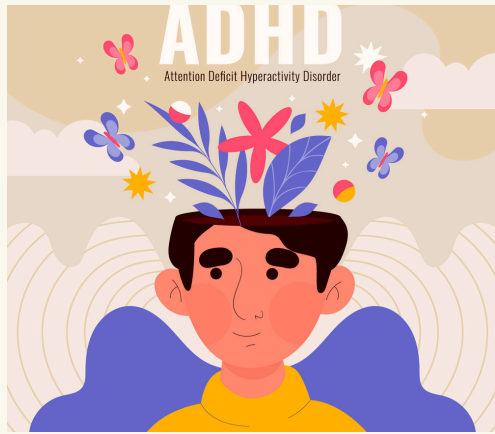


WEEK 1 HANDOUT- WHAT IS ADHD?



ADD Vantage
ADHD Education & Empowerment



1. WHAT'S IT LIKE TO HAVE ADHD?

Having ADHD can feel like you:

- Struggle to focus on tasks.
 - Act impulsively without thinking.
 - Are restless and need to fidget.
 - Forgetfulness and disorganisation.
 - Have challenges with time management.
 - Experience emotional sensitivity and mood swings.
 - are frustrated and have lower self-esteem.
 - Have difficulty in social interactions
- These experiences can vary in intensity, but they are common among individuals with ADHD.

2. ADD vs ADHD

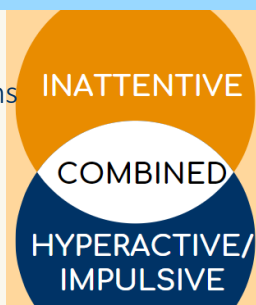
ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder) is an outdated term.

Since 1987 ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) with three presentations (types) is the recognised term for the condition.

3. TYPES OF ADHD

ADHD has three main presentations or sub-types:

Inattentive,
Hyperactive and
Combined.



4. INATTENTIVE ADHD

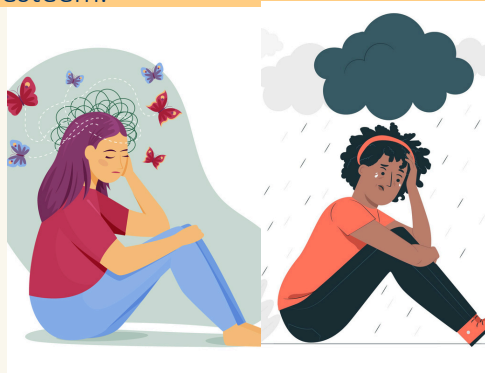
Characterised by **persistent difficulties with maintaining focus and attention.**

People with this type of ADHD are often forgetful, disengaged or distractible. They struggle with organising tasks, lose focus, seem to have trouble listening, forget things, make careless mistakes and lose interest quickly.

Most common in adults, women & girls.

Often **misdiagnosed** in **children** as spacey, apathetic behaviour or as a learning disorder.

Often **misdiagnosed** and **underdiagnosed** in girls and women. In **teens & adults**, frequently **misdiagnosed** as a mood disorder or anxiety. Without the proper treatment or delayed treatment, this can often lead to issues with low self-esteem.



5. HYPERACTIVE/IMPULSIVE ADHD

Characterised by **impulsive** and **hyperactive** behaviour.

Most recognisable type of ADHD and most often diagnosed in boys and men.

Usually diagnosed at school age. In adults hyperactivity can be replaced with restlessness.

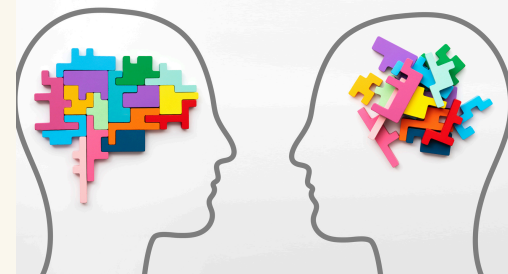
Least common type of ADHD (5-10%)

6. COMBINED ADHD

Most common presentation (60-70%). These people have symptoms of **both inattentive and hyperactive ADHD.**

Men and boys more commonly have hyperactive symptoms, while women and girls more commonly have inattentive symptoms.

Because of this, men are more commonly diagnosed than women, as their symptoms are more easily recognisable as ADHD.



7. MYTHS ABOUT ADHD

1. ADHD is not a real disorder
2. Everyone has a little ADHD
3. You outgrow it
4. ADHD is over-medicated
5. Medication leads to addiction
6. Girls have less ADHD than boys
7. It is a result of bad parenting
8. You can't focus with ADHD
9. People with ADHD are stupid or lazy
10. ADHD is a learning disability.



WEEK 1 HANDOUT- WHAT IS ADHD?

8. WHAT IS ADHD?

ADHD is a **neurodevelopmental disorder** marked by persistent patterns of **inattention**, **hyperactivity**, and **impulsivity**.

ADHD is one of the most common neurodevelopmental disorders of childhood. It is usually first diagnosed in childhood and often lasts into adulthood.

ADHD Brains are different in how they grow and develop. ADHD is a **developmental impairment** of the brain's **executive functions**.



9. PREFRONTAL CORTEX

The prefrontal cortex has the important job of switching between different neural networks that regulate your **thoughts**, **actions** and **emotions**. It is a crucial region of the brain responsible for **executive functions**.

10. DOPAMINE

Dopamine is a **neurotransmitter**, transmitting signals from one neuron to another. In ADHD brains there is a **dysregulation in these pathways** leading to **decreased dopamine** activity. It is the brain chemical involved in attention, motivation and reward.

11. EXECUTIVE FUNCTION

Executive function is a set of **cognitive processes (mental skills)** that help us organise thoughts and activities, prioritise tasks, manage time efficiently, and make decisions.

ADHD is an **executive function dysregulation disorder**, which means individuals may have **difficulties managing their thoughts, attention, behaviours, and emotions**.

The core executive functions are:

1. **Inhibitory Control** (or Self-Control): It allows us to inhibit our impulses, regulate attention, and ignore distractions.
2. **Working Memory**: Involves holding and manipulating information for tasks like reasoning, comprehension, and learning.
3. **Cognitive Flexibility** - Ability to think about multiple concepts at once OR to switch tasks.



12. WHAT CAUSES ADHD?

The exact cause of ADHD is not fully understood, and it likely results from a complex interplay of

1. **Genetics**: ADHD tends to run in families, suggesting a genetic link.
2. **Brain Structure and Function**: Differences in brain structure.
3. **Neurotransmitters**: Imbalances in dopamine associated with ADHD.
4. **Environmental Factors**: Prenatal factors (smoking), premature birth, and childhood trauma.



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13. HOW COMMON IS ADHD?

According to the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) data 2016-2019 in the USA.

Children and Adolescents: 9.8%. 3-5 year old (2%), 6-11 year olds (10%) and 12-17 years (13%).

Boys(13%) 2x more than girls(6%).

Adults: 5% ADHD can continue into adulthood - symptoms may change. Men (5.4%) women(3.2%).



14. RESOURCES

ADDitude magazine-

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

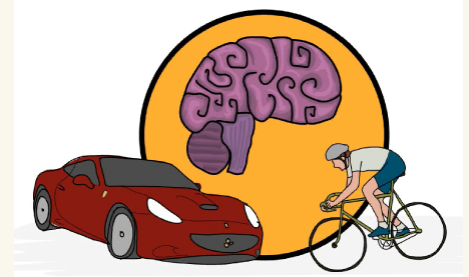
Books

Dr. Ed Hallowell Driven to Distraction

Ellen Littman Understanding girls with ADHD

Youtube- How to ADHD

Podcasts: ADHD Experts Podcast:
Presented by ADDitude Magazine



15. REFERENCES

ADDitude magazine- various

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

Australian Evidence-Based Clinical Practice Guideline for ADHD

<https://adhdguideline.aadpa.com.au/www.chadd.org>