

# Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

## Symptoms that interfere with learning:

difficulty focusing/concentrating on task at hand, time blindness, sitting still, shutting down when overwhelmed, self-esteem, hypersensitive to stimuli from the environment.

## There are three forms of ADHD:

hyperactive, inattentive, or combination of both

### Common Barriers

- Listening to and following directions, recalling, and retaining information, and completing assignments are overwhelming experiences for students with ADHD
- Focusing and paying attention for long periods of time can be a challenging task in and outside the classroom for students with ADHD
- Continuously processing activity from the environment (hearing, seeing, smelling) can cause difficulty in testing, listening to lectures in the classroom or virtually for students with ADHD

### Strategies

#### Where to Study

- In the classroom, find a seat in the front of the room to avoid distractions from other students
- Find the time that you study most productively: morning, afternoon, evening, or when your medication is active
- Find a quiet space that is used for studying only, so that it becomes a habit that feels much like "going to the office"
- Determine if you learn best alone or with others and choose your study group and classes accordingly

#### How to Study

- Space out various study times throughout the day
- Plan for 2-5 minute focus breaks during your study session (i.e., doing a crossword or sudoku puzzle, or combining deep breathing with positive imagery of things like the excitement of knowing how to solve the problem, performing at your best at the test, getting graded on your academic ability instead of on your ADHD)
- Stick to your planning and avoid temptations of distracting activities by:
  - using headphones
  - turning your vision to a wall in spaces where others work
  - finding a quiet place
  - turning off your TV
  - turning your phone on airplane mode/do not disturb

## Common Barriers

- Students with ADHD may find it difficult to concentrate when reading, reviewing online materials, or watching online lectures
- Students with ADHD may find mathematics difficult

## Strategies

### STUDYING & WRITING

- Review notes/PowerPoints after class by:
  - Filling in any gaps with help of knowledge from the textbook, tutors, teaching assistants, instructors, etc.
  - Write down any questions you may have
- Plan writing big papers spaced out over time (start well in advance) to allow time for meeting with your professor, doing library research, editing, rewriting, organizing, and use of several drafts
- When writing a (research) paper, find books, journal articles, and other materials and document them in a reference management tool before you sit down to write:
  - Reference management tools allow you to find the publication easily, add highlights and comments, and they provide proper citations. Examples are Mendeley, Zotero, or Endnote

### ONLINE STUDY MATERIALS & READING

Use reading, movement, and conversation techniques, such as:

- underlining, highlighting, writing in margins
- drawing a mind map
- adding physical stimulation such as fidget tool, pacing, sitting on a yoga ball, etc.
- reciting information out loud or discuss the material with others, to stay alert while studying

### MATHEMATICS

- Find ways to make math come “alive” for you:
  - read the problem aloud
  - restate problems in your own words
  - break the problem down in smaller parts
  - draw a concept map or image of what you are calculating
  - write out word problems section by section then put the final formula together
  - use colored paper or post-it notes (i.e., different formulas on different colors for memory support), colored pens and highlighters (i.e., to distinguish signs and symbols), large dry erase boards (i.e., for drawing an image or concept map)
- Limit time increments: stop when you lose productivity/don't get it anymore, take a break and start again
- Use resources such as [tutoring](#), studying with a fellow student in the class, Khan Academy video's etc.

## Common Barriers

- Difficulties with organization of materials, individual tasks, and staying on track
- Time management
- Goal setting
- Self-monitoring

## Strategies

### ORGANIZATION

- Color-code folders, files, schedules to help organize assignments for academic subjects

### TIME MANAGEMENT

Using digital planners with repeat and reminder function and sync it with a phone app

- Organize time by the hour instead of a to-do list, with space for breaks
- Planning for flexibility by scheduling for free time and fun things too to keep the planner attractive
- Get in the habit of checking entries each morning before you start your day and throughout the day

### GOAL SETTING

- Write down SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timed) goals and make sure your daily planned activities align with your main goals, such as college, work, close relationships, health
- Reward yourself, i.e., with a break, sending a text to a friend, a telephone call with a loved one, visiting a friend, TV time, a weekend away from campus (not used as escape but used as reward)
- Prepare for transitions: set reminders about what is coming next, such as next class, break, time for a different course, etc.

### SELF-MONITORING

- Provide visual reminders and aids such as: to-do lists, banners on your digital calendar, spreadsheets with charts or graphs, etc. to monitor your progress
- Prompt yourself regarding the subject material being covered by frequent use of task lists and notes to yourself.
- Manage your time with help of a (digital) calendar, phone app, or computer software program
- Once a week, check your grades, progress in your assignments, due dates, and adjust your planning if necessary

## Advocating for Yourself

### When Self help Strategies are Insufficient

- Use of accessibility software may be helpful. UND Accessibility Technologies provides Read&Write which can be downloaded at no cost
- When dealing with problems with self-esteem, anxiety, and depression, seek out assistance from UND's University Counseling Center or a therapist
- Depending on individual barriers students experience, they may connect with UND's Disability Services for Students Office to see if they are eligible for accommodations
- Visit with an Academic Coach at UND for more information about individually tailored strategies as challenges can be different for every person.

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