

For Managers: HOW TO SUPPORT AN EMPLOYEE WITH ADHD



What does ADHD look like at work?

Employees who live with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) may:

- Experience difficulty initiating tasks but also can invest a great deal of energy into projects
- Exhibit some forgetfulness but are often very creative and high performing
- Have trouble sitting still or focusing for long periods but can thrive with structured expectations and working conditions
- Be some of your **BEST** employees!

How to support an employee with ADHD

Some management styles work especially well for people with ADHD. While there is limited research on the evidence-based effectiveness of ADHD accommodations in the workplace, incorporating the following strategies may benefit all your employees, including those with undisclosed mental health conditions.

- **Ask about previous modifications.** If an employee approaches you to talk about working with ADHD, a good place to start is asking what has helped in the past for them, as well as what kind of communication and feedback is helpful.
- **Learn how to successfully utilize accommodations.** Ensure that you know how to work with an employee on their accommodations so it can be an effective and collaborative process.
- **Ask HR or leadership.** Without disclosing an employee's diagnosis, you can ask the HR team or fellow supervisors if they have seen any ADHD accommodations be particularly effective.
- **Focus on strengths instead of weaknesses.** Help employees see where their talents lie. Focus on how employees are completing their assignments as a sign of their dedication and productivity.
- **Monitor Workload.** Ensure all employees have an appropriate workload and check in with them to understand their stress level. People who hyperfocus will often forget to take breaks or holiday time. Give employees gentle reminders to step away from work now and then.
- **Be flexible.** If possible and appropriate in your industry, allow employees to set their schedules or work from home.
- **Put it in writing.** Whenever possible, provide employees with written instructions, meeting agendas, and assignments. Written communications will ensure employees don't miss key details.
- **Pair them with a mentor** or encourage an employee to find a mentor that they feel comfortable with. A mentor can help someone with ADHD stay on track.

Disclosing an ADHD diagnosis takes a lot of courage. If an employee confides in you, good work on developing a trusting relationship! If an employee hasn't disclosed, but you suspect an employee needs support, you can start a conversation with them. Avoid suggesting a diagnosis or treatment and instead say things like, "How can I support you", or "Let's talk about your workload and see what's working and what's not".



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Want more resources?

- Check out the [Job Accommodation Network](#) for more recommendations on accommodations in the workplace.
- For resources and support, call the [NAMI HelpLine](#) at 1-800-950-NAMI (6264) or text “HelpLine” to 62640.
- [NAMI ADHD](#) provides an overview of ADHD, treatment options, and support.
- [Children & Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder \(CHADD\)](#) is an organization that provides information and resources on ADHD/ADD, including treatment options, and provides [in person](#) and [adult online support communities](#). Their information line can be reached at (800) 233-4050, Monday-Friday, 1:00 – 5:00 PM EST.
- [Attention Deficit Disorder Association \(ADDA\)](#) provides information and resources on ADD for adults living with the disorder, including [support groups and workshops](#) and an “[Ambassadors](#)” program to provide ADD adults an opportunity to talk with others living with the disorder. The ADDA can be reached at (800) 939-1019.
- [ADDitude Magazine](#) is an online magazine that offers free information about the condition, symptoms and treatment; webinars, parenting tips and resources.
- There are therapists and coaches who specialize in ADHD.

References

An Employer’s Guide to ADHD in the Workplace. Scottish ADHD Coalition. (2018). Retrieved August 8, 2024. <https://www.scottishadhdcoalition.org/adhd-and-employment/>

Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Job Accommodation Network. (n.d.). Retrieved August 8, 2024. <https://askjan.org/disabilities/Attention-Deficit-Hyperactivity-Disorder-AD-HD.cfm>



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