

Supporting Employees with ADHD

ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) presents unique challenges in the workplace, but with the right support, employees can thrive. This guide provides strategies to help managers foster an inclusive environment and empower employees with ADHD to succeed.



Embracing Neurodiversity

Recognising and valuing neurodiversity is key to supporting employees with ADHD. ADHD is not a limitation but a different way of thinking and working. By creating an inclusive environment and providing equal opportunities, managers can help employees harness their strengths and perform at their best.

Understanding ADHD

ADHD presents in three main subtypes:

1. **Combined Presentation** – Symptoms of inattention and hyperactivity/impulsivity.
2. **Inattentive Presentation** – Difficulty focusing without hyperactivity.
3. **Hyperactive/Impulsive Presentation** – High energy levels & impulsivity without attention difficulties.

Common Challenges and How to Support Employees

Employees with ADHD may face workplace challenges related to time management, emotional regulation, and impulse control. These difficulties can impact their ability to meet deadlines, stay organised, and effectively manage workplace relationships. However, with the right strategies and support, employees with ADHD can overcome these challenges and thrive in their roles.

Time Management

Employees with ADHD may struggle with prioritising tasks, estimating how long a task will take, and staying organised. They may procrastinate or hyperfocus on one aspect of a project while neglecting others.

- Work collaboratively with employees to identify what supports they need.
- Use visual tools like digital planners and wall calendars.
- Break tasks into manageable steps with clear deadlines.
- Clarify expectations about the level of detail required.
- Encourage the use of time management techniques such as the Pomodoro Technique and the 2-Minute Rule.
- Provide regular check-ins to help employees stay on track.

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Emotional Regulation

Some employees with ADHD experience heightened emotional responses, particularly in response to feedback or perceived criticism. Rejection Sensitivity Dysphoria (RSD) can cause strong emotional reactions to perceived failures or setbacks, which may affect confidence and workplace interactions.

- Be mindful of how feedback is delivered, using a strengths-based approach.
- Encourage open communication to build trust and reduce anxiety.
- Use the 'sandwich model'—pairing constructive feedback with positive reinforcement.
- Foster a workplace culture that encourages psychological safety.

Impulsivity and Hyperactivity

Employees with ADHD may interrupt conversations, struggle with self-regulation, or feel restless in office environments. This can impact teamwork and communication.

- Allow movement breaks and flexible work arrangements.
- Provide fidget tools to help with focus.
- Reduce environmental distractions where possible.
- Encourage self-regulation strategies such as mindfulness and breathing exercises.
- Seek employee input on how they prefer to receive feedback and communication.

Leveraging Strengths

ADHD can bring unique advantages to the workplace, including:

- Creative problem-solving and innovation.
- Strong adaptability and multitasking abilities.
- High energy and enthusiasm that can motivate teams.
- Hyperfocus on tasks they find engaging, leading to exceptional work quality.

Building an Inclusive Workplace

Creating a supportive work environment benefits everyone. Encourage teamwork, flexibility, and open discussions about workplace accommodations. When employees feel valued and understood, they are more likely to thrive and contribute meaningfully to the organisation.

Support Services

Employees can access free, confidential counselling through your organisation's Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

For managers seeking guidance on workplace challenges related to ADHD, AWS offers a Manager Initiated Referral service, which includes coaching sessions tailored to specific employee needs. Contact AWS for more information.

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References and Additional Resources:

- 10 Common ADHD Mistakes at Work and How to Overcome Them. <https://neurolaunch.com/adhd-mistakes-at-work/>
- ADHD at Work. <https://add.org/managing-employees-with-adhd/>
- American Psychiatric Association. (2013). Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (5th ed.). Washington, DC.
- How to Succeed at Work with ADHD (and How Employers Can Help). <https://www.beyondclinics.co.uk/guides-resources/how-to-succeed-at-work-with-adhd-and-how-employers-can-help>
- Managing Employees with ADHD: 8 Strategies for Success. <https://fitsmallbusiness.com/managing-employees-with-adhd/>
- The Impact of ADHD on Work Performance: Understanding and Managing Challenges in the Workplace. <https://neurolaunch.com/how-does-adhd-affect-work/>

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