

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

ADHD is a disorder that affects a person's brain development and brain activity. Typically, a person is diagnosed with one of three types of ADHD: Predominantly inattentive, predominantly hyperactive, or combined type. Each person with ADHD will have a unique set of symptoms, challenges, and skills, but in all types of ADHD a person's ability to attend and focus are affected. It is also important to note that there are often significant differences observed in the presentations of ADHD between males and females.

TYPES OF ADHD

- **Predominantly inattentive:** Defined as the inability to maintain attention/focus (e.g. easily going off task/distracted; missing parts of lessons, concepts, or skills; needing redirection). Students are likely to lose items such as homework, toys, or writing tools; have difficulties with time management; and find following instructions or organizing tasks a challenge.
- **Predominantly hyperactive:** Characteristics include inability to sit still, excessive movement, rapid speaking, difficulty completing tasks quietly, fidgeting (e.g. tapping feet or hands), acting quickly without thinking of the consequences, interrupting conversations, or blurting out answers.
- **Combined:** Individuals will exhibit characteristics of both hyperactive and inattentive types.
- **ADHD in females:** ADHD may present differently in females. Predominantly inattentive ADHD may look like daydreaming, shyness, self-blaming behaviour, symptoms of anxiety or depression or an unwillingness to take risks. Predominantly hyperactive ADHD in females may present with excessive chatting, fidgeting, bossy behaviour and taking risks.

COMMON ISSUES WITH ADHD

- **Learning gaps:** Students will miss part or all of what is taught in class due to lapses in focus.
- **Unfocused speaking and writing:** Students' writing and speaking may be disorganized and difficult to follow.
- **Social/emotional issues with peers:** Students may miss the social cues of their peers and have trouble maintaining relationships.
- **Behavioural issues:** Students may exhibit oppositional, defiant, or even aggressive behaviour when being asked to do something that is challenging for them.
- **Frustration:** Students who are unable to move while they learn or who speak out of turn may face consequences for behaviour they cannot control, and therefore feel singled out.

HOW WE SUPPORT STUDENTS WITH ADHD

- ✓ Reducing distractions in the learning environment
- ✓ Using assistive technology such as Text-to-Speech or Speech-to-Text software
- ✓ Providing alternative working positions such as sitting on a bouncy ball or standing
- ✓ Focusing tasks using checklists, calendars and graphic organizers
- ✓ Teaching coping strategies such as chunking work, taking short breaks, using a fidget tool, or engaging in light physical activity to increase attention to task
- ✓ Advocating for the student to parents and teachers for strategies, tools, and devices that will assist in student learning

"Picture a room with 1,000 TVs with each TV showing something different. Now try and concentrate on just one TV without getting distracted."

- Damian DaViking Aird



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LEARNING SPACE