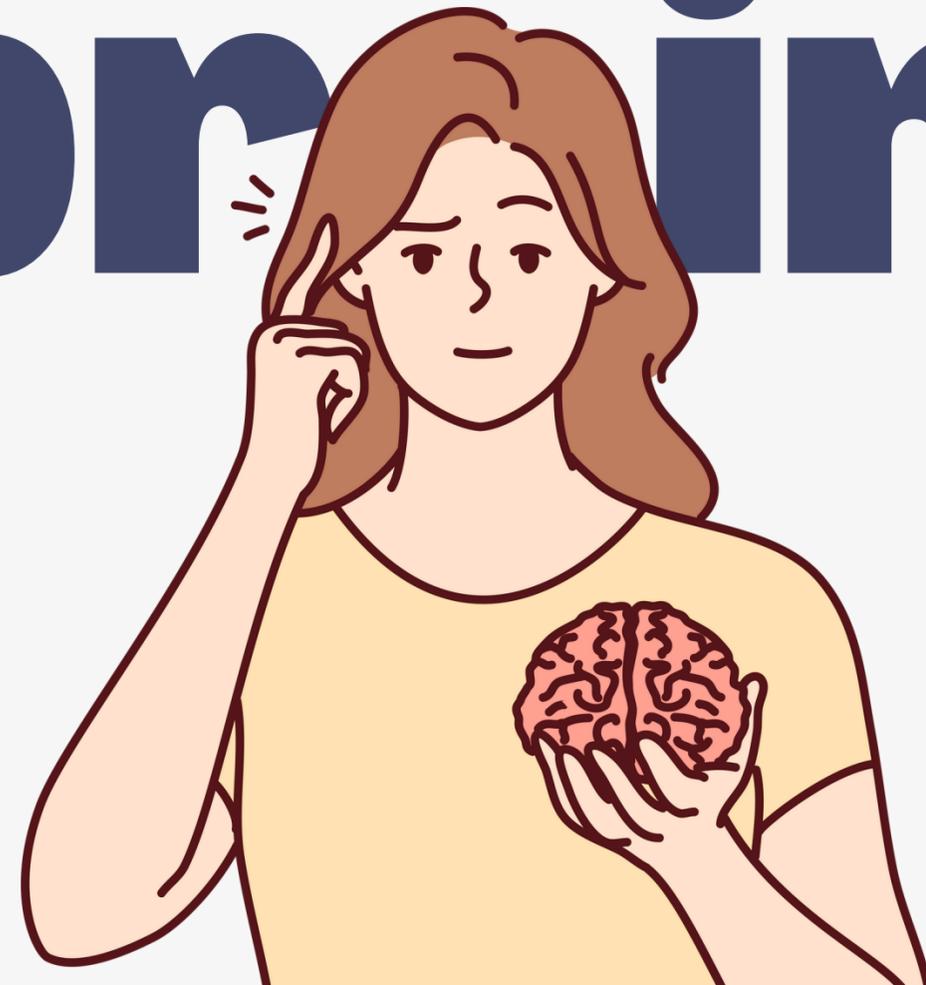


# Understanding our ADHD brains





# First of all, what even is **ADHD**?

Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is classified as a neurobehavioral, genetic disorder.

Historically, ADHD has been characterized by developmentally inappropriate levels of inattention, impulsivity, and hyperactivity.

The disorder was first mentioned in 1902 by British pediatrician Sir George Frederic Still, who described it as “an abnormal defect of moral control in children.”

(Meaning, **even though these kids could be highly intelligent, they couldn't seem to control their own behavior** the way typical children could.)

# ADHD through the years

## Previous names for ADHD included:

- Brain-injured
- Brain-damaged child
- Hyperkinetic impulse disorder
- Hyperexcitability syndrome
- Clumsy child syndrome
- Hyperactive child syndrome
- Hyperkinetic reaction of childhood (1968 — DSM II)
- Minimal brain dysfunction
- Organic brain disease
- Nervous child
- Attention deficit disorder (1980 — DSM III)
- ADHD (1987 — DSM III rev)

**Divided into 3 subtypes:** ADHD inattentive type, ADHD hyperactive-impulsive type, and ADHD combined type (1994 — DSM IV)

# ADHD: 3 subtypes

## 1. Predominantly inattentive presentation

- Fails to give close attention to details or makes careless mistakes
- Has difficulty sustaining attention
- Does not appear to listen
- Struggles to follow through with instructions
- Has difficulty with organization
- Avoids or dislikes tasks requiring sustained mental effort
- Loses things
- Is easily distracted
- Is forgetful in daily activities



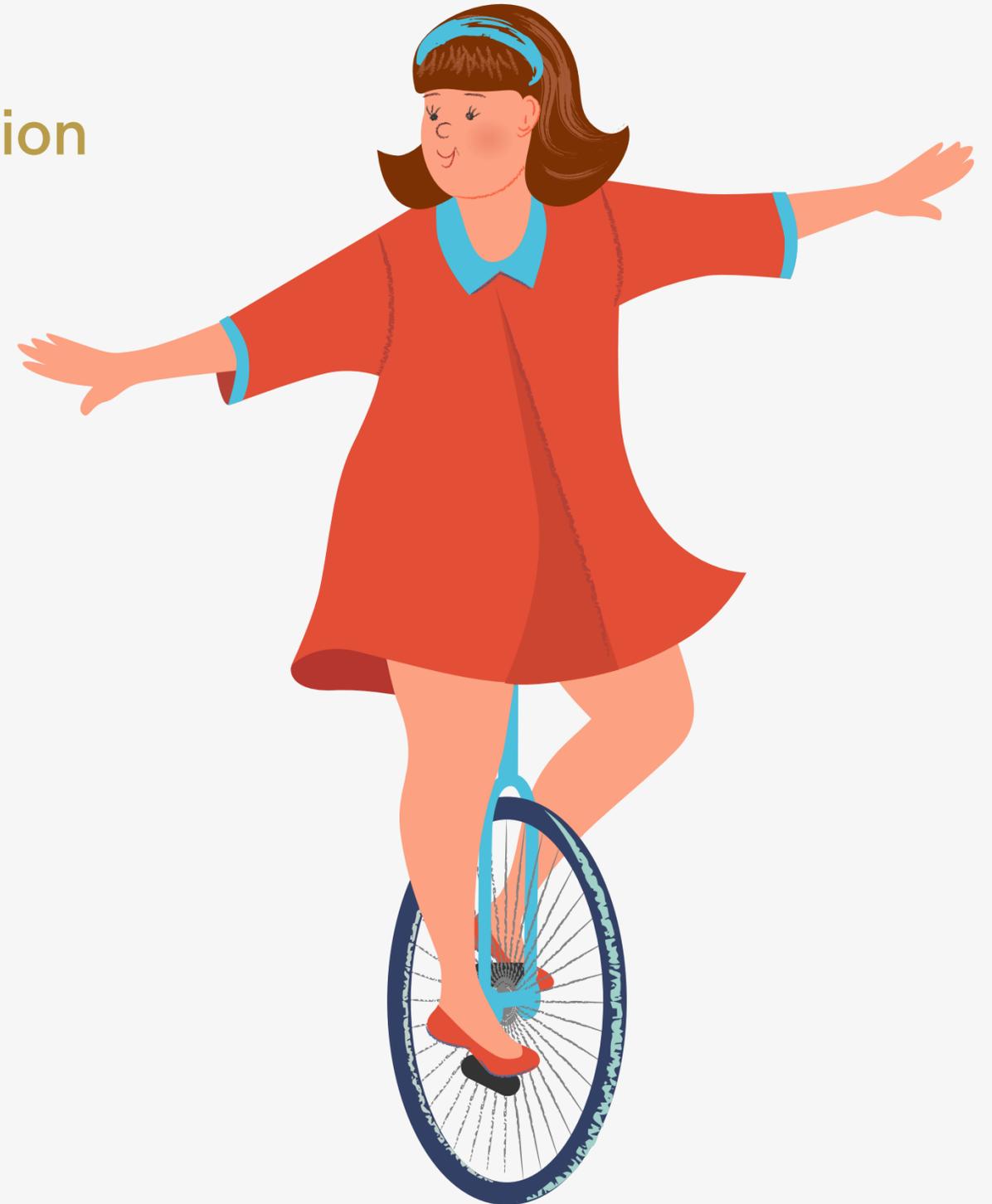
# ADHD: 3 subtypes

## 2. Predominantly hyperactive-impulsive presentation

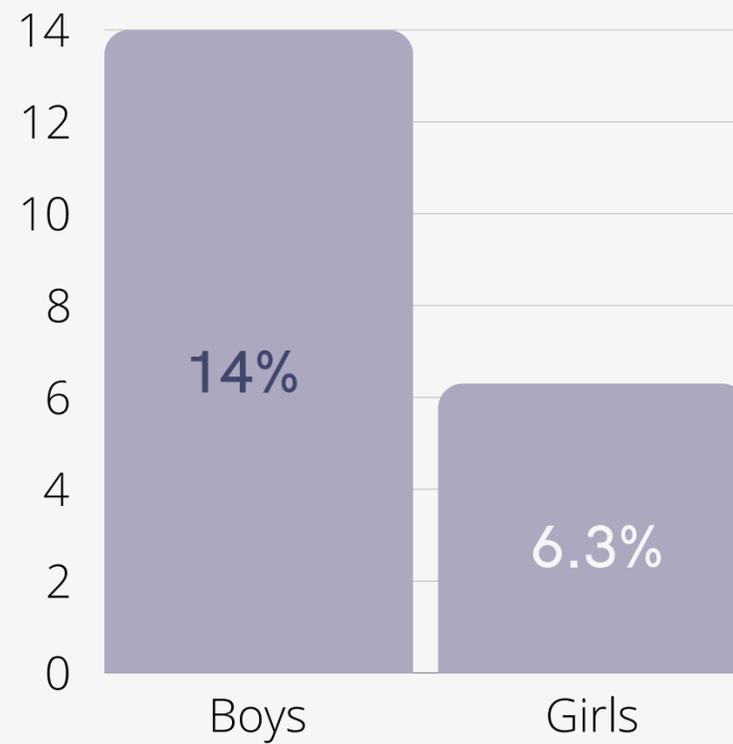
- Fidgets with hands or feet or squirms in chair
- Has difficulty remaining seated
- Runs about or climbs excessively in children; extreme restlessness in adults
- Difficulty engaging in activities quietly
- Acts as if driven by a motor; adults will often feel inside as if they are driven by a motor
- Talks excessively
- Blurts out answers before questions have been completed
- Difficulty waiting or taking turns
- Interrupts or intrudes upon others

## 3. Combined presentation

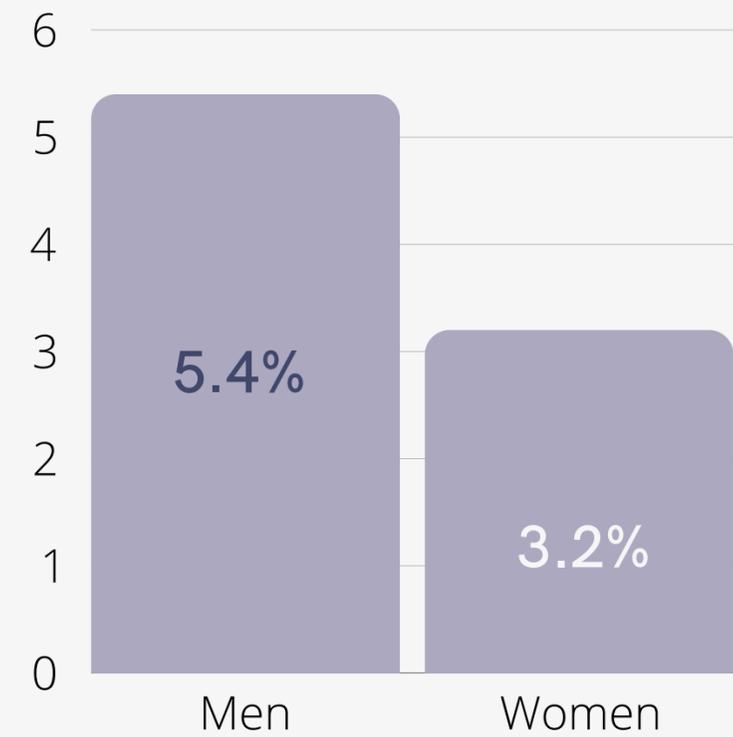
- The individual meets the criteria for both inattention and hyperactive-impulsive ADHD presentations.



# ADHD in the U.S. By the numbers



ADHD prevalence (aged 4-17)  
2016

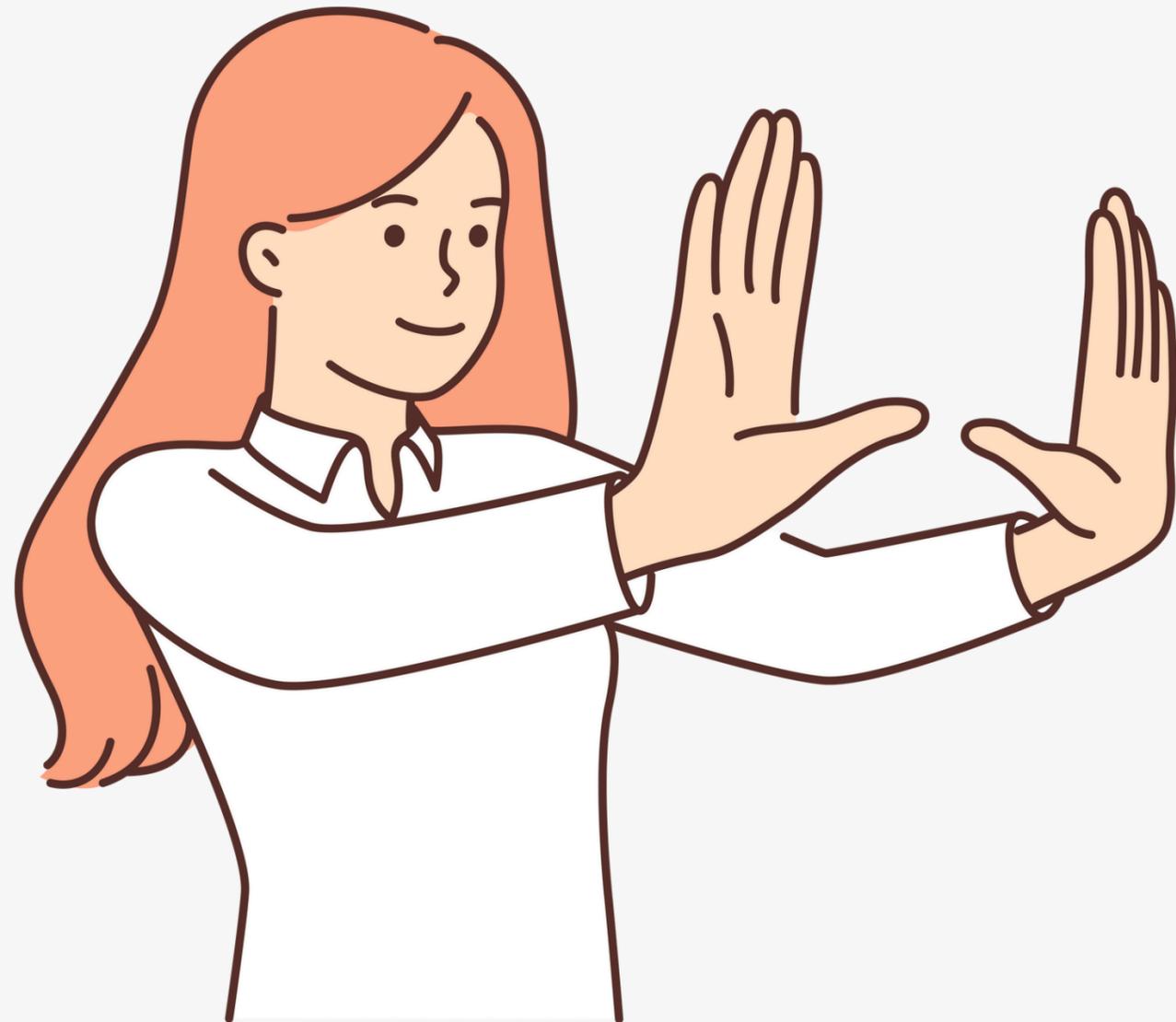


ADHD prevalence in adults  
2016

Source: National Health Interview Survey (NHIS)

# Interest-based brains

(vs. importance-based brains)



Someone with ADHD can be highly motivated when they are interested in the task at hand. Sometimes we call it "hyperfocus" or being "in the zone" or simply feeling like occasionally we're able to spin plates and get \$#!+ done.

Our brains are highly curious and we love solving problems.

However ...

# Importance-based brains



Someone without ADHD — a neurotypical person — often finds motivation for a task based on its importance.

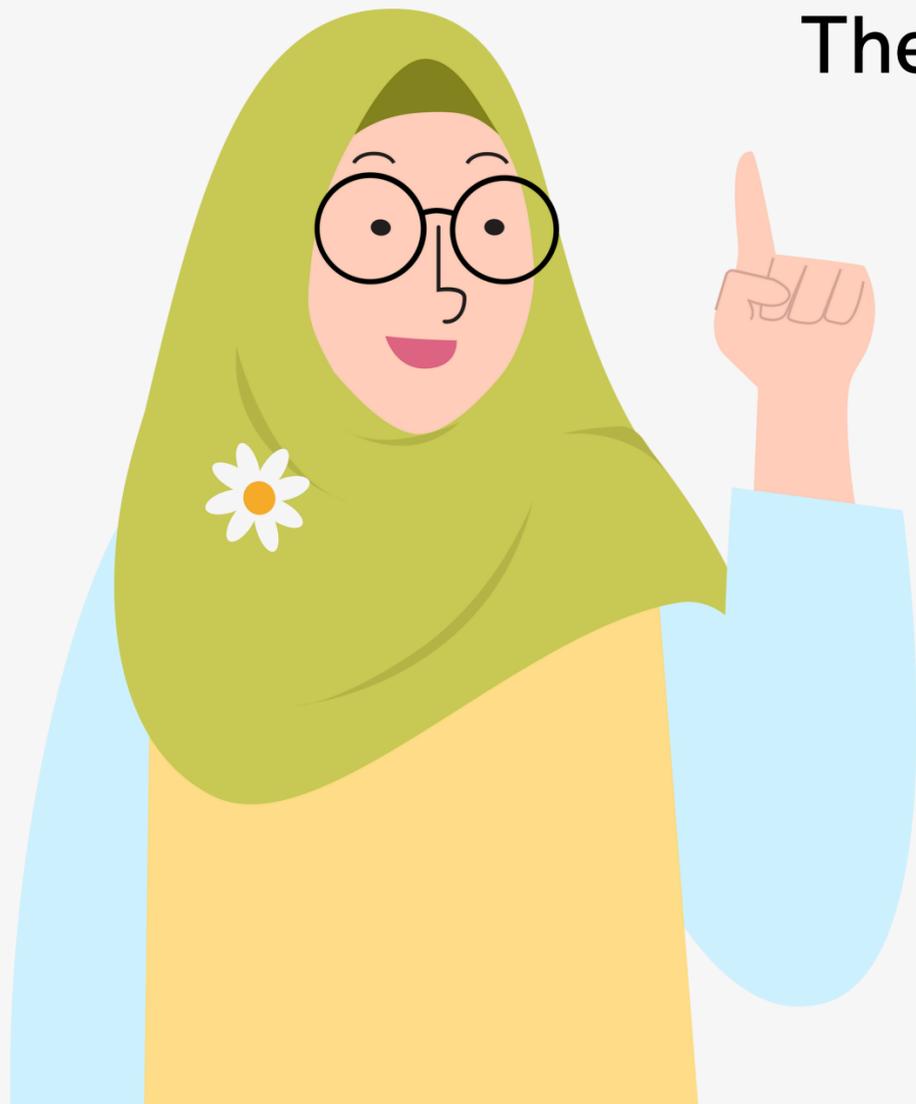
That importance can come from a sense of duty (either the task or goal is important to someone else like a boss, spouse, family member, or friend), or related to a reward for doing the work or punishment for not doing it.

Simply knowing the importance of a task and the related potential for reward or punishment is enough to provide motivation.

*interest-based!*

# Understanding our ^ brains

The (roughly) **5 requirements** for a task to engage our brains



1. Is it **novel**?
2. Is it **urgent**?
3. Is it **interesting**?
4. Is it **challenging**?
5. Is there an **authentic motivation**?

*interest-based!*

# Understanding our brains



## Is it **novel**?

We love learning new things — hobbies, musical instruments, software, etc! We are naturally drawn to tasks that allow us to develop a new skill or approach a problem from a novel perspective.

*interest-based!*

# Understanding our ^ brains

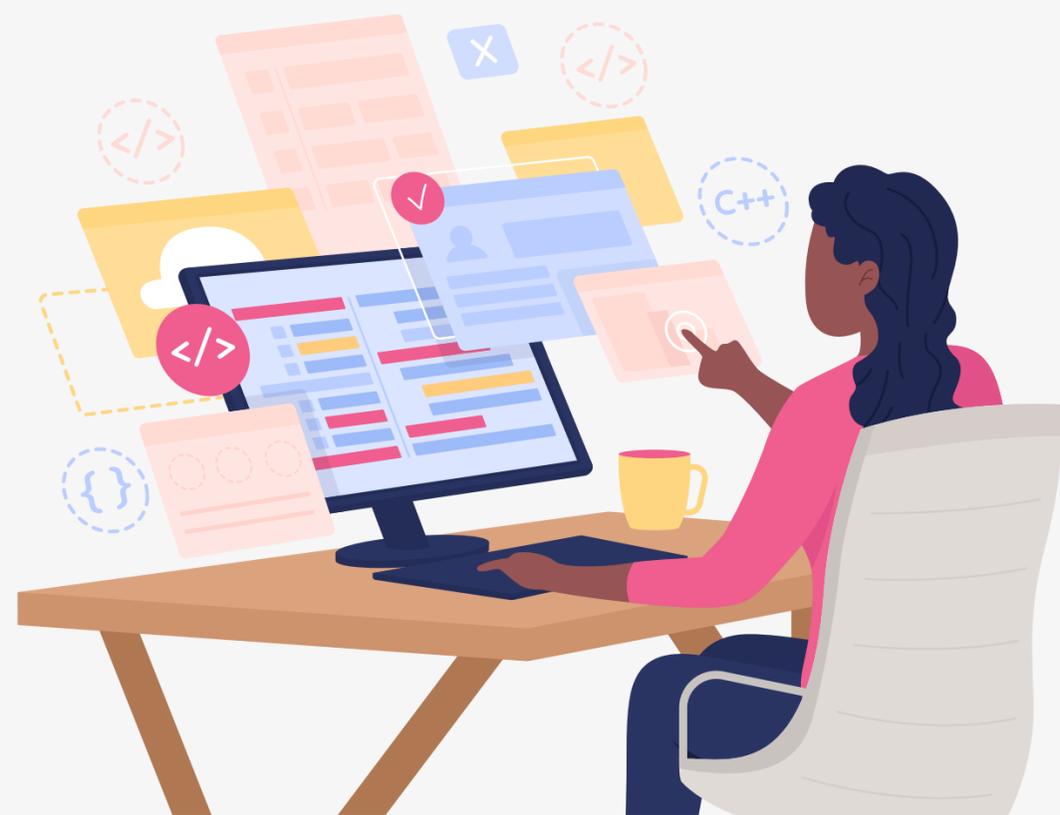


## Is it urgent?

Many of us with ADHD use urgency as a motivation to engage and focus. We work well under pressure and with time constraints, and we often procrastinate until we can create a climate of urgency.

*interest-based!*

## Understanding our brains



## Is it **interesting**?

We love solving puzzles! When a topic, task, or project is intriguing enough to trigger genuine curiosity or an urgent desire to learn more or solve a problem, we can push all other duties aside.

*interest-based!*

# Understanding our ^ brains



## Is it challenging?

Sometimes tasks can be too boring or mundane, so we need to infuse them something more difficult in order to keep ourselves engaged.

Or, for some of us, the phrase "You can't do that!" can be enough to motivate us to prove them wrong!

*interest-based!*

## Understanding our ^ brains



## Is there an authentic motivation?

Motivation is intrinsically linked to authenticity for the ADHD brain. It is important for us to feel connected to the "why" behind our actions. A task or goal must make sense to us, rather than prompt us to operate out of a sense of duty or a place of "should" (ie. guilt or obligation).

*interest-based!*

# Understanding our ^ brains

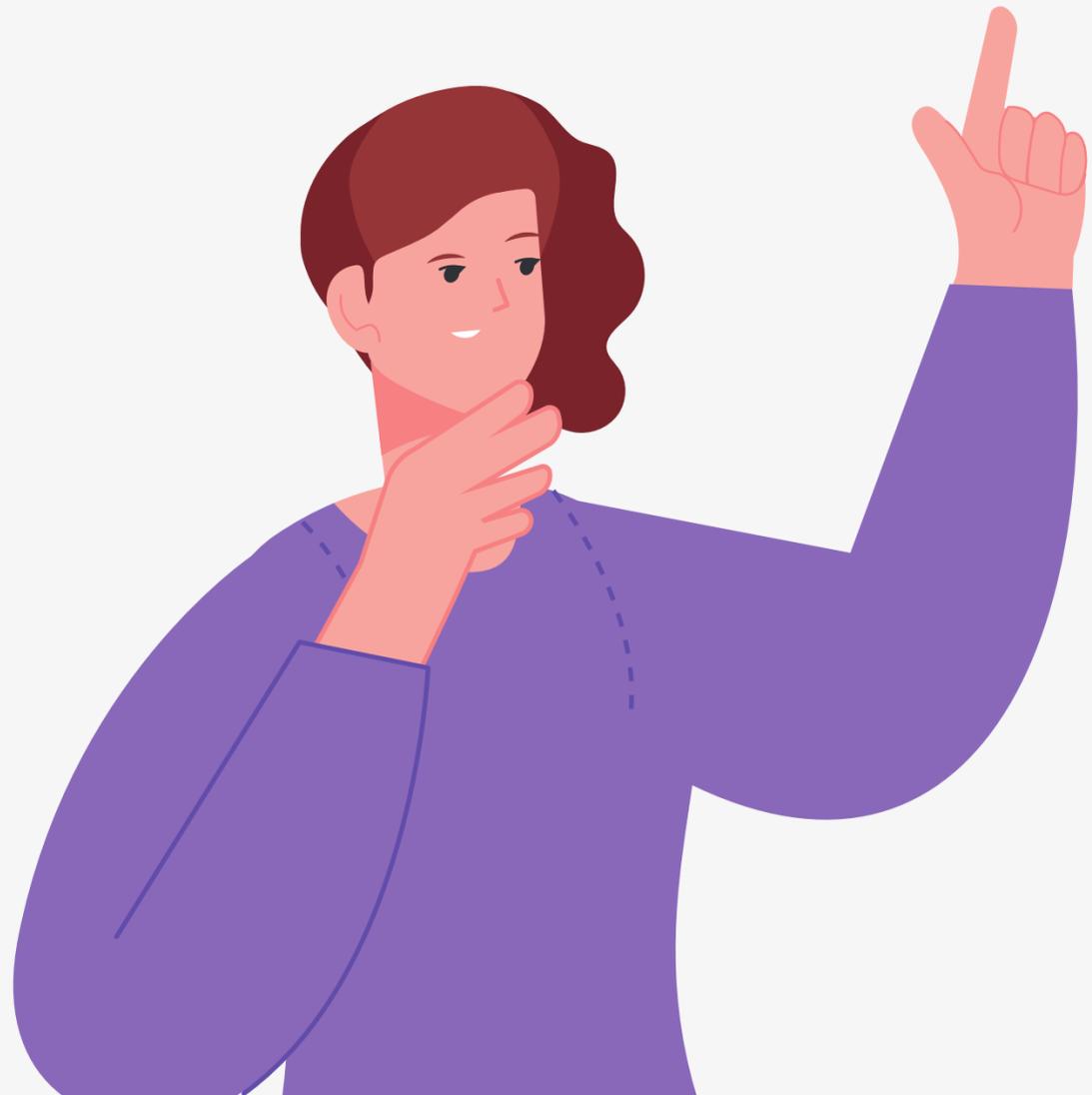


**Remember:** You're actually capable of incredible focus & achievement!

Whenever you feel stuck around a task or goal, ask yourself if you can identify any interest-based qualities.

If you can't, then here are some ideas to help you get **unstuck** ...

# 5 ways to get motivated *when we have* **ADHD**



Feeling stuck around a goal or task?  
Here are **5 tips** to help you move forward.

# 5 ways to get motivated

when we have **ADHD**

## Eliminate the "should"

Get right with your "why." Is this something I really want to do? Or is this something I feel like I should be doing? Where is my authentic motivation for this task? Does it absolutely have to be done today? Can someone else do this for me?



# 5 ways to get motivated

when we have **ADHD**



## Game-ify it

We love streaks and games. Need to clean? Take a before & after photo to motivate you! Record a time-lapse video! Pretend you're a character in a play! tap into your creative nature to make a mundane task a little less boring.

# 5 ways to get motivated

when we have **ADHD**



## Work backwards

When you have the big picture but you don't know where to start, it's time to get specific about actionable tasks. Identify what you can do right now. Focus on the first 3 steps, and take one small step at a time.

# 5 ways to get motivated

when we have **ADHD**



## Set accountability

Sometimes just wanting to do something isn't enough. Accountability can be a great motivator — find a body double or state your intention to someone other than yourself. Create a deadline with a consequence. Reward yourself when you're done!

# 5 ways to get motivated

when we have **ADHD**



## Time blocking

If this task is something that absolutely needs to get done today but you're feeling stuck, a simple way to get started is to set a timer and just begin. A timer is a great way to simulate enough urgency to build momentum.

## SOCIAL MEDIA:



### INSTAGRAM

[@katyweber.adhd](#)

[@womenandadhdpodcast](#)



### TIKTOK

[@womenandadhdpodcast](#)



### TWITTER

[@womenandadhd](#)



### FACEBOOK

[@womenandadhd](#)

[@katyweberadhd](#)



### LINKEDIN

[@womenandadhd](#)

## Hi, I'm Katy!

Founder of Women & ADHD, LLC  
ADHD Advocate, Coach, Podcast Host

Diagnosed with ADHD at the age of 45, I've made it my mission to help neurodivergent women learn to love their brains!

I help women sort through the overwhelm of a recent ADHD diagnosis so they can create strategies to help them live a more fulfilling, gratifying life!

**WOMEN &  
ADHD**

womenandadhd.com



# Looking for help with your ADHD?

I'm here to support you on your unique neurodivergent journey!

xo Katy



## **Women & ADHD Podcast**

Each week, I interview other women who discovered they have ADHD and are finally feeling like they understand who they are and how to best lean into their strengths. [Find it here.](#)



## **“Hey, it’s ADHD!” — a self-guided course**

Everything I’ve learned about ADHD in women — in one place! “Hey, it’s ADHD!” is a self-guided, self-paced course that's made to help you wherever you are on your ADHD journey! [Find it here.](#)



## **Women & ADHD 1-on-1 Coaching**

This is where clients get the best results, the fastest. Are you feeling overwhelmed by this new insight into how your brain operates? Work with me one-on-one to understand who you are through this new lens, so you can finally lean into your strengths and use them to your advantage moving forward. [Find out more.](#)



## **Women & ADHD Small Group Coaching**

Find connection, support, and friendship with other incredible women with ADHD, while developing a greater understanding of who you are and what structures help you operate. [Find out more.](#)

If you’ve been diagnosed with ADHD or think you have ADHD, head to [womenandadhd.com](https://womenandadhd.com) for expert resources, self-tests, community events & more!