



Your ADHD in the Workplace

How and if your ADHD impacts your job performance depends on many factors:

- The type and severity of your symptoms
- The suitability of the job to your strengths
- How successfully you are using strategies to offset any weaknesses

ADHD Symptoms & Some Examples of How They May Impact Your Job Performance:

Note: Not all adults with ADHD will experience all or even most of these symptoms. The type and severity of how ADHD symptoms present is very individualized.

- **Difficulties with Attention Regulation**
 - Inability to stay focused during tasks or meetings
 - Becoming bored quickly increasing inattention
 - Difficulty switching focus quickly
 - Hyper-focussing and forgetting about other tasks or appointments
 - Difficulty following lengthy direction and instructions
 - Poor listening skills
 - Inattention to detail
- **Distractibility**
 - External distractions – open office environments – unable to block out noise
 - Internal distractions – own mind wandering
- **Impulsivity**
 - Committing to tasks and projects impossible to complete
 - Blurting out inappropriate or regrettable thoughts and comments
 - Jumping into projects without a plan
 - Impulsively jumping from job to job
- **Hyperactivity**
 - Unable to sit in meetings for extended periods
 - Constant movement, pacing, tapping
 - Unable to remain seated at desk for extended periods
- **Time management impairments**
 - Under estimating time required to complete tasks
 - Missing deadlines
 - Getting to work on time
- **Organization difficulties**
 - Staying on track of larger projects

- Easily overwhelmed with larger assignments
- Misplacing work related documents and materials
- Maintaining an organized work space
- **Forgetfulness**
 - Forgetting schedules, routines, due dates, or tasks
 - Unable to remember commitments to coworkers
- **Procrastination**
 - Putting off unpleasant tasks until the last minute
 - Late or rushed completion of assignments
 - Delayed long term projects or excessive overtime to meet deadlines
- **Emotional Dysregulation and difficult relationships with co-workers**
 - Overly emotional to criticism
 - Dwelling on perceived slights
 - Easily angered and expressing anger inappropriately
 - Unable to view situations as anything other than black and white
 - Difficulty reading social cues
 - Monopolizing discussions, interrupting or being overly blunt

Assessing Your Strengths and Weaknesses

If ADHD symptoms are causing difficulties at work, taking an honest accounting of your strengths and weaknesses may be in order. This alone may be difficult for someone with ADHD since being aware of symptoms and how they impact others is not often seen a strength for those with ADHD.

Strategies that may help:

- Acquire feedback from a co-worker you trust – *take notes, to avoid becoming defensive*
- Review copies of past job performance reviews
- Ask for feedback from your spouse, significant other or family - *traits seen at home often translate into the workplace*
- Access a professional evaluation from a career counsellor, therapist specializing in ADHD or an ADHD coach – *these professionals will also be able to assist with potential strategies and accommodations*

Remember to assess your strengths as well.

In what parts of your job do you excel? What are the skills others have told you they are in awe of?

Some additional questions to ask yourself

- What parts of your job, do you find easy?
- What parts of your job are constant struggles?
- Have you been reprimanded several times for a specific issue?
- Are there specific changes that you feel could significantly help you to perform better – *quieter location, coming in earlier, more detailed instructions or supervision?*

Disclosing Your Diagnosis

Should you reveal your diagnosis to your employer?

This is a very personal decision and remains a controversial topic. Disclosing your ADHD could result in either good or bad consequences. Disclosing your ADHD to those who may not understand the condition, could lead to your being viewed negatively, since stigma and misunderstandings about ADHD still exist. On the other hand, if your employer is open to discussing the implementation of accommodations, but requires a reason that they are required, disclosing your ADHD could be very beneficial.

Your employer will need to understand ADHD as a medical condition with symptoms that can impact job performance, both positively and negatively. You may be required to educate your employer on ADHD since misinformation continues to exist. Providing personal examples of how your ADHD impacts you both negatively and positively would be beneficial.

An alternative approach to full immediate disclosure could be to initially meet with your supervisor to request certain changes in your work environment that you feel will make you more productive. Placing the discussion in the context a win for both sides, by a potential increase in productivity, is an excellent way to begin the conversation. Work your request from an angle of strength, using positive statements like “I work best in an environment with fewer distractions. More frequent check-ins would help me to stay on track and get those large reports to you on time.” Or try, “I am at my peak efficiency in the early morning when the office is quiet. I was wondering if we could schedule my tasks in order to take advantage of my peak productivity.” Don’t call these accommodations unless you have decided to formally disclose. Frame these difficulties in terms of solution-oriented goals.

If you do decide to disclose and receive immediate resistance, you may wish to gently point out to your employer that ADHD is considered a disability by Human Rights Commissions. Although at this point of the discussion, if at all possible, things should be kept as amicable as possible.

Although situations may vary from province to province a recent Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) report, “Minds that matter: Report on the consultation on human rights, mental health and addictions”, <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/minds-matter-report-consultation-human-rights-mental-health-and-addictions> has helped to clarify the duty of employer to accommodate individuals with mental health conditions. It is however also important to note that the commission states, “The accommodation process usually begins when someone identifies they need accommodation due to a disability-related need.”, <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/minds-matter-report-consultation-human-rights-mental-health-and-addictions/10-duty-accommodate>, and that it is the responsibility of the person with the disability is to “inform their employers of their needs”, <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/disability-workplace-roles-and-responsibilities-fact-sheet>.

The OHRC list of Employers' Responsibilities

<http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/disability-workplace-roles-and-responsibilities-fact-sheet>.

- Accept requests for accommodation in good faith;
- Request only information that is required to make the accommodation;
- Obtain expert advice or opinion where necessary;
- Take an active role in ensuring that possible solutions are examined;
- Maintain the confidentiality of persons with disabilities;
- Deal with accommodation requests in a timely way, and
- Bear the cost of any required medical information or documentation.

Requesting Accommodations

Some adults may feel very uncomfortable requesting any type of special consideration. They may feel that they will be viewed as incompetent or making excuses. They may worry that coworkers may resent them for receiving special treatment. But viewing accommodations as a means to your becoming more productive and ultimately a better employee would be a better way for both you and your employer to view these requests.

Before requesting special accommodations, take some time to think about:

- Specific changes that you feel would be beneficial – *allowing access to a quiet space to work for certain tasks would be less distracting and increase your output*
- How will you explain why these accommodations would be beneficial – *taking a tape recorder into meetings will allow you to prepare more accurate minutes of the meeting*
- How these changes will increase your work productivity – *arriving an hour earlier will allow you to complete complex tasks without distractions*
- Are these accommodations reasonable – *will they greatly inconvenience your employer or your colleagues?*
- How will these accommodations provide solutions to past issues with your performance – *meeting with your supervisor on a bi-weekly basis will assist you with time management of larger projects*

Web Sites Referenced for the development of this document:

<http://www.additudemag.com/adhd/article/816.html>

<http://www.webmd.com/add-adhd/guide/adhd-in-the-workplace>

<http://www.healthyplace.com/adhd/articles/top-ten-adhd-traps-in-the-workplace/adhd-in-the-workplace/> originally published <http://www.chadd.org/> with permission from the author Kathleen Nadeau.

<http://psychcentral.com/lib/adhd-in-the-workplace-solutions-and-success/0001511>

<http://gbr.pepperdine.edu/2010/08/attention-deficit-hyperactivity-disorder-adhd-in-the-workplace/>

<http://add.about.com/od/adhdinadults/a/Worktips.htm>

<http://askjan.org/media/adhd.html>

<http://www.additudemag.com/adhd/article/1497.html>

<http://www.healthcentral.com/adhd/adult-adhd-251301-5.html> Workplace Accommodations for Adults with ADHD