

# QUIET!!! Supporting ADHD Staff in Libraries

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UNC Greensboro





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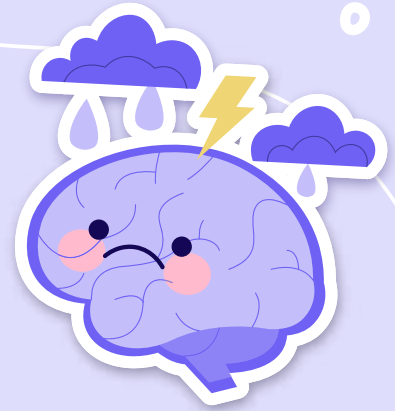
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Slides available at <https://go.uncg.edu/quietncla>



# Who Are We?



## Amy

- She/her
- Assistant Dean for Teaching and Learning at UNCG
- Diagnosed with ADHD two years ago

## Ian

- He/they
- GA at the UNCG Teaching Resources Center
- Reference, Outreach, and Instruction Intern at the Jackson Library
- Diagnosed with ADHD as a child, redocumented the diagnosis last year

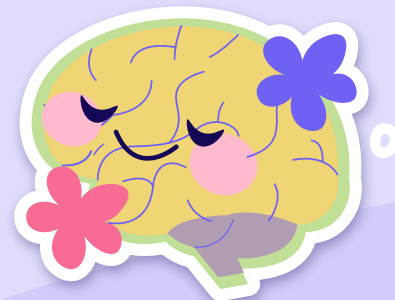


# Introduction

ADDitude Magazine (2018) has listed Librarian as the 5th worst job for people with ADHD. After all, "Librarians are masters of quiet, self-guided organization" (para.10).



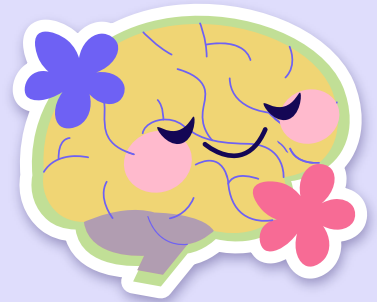
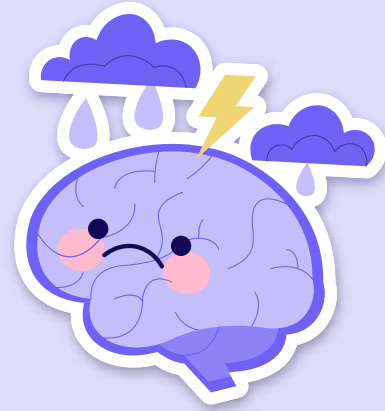
And ADHDers are....not.



01

# Introduction

Why are we talking about ADHD?





# What is ADHD?

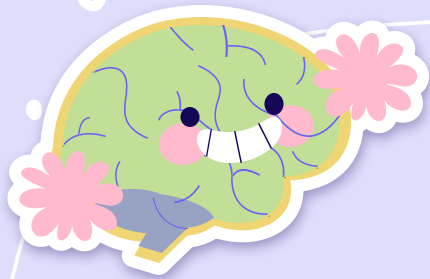
ADHD is a brain disorder associated with low levels of dopamine.

Three types:

- Impulsive/Hyperactive (least common)
- Inattentive
- Combined (most common)

(Johns Hopkins, n. d.)





# What is ADHD?

## Models of Mental Health and Disability

### Medical

- Symptom based
- Categorizes "disordered" brains

a persistent pattern of inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity that interferes with functioning or development.

(DSM V, 2013 qtd CDC, 2022)

### Social

- Separates "impairment" from "disability"
- Makes societal barriers the "problem", not the individual

"Disability is something imposed on top of our impairments...Disabled people are therefore an oppressed group."

(UPIAS, 1975 qtd Shakespeare, 2010)

### Neurodiversity

- Sees differences rather than "disorders" or "impairments"
- Eliminates stigma to foster self-esteem and resilience.

People with learning or thinking differences are "wired" differently than their peers.

(*What Is Neurodiversity?*, 2020)

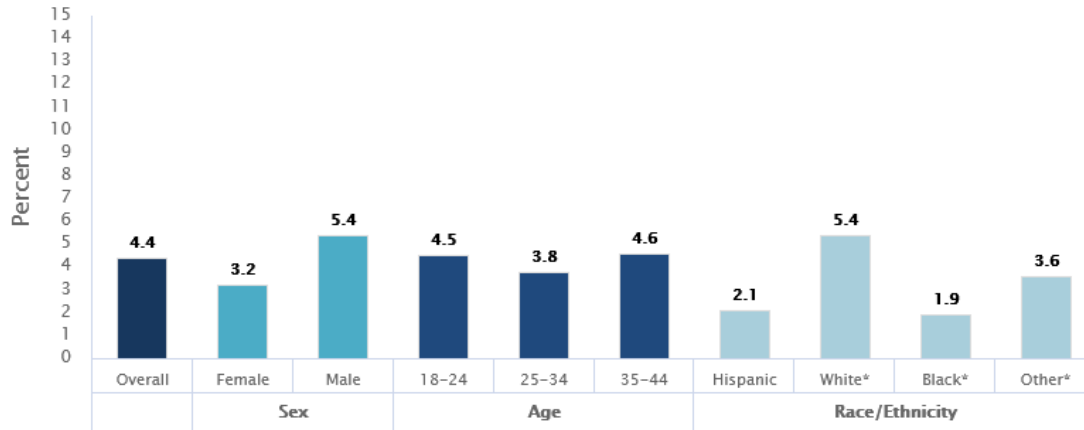
## Prevalence of ADHD Among Adults

- Based on diagnostic interview data from the National Comorbidity Survey Replication (NCS-R), Figure 4 shows the estimated prevalence of adults aged 18 to 44 years with a current diagnosis of ADHD.<sup>5</sup>
  - The overall prevalence of current adult ADHD is 4.4%.
  - Prevalence was higher for males (5.4%) versus females (3.2%).
  - The non-Hispanic white group (5.4%) had a higher prevalence than all other race/ethnicity groups.
- The estimated lifetime prevalence of ADHD in U.S. adults aged 18 to 44 years was 8.1%.<sup>6</sup>

Figure 4

### Prevalence of Current ADHD Among U.S. Adults (2001–2003)

Data from National Comorbidity Survey Replication (NCS-R)



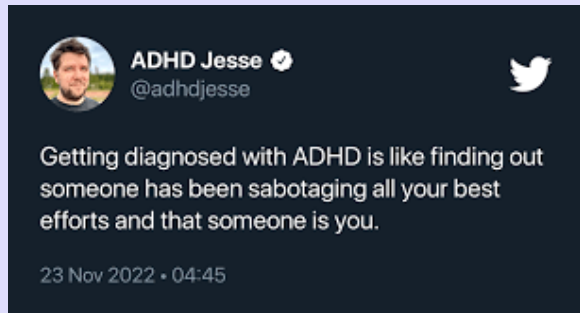
(NIH, n.d.)





# ADHD Diagnoses (or not)

- In one study (Oliva et al., 2021) adults experienced a median time of 17 years between onset of symptoms and diagnosis
- People with ADHD-inattentive type were had a longer time between onset and diagnosis, as well as people who were employed, and people who had a genetic predisposition to ADHD



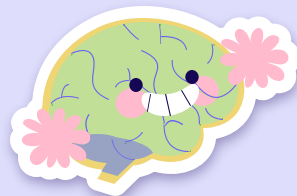
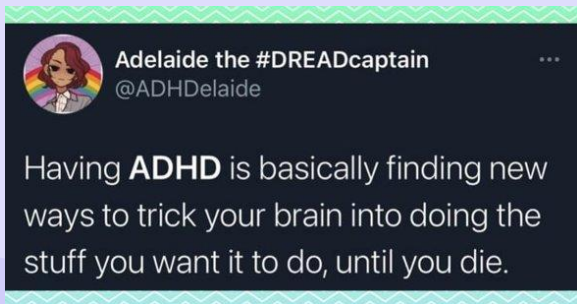
## How I felt before I was diagnosed with ADHD:



# Women and ADHD and Librarianship

82.2% of librarians are women, according to the Current Population Survey (2023).

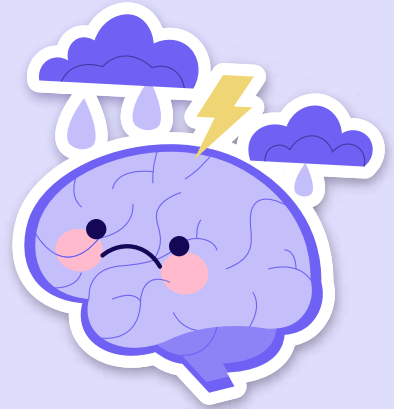
Women and girls are more likely to not be diagnosed with ADHD until adulthood due to differences in ADHD presentation. Girls are more likely to present as inattentive and less organized while boys are more likely to be hyperactive or impulsive (CHADD, n. d.)



02

# ADHD in the workplace

Because executive functioning isn't just for home



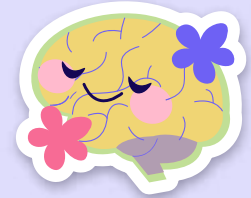
# ADHD and Disclosure

There are a variety of reasons people with ADHD may not want to disclose:

- Fear of stigma (true for a variety of invisible/concealable disabilities) (MacIntosh et al., 2022)
- In a Danish study, people with ADHD made less money than their same-sex siblings (Daley et al., 2019)
- According to a 2019 survey (Biospace), 70% of survey participants believed that ADHD is overdiagnosed and 46% believed that children grow out of ADHD.



# ADHD and the law



ADHD is covered under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which means that:

- Workplaces with more than 15 employees and/or state or local government agencies must provide reasonable accommodations

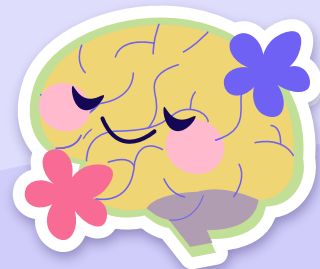
In the ADA, disability is defined as “a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of such individual” where major life activities “include, but are not limited to, caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, seeing, hearing, eating, sleeping, walking, standing, lifting, bending, speaking, breathing, learning, reading, concentrating, thinking, communicating, and working” (2008)

So people with ADHD may qualify for “reasonable accommodations” under the ADA if they meet the threshold for disability



“I once disclosed my ADHD to an employer at a previous job and it was used against me at every turn. Every small mistake, every tardy arrival to work, every time I had to ask for something to be repeated, I was confronted with ‘If you can’t control your ADHD, it’s going to affect your future with [Company].’ Occasionally, when I was working hard and really ‘in the zone,’ my boss would make a comment like ‘Looks like someone doubled-up on the Ritalin today!’ My ADHD is unmedicated and untreated. It was mortifying and absolutely affected the way I was viewed and treated by the organization. Since leaving that company, I have never again disclosed my diagnosis of ADHD to any employer or coworker. – Female middle manager participant, age 35.”

**From MacIntosh et al, 2022, p. 228**



# ADHD from an Asset Perspective

- Adults with ADHD have scored higher on real world creative tasks (White & Shah, 2011).
- Sedgwick et. al. (2018) interviewed men with ADHD who named the following positive aspects of their ADHD: “divergent thinking, hyper-focus, nonconformist, adventurousness, self-acceptance and sublimation” (p. 244).
- “The student with ADD/ADHD is frequently excellent at brainstorming and may be the ‘king or queen of possibilities’” (Alcock & Ryan, 2000, p. 9).
- Excel at intuitive decision making (Wiklund et. al., 2016).

@jennhasadhd

Life with ADHD be like:



Doing my  
own tasks



Helping others  
with their tasks



René Brooks | Black Girl, Lost Keys  
@blkgirllostkeys



The ADHD brain is a marvel and one of the places it truly shines is in a total emergency situation.

I never feel more clear headed, more in control, or more able to confidently call the shots and call them perfectly than when everything is in utter peril.

19 Feb 2021 • 22:03

# Why (some types of) librarianship MAY be ideal for folks with ADHD

Many people with ADHD:

- Function well when their days vary widely
- Are excellent at brainstorming ideas
- "Think outside the box"
- Are great at group work (because they excel at helping others complete tasks, work best with accountability, and the ones with anxiety are afraid to let others down!)
- Are willing to try new things and take risks



autismhq

adhd culture is writing fast but having your mind go even faster so you accidentally a few words

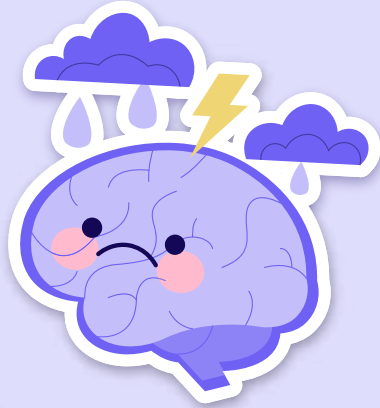
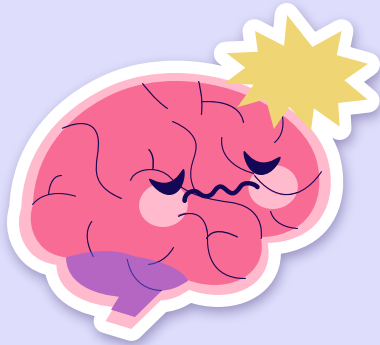
72,924 notes

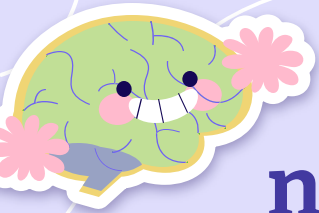




03

# Supporting Colleagues and/or Employees with ADHD





# Create an environment where neurodiverse people feel welcome

- Be aware of microaggressions
- Provide flexibility (think Universal Design for Learning)
- Be the kind of boss/colleague someone would feel comfortable disclosing to (but don't armchair diagnose anyone!)
- Consider psychological safety



Me, trying to be calm, cool, and non-judgmental as someone 'explains' why ADHD is not a real thing.



I should be a therapist, or spy, or something.

Rick Green

[TotallyADD.com](http://TotallyADD.com)

# **(Many) People with ADHD Thrive in Environments with:**

- Opportunities for movement
- Regular and (fairly) immediate feedback
- Deadlines with flexibility
- Clear, regular communication
- Structure (but not too much!)

(Scottish ADHD Coalition, 2022)

# Possible helpful accommodations

- Providing interruption-free work time
- Allowing work from home or a private office
- Noise-cancelling headphones
- Provide to-do lists
- Helping prioritize most important tasks
- Providing assistive technology, like timers
- Give deadlines
- Provide instructions in writing
- Sensory considerations
- Having task-based workstations
- Reconsidering meeting frequency

(mostly from Davenport, 2023)

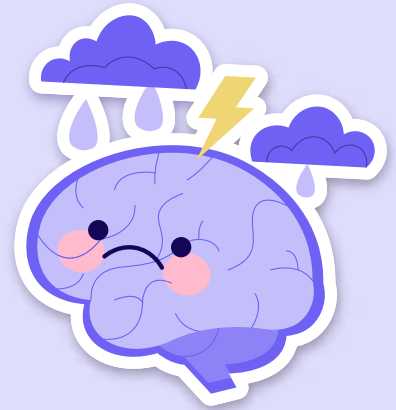
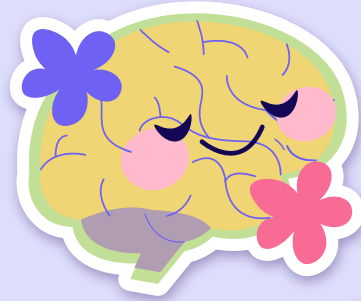
 **adhdfeelsandmemes**  
complete silence is more distracting than background noise and you can fight me on this

 **adhdfeelsandmemes**  
let me explain, if I don't have background noise my brain will make it's own background noise and Brain Background Noise is infinitely more distracting than Regular Background Noise  
Source: adhdfeelsandmemes

04

# ADHD and Self-Advocacy

Because haunted houses aren't scary enough



# Why is self-advocacy hard?

- There's a 25% comorbidity rate between ADHD and anxiety (D'Agati et al., 2019)
- People with ADHD are used to being ignored and invalidated



ADHDer  
advocating  
for themselves



ADHDer  
advocating  
for someone else

*When you've got to do a high executive function task with a low dopamine reward:*



# Why/How we should do it anyway

- Know your rights- talk to your medical professional about whether or not you qualify for accommodations under the ADA
- Even if you don't qualify, you can still ask for help!
- How to do it:
  - Make a list of accommodations you think would help, from the BIG (private office space) to the SMALL (written directions instead of spoken), keeping in mind you unlikely to get everything you ask for
  - Practice with someone you trust
  - Pretend you're advocating for someone else
  - Be prepared to offer a trial period for any changes



# TL;DL

- It is entirely possible that someone you work with or who works for you has ADHD
- They may or may not tell you for a variety of reasons
- Many people, especially women, are not diagnosed with ADHD until adulthood
- Do what you can to create an environment where neurodiverse people feel welcome
- If you have ADHD, advocate for yourself!

@adhdelite

Interviewer: So where do you see yourself in five years?

Me: I'd say my biggest weakness is listening





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# Further Resources

Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder  
(CHADD)

Attention Deficit Disorder Association

National Resource Center on ADHD

How To ADHD

Black Girl, Lost Keys

Accommodation and Compliance: ADHD (from Job Accommodation  
Network)

20 Signs and Symptoms of ADHD in Girls (this is the article Amy referred to in  
the presentation that she didn't save)

# Thanks!

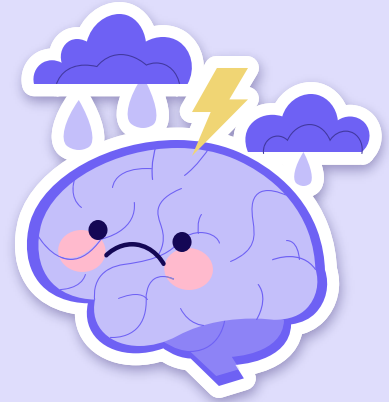
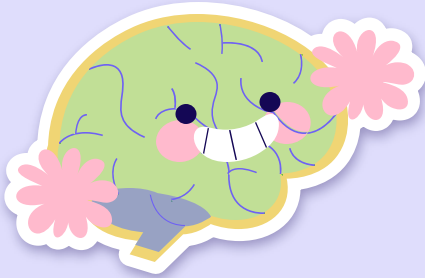
Do you have any questions?

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Slides available at:

<https://go.uncg.edu/quietncla>



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