

ADHD the hidden superpower

Some exceptional people have ADHD – Albert Einstein, Bill Gates, Richard Branson, Walt Disney. Their creative traits allowed them to think outside the box and lead the way in their field.

Why employ someone who is ADHD? We are all familiar with some of the downsides of this neurodiverse trait, but did you know there are huge benefits as well. People with ADHD have enhanced ability to:

- Intuitive
- Circumspective
- Hyperfocus
- Highly resilient
- Generous
- Ingenuity
- Fairness
- Compassion
- Persistence & perseverance
- Engaging conversation skill
- Empathetic & Sympathetic
- Exceptional in a crisis
- Introspective
- Passionate
- Enhanced info processing
- Keen long-term memory
- Multitasking
- Strong moral compass
- Creative
- Intelligent
- Offer a different perspective
- Highly motivated
- Highly observant

Small Business Economics study found that people with ADHD were 60-80% were likely to be an entrepreneur.

So what is ADHD?

ADHD brains have low levels of a neurotransmitter called norepinephrine (nuh-reh-puh-neh-fruhn). Norepinephrine is linked arm-in-arm with dopamine. Norepinephrine, also known as noradrenaline, is both a neurotransmitter and a hormone. It plays an important role in your body's "fight-or-flight" response. Dopamine is the thing that helps control the brain's reward and pleasure centre.

Are there any downsides to ADHD?

- Difficulty in turning thoughts off, having a constantly busy mind.
- Difficulty listening to other people – end up finishing peoples sentences for them or interrupting them.
- Getting easily distracted and bored.
- Difficulty in following detailed instructions.
- Difficulty in being self-organised.
- Being forgetful and losing things.
- Tend to do things on the spur of the moment.

Are there any simple adjustments which would make the working life of someone with ADHD easier and help them unleash their superpower?

The answer is yes, and they are quite simple to put into place:

- Take short breaks throughout the day. Negotiate taking 10-15 minute breaks regularly away from your desk. this may mean working slightly longer core hours to accommodate this e.g. 8.30-5.30 rather than 9-5 would give you four 15 min breaks to take during the day when you needed them.
- Focus on one job at a time rather than multi-tasking when you may be distracted often set a regular timer on phone or pc to bring you back to focus should you tend to go off track – can be visual or auditory. this needs to be intrusive enough for you to notice it. use
- A “do not disturb” sign/function on your telephone and email, when specific tasks require intense concentration. ask your employer to encourage co-workers not to disturb you unless absolutely necessary.
- Ask your employer if you can work somewhere that is quiet and away from distractions, for example away from doors, busy phones, loud machinery. understanding any sensory issues, e.g. open plan offices have lots of noise and lights, which may be minimised by the use of desk partitions, telephones that light up when ringing, noise-cancelling headphones, desk low-lights etc.
- Ask about the possibility of working from home occasionally or coming in early or staying late, to reduce distraction, stress and fatigue. relaxation techniques can help with concentration
- Ask for an office mentor – maybe line manager, colleague, buddy arrangement. someone who can help you build awareness of how you communicate and any other issues with social cues. they can help defuse difficult social situations before they become too large.
- Asking for breaks from the office can help control heightened emotion and avoid outbursts. understanding that your eye contact, speech, and body language may not be the same as other co-workers.
- Ask for clear and specific information and instructions about what is expected of you e.g. when going for interviews, completing work tasks etc. this could include travel directions, photographs of people you will be meeting, when activities will start and end.
- Understanding that you may find hypothetical or abstract questions difficult and that you may also interpret language quite literally. ask if the employer can avoid asking questions that are too open e.g. “tell me a bit about yourself”.

- Let employers know if you have a tendency to talk too much or focus on one particular topic at length, and that it is okay for them to let you know when you are doing this.
- Let the employer know that they may need to prompt you and ask supplementary questions in order to get the information from you that they need. for job interviews, invite a supporter along to help you, in case questions need to be rephrased, or you have misunderstood the context and need to be prompted. this person can act as a go-between to ease communication between you and the interviewer.
- Ask for a work trial so that you can demonstrate exactly how you would perform in the workplace. some employers find that a two-way placement evaluation - a period of work experience - is a better way of assessing individuals' talents than a formal interview.
- A first day at work could start with a full induction, an introduction to each employee, a map of the building/office and where each person sits and a timetable for the first week. ask for an explanation of any unwritten rules of the workplace.