

Understanding ADHD

A quick guide for clients and families

Your brain works differently. That is not a flaw, and you are not alone.

Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a neurodevelopmental condition that affects how the brain manages attention, activity level, and impulse control. It is not caused by laziness, poor parenting, or lack of willpower. ADHD can show up in childhood and often continues into adulthood, and it can look different in each person.

Inattention may look like

- Trouble sustaining focus, especially on tasks that feel boring
- Mind drifting during conversations or reading
- Losing items, missing details, forgetting appointments
- Difficulty starting, organizing, or finishing tasks
- Losing track of time

Hyperactivity & impulsivity may look like

- Feeling restless inside, even when sitting still
- Fidgeting or needing to move
- Interrupting or speaking before thinking
- Acting on impulse, then regretting it
- Jumping between tasks or ideas

Myths and facts

Myth: ADHD is just a lack of discipline.

Fact: Brain-based differences in self-regulation are well documented.

Myth: Only hyperactive kids have ADHD.

Fact: Many people, including adults and women, are mainly inattentive and are often missed.

Myth: People with ADHD can never focus.

Fact: Many can focus intensely on interesting tasks (hyperfocus) but struggle with others.

Myth: ADHD is the only thing going on.

Fact: Anxiety, depression, trauma, and sleep problems are common alongside ADHD.

What can help

- **Therapy:** cognitive behavioral approaches and skills training for planning, time, and emotions
- **Medication:** effective for many people; decided with a prescribing provider
- **Sleep:** steady bedtime and screen-free wind-down
- **Movement:** walks, stretching, and regular exercise
- **Environment:** fewer notifications, timers, checklists, and small steps
- **Support:** family, friends, coaching, or a body-doubling partner

When to reach out

Consider an evaluation if focus, organization, or restlessness has lasted for months and affects work, school, relationships, or your peace of mind. ADHD can only be diagnosed through a proper evaluation by a qualified professional. If you ever feel hopeless or in crisis, call or text **988** (Suicide & Crisis Lifeline) or call 911.