

ADHD and Women: How it started, how it's going summary

Key Points

- ADHD affects people's ability to concentrate, control impulses, and manage their energy levels. It is not an attention *deficit*, but more a problem with *regulation of an abundance of attention*.
- Contrary to some media, women are widely considered to be underdiagnosed.
- Boys with ADHD tend to display their problems outwardly (externalise) and at a young age, while girls with ADHD are less likely to show these issues and mask them. They often internalise their problems which may present as depression/anxiety, or they emerge later. This can make it harder to identify their ADHD symptoms.
- Hormones, both monthly and across the lifespan, can affect conditions related to brain development. This means how a woman presents with ADHD is influenced by her hormonal cycle, especially during hormonal change periods like puberty, motherhood and menopause.
- Factors related to sex and gender play a role in how our brains develop and can affect conditions related to brain development, like ADHD. These factors have different ways of influencing our brains at different levels.
- Stimulant medication is generally safe, effective for most (over 80%), not addictive, may require more/less depending on hormonal cycle.
- *We're all different*. Some focus better in silence, others with tv/podcast/game/music on.

My top pick for what helps

Talking ourselves down is possibly the most damaging side effect of late diagnosis. Time to reframe that! Learning about self-compassion (see Kristin Neff) can be the key that unlocks the door to being at peace with yourself. The three key components of self-compassion are:

1. **Self-kindness**: Speak kindly to yourself, especially when things are tough. What's your self-talk like? Stop speaking in terms of deficit to yourself, please (eg I'm not; I shouldn't; I never; I can't).
2. **Common humanity**: Recognising that suffering and making mistakes are a necessary part of the human experience, *shared by everyone*.
3. **Mindfulness**: Simply observing and clocking thoughts, sensations, and emotions with curiosity, not judgment. No meditating is necessary for 'mindfulness.'

It is not self-pity or indulgence. Research shows it improves resilience, motivation, and healthy relationships.

A few resources

- [How to ADHD](#), Jessica McCabe (Insta, FB, YT etc)
- [Additude Magazine](#): free blogs, info, podcast, etc
- For older women: [Still distracted after all these years](#) by Kathleen Nadeau
- ADHD for Smart Ass Women: <https://www.tracyotsuka.com/>
- Instagram: Women with ADHD [female_adhd](#)
- Australian ADHD Professionals Ass: <https://aadpa.com.au/adhd-resources/AADPA>
- [The 12 Stages of Burnout](#) by Jessica Stillman
- ADHD comics by Dani Donovan: <https://www.adhddd.com/comics/>
- Jesse Anderson on twitter: <https://twitter.com/adhdjesse>
- Dr Ned Hallowell's TikTok's <https://drhallowell.com/watch/ned-talks/>

"it helps to think of ADHD as a complex set of contradictory or paradoxical tendencies: a lack of focus combined with an ability to superfocus; a lack of direction combined with highly directed entrepreneurialism; a tendency to procrastinate combined with a knack for getting a week's worth of work done in two hours; impulsive, wrongheaded decision making combined with inventive, out-of-the-blue problem solving; interpersonal cluelessness combined with uncanny intuition and empathy; the list goes on." Dr Ned Hallowell

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Serena Nathan student1@whws.org.au