

COMPLEX LEARNING DIFFICULTIES AND DISABILITIES RESEARCH PROJECT (CLDD)

ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER

What is attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)?

Students with ADHD have difficulties in three main areas: being inattentive, being hyperactive, and being impulsive.

Three main areas of difficulty in ADHD

Being inattentive	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• finds it hard to pay attention; easily distracted• lacks concentration; very short attention span• disorganised and forgetful• reluctant to stay on task; makes lots of careless mistakes
Being hyperactive	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• difficulty sitting still; fidgety• always on the go and out of their seat• dashes around on the playground• talks non-stop; asks questions without waiting for the answer
Being impulsive	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• acts without thinking; little sense of danger• interferes with other students' things and interrupts their games and activities• has difficulty taking turns; wants instant help or attention• breaks rules; shouts out

In addition, students with ADHD may need to be given time to take in what is said to them and to think about how to respond.

They may be very emotional and easily upset, although they are not good at making allowances for the needs of others.

As their behaviour can seem very annoying to others, they often lack friends.

Many students with ADHD have co-existing conditions, such as autism, dyslexia, dyspraxia or speech and language difficulties.

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Strategies that may help

The following strategies have been found to help students with ADHD:

- 1 having the same staff to help them, so that they know who to turn to for support and can be helped to form relationships with others
- 2 working closely with parents and carers, so that a similar approach to meeting their needs is taken at home and at school (students with ADHD usually behave in a similar way wherever they are)
- 3 taking care about where they sit in class and trying to keep distractions to a minimum, perhaps by using screens
- 4 making it clear that they must finish an activity and gradually increasing the time they can stay in their seat and on task; sometimes, a visual clue, such as a giant egg timer, will help them to stay focused
- 5 helping them to understand the need to stop and think before they act by taking time to discuss their behaviour with them when they are feeling calm; each time they are in trouble, go over what they did and what the consequences
- 6 working on improving one aspect of their behaviour at a time; for instance, staying in their seat, not calling out or being careful not to disrupt other students' activities; incident sheets can be helpful in indicating patterns of behaviour
- 7 allowing them to move about between activities or to have short bursts of physical activity; this will help them to use up some of their energy and to practise controlling their movements
- 8 making sure they experience success, and praising them when they behave well or do a good piece of work
- 9 not overloading them with too many verbal instructions; trying to support them by giving information visually as well; for instance, using timetables (in written or picture form) or diaries, so they understand how the day is organised, what is happening now and what will happen next
- 10 keeping instructions simple; giving them time to understand what they have to do and to respond to questions; asking them to repeat back to you what they need to do; helping them to organise their possessions using pictures or lists of things they need for each lesson or activity
- 11 thinking about how to involve the learner themselves in making decisions about personal targets, ways of learning, and assessment; how we can help them to recognise and self-manage situations such as raised anxiety or sensory overload – e.g. by asking someone for help or by using strategies thought out and practised beforehand. This may improve self esteem.



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Students with ADHD are not easy to work with. They may appear to be rude, although they do not mean to upset others. Those with more extreme difficulties may run the risk of being excluded because of their challenging behaviour. Although they can be very exhausting, most are able to respond to receiving support and guidance. As their behaviour improves, so will their ability to gain satisfaction from their work and to develop the social skills they need to make friends.