

Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

A Closer Look

*"ADHD isn't a lack of
attention; it's a different way of
paying attention."*



***No diagnosis (self or otherwise) to be
made based on the given information.
Please consult a recognised mental health
practitioner to know more*



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How to Use This Booklet

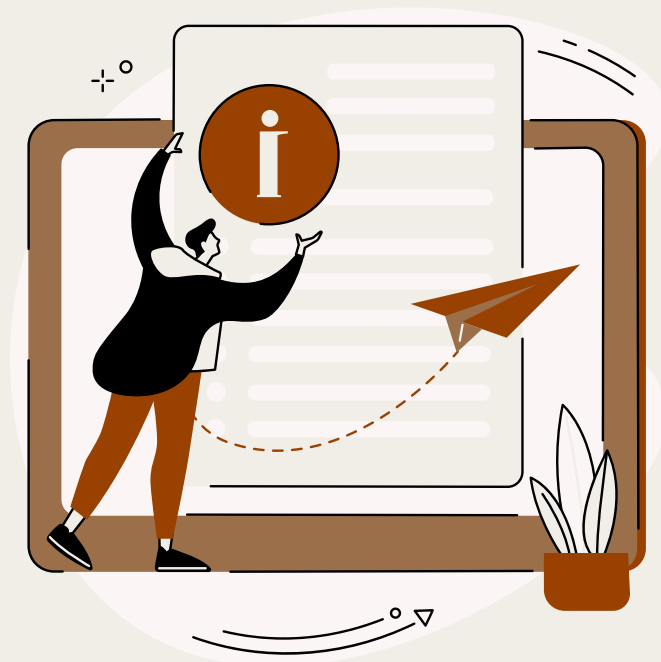
This booklet is a gentle companion for those living with ADHD, supporting someone who does, or seeking to understand it better. It's written to be clear, practical, and human, not clinical or overwhelming.



How to Use This Booklet

Here's how you can go about it:

- No need to read in order – Each section is designed to stand alone. You can flip to what feels most relevant right now, whether that's emotional challenges, daily hacks, or ADHD in relationships.
- Look out for real-life examples – You'll find short, anonymous vignettes throughout – composite stories inspired by lived experiences. They help bring the content to life and show how ADHD might feel in everyday moments.



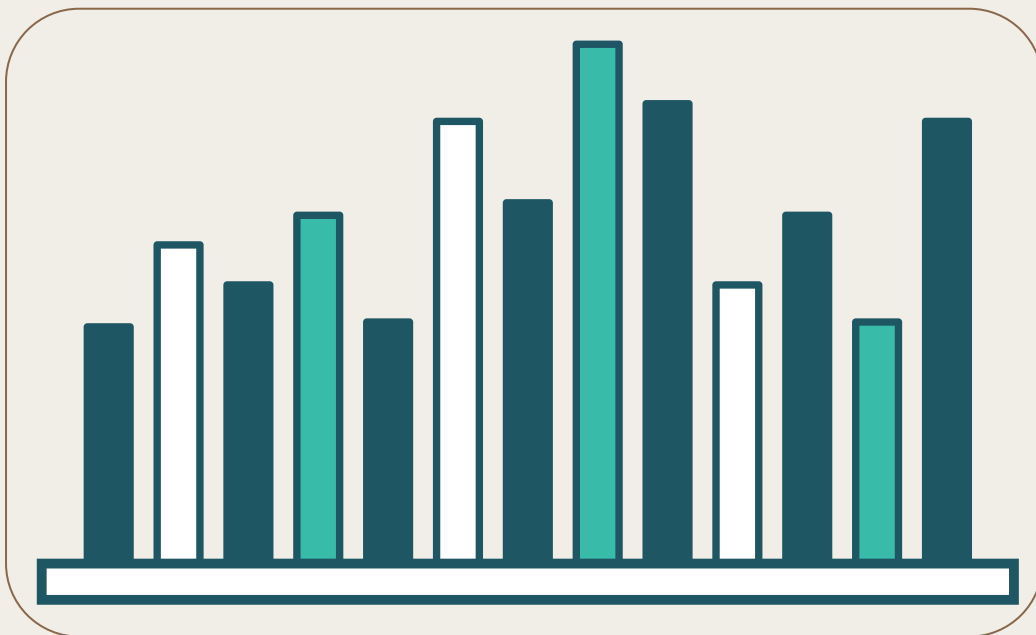
How to Use This Booklet



- For individuals, families & professionals – Whether you're a parent, friend, teacher, therapist, or navigating your own ADHD, you'll find language and tools that invite empathy, not judgment.
- Revisit when needed – You may come back to the same pages at different stages of your journey. That's expected. Let this be a space of reflection, not pressure.

ADHD Statistics

- A comprehensive global umbrella review across 3.3 million participants estimates ADHD prevalence in children and adolescents at 8.0% (95% CI: 6.0–10%)
- Prevalence is higher in males (around 10%) compared to females (about 5%) in youth populations
- In adults, persistent ADHD affects approximately 2.6% globally, while symptomatic ADHD is estimated at 6.8%.
- The overall adult global prevalence is estimated at ~3.1% based on large-scale international data



ADHD Statistics

India Specific Data

- School- and hospital-based studies in India show child ADHD prevalence ranging from 4.7% to 29.2%, depending on region and assessment methods
- A South India (Tamil Nadu) study reported 8.8% among children aged 8–11, while another found 11.32% among 6–11 year-olds
- Recent adult studies in Delhi-NCR indicate 5.5% to 14% prevalence among college-aged young adults (ages 18–25)



ADHD Statistics

Additional Insights



- As of 2019, an estimated 84.7 million children worldwide live with ADHD
- ADHD often persists into adulthood: 15% continue to meet full diagnostic criteria, with 40–60% retaining some symptoms over time
- Many cases, especially among females and adults remain undiagnosed or misdiagnosed due to subtler symptom presentation

What Is ADHD, Really?

Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a neurodevelopmental condition that affects how the brain regulates attention, activity levels, and impulses. It is not simply about being distracted or hyperactive—it involves differences in brain structure and function, particularly in areas responsible for executive functioning, such as planning, focus, time management, and emotional regulation.

ADHD is **brain-based** and often **lifelong**. It's caused by a combination of genetic, neurological, and environmental factors, and is linked to differences in dopamine regulation and frontal lobe activity.



What Is ADHD, Really?



ADHD isn't about lacking attention — it's about difficulty regulating it. People with ADHD can hyperfocus for hours, but struggle with boring or repetitive tasks.



ADHD presents differently across individuals and ages, and it's not a result of laziness, lack of intelligence, or poor parenting. Understanding it as a neurological difference, rather than a behavioral problem, helps shift the focus toward support, tools, and self-compassion.

What We Need to Know...

- ADHD is a brain-based neurodevelopmental condition that affects attention, impulse control, and activity levels.
- It is not caused by laziness or bad parenting but by a combination of genetic, neurological, and environmental factors.
- Brain imaging studies show reduced activity in areas responsible for executive functioning, especially the prefrontal cortex.
- Neurochemical imbalances (particularly in dopamine regulation) also contribute to symptoms.

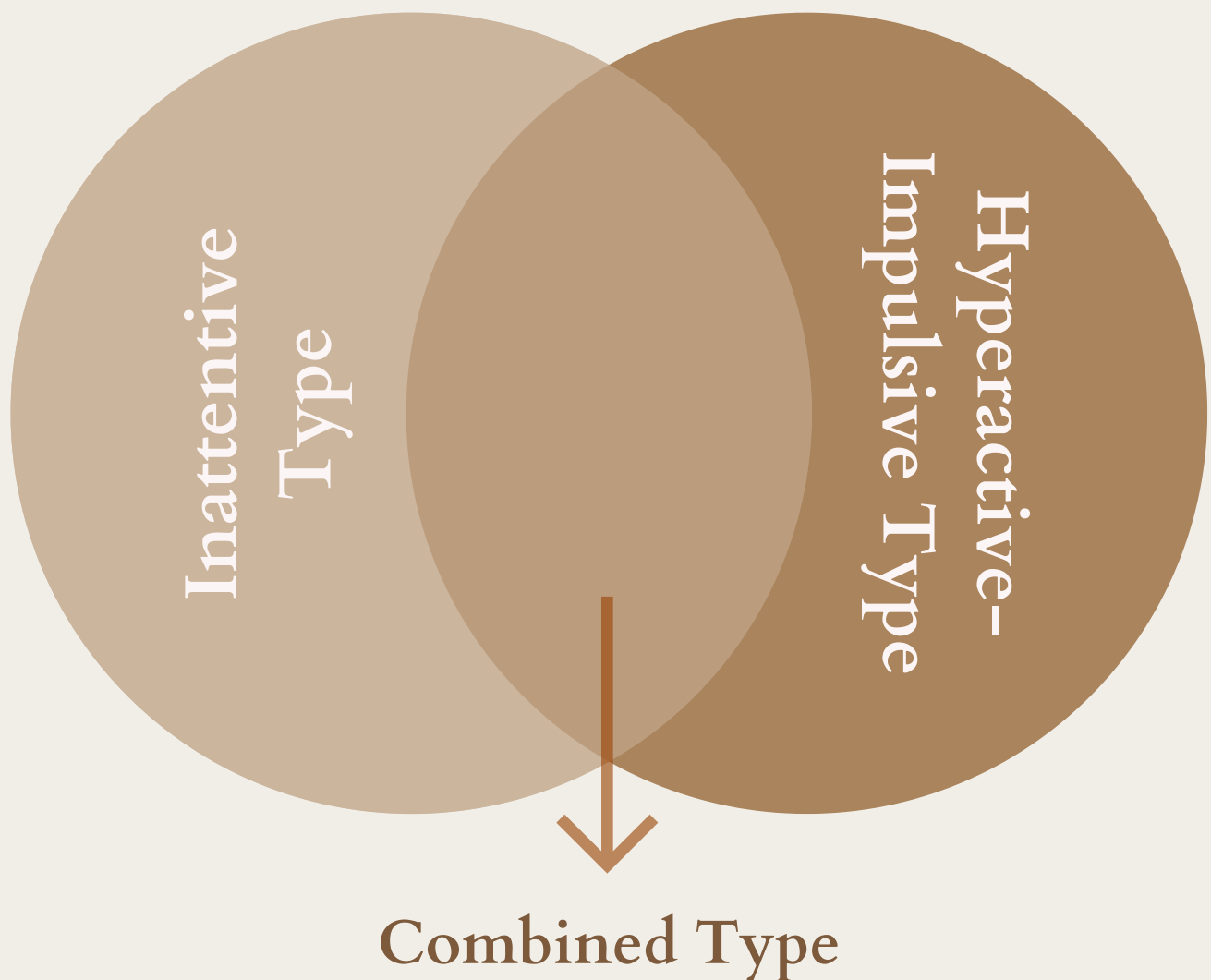


Understanding the ADHD Journey: From Symptoms to Support



Types of ADHD

ADHD is not a one-dimensional condition. It presents in different ways, which is why it is classified into three main types: Inattentive, Hyperactive-Impulsive, and Combined. Understanding these subtypes is essential for recognizing how ADHD may affect individuals differently.



Inattentive type

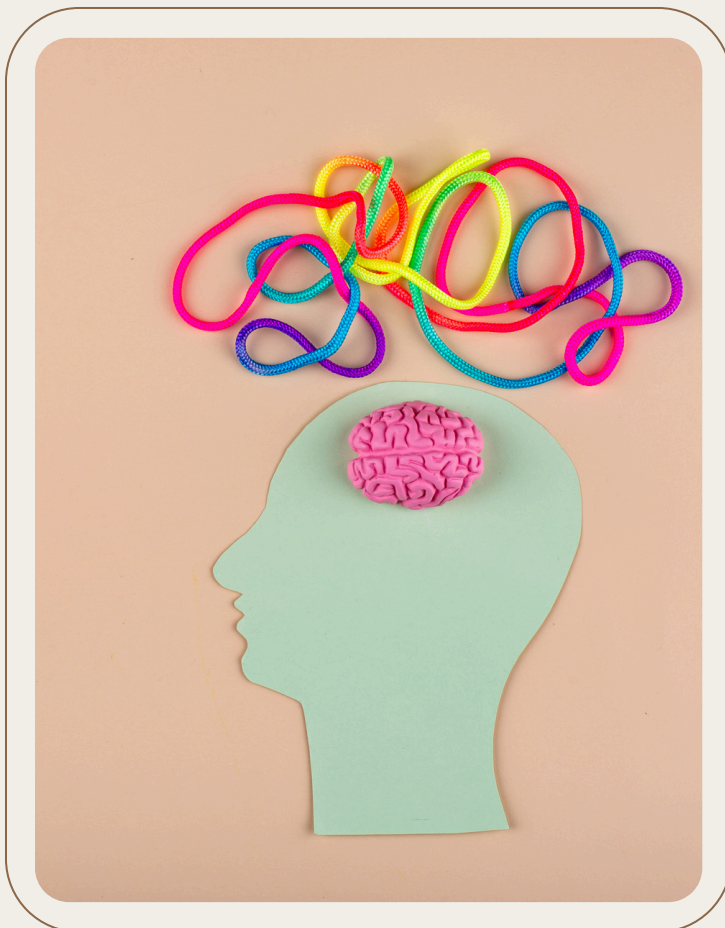
The Inattentive Type (ADD) is often overlooked, especially in girls and adults, because it does not include obvious hyperactivity. Individuals with this type may appear forgetful, disorganized, or as though they are not paying attention. In reality, their minds may be racing or overloaded with internal distractions.

They may struggle to focus, follow through on instructions, stay organized, or remember daily responsibilities. For example, a student with ADD might frequently lose materials, miss deadlines, or seem like they are daydreaming during class.



Hyperactive-Impulsive Type

The Hyperactive-Impulsive Type (ADHD-HI) is marked by visible restlessness and impulsivity. It tends to be more noticeable in young children, who may have difficulty sitting still, speak out of turn, or act without considering consequences.



In adults, this can look like constant movement, excessive talking, or interrupting others in conversation. This type is often mistaken for simple behavioral issues when it is actually driven by neurological differences in self-regulation.

Combined Type

The Combined Type includes symptoms of both inattention and hyperactivity-impulsivity. It is the most common presentation and typically causes more widespread difficulties in focus, impulse control, organization, and time management.

For instance, an individual with combined type ADHD, may struggle to prioritize tasks, frequently switch from one activity to another, and find it hard to stay on top of responsibilities both at home and at work.



How is ADHD diagnosed?



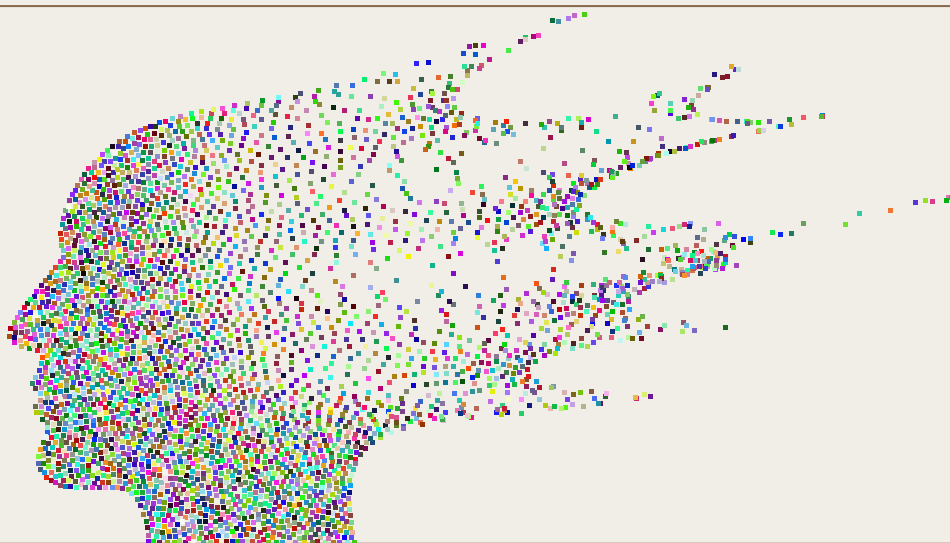
There is no single test to diagnose ADHD. Given its complex etiology and types of symptom presentation, a diagnosis of ADHD is reached through a thorough and gradual process of data collection from different sources including clinical history taking, psychometric assessments, and review of past scholastic and performance records, etc

Differential Diagnosis, and Comorbidities

Differential Diagnosis:

Several conditions may mimic or overlap with ADHD. It's important to rule out or differentiate from:

- Anxiety disorders (restlessness or inattention due to worry)
- Learning disabilities (difficulties may stem from skill deficits, not attention)
- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
(social/communication challenges can look like inattention)
- Mood disorders (depression or bipolar disorder may impact focus and energy)



Differential Diagnosis, and Comorbidities



Common Comorbidities:

ADHD often co-occurs with other conditions.

The most frequent include:

- Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD)
- Anxiety disorders and Depression
- Specific Learning Disorders (e.g., dyslexia, dyscalculia)
- Sleep difficulties (which can worsen inattention and irritability)

ADHD, Social Media & Self-Diagnosis: A Double-Edged Sword

With growing awareness, platforms like Instagram and YouTube are flooded with ADHD-related content. While this can help people feel seen and validated, it also comes with risks.

The Good



- Creates space for neurodivergent voices
- Reduces stigma and isolation
- Increases awareness, especially in adults and women
- Normalizes help-seeking

The Not-So-Good



- Oversimplifies complex symptoms
- Encourages “diagnosis by algorithm”
- Spreads misinformation or stereotypes
- Can cause over-identification or unnecessary worry

ADHD, Social Media & Self-Diagnosis: A Double-Edged Sword

Things to Keep in Mind

- Social media can offer support, but it does not replace professional assessment
- Online quizzes and videos may offer clues—not conclusions
- If you resonate with ADHD traits online, speak to a mental health professional

Healthy Phone Habits for ADHD Brains

- Use screen timers or app blockers
- Follow pages that offer practical, verified strategies
- Take tech breaks to reduce sensory overload
- Mute/limit content that feels overwhelming or triggering



What ADHD Looks Like (And What It Doesn't)

ADHD is often misunderstood because its symptoms vary widely and may not always align with common stereotypes. While hallmark features include inattention, impulsivity, and hyperactivity, these symptoms can present subtly—especially in structured or familiar environments.

For example, ADHD might look like difficulty following through on tasks, frequently losing items, zoning out during conversations, or feeling mentally overwhelmed even with simple routines.



What ADHD Looks Like (And What It Doesn't)

It may also include impulsive speech, restlessness, or emotional reactivity. Importantly, ADHD is not always loud, disruptive, or chaotic. It doesn't always involve visible hyperactivity or academic struggles. Many individuals with ADHD are high-achieving, thoughtful, and quiet, which can mask their challenges.



What ADHD Looks Like (And What It Doesn't)



Misunderstandings often lead to delayed diagnoses or mislabeling the person as lazy, careless, or disinterested. These labels can deeply hurt—many people with ADHD grow up feeling ashamed, confused, or broken, constantly questioning their worth despite trying their best. The internal toll of being misunderstood can create lasting self-doubt.

Recognizing the full picture of ADHD means looking beyond stereotypes and understanding the real-life, day-to-day experiences that often go unseen.

Commonly Reported ADHD Challenges

Executive Dysfunction Explained

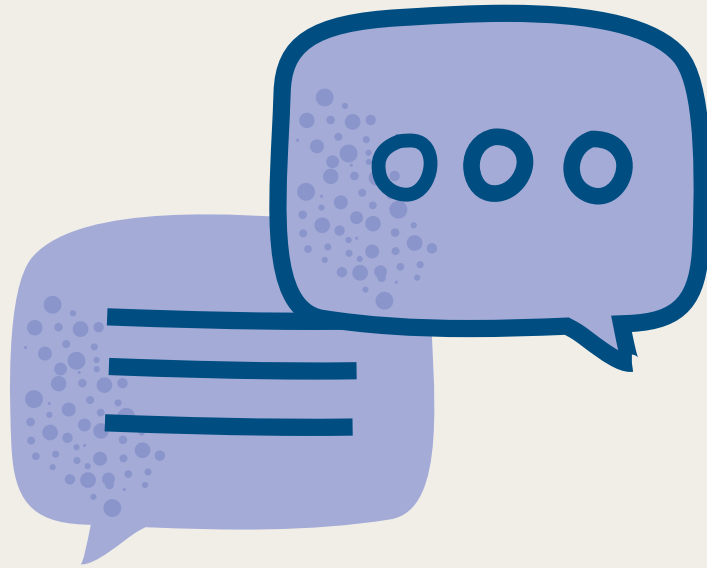
Executive dysfunction refers to difficulties with higher-level cognitive and behavioral processes that control and coordinate other cognitive functions. These processes, often associated with the prefrontal cortex of the brain, are essential for goal formulation, planning, organization, sequencing, and self-regulation.

Executive dysfunction is a core challenge for individuals with ADHD. It refers to difficulties with the brain's "management system"—the set of mental skills that help us plan, organize, initiate, and complete tasks. People with ADHD often struggle to break tasks into steps, prioritize what matters most, manage time effectively, and switch between tasks smoothly.



Commonly Reported ADHD Challenges

Executive Dysfunction Explained



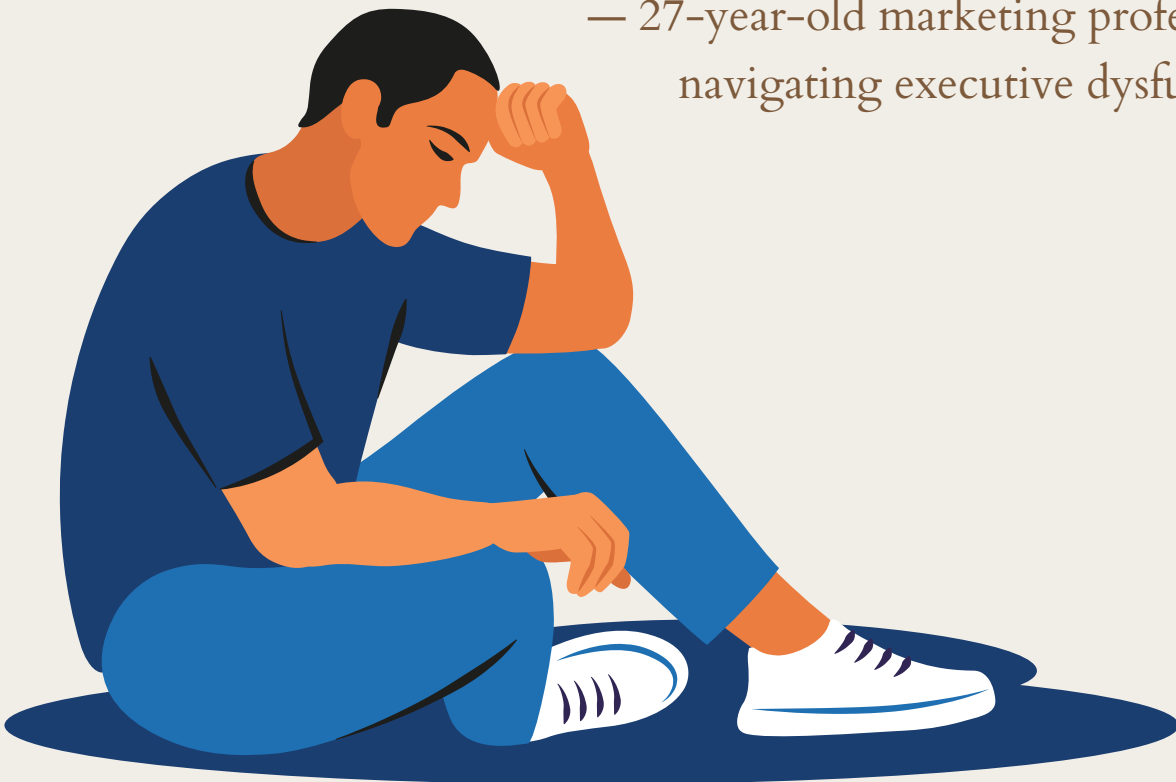
This isn't a matter of willpower or intelligence; it's rooted in how the ADHD brain processes information and regulates attention and motivation. For example, someone may know what they need to do and even want to do it—but still feel stuck, overwhelmed, or unsure where to start. Deadlines, distractions, and transitions can all become especially difficult to navigate. Understanding executive dysfunction helps shift the conversation from “Why don't they try harder?” to “How can we support the way their brain works best?”

Vignette 1: The Invisible Wall

Executive Dysfunction Explained

“I kept telling myself I would start the assignment after lunch. Then after tea. Then after just one more scroll through Instagram. The day passed, and I didn’t even open the file. I wasn’t being lazy – I was overwhelmed, stuck. I wanted to do it. I just couldn’t figure out where to begin, and the more time passed, the worse it felt. The guilt hit before I even slept that night.”

— 27-year-old marketing professional
navigating executive dysfunction



Commonly Reported ADHD Challenges

Time Blindness & Procrastination

Many individuals with ADHD experience 'time blindness'—a difficulty sensing, estimating, or tracking the passage of time. Rather than viewing time as a continuous, linear flow, it often feels like two categories: “now” and “not now.” This disconnect makes it hard to plan ahead, meet deadlines, or gauge how long a task will take.

As a result, even important tasks may be postponed until they become urgent. For instance, starting an assignment that’s due in two weeks might feel nearly impossible to begin, while one that’s due tomorrow morning may finally spark action—because the urgency creates the stimulation needed to focus.



Commonly Reported ADHD Challenges

Time Blindness & Procrastination



Procrastination in ADHD isn't about laziness or lack of motivation; it's a neurological challenge with task initiation, especially when the task feels unclear, overwhelming, or unstimulating. Often, the brain seeks immediate rewards or stimulation, which pulls attention away from future-oriented goals

Recognizing these patterns is the first step in developing realistic strategies—such as using external timers, visual schedules, or accountability systems—to make time feel more visible and manageable.

Vignette 2: Time Slips Away

Time Blindness & Procrastination

“I genuinely thought I had enough time. I looked at the clock at 5 p.m., and next thing I knew, it was 7:30. The train had left. I missed my friend's birthday dinner. Again. I cried in the bathroom, not because I forgot, but because I just... lost track. It happens all the time. No one understands how time just disappears.”

— College student with ADHD



Commonly Reported ADHD Challenges

The Emotional Turbulence of ADHD

ADHD doesn't just impact focus or organization—it also deeply affects emotions. Many individuals with ADHD experience Rejection Sensitivity Dysphoria (RSD), a heightened emotional response to real or perceived criticism or rejection.

This can lead to intense feelings of hurt, shame, or withdrawal. Mood swings, frustration, and irritability may also occur, often in response to everyday challenges that feel overwhelming. These emotional reactions aren't just “overreactions”—they stem from the brain's difficulty in regulating emotions.

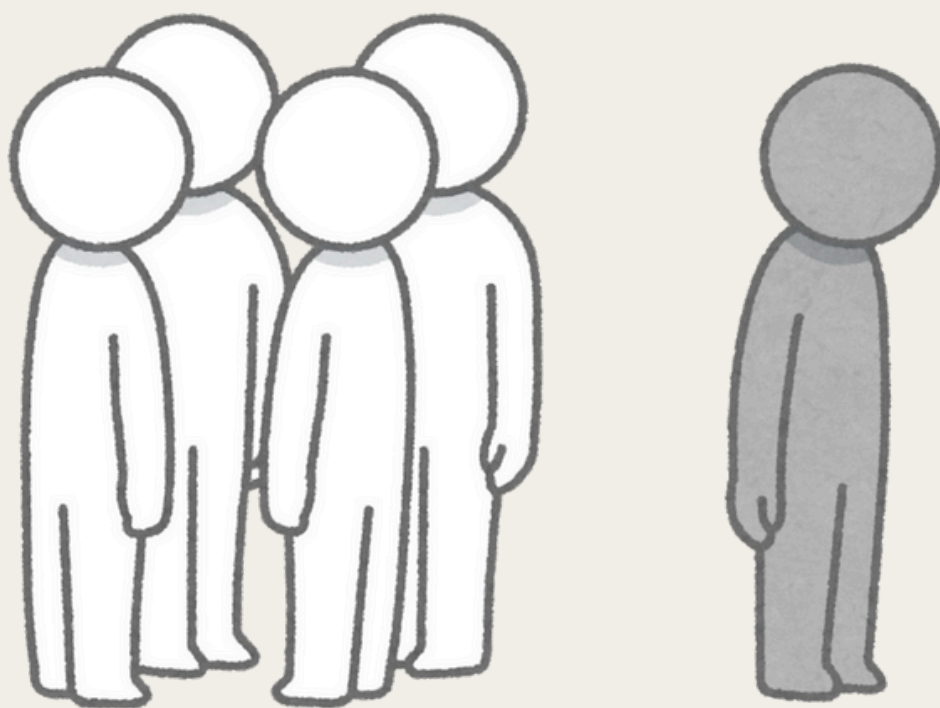


Vignette 3: The Spiral After Small Feedback

Rejection Sensitivity

“My manager said, ‘Just tweak this one line.’ It wasn’t even criticism. But my stomach dropped. I went home thinking I’d disappointed everyone. I stayed up rehearsing what I’d say the next day, imagining worst-case scenarios. A single, neutral comment turned into a spiral of shame and anxiety. I knew it wasn’t logical—but it felt real.”

— 32-year-old with ADHD and rejection sensitivity



Commonly Reported ADHD Challenges

Masking & Burnout



Many individuals with ADHD learn to "mask" their symptoms—consciously or unconsciously hiding signs of inattention, restlessness, or impulsivity to appear more organized, focused, or socially acceptable.

This often means overcompensating, staying hyper-alert, or mimicking neurotypical behaviors to avoid judgment or criticism. While masking may help in short-term situations, it comes at a cost.

Commonly Reported ADHD Challenges

Masking & Burnout



Constant self-monitoring and performance can lead to deep mental fatigue, emotional exhaustion, and eventually burnout.

Over time, the pressure to "keep up" without support may erode self-esteem and create distance from one's authentic self.

Recognizing and reducing the need to mask—especially in safe environments—is an important part of long-term well-being.



Vignette 4: Wearing a Mask No One Sees

Masking & Burnout

“I’ve always been the ‘sorted one’—planner, scheduler, list-maker. People come to me when they need organizing help. What they don’t see is that I stay up until 2 a.m. fixing everything I forgot to do during the day. I replay conversations, afraid I missed a cue. I smile through meetings, then collapse from exhaustion. It’s like playing a role to seem ‘normal,’ but it’s costing me everything. I don’t even know what my baseline feels like anymore.”

— Composite vignette based on multiple clients who mask ADHD



Strengths Associated With ADHD



While ADHD is often discussed in terms of challenges, it also comes with unique and valuable strengths.

Many individuals with ADHD show high levels of creativity, often thinking in nonlinear and original ways that spark innovation. When deeply interested in something, they can enter a state of hyperfocus—immersing themselves fully and producing high-quality work.

Despite setbacks, many develop strong resilience, learning to adapt and persevere in the face of difficulties.

Recognizing and nurturing these strengths can help shift the narrative from deficit to potential.

Vignette 5: Tunnel Vision Superpower

Hyperfocus as a Strength

“When I’m interested in something, I go all in. I once built an entire art portfolio in three days. No breaks, barely any sleep. I forget to eat, forget the world. It’s like a superpower—until I crash. I just wish I could summon that level of focus on the things I need to do, like taxes or cleaning my room.”

— Creative entrepreneur with ADHD



ADHD in Relationships

ADHD can impact how individuals engage in relationships—whether with friends, family, or partners. Traits such as distractibility, impulsive communication, emotional reactivity, or forgetfulness may be misinterpreted as carelessness or disinterest. For instance, someone may unintentionally interrupt conversations, forget important dates, or struggle with emotional regulation during conflicts.

On the other hand, many individuals with ADHD bring enthusiasm, sensitivity, loyalty, creativity, and deep empathy to their relationships.



Understanding these patterns helps reduce miscommunication and fosters healthier, more compassionate connections. Recognizing ADHD's influence in relational contexts is key to creating supportive and lasting bonds.

ADHD at Work / School

In academic and workplace settings, individuals with ADHD often face challenges with sustained attention, task management, meeting deadlines, and following through on multi-step instructions. These difficulties can be mistakenly seen as laziness or lack of motivation. In reality, ADHD affects executive functioning—making organization, prioritization, and time estimation more difficult.

However, when supported with appropriate strategies such as structured routines, visual reminders, and flexible communication—many individuals thrive.

Their creativity, problem solving abilities, and out-of-the-box thinking are often assets in collaborative and fast-paced environments. Understanding ADHD in these settings helps shift the focus from productivity myths to practical, person-centered support.



Coping Tools & Daily Hacks

Living with ADHD means building systems that work with the brain, not against it. Practical strategies—like using timers to create urgency, visual checklists to track progress, and color-coded calendars to break tasks into manageable steps—can significantly improve day-to-day functioning.

Body doubling, where someone works quietly alongside you, can boost focus and reduce task avoidance. Adding accountability through a coach, friend, or regular check-ins, can also provide structure and motivation



Structured routines, clear transitions, and physical cues (like sticky notes or reminders) also help in reducing overwhelm.

While no single approach works for everyone, experimenting with tools tailored to your strengths can create sustainable, supportive habits.

Medication & Treatment Options

ADHD treatment often involves a combination of approaches tailored to individual needs. Medications, primarily stimulants like methylphenidate and amphetamines, are commonly prescribed to help improve attention, impulse control, and hyperactivity.

Non-stimulant medications are also available for those who may not tolerate stimulants well. Alongside medication, therapy—such as cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT)—can support skills development, emotional regulation, and coping strategies.

Coaching is another valuable resource, helping individuals set goals, organize tasks, and maintain motivation. Effective treatment plans are personalized and often combine multiple methods for optimal results.



Medication: Key Considerations & Side Effects

Medication can be an effective part of ADHD treatment, especially when symptoms significantly interfere with daily life. Common options include stimulants (like methylphenidate) and non-stimulants (like atomoxetine), typically prescribed by a psychiatrist. Finding the right type and dose may take time and requires regular monitoring.



While many people benefit from improved focus and regulation, side effects like reduced appetite, sleep issues, headaches, or mood shifts can occur. Not everyone experiences these, but any discomfort should be discussed with a doctor. Medication tends to work best when combined with therapy and daily strategies, as part of a holistic plan.

Always report any side effects to your doctor.
Do not adjust dosage on your own.

Shame, Self-Doubt, and Unlearning Internalized Criticism

Many individuals with ADHD carry deep feelings of shame and self-doubt, often stemming from years of misunderstanding and unmet expectations. These feelings can lead to harsh self-criticism and negative beliefs about one's abilities.



Reframing the ADHD story involves recognizing that these challenges are not personal failings but part of a neurodevelopmental condition. Building self-compassion, focusing on strengths, and challenging internalized stigma are key steps in this process.

Individuals with ADHD should be given that space of acceptance and made to feel welcome, which is when they will want to open up and will also learn to accept themselves, in the process. With support, it is possible to shift from a narrative of blame to one of acceptance, resilience, and growth.

In conclusion

ADHD is a complex neuro-developmental condition which presents in ways that can cause levels of distress and impairment in different domains of life across age ranges. The symptoms of ADHD can be treated and managed with a multi-dimensional approach including medication, lifestyle modification, therapy and support.



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Additional Resources

- CHADD (Children and Adults with ADHD) – Offers education, advocacy, and support for individuals with ADHD.

 <https://chadd.org>

- ADDitude Magazine – A leading source of ADHD expert advice, practical tips, and personal stories.

 <https://www.additudemag.com>

- Understood.org – Focuses on supporting people with learning and attention issues, including ADHD.

 <https://www.understood.org>


- ADHD Adults – A UK-based organization offering podcasts, webinars, and resources for adults with ADHD.

 <https://www.theadhdadults.uk>

- Centre for ADHD Awareness Canada (CADDAC) – Provides evidence-based ADHD information and advocacy.

 <https://caddac.ca>


- The ADHD Coach Academy (ADDCA) – Offers ADHD coaching certification and personal coaching resources.

 <https://addca.com>

- TotallyADD – A site created by people with ADHD offering humorous, relatable content and coping strategies.

 <https://totallyadd.com>

- YouTube – How to ADHD – A video series by Jessica McCabe with practical ADHD coping tools and tips.

 <https://www.youtube.com/c/HowtoADHD>



Getting Help in India

Currently, there are no ADHD-specific helpline numbers in India. However, individuals seeking support can contact a qualified mental health professional for guidance and resources tailored to their needs. Alternatively, the Tele-MANAS national mental health helpline offers free and accessible support and can help connect individuals to the right services.



Tele-MANAS Helpline:

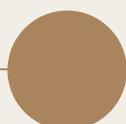
Dial **14416** or visit [TeleMANAS Portal](#)



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Task Initiation Strategies



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