

# Authentically ADHD

in partnership with **Sellafield's S.L A.D.D-ers group.**

**Awareness Event 23<sup>rd</sup>  
July 2025 in  
Whitehaven**

**Summary  
Report**



# About Healthwatch Cumberland

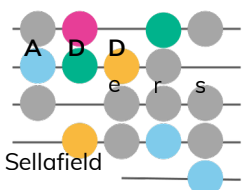
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Healthwatch Cumberland (HWC) is your local health and social care champion. Healthwatch is independent of all services. We are in place to engage with local people, communities, and neighbourhoods to listen to your experiences and feelings of using health and social care services. With a mission to reduce inequalities and barriers to services, Healthwatch aims and is driven to hear the experiences from those who could be classed as seldom heard and shares this feedback to encourage improvements.

Defined by the Health and Care Act 2012, our statutory role is to:

- Gather the views of people about their needs and experiences of local health and social care services.
- Local Healthwatch make these views known to those involved in the commissioning and scrutiny of care services.
- Make reports and make recommendations about how those services could or should be improved to decision-makers on how to improve the services they are delivering, enacting positive change.
- Promote and support the involvement of people in the monitoring, commissioning and provision of local health and social care services.
- Provide information and advice to the public about accessing health and social care services and the options available to them.

Healthwatch Cumberland and leading members of the S.L.A.D.D. -ers group met regularly prior to this event working together to co-produce what we wanted this event to achieve.



## About Sellafield's S.L.A.D.D.-ers group:

This is a workplace peer support network for employees alike to get together and support each other. They offer assistance in many ways which include, the preparation of Reasonable Adjustment Passports, raising awareness with line managers and colleagues and monthly networking opportunities.

Together, Healthwatch Cumberland and leading members of the Sellafield support group created an event which was an opportunity to share resources, best practice and showcase how employers support their staff with ADHD. A chance to share, learn, listen and connect.

# What did we do?

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The day was full of empowerment and practical advice and tips. We were joined by members of several local organisations such as Triple A, Carer Support West Cumbria, Cumberland Council, Social Prescribing and People First, who offered support and advice to those who have been diagnosed with ADHD or suspect they might have ADHD. Overall, there were 12 organisations in attendance and many representatives of organisations also present.

The Healthwatch Cumberland team was there to understand more about local people's experiences of living and working with ADHD, their experiences of diagnosis and misdiagnosis, and what changes people would like to see. Staff members Suzannah (Comms & Admin), Clandon (Engagement), Caitlin (Research & Data) and Sally (HWC Manager) were present.

We held the event at the United Reform Church in Whitehaven which featured the main event room with stalls around the outer edge and seated tables for attendees in the centre. There was a quiet space in a second room to allow people to step out whenever needed.



The event provided space for both support and advice for sharing lived experience. The Sellafield team kindly led a Q&A session over lunchtime to share their own stories and open up the floor to others who wanted to ask questions or talk about their experiences. A range of people opened up about their experiences of ADHD with some talking about themselves or their children.





We also developed feedback cards that many of the attendees completed. These told us about changes people would like to see in Cumberland for supporting those with ADHD and what they thought of the event.



I liked how open, authentic and honest people were – sharing their personal stories. Also how it was organised – traffic light colour stickers (name badges) and fidgets etc.



### Lisa Birdsall – Project Lead of Baton of Hope Cumbria

Lisa spoke about her experience of ADHD including her misdiagnosis, medication struggles and ultimately the impact on her mental health.

To watch the video of Lisa’s story, visit our social media pages or [click here](#)



# What we heard:

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## 1. What did you like about our event and what could be done better next time?



“Very Informative. As someone who thinks they have ADHD, it has given me ways to get a diagnosis and new networks.”

“The Q&A was great. A great chance to hear perspectives and experiences.”

“It was a completely safe space with lots of good knowledge in the room when answering questions and just acceptance with compassion.”

“Really informative. Good to know who is around to help and talk to.”

“Timetable ahead of time and more about what ADHD is in the afternoon as I am newly diagnosed. I wanted to know more about it.”



## 2. What have you learned from today?



“About benefits of a diagnosis and a support system. ADHD looks very different for different people.”

“Comorbidity in ADHD and other mental illnesses. Often seen this in autism populations as well as misdiagnoses (BPD/EUPD). Referral, assessment titration process.”

“That I am not on my own.”

“About experiences and symptoms of ADHD - how it may show up.”

“How many services are in West Cumbria that I have not been aware of.”

“I have learned a bit more about myself and the separate organisations.”



### 3. What changes would you like to see?



- More people to discuss posters would have been good.
- None. I'm totally satisfied!
- More events like this more often.
- More support for families and friends too.
- More events like this - more honest and open conversation.
- More of these events but on different topics - Mental health, dementia etc.
- Better and quicker way to get a diagnosis.
- More info about how to support someone in the workplace. Mini training sessions.
- More conversations like this to increase acceptance. Training sessions would be a great addition.
- More on actual ADHD, what it is, how to cope.
- A scheduled time able of talks. Welcome and show around, a brief what is around. More on ADHD.
- ADHD and autism overlap takeaway info resources. Opportunities for collaboration between attending organisations.
- Expand the event.
- More diagnosis and less stigma. A more neurodivergent friendly world where people can openly be themselves.
- Better help for newly diagnosed (having to pay private for meds and assessment).



# ADHD Traits & Symptoms

Sellafield S.L. A.D.D-ers group developed the following posters that were displayed around the event room.

What it looks like..



How to manage..

How it looks in the workplace..

Helpful strategies..

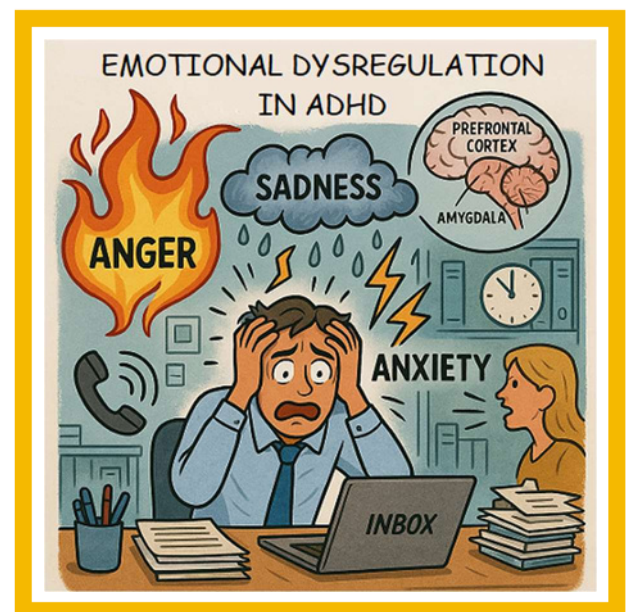


# EMOTIONAL DYSREGULATION

Intense, rapid, and sometimes unpredictable emotional responses. Difficulty managing and responding to emotions in a typical way, leading to reactions that may be disproportionate to the situation. This can manifest as sudden anger, overwhelming sadness, or extreme anxiety, even in response to minor triggers.

What it looks like:

- Intense emotions and rapid mood swings.
- Difficulty calming down after emotional events.
- Impulsive reactions without thinking.
- Trouble managing emotions due to executive function challenges.



How to manage it:

Therapies: CBT and DBT build emotional coping skills.

Medication: Can support emotional regulation.

Mindfulness: Breathing and relaxation techniques help calm the mind.

Organisation: Reduces stress and emotional overload.

Support: Family, friends, and groups offer encouragement and strategies.

# REJECTION SENSITIVITY DYSPHORIA

Intense emotional pain and sensitivity to perceived or actual rejection or criticism. RSD can significantly impact daily life and relationships, leading to intense emotional reactions, avoidance of social situations, and low self-esteem.

What it feels like:

- Deep emotional pain from real or perceived rejection.
- Extreme sensitivity to criticism, even when constructive.
- Fear of failure and low self-esteem.
- Emotional reactions like anger, sadness, or withdrawal.



How it affects behaviour:

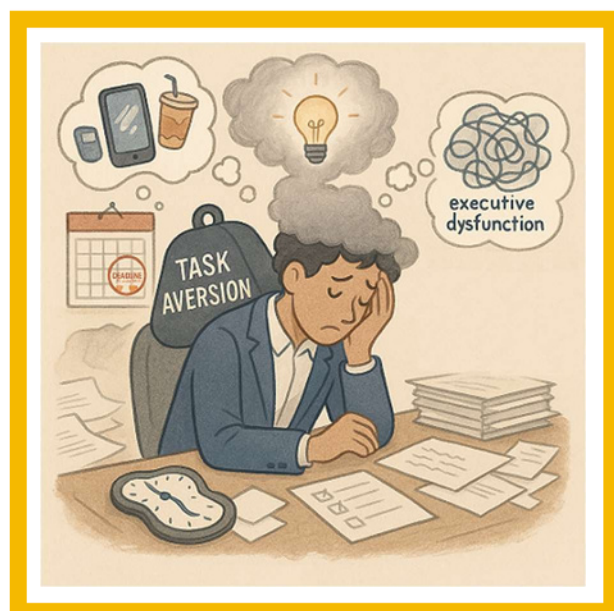
Avoiding social situations or important tasks. People-pleasing or overcompensating to gain approval. Physical symptoms like headaches or stomach upset. Struggles with maintaining relationships.

# PROCRASTINATION

A significant challenge that goes beyond simple delay tactics. It stems from core ADHD traits like inattention, difficulty with time management, and struggles with executive functions like planning and organisation. This can lead to missed deadlines, increased stress, and a negative impact on professional reputation and relationships.

Why it happens:

- Executive dysfunction: Trouble starting, organising, and completing tasks.
- Time blindness: Losing track of time and underestimating task duration.
- Emotional regulation: Frustration and self-doubt lead to avoidance.
- Sensory overload: Distracting environments make it hard to focus.
- Task aversion: Boring or overwhelming tasks are often avoided.



## Strategies for success:

Break tasks down into smaller steps. Use timers, calendars, and apps to manage time.

Minimise distractions with a quiet workspace.

Communicate clearly with colleagues and supervisors.

Partner up for accountability and support.

Practice self-compassion —it's a symptom, not a flaw.

Seek professional help for tailored strategies.

Request workplace accommodations if needed.

Leverage strengths to stay engaged.

Just start —progress begins with the first step.

# SENSORY OVERLOAD

Being overwhelmed by sensory input, such as noise, light, or smells, which can significantly impair focus, productivity, and emotional well-being. This can lead to difficulty concentrating, increased stress and anxiety, and potential communication barriers.

What it feels like:

- Everyday environments can feel overwhelming.
- Difficulty processing sensory input leads to emotional and mental overload.
- Triggers include noise, bright lights, strong smells, and visual clutter. Can cause frustration, anxiety, and reduced productivity.



How to manage it:

Identify triggers to build effective coping strategies. Create sensory-friendly spaces with soft lighting and minimal distractions.

Use tools like noise-cancelling headphones, sunglasses, or fidget items.

Take regular breaks to reset and recharge.

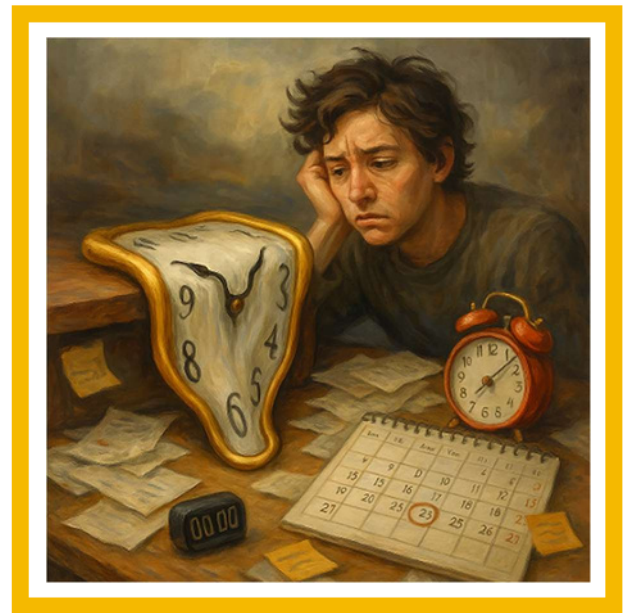
Communicate needs with colleagues and managers.

Practice mindfulness and relaxation techniques.

Time blindness is a common symptom of ADHD where individuals have difficulty accurately perceiving the passage of time and estimating how long tasks will take. This can lead to challenges with punctuality, task completion, and overall time management.

How it affects daily life:

- Missed deadlines and underestimated task durations.
- Difficulty sticking to schedules; both at work and socially.
- Struggles with planning, prioritising, and staying organised.



## Helpful strategies:

Timers & alarms: Keep track of time and transitions. Visual schedules: Use calendars and to-do lists. Break tasks down: Make large tasks more manageable. Add buffer time: Plan for the unexpected. Seek support: Therapy or medication may help.

It's important to recognise that time blindness is not a deliberate act of disregarding time or disrespecting others.

It's a neurological difference that impacts how individuals perceive and manage time.

Executive dysfunction significantly impacts the workplace. It manifests as difficulties with planning, organisation, time management, and impulse control, leading to challenges in task completion, meeting deadlines, and maintaining focus.

How it shows up at work:

- Time management: Struggles with prioritising, estimating time, and meeting deadlines.
- Organisation: Difficulty keeping track of materials and maintaining a tidy workspace.
- Planning & initiation: Trouble starting tasks and breaking them into steps.
- Focus & attention: Easily distracted and hard to sustain concentration.
- Working memory: Forgetting instructions or important info.
- Impulse control: Acting without thinking, disrupting workflow.
- Emotional regulation: Difficulty managing stress and frustration.



Impact in the workplace:

Lower productivity and missed deadlines.  
Increased stress and risk of burnout.  
Conflicts with colleagues and strained relationships.  
Negative performance reviews.

# DELAYED AUDITORY PROCESSING

Individuals with ADHD may experience delayed auditory processing. Delayed auditory processing means the brain takes longer to interpret and respond to sounds, particularly spoken language.

What it looks like:

- Appears not to be listening or needs things repeated.
- Struggles to follow verbal instructions.
- Processes spoken information more slowly than others.
- Distracted by background noise or unable to filter sounds.



Why it happens:

ADHD impacts attention and impulse control; key for auditory processing.

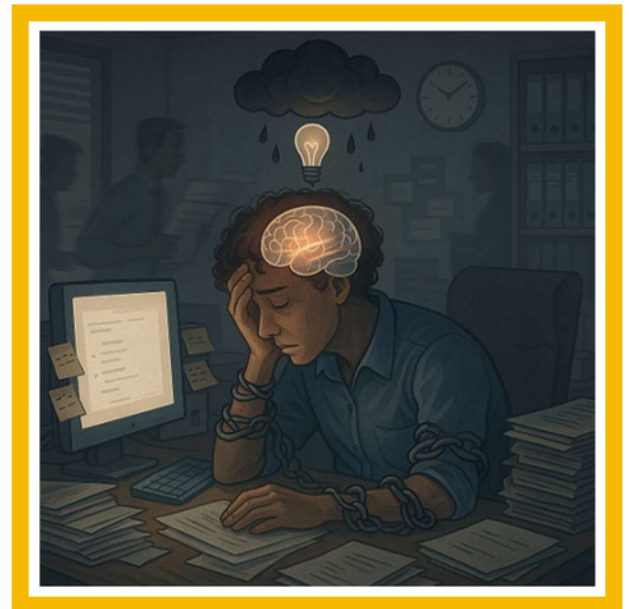
Sensory sensitivities make it harder to focus in noisy environments.

These challenges stem from how ADHD affects attention, working memory, and processing speed, making it harder to keep up with auditory information in real time.

A state of physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion resulting from the chronic stress of managing ADHD symptoms and navigating daily life. It's characterised by persistent fatigue, reduced motivation, emotional dysregulation, and difficulty concentrating, often exacerbated by the demands of work, family, and social life.

## Key signs:

- Extreme exhaustion: Mental fatigue that rest doesn't fix.
- Emotional overload: Irritability, anxiety, and hopelessness.
- Procrastination & avoidance: Tasks feel overwhelming.
- Loss of motivation: Struggling to start or enjoy activities.
- Physical symptoms: Headaches, tension, and fatigue.



## Why it happens:

Constant effort to manage symptoms. Masking, overstimulation, and environmental stressors.

The constant effort to manage ADHD symptoms, masking and camouflaging, overwhelm and overstimulation, and environmental factors can lead to ADHD related burnout.

# IMPOSTER SYNDROME

Imposter syndrome -persistent self-doubt and a fear of being exposed as a fraud -can be significantly amplified in adults with ADHD. Individuals may already struggle with feelings of inadequacy and shame related to their symptoms, and imposter syndrome can exacerbate these feelings, leading to increased anxiety, stress, and even burnout.

How it shows up:

- ADHD symptoms like forgetfulness or disorganisation feel like proof of incompetence.
- Masking struggles creates a fear of being “found out”.
- Perfectionism & overcompensation lead to burnout.
- Negative self-talk reinforces feelings of inadequacy.
- Social anxiety & RSD heighten fear of judgment and rejection.



The result:

A constant internal battle between achievements and self-doubt

Impacts of imposter syndrome on adults with ADHD include reduced self-Esteem, anxiety and stress, burnout, and career limitations.

Consciously or unconsciously concealing ADHD symptoms to fit into social expectations and norms. This can involve mimicking neurotypical behaviours, overcompensating for difficulties, or suppressing natural tendencies. While masking can help individuals navigate social situations and avoid judgment, it can also lead to significant negative consequences like burnout, anxiety, and a disconnect from one's true self.

What it looks like:

- Subtle behaviours like leg bouncing or fidgeting to manage hyperactivity.
- Internal filtering of thoughts to avoid impulsive speech.
- Overcompensating with complex systems to stay organised.
- Suppressing emotions to appear calm and composed.
- Enduring discomfort in noisy or overwhelming environments.
- Mimicking others to fit into social situations.



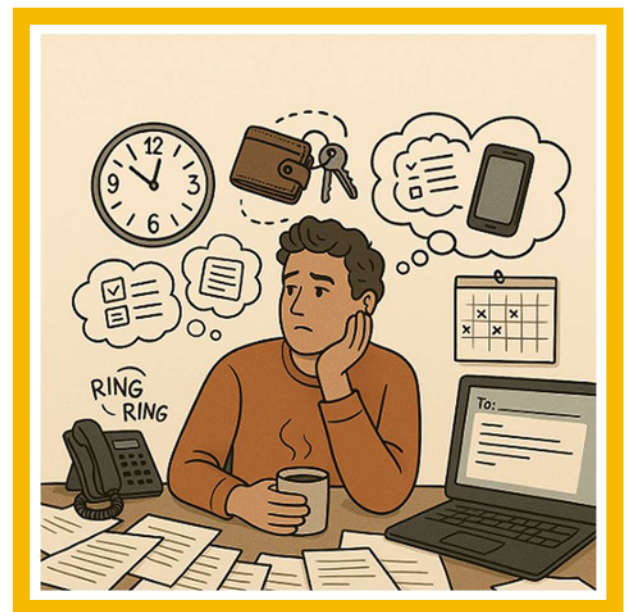
Why it matters:

Masking hides real struggles, often leading to exhaustion and emotional strain.

Inattention is a key symptom of ADHD in adults, manifesting as difficulty focusing, staying organised, and completing tasks. Adults may struggle with forgetfulness, losing things frequently, and being easily distracted, which can significantly impact daily lives and relationships.

Common signs in adults:

- Difficulty focusing on tasks or conversations.
- Forgetfulness with appointments, deadlines, and daily tasks.
- Easily distracted by thoughts or surroundings.
- Disorganisation in time, tasks, and spaces.
- Losing things like keys or phones frequently.
- Avoiding tasks that require sustained attention.
- Struggling with instructions, leading to errors.
- Careless mistakes due to lack of attention to detail.



Why it matters:

Inattention can impact work, relationships, and daily life, but understanding it is the first step to support and success.

Hyperactivity can manifest as persistent restlessness, fidgeting, and an inability to relax, even when it's not appropriate. While hyperactivity may lessen in some adults compared to childhood, it can still present as excessive talking, interrupting, and difficulty engaging in quiet activities. Adults with ADHD may also experience an internal sense of restlessness and a need for constant movement or stimulation.

Common signs in adults:

- Fidgeting with hands, feet, or objects.
- Difficulty staying still, often shifting or moving around.
- Internal restlessness, a constant need for stimulation.
- Excessive talking or interrupting others.
- Impulsivity, acting without thinking or struggling to wait.



## Why it matters:

Hyperactivity isn't just physical—it can affect focus, relationships, and daily functioning.

Not all adults with ADHD will exhibit prominent hyperactivity. Some may primarily experience inattentive symptoms. While symptoms may change over time, ADHD is generally a lifelong condition, and symptoms can persist into adulthood.

The tendency to disclose excessive or inappropriate personal information, is a common challenge for individuals with ADHD, often stemming from impulsivity and difficulties with executive functions. This behaviour can lead to awkward social situations, strained relationships, and damage to one's professional or social image.

Why it happens:

- Impulsivity: Speaking without filtering thoughts.
- Executive function challenges: Difficulty with self-monitoring in conversations.
- Desire for connection: Sharing to build relationships.
- Intense emotions: Expressing feelings or seeking validation.
- Hyperverbal tendencies: Talking more than intended.



The result:

Oversharing can be a coping mechanism—but understanding it helps foster empathy and better communication. Oversharing can create social isolation and distance in relationships, as others may feel uncomfortable or overwhelmed by the disclosures. Disclosing inappropriate or irrelevant information at work can negatively impact one's professional reputation and career progression. Individuals with ADHD may feel shame and regret after oversharing, further impacting their self-esteem and confidence.

A tendency to talk excessively, often impulsively, and with difficulty regulating one's speech. This can manifest as talking rapidly, interrupting others, or monopolising conversations. It's not just about talking a lot, but also about a lack of control over when and how much one speaks, which can be disruptive in social situations and contribute to feelings of shame or misunderstanding.

Why it happens:

- Impulsivity: Difficulty filtering thoughts before speaking.
- Hyperactivity: Restlessness and excessive talking.
- Social challenges: Trouble reading cues and taking conversational turns.
- Emotional intensity: Oversharing driven by strong feelings.
- Self-awareness: Regret or shame after speaking too much.



Impact:

Can be seen as friendly or overwhelming.  
May lead to misunderstandings and social strain.

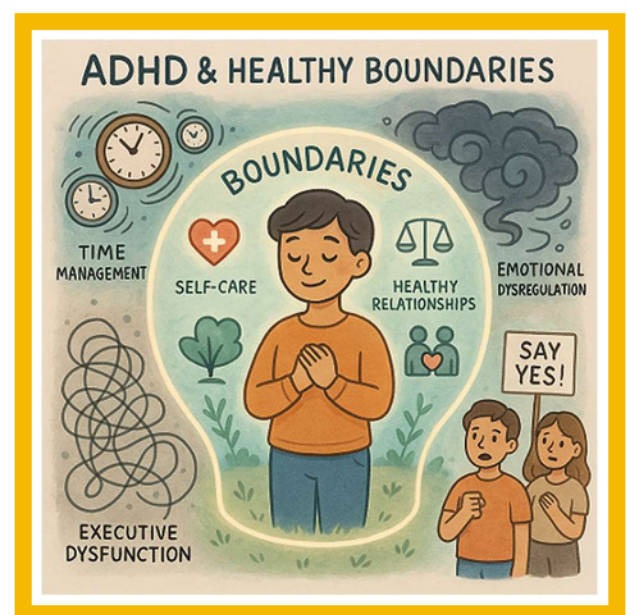
Managing it:

Practice mindfulness and self-regulation.  
Learn to recognise social cues.  
Break tasks into steps to reduce overwhelm.

Boundaries refer to the clear limits individuals set for themselves and others, defining acceptable behaviours and interactions. Individuals with ADHD often struggle with boundaries due to challenges with self-regulation, emotional dysregulation, and executive functioning skills.

Common challenges:

- Saying “no”: Fear of rejection or desire to please.
- Overcommitting: Impulsively taking on too much.
- Time struggles: Difficulty managing schedules.
- Emotional reactivity: Impulsive responses can cross boundaries.
- Social cues: Trouble recognising limits in interactions.



Building healthy boundaries:

Self-awareness: Know your limits and triggers.

Mindfulness: Pause and regulate emotional responses.

Planning: Prepare for boundary-setting situations.

Clear communication: Be direct and respectful.

Consistency: Reinforce boundaries over time.

Self-compassion: Accept that it's a learning process.

Visual aids: Use charts or checklists.

“Stop” skill: Stop, think, respond.

A core symptom of ADHD, particularly in the hyperactive-impulsive and combined types. Difficulty controlling impulses, leading to actions without thinking about the consequences. This can include interrupting others, making hasty decisions, and engaging in risky behaviours.

Common behaviours:

- Interrupting conversations or activities.
- Blurting out thoughts without thinking.
- Difficulty waiting or taking turns.
- Hasty decisions without considering consequences.
- Risky behaviours without assessing danger.
- Emotional outbursts and poor regulation.
- Disorganisation and poor time management.
- Struggles with delayed gratification.



Impact:

Strained relationships and social challenges.  
Missed deadlines and reduced performance.  
Increased risk of accidents or injuries.  
Higher vulnerability to addictive behaviours.

A state of intense and sustained attention, is a common experience for individuals with ADHD, and it can significantly impact their workplace performance. While it can lead to exceptional productivity on tasks that are engaging, it can also create challenges related to task switching, time management, and neglecting other responsibilities.

## How it helps:

- Boosts productivity on tasks that are engaging.
- Deep concentration can lead to high-quality work.

## Challenges it brings:

- Difficulty switching tasks, even when urgent.
- Time blindness, leading to missed deadlines or meetings.
- Strained relationships if communication is ignored.
- Risk of burnout from prolonged, intense focus.



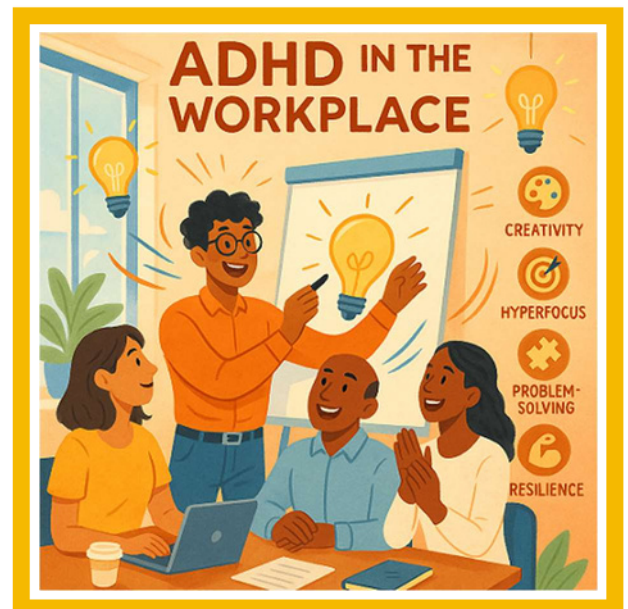
## Why it matters:

Hyper focus can be a strength, but without balance, it can impact wellbeing and teamwork.

People with ADHD often possess unique strengths and positive attributes that can be leveraged for success and well-being. These include heightened creativity, hyperfocus, resilience, and a high energy level, which can be channelled into positive outcomes when managed effectively.

## Celebrating Strengths in ADHD

- **Creativity & Innovation:** Thinking outside the box and solving problems in unique ways.
- **Hyperfocus:** Intense concentration on tasks that spark interest.
- **Resilience & Adaptability:** Overcoming challenges with flexibility and determination.
- **High Energy:** Channelled effectively, it fuels passion and productivity.
- **Spontaneity & Courage:** Willingness to take risks and embrace new experiences.
- **Sociability & Empathy:** Engaging conversations and strong emotional connections.



By focusing on the positive aspects of ADHD and developing strategies to manage challenges, individuals can harness their unique strengths and live fulfilling lives.

# Support

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ADDISS: The National Attention Deficit Disorder Information and Support Service provides accessible information for everyone. They offer behavioural guidance and online resources.

<http://www.addiss.co.uk/>



Kapella (Think ADHD): Supports individuals aged 7+, including those diagnosed, awaiting diagnosis, or self-identifying with ADHD traits. Services include 1:1 coaching, therapeutic support, parent/carer support, webinars, and training for professionals.

<https://kapella.org.uk/our-services/think-adhd/>



ADHDadultUK: Charity focused on adults with ADHD, offering resources, podcasts, symptom checkers, guidance on treatment and co-existing conditions, and connections to online communities.

<https://www.adhdadult.uk/>



UK ADHD Partnership: Provides an A-Z list of support groups nationwide, including local and regional support for children, young adults, and adults, as well as professional resources.

<https://www.ukadhd.com/support-groups.htm>



Mind produced an online page detailing the impacts of having ADHD and provided information into how to access support from your GP, medication options and alternative support services.

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/adhd-and-mental-health/>

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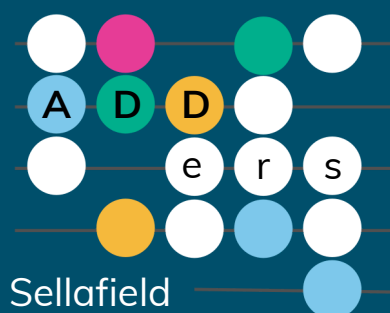
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