

Monthly tips and resources for young adults, their families, and supporters who are exploring options for life after high school in Indiana.

Managing ADHD in the Workplace

Issue No. 34, June 14, 2023



The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) is the authoritative guide used by health care professionals across the U.S. to diagnose mental health disorders. The DSM characterizes Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) as “a persistent pattern of inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity that interferes with functioning or development.”

Adults with ADHD display at least five qualifying symptoms such as inattention to detail, easy distractibility, difficulty with organization, extreme restlessness, or excessive talking.

ADHD and Work

ADHD can affect all areas of life, including success in the workplace. According to the organization [Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder \(CHADD\)](#), individuals with untreated ADHD face several challenges in the workplace. These “may include interpersonal conflict, tardiness, high absenteeism, high error rate, inability to change and lack of dependability. Consequences for these behaviors could include reprimands, suspensions, demotions, loss of pay and termination.” People with ADHD may experience unemployment or change jobs frequently.

However, there are positive aspects to ADHD. According to *Psychology Today*, those with ADHD often excel in jobs that allow for creativity, frequent movement, and repetitive tasks. “Many with ADHD report that careers in the arts, education, healthcare, or the food industry allow them to play to their strengths and minimize their ADHD-related challenges.” Ultimately, career suitability for someone with ADHD depends on their unique mix of personality, strengths, weaknesses, and interests.

Managing ADHD in the Workplace

Many with ADHD experience workplace success by implementing these accommodations:

- **Reduce distractions.** Create a dedicated workspace free from distractions or use earphones or ear plugs. Consider an office away from the main work area.
- **Keep organized.** Find a calendar system that works for you, whether on your phone, desk calendar, or notebook. Tracking important deadlines and keeping a daily to-do list either electronically or in a notebook is crucial. Checking off completed tasks builds confidence. Before leaving for the day, make a new list for the following day.
- **Manage workload.** Prioritize and break down tasks based on their importance. Managing smaller tasks first can increase your productivity and reduce your stress.
- **Seek peer support.** Consider asking peers for help checking important work. Partner with a co-worker on large projects and create a system of support for one another.
- **Schedule breaks.** Incorporate short breaks into your workday by setting a timer. When the timer goes off, take a break. Upon return, reset the timer for the next scheduled break. You could also use breaks to complete other workday tasks such as checking emails after working on a project.
- **Identify peak times.** Keep track of times when you focus best and seek employment that accommodates your peak productivity hours.

Disclosing your ADHD

Disclosing your ADHD is not required. However, if you have sought medical help through counseling or medication and have implemented daily work accommodations to help manage focus and attention, you may choose to disclose your diagnosis. For more information about disclosure and accommodations for ADHD, please see these articles by the Job Accommodation Network: [Disability Disclosure and the Americans with Disabilities Act](#) and [About ADHD](#).

Disclosing ADHD is a personal decision. While some fear judgment from their employer or colleagues, disclosing may help them better understand your needs and working style. If you decide not to disclose your ADHD, consider finding a coach or mentor to consult. There are many training programs that focus on finding successful employment for those with ADHD.

Resources

- CHADD: [ADHD Workplace Issues](#)
- NIMH: [Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder in Adults: What You Need to Know](#)
- WebMD: [ADHD in the Workplace](#)
- *Psychology Today*: [ADHD in the Workplace](#)
- WebMD: [Should You Tell Your Boss You Have ADHD?](#)

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