

# Disability awareness

## Attention Differences

**Attention Differences or Disorders** is the term used to refer to **Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)** and **Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)**. As their name suggests they lead to difficulties in maintaining attention as well as in many cases impulsive and hyperactive behaviour. Around four per cent of children have this diagnosis and this falls to around one per cent in adults. ADHD and ADD occur across all intelligences and are much more common in males than females.

Attention Disorders are considered to be a specific learning difference or neurodiversity along with Dyslexia, Dyspraxia and Autistic Spectrum Condition. These conditions can overlap or co-occur, meaning individuals may have one of these other conditions alongside their ADHD or ADD.

Attention Disorders affect individuals differently so it is important not to assume someone with the condition is affected with all of the potential difficulties below. The individual is the expert in their condition so they should be your number one source of information about how it affects them.

### Concentration and focus

- ⦿ Struggling to stay focused, wandering attention and very easily distracted
- ⦿ Finding it hard to go back to a task after an interruption
- ⦿ Flitting from one activity to another, overlooking details. Poor listening skills or zoning out
- ⦿ Hyperfocus - becoming over-absorbed in interesting tasks.

### Organisation and memory

- ⦿ Poorly organised. Messy or cluttered workspace. Tends to lose or misplace things
- ⦿ Has difficulty keeping track of multiple tasks and prioritising
- ⦿ Poor time management, persistent lateness, forgetting appointments
- ⦿ Puts things off. Finds it hard to start and finish tasks.

### Impulsivity

- ⦿ Impatient. Tends to interrupt others. Gives answers before question has finished
- ⦿ Acts or speaks without thinking
- ⦿ Reckless behaviour and risk taking. Possible addictive tendencies

- ⦿ Rushing through tasks without considering instructions and making mistakes
- ⦿ Finding it hard to behave in socially appropriate ways.

### Hyperactivity or restlessness

- ⦿ Highly energetic and perpetually 'on the go'
- ⦿ Feeling restless and agitated - thoughts racing
- ⦿ Constant fidgeting and difficulty sitting still
- ⦿ Trying to do everything at once. Excessive talking
- ⦿ Easily bored and craving excitement.

### Emotional and social difficulties

- ⦿ Difficulty managing emotions especially anger or frustration. Easily stressed out
- ⦿ Short-tempered, irritable and prone to mood swings
- ⦿ Feeling they have under-achieved. Low self-esteem, insecure and sensitive
- ⦿ Difficulty staying motivated
- ⦿ Potential strain on personal and working relationships.

Over the page is a list of a range of strengths individuals with ADHD or ADD may have as well as some simple adjustments you can make.

Often when we learn about different disabilities and health conditions there is too much focus on the difficulties not abilities. Having an Attention Difference/Disorder can also give an individual valued skills and qualities such as those below:

- ⦿ Hyperfocus – attention, drive and energy-focused on a task
- ⦿ Resilient and persistent – getting through setbacks
- ⦿ Finding innovative solutions and methods
- ⦿ Willingness to try new things and take a risk
- ⦿ Bright, creative, engaging and entertaining
- ⦿ Generous, warm, caring and considerate
- ⦿ Enthusiastic and motivated with loads of energy.

Whether you have a friend, customer or colleague or employee with ADHD or ADD there are some simple things you can do to make their life easier:

## Concentration and focus

- ⦿ Avoid open plan offices. Provide access to quiet space. Reduce distractions
- ⦿ Enable them to focus on one task at a time. Have a 'Do not disturb' sign. Regular breaks
- ⦿ Alternate mundane and interesting tasks.

## Time management

- ⦿ Encourage use of diary/planner/checklists/alarms
- ⦿ Suggest they plan to arrive early or prepare the night before
- ⦿ Agree a schedule of work with timings before starting.

## Organisation

- ⦿ Set up an organised workspace eg, folders, trays, desk tidy. Use colour coding and labelling
- ⦿ Suggest planning and organising times at the start and end of the day
- ⦿ Encourage writing down tasks and information. Can technology help?

## Impulsivity/Hyperactivity

- ⦿ Moving around can help - standing up or walking around
- ⦿ Suggest they do something physical during meetings eg, notetaking, doodling or stress ball
- ⦿ Regular physical activity and fresh air can be beneficial.

## Emotional and social difficulties

- ⦿ Find a way for them to discuss worries and deal with stress/frustration
- ⦿ Set small achievable goals to build confidence and celebrate success
- ⦿ Avoid criticism and create opportunities for positive feedback and praise.

**Remember the individual with ADHD or ADD is the expert – if in doubt, check with them!**

## Contact us:

If you would like further information on how we can help you, please get in touch with us:  
t: 0300 456 8113 e: [training@remploy.co.uk](mailto:training@remploy.co.uk) w: [www.remploy.co.uk/training](http://www.remploy.co.uk/training)

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