



CENTRE FOR ADHD AWARENESS, CANADA
CSTC - Centre de sensibilisation au TDAH Canada

CADDAC 2026 ADHD Conference

SPEAKER ABSTRACTS

Dr. Kenny Handelman *Keynote: Day 1*

Fuel, Focus, and Follow-Through: Rethinking ADHD from the Inside Out

What if ADHD is not simply a problem of trying harder, paying attention, or getting organized? What if the real issue is that the ADHD brain struggles to regulate the energy needed to start, focus, shift, and follow through?

This session brings new life to an overlooked ADHD theory and connects it with current science and everyday lived experience. Through the metaphor of the brain's "fuel tank," we will explore why ADHD can be so inconsistent—and how understanding brain energy, activation, and regulation can help individuals and families find more practical, personalized, and compassionate strategies.

From Supported Teen to Independent Adult: Navigating ADHD Through the Transition Years

Young people with ADHD often face adult expectations before they have adult-level supports or executive-functioning skills. This session explores the transition from youth supports to adult life, including treatment continuity, independence, self-advocacy, school/work accommodations, family roles, and practical strategies to help young adults avoid falling through the cracks.

Dr. Joan Flood & Dr. Doron Almagor *Keynote: Day 2*

ADHDers and the use of Social Media

Abstract coming soon!

Dr. Joan Flood

ADHD and Cannabis

Cannabis became legal in Canada in October 2018, with the goals of improving safety and public health, reducing youth access, and curbing the illegal market. Several years on, we are now in a position to reflect on its impact on health care — and particularly, its effects on people with ADHD.

People with ADHD have a notably higher tendency to develop cannabis use disorder. In young people, the brain's endocannabinoid system — a natural signaling network — plays an important role in healthy brain development, and regular cannabis use can disrupt that process in ways that may not be

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fully reversible. Cannabis is also linked to problems with attention and thinking that can compound the difficulties already faced by people with ADHD. In adults, regular use carries clinically meaningful risks of addiction, mental illness, and cognitive impairment.

This talk will review current knowledge of ADHD and cannabis, and how legalization has affected its use. We will look at the latest science on how cannabis acts on the brain and affects treatment of ADHD, along with the updated statement on cannabis and ADHD from CADDRA (the Canadian ADHD Resource Alliance). We will also discuss how to address cannabis use in a culture where few people recognize its risks.

Dr. Doron Almagor

The Right Fit at the Right Time: New and Upcoming ADHD Treatments in Canada

For a long stretch, ADHD treatment in Canada meant the same short list of medications and the same familiar trade-offs. That stretch is over. Several new options have arrived, the generic and coverage picture has shifted, and more is coming, which together make something possible that was hard to do a few years ago: matching the treatment to the person, rather than asking the person to make do.

The new stimulant formulations already available here show what that looks like. Some are built to start working at the right moment, so a child is covered while getting ready for school instead of an hour after the morning has fallen apart. Some come as liquids or chewables for the many kids and adults who never could swallow a capsule. Others are designed to last longer and to wear off more gently, softening the late-afternoon crash families know well. There have also been real changes in cost and access, including new generic versions of familiar medications and recent shifts in coverage and copay rules, which this session will help make sense of.

Looking ahead, newer non-stimulant options are expected, some better tolerated for people who do not do well on stimulants, with the potential to help anxiety and mood as well. Dr. Almagor sits on the national committee updating Canada's ADHD prescribing guidelines, and will walk through what is here, what is coming, and how prescribing is becoming more personalized, so a medication can be chosen around a person's schedule, body, other conditions, and budget. Most of all, it is for the people who take these medications and the families affected by them, and it is just as useful for the professionals in their corner, including psychologists, psychotherapists, occupational therapists, social workers, and ADHD coaches, who are often the people families turn to. You will leave with a clear picture of what is available now, what is coming, and what to raise with your own care team, so that together you can find the option that fits.

The ADHD Resilience Paradox: How to Bounce Back Without Burning Out – Aaron Bailey

People with ADHD are often described as resilient. Despite facing more setbacks, criticism, and challenges than their neurotypical peers, many continue to persevere and push forward. But resiliency can come at a cost. While people with ADHD can be *highly* resilient, doing so often requires extraordinary effort, persistence, and emotional energy. This presentation explores the relationship between ADHD and resiliency, examining why resiliency can feel so difficult to access and sustain. Participants will learn about protective factors associated with resiliency, as well as the challenges. Drawing on Thomas Leonard's 'Symptom-Source-Solution' model, we'll look at a practical framework for increasing agency, autonomy, and hope. Attendees will leave with practical insights and tools to move beyond resilience as survival and toward resilience as a foundation for thriving.

Wired Differently at Midlife: ADHD, Menopause, and the Women Who Were Missed – Ammara Wood

For millions of women, ADHD went undetected for decades — not because it wasn't there, but because the diagnostic lens was never built for them. Now in midlife, they're navigating a second invisible storm: perimenopause and menopause, which dramatically amplify ADHD symptoms through hormonal shifts that directly affect dopamine, executive function, and emotional regulation. This session unpacks why ADHD is so frequently missed or misdiagnosed in women, and why midlife can bring both a long-overdue reckoning and a path forward. Attendees will explore the science behind the ADHD-hormone connection, the emotional weight of a late diagnosis, and what it actually looks like to build strategies that work with the ADHD brain through hormonal change. You'll leave with a clearer understanding of this underrecognized intersection, and practical, brain-friendly, evidence-informed strategies you can begin applying right away to support executive function, emotional regulation, and daily capacity.

ADHD & Sleep: Understanding and Optimizing the Other Half of the Day - Dr. Chris Richards-Bentley

Sleep disorders of several types are more common in people living with ADHD, and sleep-related challenges are a common area of concern and frustration voiced by many clients. ADHD can significantly impact the way someone engages with sleep and may make certain sleep interventions, both psychological and pharmacological, more challenging. This presentation will examine the following:

1. What is happening in the brain when sleep is disordered, and how does it affect executive functioning and the treatment of ADHD?
2. A basic understanding of how medications and substances impact sleep, looking at not only ADHD treatments and how they improve or hinder sleep, but also various sleep aids commonly used in patients with ADHD.

3. Sleep Hygiene and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy for Insomnia (CBT-I): What are these approaches, and how can they be made most effective for people with ADHD?

Seeing Strengths, Building Skills, and Empowering Children with ADHD – Dr. Julie Desjardins

Parenting a child with ADHD can be both rewarding and challenging. While ADHD can affect emotional regulation, organization and daily routines, children with ADHD also bring unique strengths, creativity, energy, and ways of thinking that deserve to be recognized and nurtured.

This practical and engaging workshop is designed to help parents better understand ADHD and its impact on their child's self-esteem. Through a strengths-based lens, parents will learn evidence-informed strategies to support their child's success while fostering confidence, resilience, and a positive sense of self. Topics will include:

- Recognizing and building on your child's strengths
- Managing big emotions and emotional dysregulation
- Reducing conflict and strengthening parent-child relationships
- Helping children develop confidence, independence, and self-advocacy skills

Parents will leave with a deeper understanding of ADHD, practical tools that can be implemented immediately at home, and renewed confidence in their ability to support their child's growth and well-being. Whether your child has recently been diagnosed or you have been navigating ADHD for years, this workshop will provide valuable insights, strategies, and encouragement to help your child thrive.

When Smart Girls Struggle: Exploring High-Masking Presentations of ADHD and Autism in Girls and Women – Dr. Marie Hooper

Girls and women with ADHD are often missed because their struggles do not always match the stereotypical ADHD profile. Many are bright, capable, socially aware, and high-achieving, while also quietly struggling with executive functioning, emotional regulation, sensory overwhelm, social exhaustion, anxiety, perfectionism, and burnout. These challenges can be even harder to recognize when ADHD overlaps with autism, particularly among girls and women who have learned to mask, compensate, and “hold it together” in public.

Drawing from my clinical work in neurodiversity-affirming assessment, lived experience, and perspective as a parent, this session will explore how ADHD and autism can present in girls and women across the lifespan. The presentation will highlight why these individuals are often misdiagnosed, misunderstood, or identified late, and how clinicians, educators, and families can better recognize and support them.

Why ADHD Brains Get Stuck on Screens – and What Families Can Actually Do – Eli Singer and Harshi Sritharan

Screens are not simply “distracting” for people with ADHD. For many children, teens, young adults, and adults, digital platforms can become powerful sources of stimulation, avoidance, emotional regulation, connection, conflict, and shame. Families may see this as homework battles, gaming blowups, bedtime drift, compulsive checking, transition meltdowns, reduced frustration tolerance, and endless arguments about “how much is too much.” In this practical, shame-free session, Registered Social Worker Harshi Sritharan of Green Forest Therapy and Eli Singer of Offline.now will explore why ADHD brains can become especially stuck on screens—and what families, adults, educators, coaches, and clinicians can actually do about it. Participants will learn how ADHD-related differences in executive functioning, novelty-seeking, reward sensitivity, emotional regulation, attentional switching, hyperfocus, sleep disruption, and nervous-system dysregulation can make social media, gaming, short-form video, and constant notifications unusually sticky. The session will also address the social reality that, for many young people, online spaces are not optional entertainment; they are where friendships, homework, plans, and social status are negotiated. Restriction alone may not address the needs these spaces are serving.

Rather than offering one-size-fits-all screen rules, this session introduces a practical approach to digital emotional regulation: understanding the role screens are playing, reducing shame and conflict, building external supports, strengthening communication, using collaborative tech agreements, replacing rather than simply removing screen habits, protecting sleep, and creating small experiments that build confidence and follow-through. Attendees will leave with a deeper understanding of why ADHD brains get stuck on screens, along with language, examples, and practical strategies they can use at home, in clinical or coaching conversations, and in school or workplace support settings.

From Hanging In to Hanging Out: How to Help School-Aged Kids Find Their Friendship Fit – Lanni Zinberg-Swartz

Did you know that 50-80% of kids with ADHD experience difficulty with friends? These challenges can begin early on and be well-established by age 7. However, when the important adults in their lives understand why friendships may be different from those of neurotypical kids, and know how to actively support them, we often see positive connections with other kids start to take shape.

This session will focus on tips and tricks to help parents/caregivers, educators and other professionals learn concrete ways to support elementary-school aged kids with ADHD to form fun and meaningful connections with others their age. Discussion will include how to determine where to start, the crucial role of a parent or other invested adult as a coach, and strategies to plan for and execute playdates that are fun for everyone involved.

From Deficit to Design: How ADHD Children Are Challenging Us to Evolve Parenting, Education, and Emotional Intelligence – Lara Dawn

For decades, ADHD has been viewed primarily through a deficit lens, focusing on symptoms, impairments, and the challenges children experience in traditional environments. Yet a growing body of research in neuroscience, emotional regulation, and neurodiversity invites us to ask a different question: What if ADHD is not exposing what is wrong with our children, but what is outdated in our systems?

In this thought-provoking and practical presentation, special education teacher, ADHD parenting specialist, and founder of The ADHD Village, Lara Dawn explores how ADHD children are challenging us to rethink parenting, education, and emotional intelligence in the 21st century.

Participants will discover how many behaviors commonly associated with ADHD are rooted not in defiance or lack of motivation, but in differences in nervous system regulation, executive functioning, emotional processing, and learning styles. Through a combination of research, personal stories, clinical insights, and practical strategies, Lara reframes ADHD from a problem to be fixed into a design to be understood.

How to Organize Your Clothes and Avoid Laundry Woes – Nathalie Pedicelli

As most professional organizers can tell you, clothing is the second most problematic category for someone with ADHD to organize, with paperwork coming in at #1. Clothing invades the home, creeping into just about every room. This clothing that is strewn around the house is, for the most part, in some stage of the laundering process. Doing the laundry is often overwhelming.

Figuring out what to wear to work every day can also become an overwhelming process of decision-making. Making sure your business suit is clean for that important meeting or that your children can find clean socks requires an ability to manage several processes that tax executive functions in an ADHD brain.

This session is geared for adults with ADHD who want proven, low cost, yet simple to implement organizing strategies to manage their clothes and laundry better. These techniques will make it easier for individuals to trim and manage their wardrobe and to reduce the overwhelm from not knowing what to wear.

Reclaiming Unstructured Time Beyond the Workday: Neuroaffirming Tools for Transitions, Downtime & Wellbeing – Rhiannon Carter

Many people with ADHD thrive in structured settings — yet struggle to translate that success into their personal lives. When structure disappears, even small tasks can feel overwhelming. Evenings, weekends, and time off may become unexpectedly draining, with time slipping away through avoidance, doom scrolling, or decision paralysis.

If unstructured time leaves you, or someone you care about, feeling stuck, depleted, or disconnected from what matters most, you're not alone.

This session explores why transitioning into unstructured time can feel so challenging and offers practical, neuroaffirming strategies that can help. Using a solution-focused coaching approach, this presentation emphasizes how to optimize downtime. You'll leave with tools to create a flexible, personalized structure—helping you reconnect with your energy, relationships, hobbies, and a greater sense of meaning beyond the workday.

When Brightness Masks Struggle: Understanding the Hidden Needs of Gifted and Twice-Exceptional Learners with ADHD – Barbara Lazarou, Melanie Harsch, Jim Rea

Gifted and twice-exceptional (2e) learners with ADHD are frequently overlooked because their cognitive strengths can mask significant challenges. Despite appearing academically capable, many experience executive functioning difficulties, anxiety, perfectionism, emotional dysregulation, school avoidance, masking, and social isolation. As a result, their needs are often misunderstood, misidentified, or recognized only after considerable academic, social, or emotional distress.

This session explores the intersection of giftedness, ADHD, and twice-exceptionality, highlighting the lived experiences of these learners and examining why they are so often missed in educational and clinical settings. Presenters will discuss common misconceptions, the impact of unmet needs on mental health, identity, engagement, and belonging, and practical strategies for recognizing and supporting gifted learners with ADHD. Co-presented by three board members of the Association for Bright Children of Ontario (ABC Ontario), participants will leave with a deeper understanding of the ADHD + gifted/2e profile and evidence-informed approaches to supporting these often-overlooked learners.

Running on Empty: Parenting with an ADHD Brain – Dr. Maria Rogers

Parenting can become the point at which many adults with ADHD feel their coping strategies begin to collapse under the relentless demands of family life. Yet despite growing recognition of adult ADHD, remarkably little attention has been paid to the unique experiences of parents raising children while navigating their own ADHD-related challenges. Drawing on emerging research, clinical practice, and lived experiences from families, this presentation examines how ADHD affects parenting across emotional regulation, executive functioning, co-parenting, shame, identity, and family relationships. Dr. Rogers will explore why parenting often feels uniquely overwhelming for adults with ADHD, how developmental transitions in family life can intensify symptoms, and how clinicians, educators, and support systems can better understand and support these parents with compassion and evidence-based approaches. Emphasis will be placed on strengths-based, neurodiversity-affirming perspectives that move beyond blame and perfectionism toward sustainable family functioning and well-being.

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