

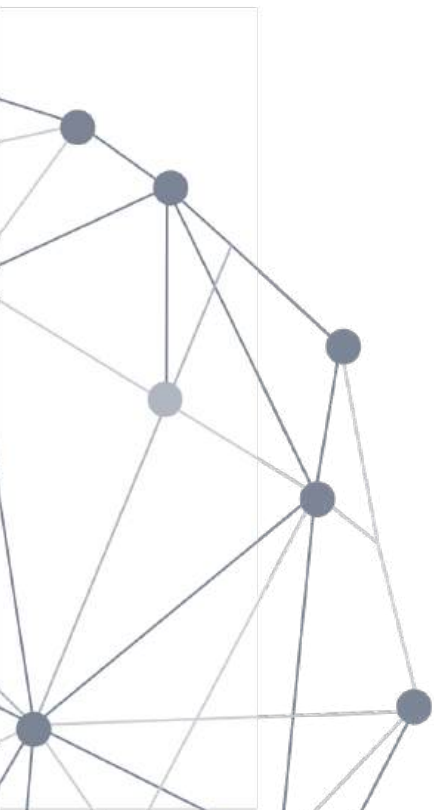
OPTIMISE
Healthcare Group



ADHD Post-Diagnostic Resource Pack

Patient Information

Support following assessment and diagnosis





Contents

Receiving and understanding your diagnosis

- 3. Receiving a diagnosis
- 4. Education around ADHD
- 5. Differences in the brain

Information

- 6.Celebrities with ADHD
- 7.Executive Dysfunction - what is it?
- 8.Managing Executive Dysfunction
- 9.The Human Function Curve
- 10.Reasonable Adjustments
- 11.Organisation and Time Management
- 12.Impulsivity and ADHD
- 13.Managing Impulsivity
- 14.Emotional Dysregulation in ADHD
- 15.ADHD and ASD
- 16.ADHD burnout
- 17.The Link Between ADHD And Addiction
- 18.Resources for ADHD and Addiction
- 19.Sleep Hygiene
- 20.Problem Solving and Planning
- 21.Anxiety and Managing Stress
- 22.Grounding Techniques
- 23.Grounding Techniques
- 24.Depression and Anxiety apps
- 25.Psychosocial Intervention - CBT
- 26.Psychosocial Intervention - ADHD coaching
- 27. Friends and Families Do's and Dont's
- 28. How to manage how others respond to your diagnosis
- 29. How to manage friends/families response to your new diagnosis continued..
- 30-32. Contacts to note

Receiving a Diagnosis

What happens now?

Obtaining a diagnosis can come with a lot of complex emotions, it can be a relief to finally have answers and self-acceptance that things start to make sense in the context of your new diagnosis. However, it can also cause some frustration, or upset that the struggles you have faced may have gone disregarded for so long.

Many seem to find that their younger years, issues in school and relationships begin to make sense the more they read about like minded cases and it is a gradual process for some to reach full self-acceptance. For many, the diagnosis is the beginning of a lot of self reflection which may raise questions such as “if only I had known this when...” or some resentment due to delays in assessment as it can present the idea that things could have been different had a diagnosis been established earlier.

For each person, a diagnosis can mean something entirely different, some prefer not to trial medication and instead look towards psychosocial interventions such as support groups and therapy while others chose other approaches to treat their symptoms.



Education around ADHD

Common Symptoms

ADHD is a neurodevelopmental disorder which is mainly characterised by issues with attention, concentration and impulsivity. There are three subtypes of ADHD and understanding your diagnosis and the way in which ADHD impacts your day-to-day life can assist you in effectively managing the symptoms.

ADHD (Inattentive)

- Difficulty with sustained attention
- Often losing things
- Easily distracted
- Forgetful
- Tendency to start tasks and leave them incomplete

ADHD (hyperactive/impulsive)

- Impulsive, risk-taking behaviours
- 'no filter' approach in conversations
- Excessive talking
- Difficulty sitting still - fidgety
- Lack of patience

ADHD (Combined)

People diagnosed with combined type ADHD present with a mixture of symptoms both inattentive and hyperactive/impulsive.



Differences in the Brain

The ADHD brain structure is different:

- It is smaller, has less volume in some brain regions and has less cortical thickness

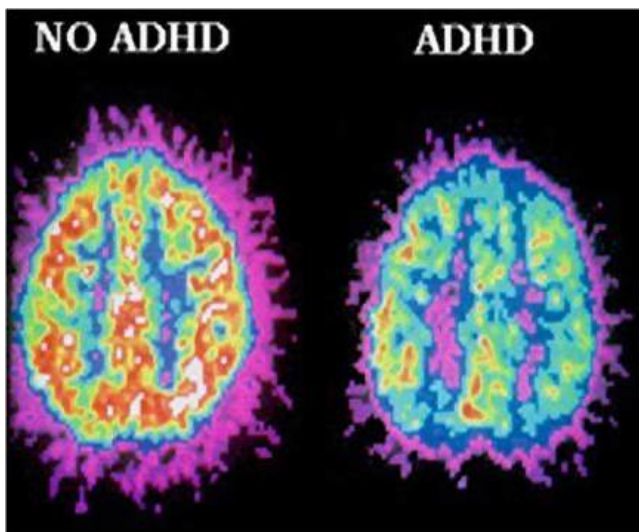
The ADHD brain functions differently:

- Less activation of the part of the brain needed for executive function and maintaining attention.
- Excessive activation of networks causing hyperactivity and impulsivity.

The ADHD brain has problems with some pathways:

- The neurotransmitters dopamine and norepinephrine — brain pathways are not working well.

-Adult ADHD centre



Credit: NeuroscienceNews

Celebrities with ADHD

Simone Biles

Olympic Gymnast
Won more than 35
Olympic and World
Champion medals



Michael Jordan

Basketball Star
Played fifteen seasons
in the NBA

Adam Levine

Lead singer Maroon 5
Three-time Grammy
award winner



Sir Richard Branson

Entrepreneur
Billionaire and owner of
Virgin

Executive Dysfunction

Executive dysfunction is a behavioural symptom that disrupts a person's ability to manage their own thoughts, emotions and actions.

Main Executive Functions

Working Memory

Involves what you are doing right now, you are using your working memory to retain current information for future use. You use working memory when having a conversation, taking notes, reading information.

Cognitive Flexibility

Refers to how well you are able to switch from one topic to another, the more flexible your thinking is the better you are able to adjust to things changing around you.

Inhibition Control

Your ability to manage your thoughts, emotions and actions. Without this, we would be unable to control our impulses

- Behavioural control - relates to your ability to stop yourself from doing things you know you shouldn't do
- Interference control - the ability to control your thoughts staying focused not allowing yourself to become distracted.

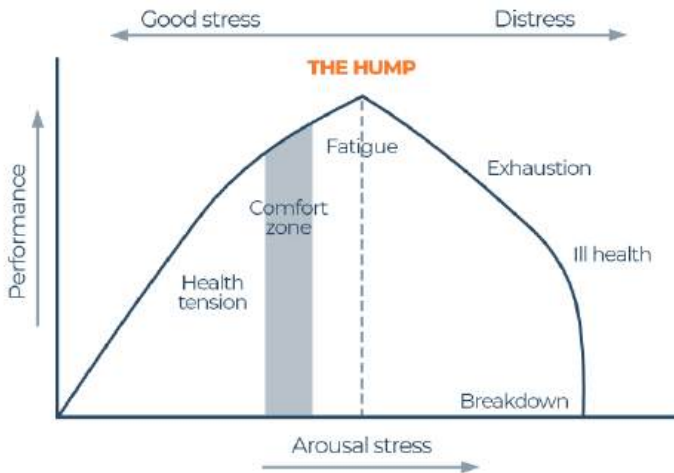
Therefore, if a person struggles with executive dysfunction, they find things like impulse control, extremely difficult.

Managing Executive Dysfunction



Treatment strategies often include medication, behavioral therapy, and lifestyle adjustments. It's important to note that while executive dysfunction is closely associated with ADHD, it can also occur in conjunction with other conditions. Understanding and support from family, educators, and employers can significantly improve outcomes for those affected.

Human Function Curve



Adapted from Nixon P, Practitioner, 1979. Sleep Advisor

While many of us commonly encounter stressors in day to day life, the difference in “Good Stress” and “Distress” is important to acknowledge.

Distress is long-term and impacts on all areas of life, it is linked to poor mental health, tension in relationships, poor physical health and burnout.

Good stress challenges us, pushes us to achieve more and become more productive but also requires boundaries and self awareness to ensure that we do not become fatigued and exhausted.

The danger of ‘the comfort zone’, many people remain within their comfort zone to limit anxiety in encountering new experiences. However, it also limits potential and can lead to a lack of fulfilment and challenges which can in turn make us less motivated as the rewards are often lesser.



Reasonable Adjustments

ADHD and the Workplace

“Under the [Equality Act 2010](#) public sector organisations have to make changes in their approach or provision to ensure that services are accessible to disabled people as well as everybody else.”

[Equality Act, 2010]

This can mean employers/educators make changes to:

- The way things are done (repeated/clearer instructions, additional breaks etc)
- Physical features (stairs, ramps, hand rails etc)
- Provide additional aids (BSL, braille, audio CD etc)

Disclosing your Diagnosis at Work

Benefit	Risk
You would not need to hide that you have ADHD at work	You may be met with a lack of understanding
Employers are legally obligated to support you and provide reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act	You may be worried about prejudice from a potential employer
Your friends and colleagues may understand you more	It can cause anxiety about how you are perceived

Organisation and Time Management

To do Lists

Useful in breaking down your plan for the day and assisting with prioritisation.

Reminders

Calendar reminders, apps to manage your diary and appointments

Post-it Notes

Many people enjoy the satisfaction of crumpling these up once completed. It also allows for tasks to be broken down into smaller, more manageable information.

Time Limits

Limiting yourself to ten, twenty or thirty minutes per task. This makes them appear more manageable and prevents you from becoming hyper-fixed as your reminder tells you to move on.

Start with the Daunting Task

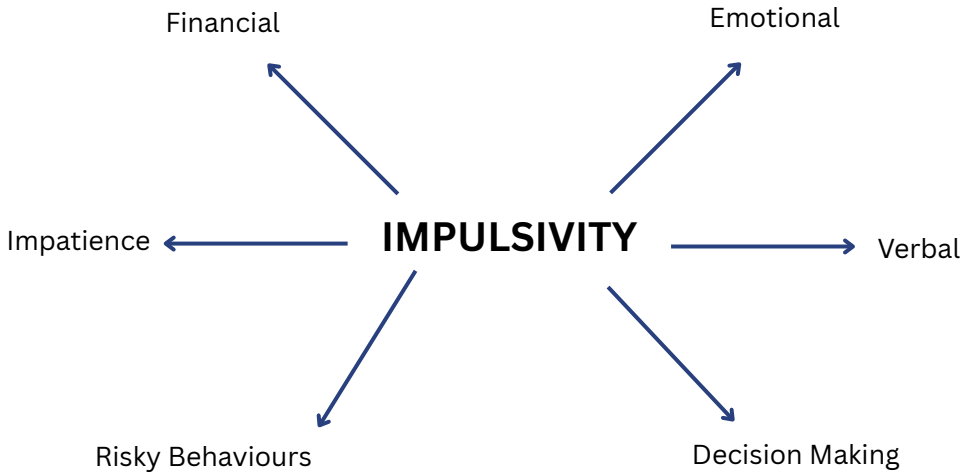
A lot of the time, we avoid the most difficult or stressful task which means it ends up lingering over us whereas starting with that task will motivate you to complete the easier ones after.

Reward Yourself

Motivation is a big struggle for many neurodivergent people, particularly if you are doing something new or a task you have previously struggled with. Therefore, no matter how small the task may seem, reward yourself when you complete it and acknowledge the time and effort required to do so.



Impulsivity and ADHD



Financial

People may make purchases that they don't need or cannot afford which can lead to debt.

Decision Making

Making rash decisions based off emotion or without considering all options which they may later regret.

Verbal

Blurting things out and interrupting others which can come across rude or abrupt.

Emotional

May be more prone to outbursts of intense emotion which can be overwhelming for both the patient and their families/friends.

Risk-taking Behaviour

Engaging in unsafe behaviours such as drugs, crime and promiscuity.

Impatience

Difficulty queuing or waiting your turn.

Managing Symptoms of Impulsivity

Self-compassion - Be kind to yourself and normalise your mistakes, acknowledge the ability to make amends and ensure you celebrate your progress in managing your impulsivity.

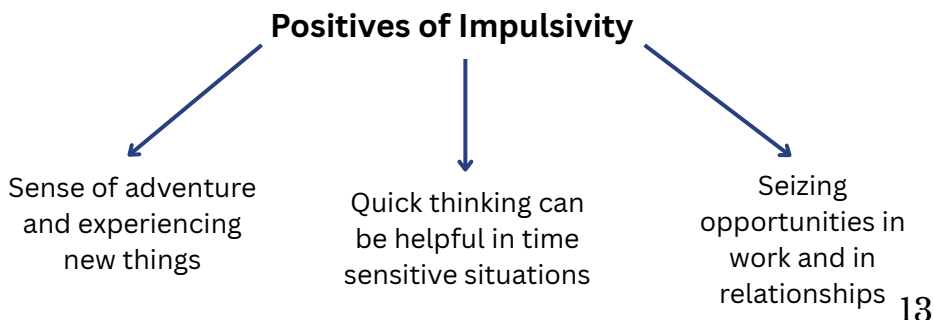
Mindfulness can help to regulate emotions by grounding you. This helps to provide perspective when you may be overwhelmed with emotions.

Identifying and reducing your triggers - Recognising your triggers and the behaviours that follow can be very effective in allowing you to manage them.

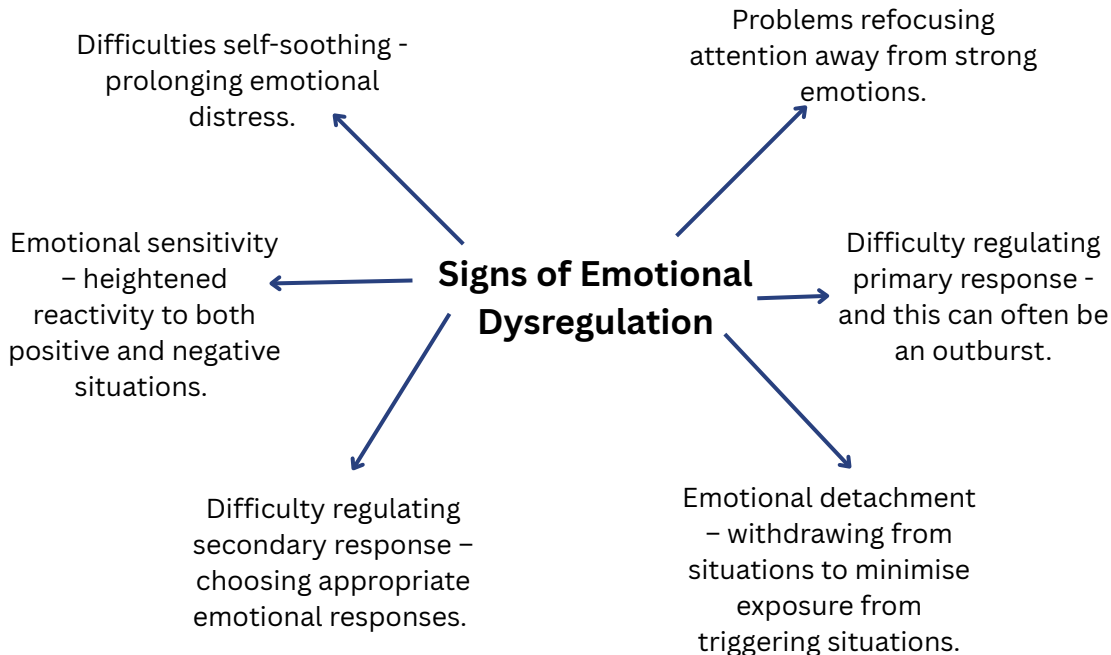
10 second rule - Wait at least 10 seconds before responding; allow yourself time and space to think clearly about your reaction.

Take responsibility - Apologise for outbursts or reactions that hurt or upset others and utilise techniques that allow you to avoid this happening again.

- Unsubscribe from marketing emails
- Unsave card details from online shopping portals
- Avoid places and people that overwhelm you
- Create budgets to help manage your income and spending
- Break big jobs down into little tasks



Emotional Dysregulation in ADHD



Self Help

·Write your feelings – Try and explain what you are feeling and why you might be feeling this. This will help you identify situations that may cause distress and avoid it in future.

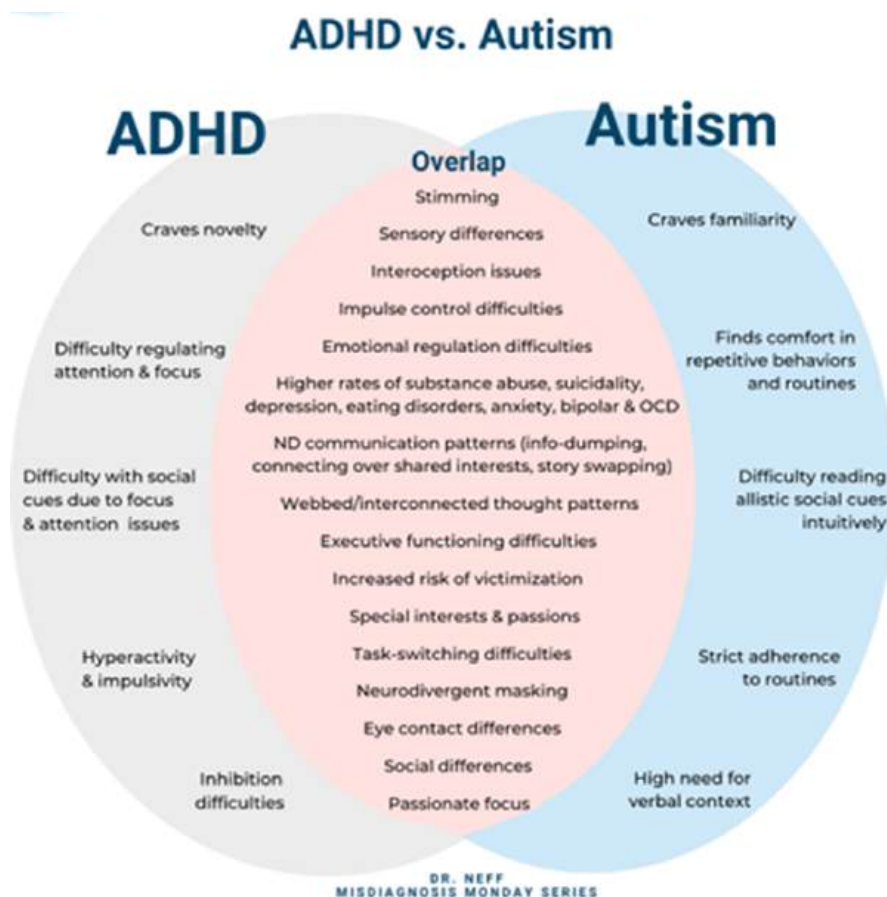
·Exercise – Along with this being good for general mental health, it can help when you feel reactive when dealing with high emotions. This will give you time to evaluate the situation and think about your next steps

·Listen to music/play an instrument – This is a good way to take a step back and recharge.

·Make a list of your coping mechanisms –You know what helps you, making a list can help you identify what works the best for you.

ADHD & ASD - The Crossover

ADHD and ASD can often overlap and identifying the symptoms that crossover can be difficult. Knowing the difference between these two things can help treatment be more effective.



Support and Treatment Options

Medication

Medication can be used to treat ADHD, and this can help manage symptoms and improve things like focus and impulsivity. There is currently no medication treatment for ASD.

Behavioural therapy

This can help patients with ADHD and ASD to reduce behavioural challenges and significantly improve interactions. This can help patients build strong coping mechanisms to manage everyday stressors.

Educational Support

Tailored education plans that cater to individual learning needs and help people achieve to the best of their ability.

Burnout

When experiencing ADHD burnout, a term coined 'ADHD freeze' is commonly used. This is when executive dysfunction peaks and it becomes increasingly difficult to manage mounting tasks and responsibilities to the extent that you cannot do anything.

It is very important during this time that you acknowledge your limitations and set boundaries. Without this, impulsive symptoms can feel the need to overcommit as a means of over compensating. However, it is important to identify when to slow down and be kind to yourself.

Prolonged burnout can lead to under performance at work, stress on relationships and compromised mental health so it is vital that you communicate when you become overwhelmed be that at work, school or home.



The Link Between Addiction and ADHD

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and addiction are complex conditions that often intersect, presenting challenges for individuals affected by both. The link has been identified through the risk-taking behaviours often displayed by those with ADHD and exacerbated by the need for immediate gratification.

Research indicates that individuals with ADHD may have a predisposition to addictive behaviours, which can manifest in various forms such as substance abuse, gambling, or internet addiction.

The impulsivity and the constant search for novel experiences associated with ADHD can lead to a higher risk of developing addictions. Moreover, the 'self-medication' hypothesis suggests that some individuals with ADHD might use substances as a way to cope with their symptoms, particularly when these symptoms are undiagnosed or untreated.

Developing healthy routines, such as regular exercise and adequate sleep, can improve focus and reduce the urge for addictive behaviours. It's also beneficial to create a supportive environment, whether it's through friends, family, or a community that understands the challenges of ADHD and addiction.



Resources for Those Living with or Experiencing Addiction

It's important for those dealing with both ADHD and addiction to seek comprehensive treatment that addresses both conditions, as they can exacerbate each other. Professional help can provide strategies for managing ADHD symptoms while also addressing the addictive behaviours, leading to a more balanced and healthy lifestyle. This might include therapy, support groups, and possibly medication-assisted treatment.

Remember, what works for one person may not work for another, so it's important to find the right combination of strategies that work for you.



adfam.org.uk

Information and support for friends and family of people with drug or alcohol problems.



0800 9177 650

help@aamail.org (email helpline)

alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk

0300 123 6600

talktofrank.com



Confidential advice and information about drugs, their effects and the law.

Turning Point

turning-point.co.uk



Health and social care services in England for people with a learning disability. Also supports people with mental health problems, drug and alcohol abuse or unemployment.

We Are With You

wearewithyou.org.uk



Supports people with drug, alcohol or mental health problems, and their friends and family.

Sober Sidekick

<https://www.sobersidekick.com/>



Downloadable app and social network for iOS and Android that helps you maintain your sobriety by connecting with a community of people.

Sleep Hygiene

Physical and mental health both benefit from good sleep and knowing how to do this can improve your overall wellbeing. Following the below guide can help improve your sleep.

-Turning your phone off

Limiting screen time before you plan to sleep will help to limit mind-racing. Instead try other things like reading, crafting or listening to music. You can set times on your phone to start winding down and start relaxing at bed time.

-Meditation

Some find that listening to white noise, waves, calming music can help to focus them and this is a great time to practice mindfulness. Find details on this on page 22 of this booklet.

-Comfort

Make your room a place that you enjoy being in of an evening following a busy day. Try and avoid working or studying in your room to promote the association of your room and sleep as opposed to productivity and business

-Diet and exercise

Regular exercise and a balanced diet have been linked to a better quality of sleep. Avoid eating large meals, having caffeine, alcohol or nicotine close to bedtime as these can all keep you awake. Also avoid exercising too close to bed time as this can also make you more energetic.

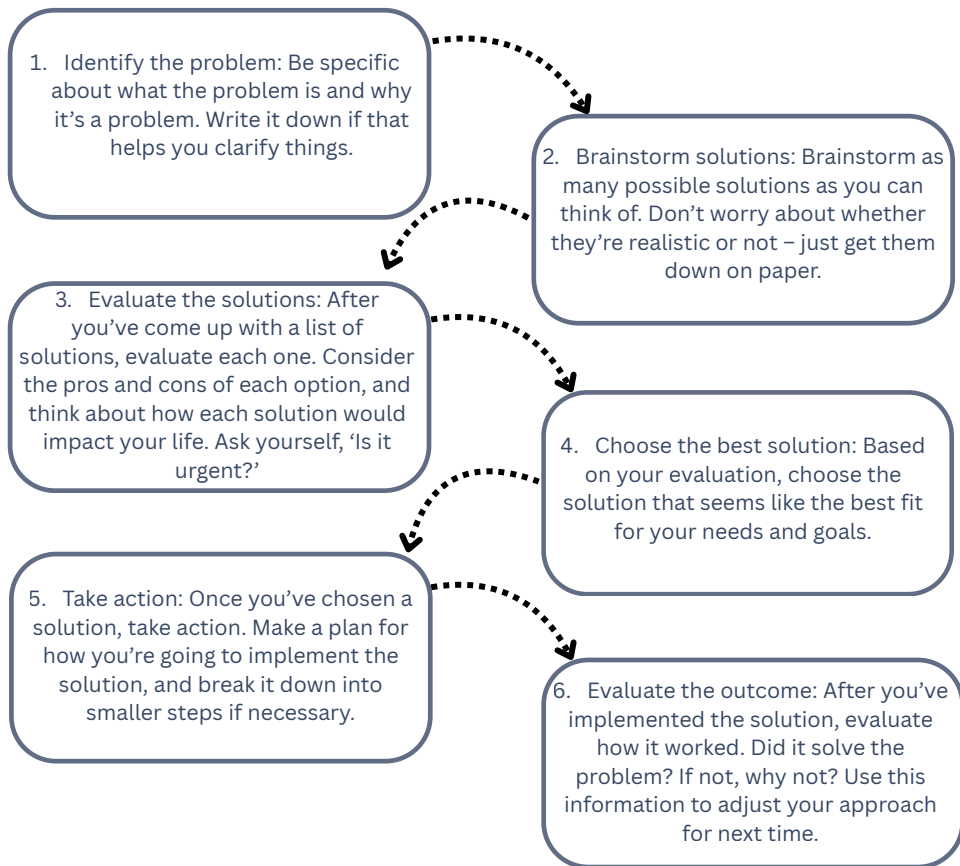
-Sleep routine

Having a regular sleep routine can help improve your sleep. Ensuring you get to bed and get up from bed at a fixed time can help with this, even on weekends!



Problem Solving and Planning

Problem solving skills are essential to help organise / manage daily tasks and activities. As organisation and time management can be difficult for people with ADHD following a step-by-step practical guide on how to overcome this can be helpful.

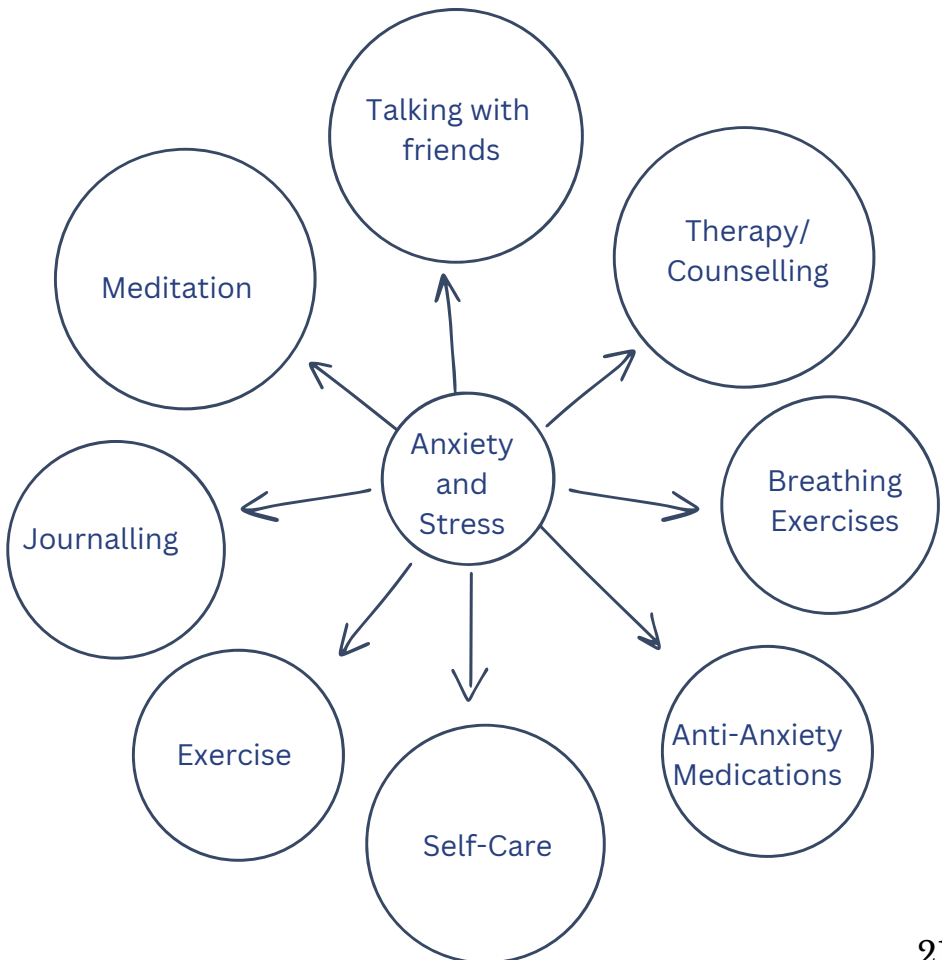


Tip: set realistic timers to keep yourself on track, for example, work on a project for 25 minutes, then take a 5-minute break.

Don't forget to celebrate the small wins when you get something completed!

Anxiety and Managing Stress

Everybody's reactions to change are different and it is understandable to be apprehensive about change particularly when it is unexpected. There are ways of managing our anxiety when these changes do happen. The below mind map details just a few suggestions from the NHS and MIND charity on how to manage anxiety levels.



Grounding Techniques



Grounding techniques are used to help bring us back into the ‘here and now,’ to reconnect with ourselves, our bodies, and our present reality. These strategies are often focused on asking ‘grounding questions’ or having something ‘grounding’ to do. You could either be guided through these and if found to be successful could then be encouraged to use the skill independently at times when you are feeling overwhelmed.

You may find it helpful to focus on your senses to ‘ground’ you back into your body.

You can encourage yourself to:

- Practice the ‘54321’ technique – 5 things I can SEE, 4 things I can FEEL or TOUCH, 3 things I can HEAR, 2 things I can SMELL or TASTE, and take 1 BIG BREATH.
- Pick up or touch items near you that you can focus on identifying or labelling. Are the things soft or hard? Heavy or light? Warm or cool? Focus on the texture and colour of each item. Challenge yourself to think of specific colours, such as crimson, burgundy, indigo, or turquoise, instead of simply red or blue.
- Breathe deeply: Slowly inhale, then exhale. If it helps, you can say or think “in” and “out” with each breath. Support yourself to breathe by filling your lungs and note how it feels to push it back out.



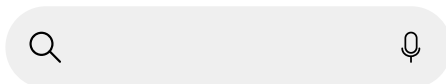
Grounding Techniques Continued...

- Move your body: For example, go for a short walk while focusing on the sensation of your feet on the floor, or do some exercise while describing how your body moves and feels.
- Recite something: Think of a poem, song, or book passage you know by heart. Encourage yourself to recite it quietly to yourself or in your head.
- Practice self-kindness. Support yourself to repeat kind, compassionate phrases to yourself: 'You're having a rough time, but you'll make it through,' 'You're strong, and you can move through this,' 'You're trying hard, and you're doing your best.' Encourage yourself to practise these phrases aloud or in your head, as many times as you need.
- Take a shower or a bath: This small thing can make you physically aware of your body and heat can be physically relaxing.
- Feet on the floor: This exercise helps to ground you — to feel stable and connected to the earth. Some people like to do it barefoot, especially outside on grass, gently shifting their weight to feel the contact with the ground. It's a simple way to reconnect with nature and remind yourself that you're part of something larger.



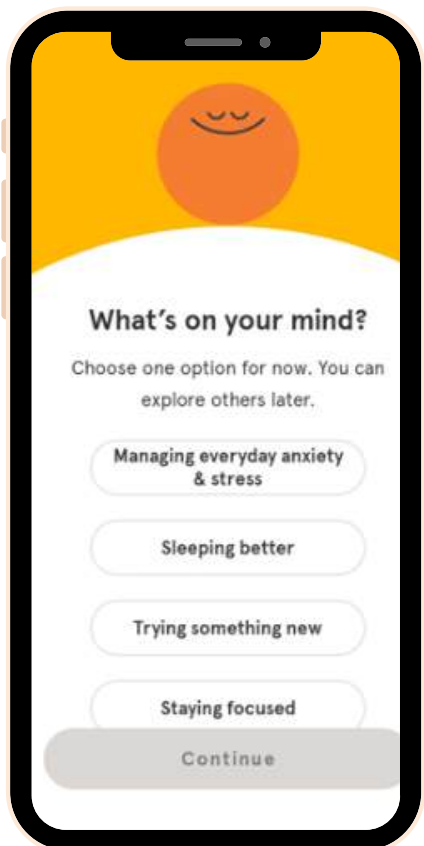
Depression and Anxiety

Apps for your phone



In Hand, Mindshift, Headspace, Calm and Hub of Hope

Apps on the go that offer grounding techniques, meditation and sign posting to more appropriate services.



Psychosocial Interventions

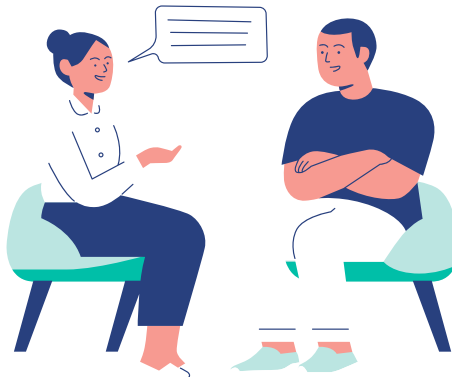
Cognitive Behavioural Therapy

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) is a form of psychotherapy that has been found to be effective for a variety of conditions, including Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). It's a structured, goal-oriented therapy that can make a significant difference in managing the symptoms of ADHD and enhancing overall life functioning.

It focuses on identifying and changing negative thought patterns and behaviours. Using techniques such as successive approximation, which breaks tasks into smaller, more manageable steps, can be particularly beneficial. Research suggests that combining CBT with medication may lead to better outcomes than medication alone.

CBT can also be useful in tackling co-morbid conditions such as anxiety and depression. It operates on the principle that negative thought patterns and behaviours can be identified, challenged, and altered to alleviate symptoms of anxiety and depression.

CBT is structured, goal-oriented, and focuses on the present. Aiming to teach individuals coping strategies to change their thought patterns and behaviours that contribute to their anxiety and depression.



Psychosocial Interventions

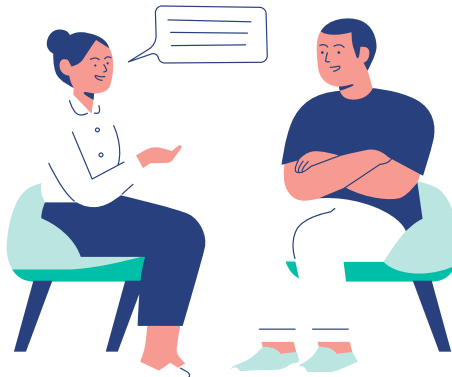
ADHD Coaching

Although ADHD coaching is not something we currently offer at Optimise Healthcare Group, it is an incredibly beneficial tool for understanding ADHD and harnessing the most beneficial aspects of it while also learning how to develop more healthy techniques to counteract some difficulties experienced by those with ADHD.

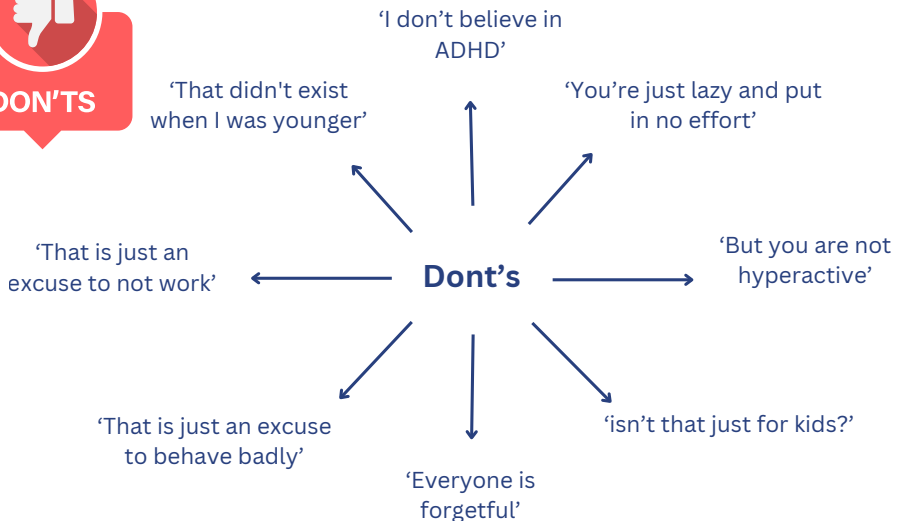
ADHD coaching is a specialised form of personal coaching that focuses on addressing the unique needs of individuals with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

It involves working with a coach who has a deep understanding of ADHD and its impact on various aspects of life, including; time management, organization, goal setting, and problem-solving. The coaching process is collaborative and tailored to the individual, aiming to develop strategies and skills that help manage the symptoms of ADHD.

Coaches often use a combination of positive psychology and cognitive-behavioural techniques to support clients in achieving their personal and professional goals. The ultimate aim of ADHD coaching is to empower individuals to overcome the challenges posed by ADHD and lead more structured and fulfilling lives.



Friends and Families Do's and Dont's



How to Manage Friends/Families Response to Your Diagnosis

Sharing a new diagnosis of ADHD can be challenging. Some people may respond with understanding and support, while others may need time to adjust or learn more. The following strategies can help you manage their reactions and maintain positive relationships.

1. Educate Yourself First

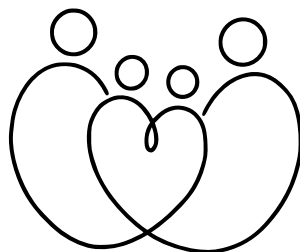
Take time to learn about ADHD and what it means for you personally. This knowledge will help you explain your diagnosis to others and address any myths or misconceptions they may have. Highlighting your strengths can also support a balanced understanding of the condition. Use clear, straightforward language to make information easier for others to understand.

2. Prepare for Misunderstandings

Not everyone will understand ADHD immediately. By developing your own understanding, you'll be better prepared to answer questions and manage misconceptions. Choose an appropriate time and private setting for these conversations to ensure that discussions take place in a safe and focused environment.

3. Communicate with Emotional Awareness

Use “I” statements to express your personal experience (for example, “I find it difficult to concentrate when there are a lot of distractions”). Everyone experiences ADHD differently, and sharing your perspective helps others understand your unique challenges. It can also be helpful to ask for specific types of support that align with your needs.



4. Set Clear Boundaries

Decide who you feel comfortable sharing your diagnosis with and what information you wish to disclose. Clearly communicate how this information should be handled or shared to protect your privacy and ensure that it remains within your comfort zone.

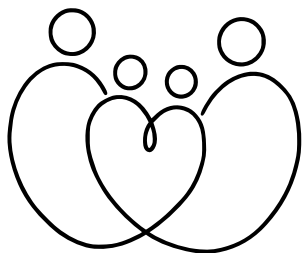
5. Anticipate Questions

Friends and family may have questions about ADHD and how it affects you. By staying informed, you can provide accurate information and help others better understand your experience. Be patient, as those close to you may need time to process and learn about the diagnosis just as you have.

How to manage a negative response

It is important to recognise that some people may not respond positively when you share your diagnosis. While you cannot control how others react, following the guidance above can help you manage these situations more effectively and support a more constructive conversation.

There are many reliable sources of information and online communities that offer support and advice on managing negative reactions. During this time, remember to be patient with others as they adjust, and kind to yourself as you process their responses. Self-compassion is an important part of maintaining your wellbeing.



Help in Crisis

Emergency Crisis Services

If you feel you are unable to keep yourself safe and require immediate support, please call 999 or attend your local A&E department

Local Crisis Services

Contact 111 for details of crisis services in your local area

NO MORE suicide

This website offers clear and immediate support options to those who may be suffering with thoughts of suicide or people who know someone struggling. It offers early intervention information. The website can also be helpful to those who have been bereaved by suicide.

Supporting the victims of honour-based abuse and forced marriage

<https://karmanirvana.org.uk/>

Stay alive app

Allows access to lots of support services and contact can be made by phone, text, live chat or online support.

You can call any of the following if you feel you need to talk to someone but are not in a crisis:

Samaritans - phone: 116 123

Papyrus - phone: 0800 068 41 41

CALM - phone: 0800 58 58 58

SHOUT - Text (85258)

Safeguarding

If you believe that you or someone you care for is vulnerable or at risk of harm, neglect, exploitation, or abuse, it is important to seek help promptly. Anyone can make a referral to their local safeguarding team.



If you or a family member are at risk, please reach out for support without delay. You can contact your GP, local safeguarding team, or appropriate authorities who are trained to assist in these situations. Additionally, you can call 111 for crisis support, safeguarding advice, and to be directed to relevant services.

If there is an immediate or imminent risk to you or a loved one, please call 999.

You can find contact details for your local safeguarding services here:

<https://safeguarding-guide.nhs.uk/contacts/>



Websites

General:

- <https://www.additudemag.com/category/adhd-add/>
- <https://www.verywellmind.com/adhd-overview-4581801>
- <https://www.adhdandyou.ca/adults>

Topics:

[How to make your home more comfortable](#)

[How to Create a Calm Home for People with ADHD – ADD Resource Centre \(addrc.org\)](#)

[A Support Plan for Each Stage of ADHD Acceptance](#)

<https://www.additudemag.com/add-relationships-support-loved-one/>

[How to Practice Mindfulness with ADHD](#)

<https://www.additudemag.com/how-to-practice-mindfulness-adhd/>

[The ADHD Sleep Formula](#)

<https://www.additudemag.com/adhd-sleep-issues-formula/>

Apps

[Best ADHD apps for adults:](#)

- Best overall: SimpleMind Pro – Mind Mapping
- Best overall: For You With You ADHD
- Best for setting reminders: Due – Reminders & Timers
- Best for taking and organising notes: Evernote
- Best for reducing overwhelm: Remember the Milk
- Best for collaborations: Asana
- Best for managing your to-do lists: Todoist
- Best for project tracking: Trello
- Best for simple lists: Clear Todos
- Best to build good habits: Habit Tracker
- Best for cognitive function training: CogniFit

Documentaries

<https://www.addrc.org/add-and-loving-it/>

Podcasts

<https://www.additudemag.com/category/adhd-podcast/>

<https://www.distractionpodcast.com/category/adhd/>

<https://www.adhdessentials.com/podcasts/>

<https://www.hackingyouradhd.com/>

<https://www.adhdrewired.com/podcast/>

<https://www.drummerandthegreatmountain.com/adult-adhd-add-podcast>

Books

For adults:

Thriving with Adult ADHD. Skills to strengthen executive functioning

Get focused & achieve your goals

Phil Boissiere, MFT, 2018

For everyday life

Order from Chaos: The Everyday Grind of Staying Organized with Adult ADHD.

Jaclyn Paul, 2019

Best for getting organised

Organizing Solutions for People with ADHD. Tips and Tools to Help You Take Charge of Your Life and Get Organized

Susan C. Pinsky, 2012

Harnessing your strengths:

ADHD 2.0: New Science and Essential Strategies for Thriving with distraction

Edward M. Hallowell and John J. Ratey, 2022

Bestseller:

Driven to Distraction: Recognizing and Coping with Attention Deficit Disorder

Edward Hallowell, MD and John J. Ratey, MD, 2011