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MY BRAIN **STILL** NEEDS
GLASSES

ADHD IN ADOLESCENTS AND ADULTS

A Practical and Friendly Guide for People Living
with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

4th
edition



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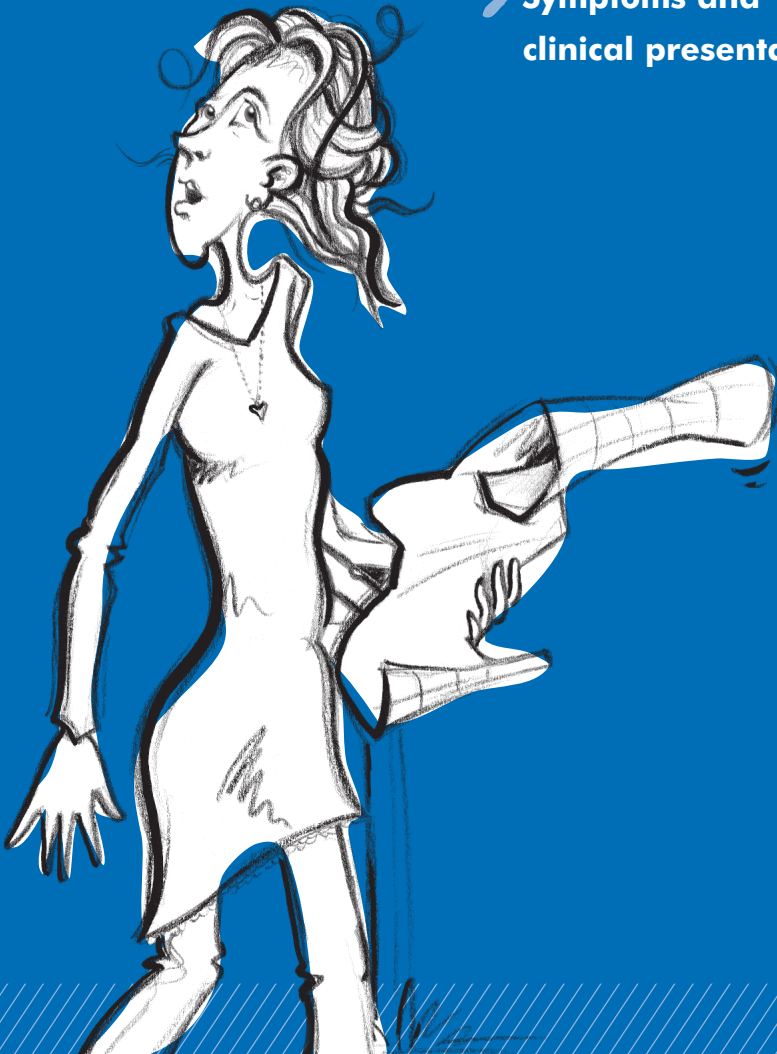
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Step 1

UNDERSTANDING ADHD

➤ Symptoms and
clinical presentations



Many people in different circumstances experience symptoms of inattention, agitation or impulsivity. Not everyone who gets spaced out or moves around a lot has ADHD! To see things clearly, let's start by defining the different types of attention and exploring the factors that modulate our attentional capacity. Then we'll proceed to look at the different manifestations of ADHD and their expression over the course of a lifetime.

A brief exploration of attention

Paying attention could be defined as the action of centering our mental activity on a specific thing. In our daily lives, we use the term “concentration” to designate the act of voluntarily paying attention to something. This requires a varying amount of mental effort depending on the type of task, our motivation level and the conditions we’re under in the moment we execute that attentional task. In contrast, what is known as “floating attention” is a cognitive process that’s more spontaneous, and is carried out in an automatic mode. It demands less mental effort and is less sensitive to disruptive factors. Let’s distinguish some forms of attention as they are characterized within neuropsychology.



Sustained attention

Sustained attention allows us to concentrate on the same task for long periods of time, even if it is monotonous and prolonged.

- **Examples:** An air traffic controller who watches a blank screen, waiting to see an object appear or move. A factory worker who examines products that pass by on a conveyor belt, looking for manufacturing defects.

Divided (or shared) attention

Divided or shared attention allows us to execute multiple tasks at the same time. Effective “multitasking” is possible only by cutting each task into mini-steps and performing each separately. Divided attention helps us move from one task to another while maintaining a minimal level of attention on all fronts.

- **Examples:** A parent who, while preparing a meal, keeps an eye on the children, while also talking on the phone. A salesperson who is talking to their client and is thinking about the profit on the sale, all the while calculating the “best price” on his calculator.

Selective attention

Selective attention allows us to focus on one particular task while ignoring other stimuli that could distract us.

- **Examples:** A person following a conversation in a crowded room. A child listening to their teacher, even though they can see other students playing on the playground outside the window and has fleeting thoughts about last summer's vacation. A worker staying focused on a presentation despite seeing an email notification.

Recognizing the factors that influence our attention span

Various factors affect our ability to modulate our attention. They can sometimes make it seem like we are dealing with ADHD ("Pseudo-ADHD") or complicate that condition if we do have it. Some of these factors are environmental, some are related to the task itself and some are components of our individual capacities for attention.


Noises, visual stimuli, bodily perceptions and ideas all compete to draw our attention. Our interest in a task and our motivation are major driving forces that stimulate and maintain our attention. Someone who's tired or feeling overwhelmed by emotion will not be able to focus effectively on the task at hand. The same goes for





someone who's disorganized, neglects their health practices or takes medication or consumes toxic substances that impair the brain's functioning. If you find you have problems with attention, it is important to identify the causes, and also to target the elements that can improve your brain's functioning and the elements that can reduce its effectiveness — regardless of whether you suffer from ADHD!

FACTORS that can MIMIC ADHD (PSEUDO-ADHD) or AGGRAVATE IT

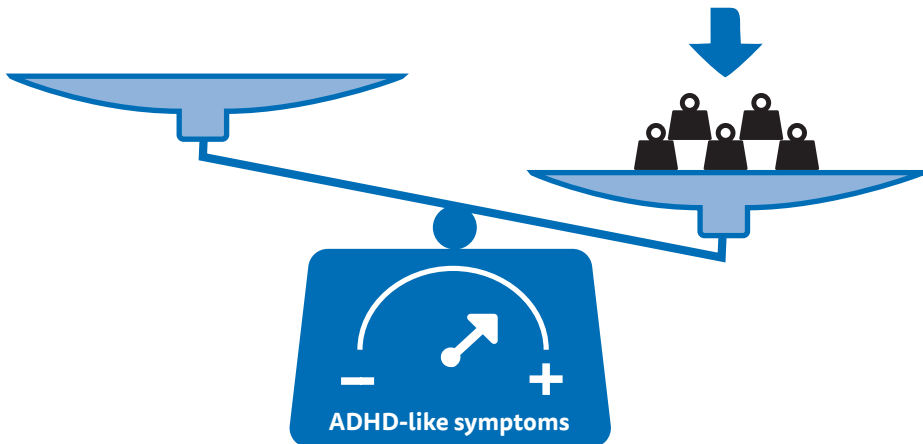
 **Energy:** Fatigue, cognitive overload, health problems


 **Emotions:** Stress, emotional overload (anxiety/sadness/anger)

 **Organization:** Lack of routine and structure, poor time and space management

 **Lifestyle:** Poor diet, sleep problems, lack of physical activity, poorly controlled use of screen time

 **Toxicity:** Side effects from medication, consumption of toxic substances





Taking care of your
brain is part of taking
care of yourself!

ADOPT HEALTHY HABITS

Our brain needs to be in shape! When our lifestyle choices are poor, it's no surprise that we develop symptoms that resemble ADHD, or that symptoms worsen for those of us who live with it. ADHD or not, it is essential to have good sleep and nutrition habits, to be active and organized to better resist distractions in our environment — including screens (Internet, social and video games). Be careful: brain at work! Avoid taking medications that have sedative effects, or saturating neurons with alcohol or drugs.