

ADHD School Awareness Training Notes – Twilight/3 hour 2026



Session 1

ADHD – What is it?

It's a neurodevelopmental disorder – will affect people's behaviour and is beyond their control.

It is one of the most common childhood disorders.

Is a registered disability (but isn't classed as a learning disability).

Is not because of poor parenting, bad diet and lack of sleep but these can impact on behaviour.

ADHD is often a co-morbid condition, a child with one condition can be very likely to have another i.e. Autism, Anxiety, Dyslexia, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, Pathological Demand Avoidance, Oppositional Defiance to name but a few.

Latest research suggests that ADHD has a high genetic link. – 1 in 2 if parents have the condition (often undiagnosed) or 1 in 5 if the wider family has the condition.

Presentations of ADHD

Inattentive

- Makes careless mistakes
- Easily distracted
- Doesn't follow through instructions
- Not listening

Hyperactive

- Fidgeting – hard to sit still
- Excessive talking
- Mental hyperactivity – looks like day dreaming
- Acting on the go – as if driven by a motor

Impulsive

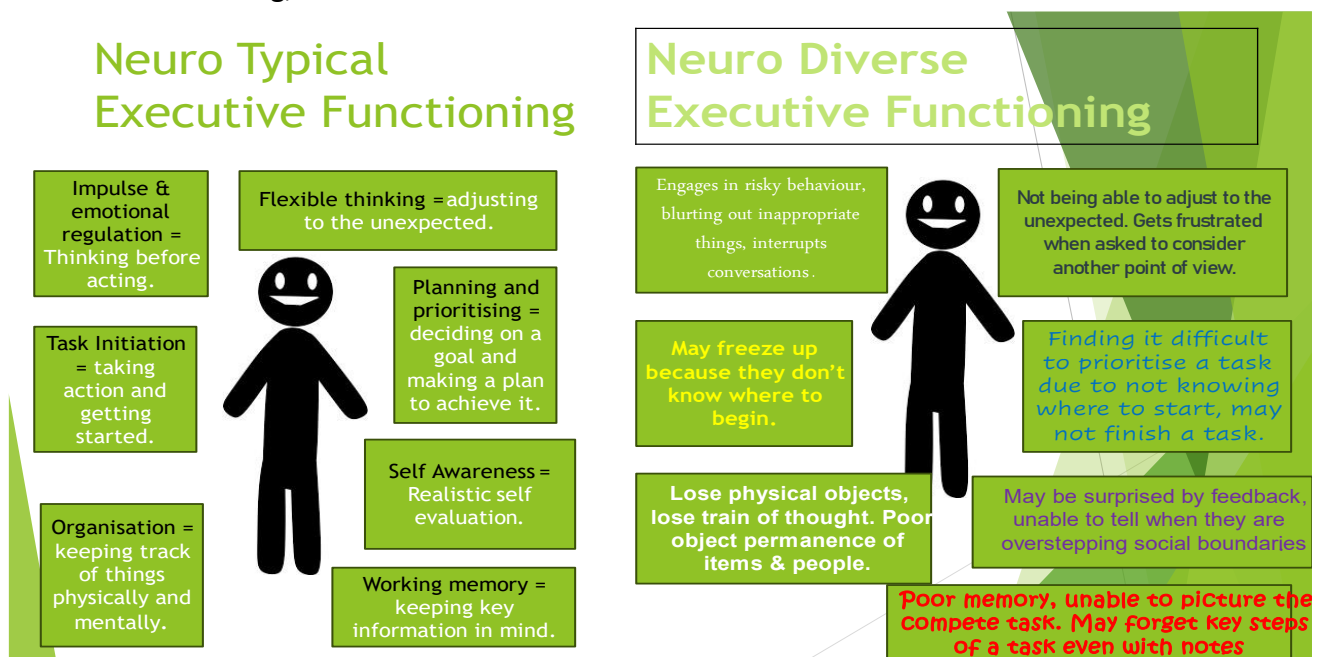
- Risky behaviour
- No thought of consequences
- Blurts out answers
- Over reactive

Combined – Having inattentive, hyperactive and impulsive symptoms.

Executive Functioning

People with ADHD have developmental differences within the brain, particularly the pre frontal cortex – the control centre for our executive functioning. MRI scans have shown that ADHD is associated with changes in several regions of the brain and delay in executive functioning. This impairs the communication between different areas of the brain.

Remember the subtle differences in the slide showing neuro typical executive functioning vs neuro diverse executive functioning,



Executive Functioning

- ▶ Up to 90% of children with ADHD have executive functioning challenges, many of which last into adulthood. (Additude 2021)
- ▶ People with ADHD struggle to process and interpret the information and have difficulty filtering all the messages going into their brain, focus is a challenge.



Remember there are ways to improve executive functioning with time and practice – reinforcing the neuro pathways – we played the game of clap, bob, hedgehog, this demonstrated how difficult it was to concentrate and focus. This game provides the opportunity to smile and have fun, allowing the children and young people a dopamine hit.

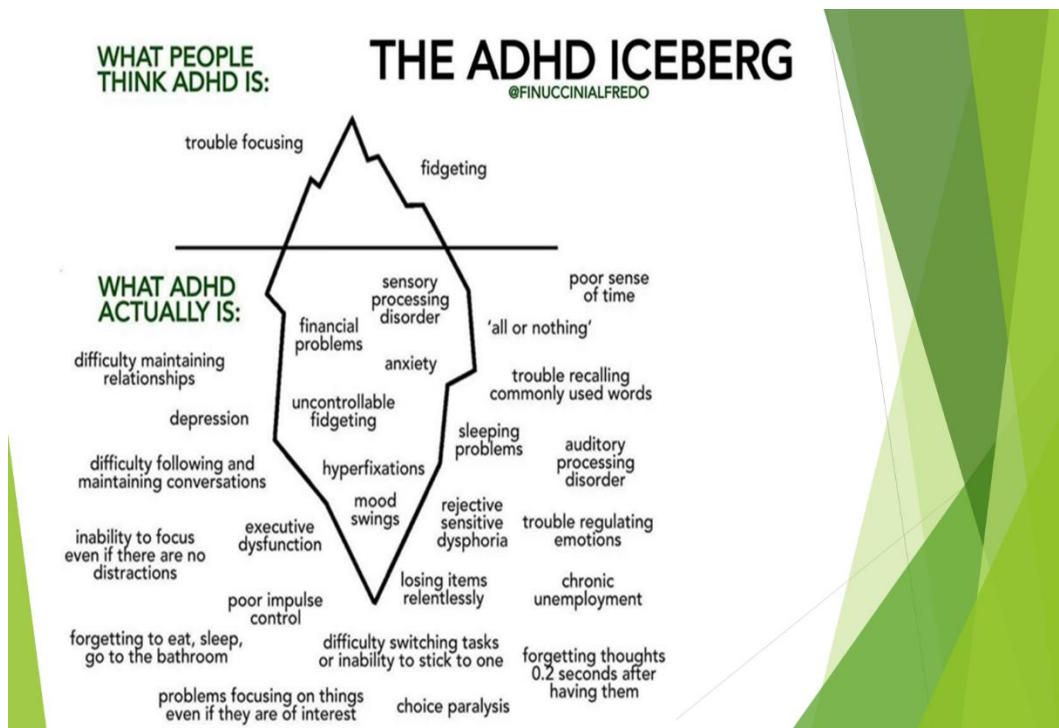
[ADD/ADHD SIMULATOR](#)

How does it feel to have ADHD?

We watched the ADHD simulator video and then asked you the 4 questions – remember how you felt after 1 min and 40 secs. Imagine how this is for a child with ADHD and how tiring this would be to try and concentrate on schoolwork.

The video demonstrated how difficult it is to pick out small pieces of information when so much is going on, we discussed sensory issues around noise and smells as well as touch.

ADHD Iceberg



Rejection Sensitive Dysphoria

RSD intense emotion/physical pain from perceived or actual rejection, criticism or failure.

RSD occurs in about 95% of all people with ADHD and virtually no one who doesn't have ADHD.

30% of people said it is the most impairing part of having ADHD.

RSD is 100% instantaneous, it can last minutes to months.

Experts suspect it happens due to differences in the brain structure. Those differences mean the brain can't regulate rejection related emotions and behaviours making their emotions and behaviour more intense.

Self Esteem

Through just one day, a child with ADHD can sustain so much damage to their self-esteem. Sometimes they can have good days, and others can just be a downward spiral.

Our aim is to understand what they are going through and build their self-esteem back up again.

We ALL need to - Just be kind!

How do you know if you have ADHD?

We watched the light-hearted butterfly video.

This video is a perfect example of the mental hyperactivity – for example how one thought leads to another thought and then another and so on. Time blindness was demonstrated by him taking a social media break of 5 mins and in reality, ended up with him losing an hour of time. It also highlighted the self-doubt he was feeling – everyone else seems to manage just fine.

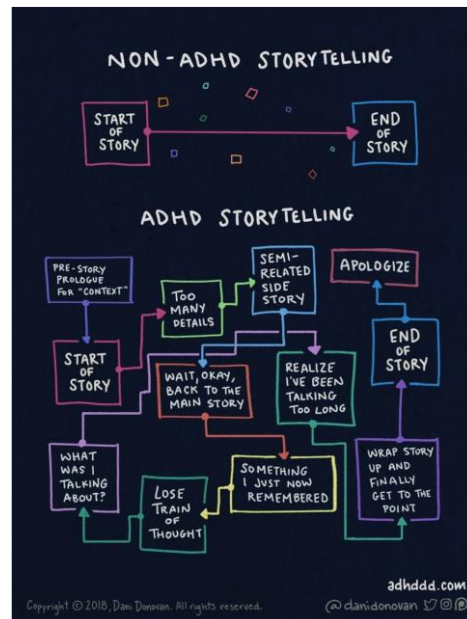
Common Communication Issues

It is thought that there is a delay of up to 3-5 years (or 30%) in normal brain maturing processes which results in structural differences, parts of the brain are less connected than in neurotypical people i.e. a 10 year old may behave like a 7 year old in terms of executive function including emotional regulation, however this is unrelated to intelligence.

It is a spectrum condition so the characteristics can present in mild, moderate or severe format. Each person will present differently. However, for a diagnosis a YP will need to present severe symptoms

ADHD Story telling

- ADHD can cause various speech and language problems such as difficulty organising thoughts, keeping pace in conversation and understanding subtle language cues.

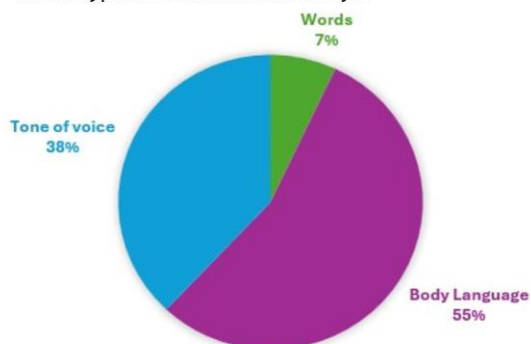


Communication Wheel – Neuro typical vs Neuro diverse

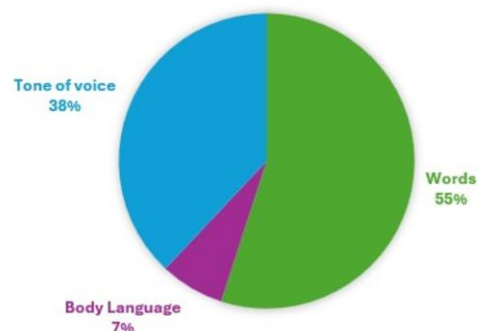
Mis Match of Communication Styles

It is thought that Neurotypical people and Neurodiverse people have a difference in how they process information. This is what communication may look like for each group

Neurotypical Communication Style



Neurodiverse communication Style



Signals aren't always connecting and light bulb activity

For messages to be passed from one area of the brain to another, we need various neurotransmitter chemicals.

Neurotransmitters bridge the synapse gaps between neurons.

The neurotransmitters that ADHD brains often lack are noradrenaline, serotonin and dopamine.

Noradrenaline is to mobilise the brain and body for action; serotonin helps to regulate feelings including happiness and anxiety; dopamine gives feelings of wellbeing and is a main driver of the brains reward system.

People with ADHD don't have a stable supply of neurotransmitters leading to inconsistencies in the symptoms.

When there isn't enough neurotransmitter chemical to bridge the synapse gaps, just like old fashioned fairy lights, if one bulb/bridge isn't working, none of the string works.

It can take 10x longer for a young person with ADHD to reinforce the neural pathway and have a strong connection in their mind for different tasks and activities.

It is important to note that people with ADHD require more processing time on tasks than neurotypical people and you may need to repeat instructions multiple times.

ADHD masking

It is quite common for girls can mask all day, however boys are also known to mask.

Living with undiagnosed ADHD can result in disadvantages, such as a lack of accommodations in the classroom, low self-esteem, and self-blame. When undiagnosed, ADHD can even affect mental health well into adolescence and adulthood.

ADHD In Girls

- ▶ It is estimated that ADHD is diagnosed up to 3 to 9 times more often in males than females, this may be more to do with under identification. Research into girls with ADHD did not start until the 90s.
- ▶ Behaviours in girls with suspected ADHD might look like-
- ▶ Talking all the time including constantly interrupting conversations
- ▶ Frequently crying
- ▶ Trouble paying attention
- ▶ Daydreaming
- ▶ Having a messy workspace
- ▶ Difficulty finishing tasks
- ▶ More likely to be repetitive behaviours such as- hair twirling/pulling, skin picking, nail biting etc.



Session 2

Emotional regulation

Behaviour is a child's loudest voice.

Behind every behaviour is a feeling, behind every feeling is a need, find the need you can then manage the behaviour. Remember that anger is a secondary emotion.

Remember Dan Siegel – Flipping your lid and the anger wheel and the importance of this as children with ADHD have poor self-control due to developmental differences in the prefrontal cortex.

Anger exercise

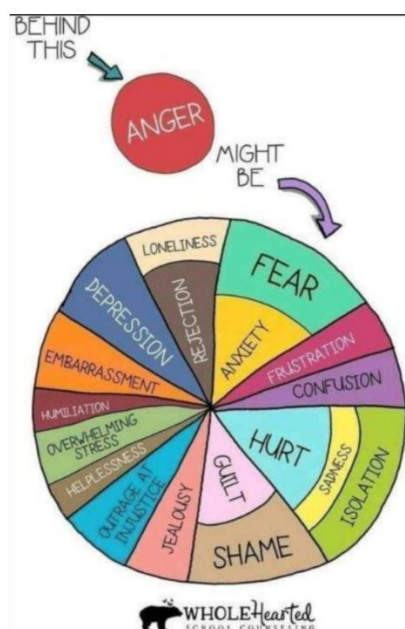
Remember the anger exercise we did, answering the following questions

Things we might do when we are angry

How we feel when we are angry?

How we feel afterwards?

We then explored how we want children to express their anger, there was an opportunity to discuss, adults expectations of children expressing anger in a calm manner even though as adults we sometimes find this difficult ourselves.



SCARED when supporting children regulate big emotions

Helping to regulate big emotions

S	Safe -Clear the decks. Make the area safe
C	Calm -Stay calm, be in control (just one person)
A	Affirmation -Give validation and acknowledge the feelings
R	Routine - Give clear direction with reduced language
E	Empathy -Allow personal space and time
D	Develop an intervention strategy -Praise and reward when the child begins to calm. Offer a calming activity i.e. Lego, screen time etc.

When a child with ADHD enters the blue zone of regulation this may quickly escalate into the red zone due to low threshold to boredom.

On going sanctions for the child's emotional outburst can damage their esteem even further. Restricting break and lunchtimes may lead to further meltdowns due to not having movement breaks.

Making the classroom an enjoyable place to be, so that learning is fun will increase everyone's Dopamine level and improve self-esteem.

Magic Moments, remember when we asked you for your magic moments of the day/week, this strategy can be used in the class, in the staff room, or at home with parents. Focusing on positives, can be shared once a week... my magic moment was when the class lined up for break, or my magic moment was I had a cup of tea made for me.

Tulip Task, remember how you felt when you were given instructions without time to process or any encouragement. Think about when we use verbal instructions through out the day and how the ADHD child may feel frustrated or under pressure to keep up with their peers

Video - Ed Hallowell – American Psychiatrist – Ferrari Brain with Bicycle Brakes!

[Dr. Edward \(Ned\) Hallowell on ADHD: a Ferrari in Your Brain](#)

What can we all do to aid the brakes?

Distractibility = Curiosity

Impulsivity = Creativity

Hyperactivity = Energy

The message was clear we need to prevent the next generation from shame, fear, loss of hope and stopping them giving up on themselves.

Positive qualities of ADHD



Praise is the magic ingredient

- ▶ On Task
- ▶ Positive descriptive praise
- ▶ Indirect praise
- ▶ Praise for being / Praise for doing
- ▶ Praise helps children to remember what we would like them to do
- ▶ Praise helps us to notice all the good about the child
- ▶ Praise = dopamine hit

Helpful Hints

- ▶ Try not to ask the child with ADHD to copy from the board as this adds to the pressure.... Provide a photocopy with bigger text.
- ▶ Allow extra processing time through out the school day.
- ▶ Check out the child's zones of regulation through out the day.
- ▶ Identify the distractions for the child and reflect this in the seating plan.
- ▶ Use Social stories.
- ▶ Provide a safe place.
- ▶ Prepare the ADHD child with potential changes to their day.
- ▶ Be aware, is the child with ADHD socially isolated.
- ▶ Have clear, reasonable and realistic expectations.
- ▶ Regular, positive and consistent communication between school and home.

Winning with ADHD – reinforcing the neural pathways.

Winning with ADHD - we know the following help YP with ADHD

Strategy	How	Comment
Clear Instructions - Visual & Verbal Sequenced steps.	Break tasks down and being clear what comes next by using pictures and word Ask for instructions to be repeated back.	Say what you mean - mean what you say. Helps the child with processing.
Opportunity to switch between tasks	Give child up to 3 different tasks/activities, they can choose to switch after 5 minutes.	ADHD brain thrives on novelty. Timers can be great motivators
Visual Rewards	House Points Magic moments	Having a physical representation
Choices	Provide 2 choices	Too many choices = choice paralysis
Jobs/Movement Breaks	Class Jobs	Good for everyone
Handy Hand	Visual reminder	Life skill

Dos and Donts

Dos work better than Donts – do walk slow – don't run

Using I need you to – becomes about your need rather than the YP

Using the because – ADHD YP like the because – it helps them to understand why they have been asked to do something.

Fidget Aides


A whole school approach?

We used the idea around people wearing glasses – some wear them all the time, some do not or perhaps you might wear them just for reading. If we think about the doing part of the brain being active, it allows the thinking part of the brain to function.

Introducing fidget aides along with boundaries and remember to teach the YP how to use this aid – we wouldn't give a child a crutch and not explain how to use it.

Practice sheet

Giving an "I" Statement



Confused

I feel (say how you feel)

When (describe the situation and avoid using 'you')

answers are called/shouted out

Because (state your need that is not being met and why it matters)

.....

I can't see who understands the question

What I'd like is (describe what would help you to meet your need)

.....

everyone who has the answer to put

their hand up.

.....

Video – suggested for school assembly – helping students and parents understand ADHD

<https://youtu.be/YeamHE6Kank?si=CI4M3AKhL7pgSm4V>

Considerations – session 3!

As a school, what are you already doing to help and include ADHD students?

Is this a whole school approach?

Is there someone who is doubtful about ADHD?

Would you consider having an ADHD champion to represent the students?

What do the children with ADHD bring to your school and classroom.

How will raising your awareness of ADHD change your practise?

How can Barnardo's help?

Out of Hours Helpline for parents/carers (facilitated by Barnardo's)

Call 0300 222 5755 option 4 or email SurreyOutOfHoursTeam@barnardos.org.uk- available from 5.00pm - 11pm, 365 days a year.

Celebrating and Inspiring Children Who Do It Differently (facilitated by Barnardo's)

A team coming into school to work directly with a few nominated young people showing traits of ADHD – email ADHDpositivity@barnardos.org.uk for enquiries.

Feedback – Please can we ask all those who attended this training to complete this quick 14 questioned feedback form – this information helps us to improve our service so we can continue to provide ADHD awareness training across Surrey schools.

Feedback form for ADHD
Awareness Training



Thank you for inviting us into your school.

Kind Regards,

Jo & Carol

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