

## The ADHD National Gazette



We are pleased to present our 2023 Autumn newsletter:

**In an analysis of enquiries to the National Helpline, it was evident from the results that there is a high increase in the demand for the service.**

The team has managed a significant increase in more complex enquiries to the helpline and has determined the need to increase resources.

The ADHD Foundation HR team are delighted to advise the appointment of four excellent and dedicated candidates to Director positions. You will find more information about the ADHD Foundation Team on our website shortly. As we branch into many projects over the coming months, we call for volunteers with specific skills to support our work. If you are interested, you will find more details on our **website**.

Thank you for being part of the ADHD Foundations community, and we hope you find interesting information in this edition of the ADHD Foundation National Gazette.

**Our Feature Article**  
**ADHD and Eating**  
**Disorders**



*Dympna Brbich, Chair/Director*

### What's inside

1. Our Activities for Quarter 1 2023
2. ADHD in the Media
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4. ADHD Diagnosis: Psychologist or Psychiatrist?
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# Our Activities for First Quarter 2023

In the first three months of 2023, stage 1 of our upscaled ADHD Australian Helpline infrastructure development has been finalised. The next stage in this second quarter begins with recruiting additional qualified volunteers to support the growing demand for ADHD support and services.

As our new and not-so-new Foundation Team gathers momentum, there is no time like the present to become involved. We are about to launch our new **ADHD Hero Volunteer site**, and you will find this on our website shortly.

We appreciate our current donors and welcome new donors, so let us all spread the good news. We would not be able to achieve our far-reaching goals and support the Australian ADHD Community without your financial support, our dedicated volunteer-led teams, and our expert team of speakers who provide our community with insights and information regularly.

The ADHD Foundation Information Technology team has been busy behind the scenes and is almost ready to launch our brand-new **membership site**. Here is a selection of information prepared specifically for our members. You will receive an email about the changes if you are an existing member. For new members waiting to join, stay tuned for more details.

Our ADHD Advocacy team have also been raising the bar through an appointment with MPs to advocate for our ADHD community in Australia. We will be uploading the ADHD Foundation's submission to the Senate enquiry on behalf of the ADHD Community prior to the closing date on 6th June 2023. By bringing our experiences together, we can drastically improve the quality and distribution of ADHD support services.

## Hear some of the stories to come out of our essential Helpline service:

I phoned feeling quite desperate, as I've not had any good news regarding a psychiatrist or psychologist in the years that I've been searching for one for my daughter. Now I have some hope. Thank you for your kindness.

This was the best experience I've ever had when looking for help. I am very pleasantly surprised and appreciate the support.

You're amazing! Thanks heaps to all the Helpline volunteers for helping me & others. You are a super special person.

It was very helpful to talk to the volunteer on the helpline about some confusion I had about the information the doctor had given me. They were extremely supportive and kind which calmed me down a lot.



# End of Financial Year Donation Drive

As you may know, ADHD Foundation in Australia is a non-profit charity. Unlike other organisations, we have no shareholders, employees, or products we sell for profit. We are committed to responsible and ethical standards free from commercial or political influences to provide independent information about your ADHD.

The ADHD Foundation in Australia operates an extraordinarily successful ADHD Helpline nationally. It remains FREE for everyone and is staffed 100% with qualified and highly knowledgeable volunteers.

But we can't do it alone. We need your help to keep our helpline running and expand our services to reach more needy people. That's why we are launching our End of Financial Year Donation Drive!

This is your chance to make a difference in the lives of thousands of people who struggle with ADHD daily. By donating to our helpline, you are helping us to:

- **Answer** more calls and emails from people seeking advice, guidance and referrals;
- **Train** more volunteers to provide peer support and empathy;
- **Develop** more educational materials to raise awareness and understanding of ADHD; and
- **Advocate** for better policies and practices to improve the outcomes and well-being of people with ADHD.

Every donation goes directly to providing services, not on big salaries, fancy offices. Every contribution, no matter if it is big or small, helps to sustain and increase ADHD support and services. And every donation is tax-deductible.

We do not receive any government funding to run our services. Still, we understand the needs of the ADHD community and are committed to providing and increasing our services as a non-profit charity.

This is your chance to become an ADHD Hero and help to make a difference in the lives of thousands of people who struggle with ADHD every day.

**Why not donate today and help us make a difference!?**



You can donate online through our website:

[Donate - ADHD Foundation Australia.](https://www.adhdfoundation.org.au/donate)

Thank you for your generosity and support. Together, we can make a positive impact on the ADHD community!



# Teacher's Input to Classroom Research



## Are you a teacher, principal or support staff working with students with ADHD?

ADHD Foundation is seeking input from school staff who support students with ADHD to inform the research we are undertaking. We would like feedback on the following:

- Understanding how students with ADHD learn most effectively
- Information, tools and training that would help facilitate better learning environments for students with ADHD
- Behavioural strategies that help students with ADHD thrive at school

**Please fill in this anonymous 5 min survey by 18 May.**

**If you'd like to give more in-depth information, we are holding consultations with several staff**

Please email [office@adhdfoundation.org.au](mailto:office@adhdfoundation.org.au) to let us know if you're interested, and we welcome any recommendations/solutions you would like to provide.

The ADHD Foundation operates as a not-for-profit charity registered with the ACNC. For more information, please see our website ADHD Foundation & Community in Australia



# ADHD in the Media

Being a national ADHD charity operating in all states and territories in Australia, we work with government agencies, organisations, support groups and online groups to build and grow awareness of the needs of those living with ADHD.

Below are some links to areas where ADHD organisations have been involved with other features coming up over the month or so. You will find more details further on in the newsletter:

## Can people with ADHD access the right treatment and care?

**ABC Radio, with Dr Michele Toner (ADHD Coach) and Dr Dorgival Caetano (Psychiatrist) (January 2023)**

[READ MORE >>](#)

More and more adults are being diagnosed and treated, but can all those who need help access what **can be** expensive, assessment and care?  
Keep listening to ABC Radio for more upcoming ADHD broadcasts.

## Why Women Are Ditching Their Jobs To Care For Kids With ADHD

**Primer Magazine, Felicity Robinson (Co-Founder)**

[READ MORE >>](#)

While flexible working hours is now mainstream, not all jobs can accommodate this – and not all employers are willing to. Against this background, many women decide to press pause on their careers, with the inevitable personal and financial cost of raising children with ADHD.

## Parents fear sending unmedicated kids to school with med shortage

**Washington Post, Jackie Spinner (April 2023)**

[READ MORE >>](#)

The ADHD med shortage is creating huge problems in the US for children — and adults — who rely on the prescriptions. Parents shared stories of frantic calls to pharmacies to find meds in stock and limiting doses on the weekends to save for school days.

## Discovering an ADHD Diagnosis Later in Life

**Medicare Live Better Issue, Tim Maguire**

[READ MORE >>](#)

Around 1 in 20 Australians live with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), many of whom were only diagnosed as adults. Judith and Mark were interviewed about their journeys to adult diagnosis and treatment and what life looks like now.

## Australia to ban non-prescription vapes in biggest smoking reforms in a decade (msn.com)

**The Guardoam. Melissa Davey Medical Editor**

[READ MORE >>](#)

To tackle youth vaping, minimum quality standards for vapes will be introduced including restricting flavours, colours and other ingredients.



# New Research and Guidelines

## Adults with ADHD - Experience of Medication Effectiveness.

**Australasian Psychiatry, Adrian Sandhu, Joy Toll and Alison Poulton (2020)**

READ MORE >>

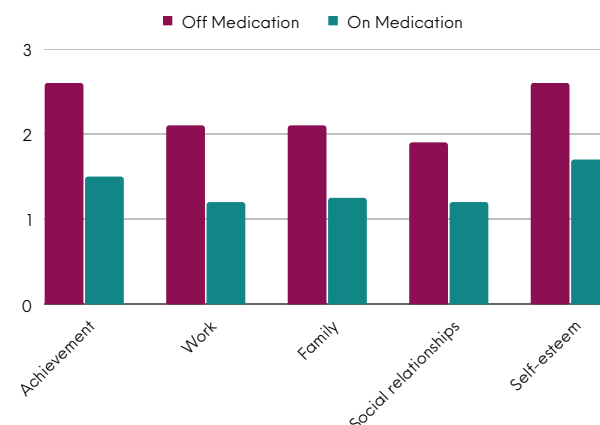
Adults attending meetings of 'ADDults with ADHD', (a community support organisation) reported suffering years of impaired functioning due to ADHD before they were diagnosed and treated.

This paper, which highlights the importance of medication to adults with ADHD comes at an opportune time. ADHD – which is for the most part untreated – currently costs the Australian community some **\$20 billion each year** (Deloitte Access Economics 2019), as well as impacting countless lives.

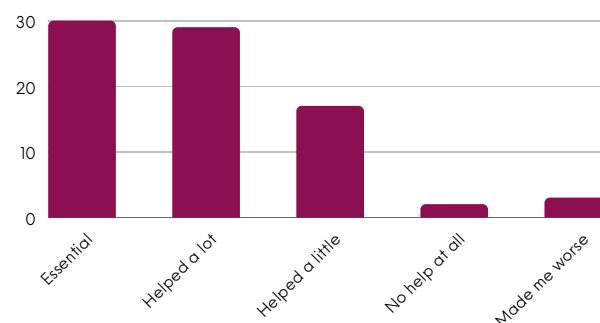
In our study, adults diagnosed with ADHD were invited to express their views on medication. We found that it made an overwhelming difference in their ability to function in the family, at their employment and socially, with a corresponding improvement in their self-esteem.

The need is now to increase the capacity of psychiatry for adults with ADHD to function more efficiently and increase their contribution to society.

**Fig. 1 Self-rated impairment of 117 adults with ADHD on and off medication.**



**Fig. 2 Opinion of 82 adults with ADHD on medication**



"The ADHD Foundation would like to congratulate Adrian Sandhu, Department of Consultation-Liaison Psychiatry, Blacktown Hospital, Australia Joy Toll Australian ADHD Foundation ADHD, Australia Alison Poulton Brain Mind Centre Nepean, University of Sydney, Australia, for their success in having this research work published in the Australasian Psychiatry."

## Better diagnosis, treatment and Care for ADHD

**Mark Butler, Minister for Health and Aged Care. Press report (October 2022)**

READ MORE >>

The Australian Evidence-Based Clinical Practice Guideline for ADHD provides a summary of scientific evidence and advice on the identification, diagnosis, support and treatment options for ADHD, including options with, and without, the use of medication.

The Australian Government provided \$1.5 million to the Australian ADHD Professionals Association to develop the Guideline with a focus on everyday functioning and quality of life based on age, gender, culture, setting and geography.

It will help inform clinicians, including medical and allied health professionals, nurses, pharmacists, and those involved in the support of people with ADHD such as educators and families, to drive improvements in care across Australia.

**Find the guideline and summary of recommendations [here](#).**





# Understanding ADHD: A more accurate Diagnosis

Diana Babajanyan , Leanne Freame, Ray Steele and Alison Poulton



## Understanding Attentional Functioning in Adult Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder—Could This Improve Diagnostic Specificity?

In a study released this week in the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, researchers at Macquarie and Sydney University found that understanding attentional function in adults with ADHD could help provide patients with a more specific diagnosis.

This in turn could help bridge the gap between adults with ADHD and the public's understanding of what ADHD is, including in workplace settings and in relationships.

The study looked at participants with the disorder in a workshop setting. The participants could describe very clearly how their attentional difficulties reduced their efficiency, making it harder for them to function in their daily living, studies or work.

Three distinct patterns were described: complete lapses in attention; giving only partial attention to a task; and attending to multiple tasks and distractions, either simultaneously or in rapid sequence.

These results could lead to a better understanding of ADHD in terms of attention deficits and improve societal understanding of the disorder.

## ADHD in adults can look very different than in children

In the workplace especially, ADHD can be a cause of chronic inefficiency. It therefore needs to be recognized so that appropriate strategies and supports can be put in place.

ADHD in adults is relatively under-researched and not well understood by the general public, and even among some health professionals there is skepticism and stigma towards adults with ADHD.

Lead author Dr Poulton of the Brain and Mind Centre, Sydney University said, 'There's still work to be done in understanding the nuances of ADHD and how we can bring on board family members, friends health professionals and the public including employers to be more empathetic and sensitive to their needs.'

This study sheds light the way that ADHD affects people's functioning, giving us a more detailed understanding about what it means to have ADHD.'

In the last few years, ADHD has had renewed interest in the media but there is still more work to be done in understanding the varying symptoms, signs and differences between adults and children.



# Atomoxetine - Strattera Update



**Please note that Lilly is discontinuing the supply of its Strattera® capsules in Australia due to global supply constraints, which will result in stock depletions in 2023.**

**[CLICK HERE FOR AN UPDATE AND AVAILABLE BRANDS \(PBS\)](#)**

The ADHD Foundation team have provided an update below; however, in Australia currently, there is no shortage of Atomoxetine which is the ingredient used in Strattera. Two other manufacturers have listed this medication on the PBS.

**Apotex Pty Ltd (Manufacturer code: TX)**

**Sandoz Pty Ltd (Manufacturer code: SZ)**

## **Update provided by Eli Lilly:**

The anticipated timing of stock depletion is based on current demand and varies by dose from April to September 2023. Please have a look at the TGA Medicine Shortage Reports Database for more information. Strattera will be delisted from PBS on 1 April 2023. This means that from 1 April 2023, patients can access Strattera (subject to product availability) via private script only.

Just so you know, only the Lilly atomoxetine, Strattera, is being discontinued. Several patient therapeutic alternatives are available, and PBS is listed in Australia. By announcing the discontinuation of Strattera, we anticipate that prescribing physicians and their patients will have sufficient time to discuss alternative options and make a switch to meet ongoing treatment needs.

Lilly is not able to provide recommendations regarding alternative therapy choices. Patients are advised to consult their relevant prescribing physician on alternative therapies. Further information on alternative brands of atomoxetine HCl can be found on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) website.





# ADHD Diagnosis: Pathway to Diagnosis?



## We know that gaining an ADHD Diagnosis for Adults has reached a crisis point.

Currently, obtaining an appointment with a Psychiatrist is extremely difficult. Most psychiatrists around Australia have had to close their books to new clients, and where it is possible to get an appointment, the wait can be between 3 and 6 months. (This differs from state to state).

Whilst the ADHD Foundation team try to stay up to date with the ever-changing availability of medical practitioners, this can change weekly as appointments fill quickly.

When you have the name of an available psychiatrist, please do not put them up on social media. Their books will close quickly, and you may not be able to get back in for a change of dosage or script renewal.

A **psychiatrist** is a medical doctor specialising in diagnosing, treating, and managing mental health conditions.

Psychiatrists in Australia have completed medical school and a residency in psychiatry, a specialised medical field that focuses on mental health.

Psychiatrists are licensed to prescribe medication and can provide medical treatments such as electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) for severe mental health conditions.

## What are some of the differences?

### Prescribing Medication

Psychiatrists are licensed medical doctors authorized to prescribe medications, including those used to treat ADHD. Psychologists cannot prescribe medication for ADHD. Only Psychiatrists can do this. A psychologist's diagnosis is generally insufficient for this purpose.

### Diagnosis

Psychiatrists may approach the diagnostic process from a medical perspective. They may conduct a physical exam and order laboratory tests to rule out other medical conditions that can mimic the symptoms of ADHD. Most psychiatrists are required to complete a diagnosis at an initial appointment.

### Ongoing Treatment

Psychiatrists may prescribe medication to help manage ADHD symptoms, such as stimulants or non-stimulants. In addition to medication management, psychiatrists may provide psychotherapy and behavioural interventions as part of a comprehensive treatment plan. Psychologists are the lower cost option in providing ongoing non-medicated interventions.



## Making your decision

### Maximising your options

While there are many effective psychotherapy solutions, it is important considering the substantial cost no matter the option, that a diagnosis from a psychiatrist allows for as many treatment options as possible, including medications.

### ADHD-specific Training

Ensure that the healthcare professional you choose is qualified and experienced in diagnosing and treating ADHD. ADHD was first recognized as a disorder in the 1960s, and our understanding of the condition has continued to evolve since then.

New research has led to changes in how we diagnose and treat ADHD, and these changes may not be immediately apparent to all healthcare professionals.

### Costs & Financial Supports

Psychiatrists are medical doctors, and their fees are typically higher than those of psychologists. However, if medication is required as part of the treatment plan, you may be eligible for a Medicare rebate, which can help to make it more affordable.

Psychologists' fees are generally lower than those of psychiatrists, and if you see a psychologist for an ADHD diagnosis, you may also be eligible for a Medicare rebate.

However, you may need a referral for a psychiatrist diagnosis for medication to be a treatment option at an additional cost.



## Challenges to look out for

### Comorbidities

ADHD frequently co-occurs with other mental health conditions, such as depression, anxiety, and substance use disorders. This can make it challenging to disentangle the symptoms of ADHD from those of other conditions and can complicate the diagnostic process.

### Variability of Symptoms

ADHD symptoms can vary in severity and can present differently in different individuals. This can make it challenging for healthcare professionals to diagnose ADHD, especially in cases where the symptoms are mild or do not fit the stereotypical "hyperactive" presentation of ADHD.

## Finding the right treatment

It's important to work closely with a healthcare professional experienced in treating ADHD to develop an individualised treatment plan that meets the individual's specific needs and preferences. This may involve a combination of medication and non-medication treatments, such as psychotherapy, behavioural interventions, and lifestyle changes.

If you would like some support in progressing your journey with ADHD or a family member, we provide our Helpline. This service is provided to help you find solutions and help you with referrals.

### ADHD Foundation Website:

[www.adhdfoundation.org.au](http://www.adhdfoundation.org.au)

### ADHD National Helpline:

Contact us at 1300 39 39 19



# The Link Between ADHD and Eating Disorders



**Before we start:** If you or someone you know is struggling with an eating disorder, please immediately consult your doctor, who will refer you to relevant healthcare professionals. Remember, seeking help and support is a courageous and essential step towards recovery.

Here are a few resources that may help:

- [Eating Disorders Australia](#)
- [Eating Disorders Families Australia](#)
- [National Eating Disorders Collaboration](#)
- [The Butterfly Foundation](#)

Over the past three months, the Australian ADHD Helpline volunteers have been fielding more and more complex enquiries from our ADHD community, seeking direction and support. Many of these calls relate to the connection between eating disorders and ADHD. This article has information that may be helpful to those wanting to learn more about the relationship between these two conditions.

## Types of Eating Disorders

- **Bulimia nervosa:** A person with this eating disorder will binge on large amounts of food in a short space of time and then “compensate” by exercising excessively or purging, which may involve vomiting or using laxatives.
- **Binge eating disorder (BED):** This is similar to bulimia, but people do not engage in compensatory behaviours.
- **Anorexia nervosa:** People with anorexia nervosa, known as anorexia, severely restrict their food intake, and they may rely on a limited number of “safe” foods.

## How they Overlap with ADHD

For patients with ADHD and an eating disorder, clinicians must understand the interplay between conditions and actively treat both.

ADHD commonly overlaps with eating disorders, in part due to traits like impulsivity, executive function deficits, low dopamine production, and more. Research shows a link between ADHD and certain eating disorders, such as bulimia and BED. ADHD does not appear to have an association with anorexia.

This may be due to the fact that overeating is an impulsive behaviour, while undereating is a restrictive behaviour.

## Biological and Genetic Factors

The ADHD brain produces insufficient dopamine, a neurochemical implicated in reward, which may cause individuals to seek satisfaction through food. ADHD brains have lower levels of GABA, a neurochemical implicated in inhibition.

Purging can be a euphoric, almost addictive form of stimulation that increases dopamine levels. Restrictive behaviours can build up reward sensitivity – individuals may purposely restrict food so that when they do eat, it is much more rewarding to them.

Dopamine receptors could overlap with obesity, binge eating, and ADHD. ADHD brains take longer to absorb glucose than non-ADHD brains, which could lead to higher sugar and simple carb consumption.



### Cognitive Factors

Individuals with ADHD, like those with eating disorders, have poor interoceptive awareness, which affects the ability to understand hunger and satiety cues. Planning and decision-making around food can be difficult, which can contribute to impulsive eating or even restriction to avoid the executive task of preparing food.

Individuals with ADHD may also struggle with self-regulation and have difficulty resisting the temptation of high-calorie foods or strict diets, leading to overeating or other unhealthy eating behaviours.

A [2022 mini-review](#) found that children with ADHD may be more likely to engage in impulsive behaviours such as binge eating, which can lead to weight gain and further exacerbate their eating disorder symptoms later in life.

### Behavioural Factors

Poor sleeping habits can dysregulate the metabolism, while poor impulse control and irregular eating schedule can contribute to overeating, and issues with self-regulation can make it difficult to know the quantity eaten.

A 2013 study found that certain traits of ADHD were more strongly associated with eating disorder symptoms than others. Predominantly inattentive presentations reported more severe eating disorder symptoms than those with hyperactive/impulsive leading traits.

This is echoed by Murray et al. in a 2013 study that found inattention symptoms were more strongly associated with disordered eating risk in females, while impulsivity symptoms were more strongly associated with disordered eating risk in males.

### Emotional Factors and Self-Esteem

Food can also be a relief from anger, sadness, anxiety, and other difficult emotions, a way to cope and feel in control. Boredom could also be a major predisposing factor to binge eating.



This may also cause a struggle with low self-esteem and negative self-talk, which can contribute to developing an unhealthy relationship with food.

There may also be an increased risk for eating disorders in girls with ADHD who particularly feel the social pressures of comparison, body image sensitivity and peer approval.

A [2009 study](#) by Wentz et al. showed that girls with ADHD were significantly more likely to develop eating disorders compared to, control girls, with a 6-fold increased risk.

The link between ADHD and eating disorders might be more prevalent in females, where a [2008 study](#) found that one in five women seeking treatment for an eating disorder had six or more signs of attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

Social anxiety is common in men and women with ADHD of all ages. When looking at disordered eating behaviours, it's important to consider that they are often intrinsically linked to how we feel about our place in social structures and if we feel accepted.



## Other Support Services

In combination with treatment from qualified healthcare professionals, here are some other supports:

**Nutritional counselling** can provide individuals with ADHD with education and support around healthy eating behaviours, which can help them to make more informed and deliberate food choices.

**Mindfulness practices**, such as meditation and yoga, can help individuals with ADHD to increase their self-awareness and develop greater control.

**Support groups** can provide individuals with ADHD a safe and supportive space to share their experiences and connect with others who are going through similar struggles.

### Reach out to the ADHD Helpline

This service is provided to help you find ADHD solutions and assist with ADHD Referrals. You can just head to the website [ADHD Helpline](#) here to register your interest.

## Recommended Resources

Find additional research on [additudemag.com](#)

**Helpful video:** [Diagnosing and Treating Eating Disorders Alongside ADHD \(with Roberto Olivardia, Ph.D.\)](#) – YouTube

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# Eating Disorders and ADHD - A true Story from the Helpline



## EATING DISORDER

**Twelve years ago, I entered the counselling rooms of a brilliant new Psychotherapist who had an excellent understanding of ADHD in adults and co-morbid conditions.**

She observed me carefully and suggested: "I would like you to do an ADHD assessment and see a leading psychiatrist."

As ADHD was in my family, I concluded that it was quite likely these two professionals were on the mark. I came through with flying colours as an adult with ADHD, diagnosed at age 54!

How did I feel? There was a sense of relief, yet mixed with emotions of sadness and gratitude. At that moment, I thought, wow...my daydreaming and poor concentration were because I had a different brain, contrary to being told that I was "stupid and dumb".

School reports saying: "you don't work to your full potential." Hence the word "university" was never mentioned in our home because that was only for "bright" children.

As the ADHD traits manifested, my already poor self-image spiralled, causing me to feel relatively isolated from my peers. The impact of an unhappy home life and bullying at school caused much anxiety, and suicidal thoughts plagued me.

My stress levels escalated as I knew medication would be recommended - something I had a strong aversion to at that time.

To learn that my brain was different and that ADHD is a complex, life-long neurobiological/developmental condition was somewhat liberating - yet I wrestled with it.

One of my main drivers in life is this: 'Become who God made me to be'. Acceptance was key. The road ahead was having to rediscover who I was as an ADHD adult, and like everybody in this world, we are all gifted with traits. I was on a new journey of self-discovery.

**That's where professional help was critical! I can't stress this intervention enough.**

Over the next 12 years, I grew to understand myself and the way my brain ticked.

It seems crazy, as I write this at age 66 I am gaining such insights and appreciation that now cause me to flourish. I am not defined by the labels: I am ADHD and I am ED; I am 'me' with a unique personality, with a renewed passion for life.

With hobbies I love and the self-awareness of my values, I enjoy my newly found identity.



Don't get me wrong – it's not all plain sailing and there are many challenges as I still grapple with planning, procrastination, prioritizing, inability to focus, etc and the list goes on.

However, I am learning to self-regulate, a new tool that helps in all these areas. To learn new strategies that target my ADHD symptoms that enhance my life such as exercise, spending time outdoors, music, fun, exploring creativity, practising self-compassion, spending time with a core of safe trusted friends; are but a few.

I was one of those ones that looked for any other alternative but medication.

I finally heeded the advice of the two key professionals and am now on a dose of Vyvanse and Intuniv which works for me. Have they helped....DEFINITELY!!

### **Life is very complex!**

I would like to elaborate on what led me to spend 22 long, arduous years in therapy.

I developed an aggressive Eating Disorder as a result of complex trauma on several levels. At the time it was diagnosed as EDNOS as there were many tentacles to this monster in my life which was on a pursuit to kill me. I had lived

A life of secrecy as a DV victim, now a survivor in a home dominated by fear and stress, coupled with a lack of self-worth. This became the perfect breeding ground for my ED to flourish. Though I did not know I had ADHD for decades, I look back now and see how those two mental health conditions morphed together, feeding into each other.



My ED was characterised by Bulimia, excessive power walking at night, restrictive eating, laxative abuse, panic attacks, social anxiety, food rituals and terrifying body dysmorphia. Plus more! My distorted irrational view of myself was: 'I must not get fat'; this was at the very core of the ED.

My psychologically warped mind had the illusion that I was in control, but nothing could be further from the truth. My health was declining rapidly. I was obsessed with body weight and shape, constantly comparing myself to women in magazines and on TV.

### **Part of my obsession with my external appearance was a way of covering up and running away from my inner appearance.**

Part of the driver behind all this was an underlying belief that I was a failure, never good enough.

I nourished this distorted thinking by judging myself so harshly and blaming myself for the sadness and tragedy within my own family. I believed the lie that I was unlovable with a profound sense of self-hatred that fostered visible insane thinking patterns 24/7.

So as I ponder the merging of the ADHD and ED brain, it is a constant challenge to keep addressing these negative thoughts and the absolute necessity to get help and get on a path of rigorous recovery!

Anger, yet acceptance arose, that in all those years prior to my present therapist, the ADHD component was never addressed. Plus the incompetency of some counsellors who had little, or no expertise in understanding Eating Disorders. Not to mention doctors!



**I had to humbly appreciate that recovery from Trauma works to its own schedule and pace.**

I strongly recommend that when seeking professional help you don't settle for anyone other than one who truly understands ADHD, and in my case, also Eating Disorders.

I am no expert on how ADHD and ED are viewed through the eyes of a psychiatrist, but I have a lived experience that I will now elaborate on.

**So, is the ED because of my ADHD symptoms?**

I believe they are strongly connected. It is not uncommon for women with ADHD to have eating disorders from what I have learned. I have grown to understand that when I was actively bingeing and purging I was comforting my anxiety, and expelling undigested emotions as I was impulsively pushing my feelings away.

Tragically, Bulimics are very clever at living a life of secrecy whilst gripped by the shame of it all. Some, may for years, maintain this heartbreaking lifestyle from those who care deeply for them.

As an adult with ADHD, I've had a growing awareness that my brain craves sugar and adrenaline to self-medicate due to the lack of dopamine. I would keep feeding my hunger cues with foods to compensate for the emotions I could not express.

The impulsive nature of the ADHD brain, combined with the destructive mindset of the ED, would cause me to binge and purge. When stressed and over-anxious, this would become a problem due to my poor self-regulation and lack of strength in control.

Self-flagellating, guilt and shame were all part of the restless cycle that led to the next episode of bingeing and purging. I have spent years learning to slow this process down and engage in a more self-reflective practice.



**ADHD brains have, according to my therapist, a state akin to industrial strength Velcro - this is the hyper-focus of the ADHD brain.**

Once they train themselves in a certain practice it is more difficult to re-train the brain and build new reactions in the central nervous system, not impossible but more difficult than a neuro-typical brain. In this way, the ADHD brain is more sensitive.

For so many; Christmas, Easter, Mother's Day and birthday celebrations are dominated by family fun, laughter and delicious foods. Yet I recall the weeks prior to Christmas with utter dread.

My anxiety levels increased dramatically closer to the day, as I found myself bingeing and purging at least 20 times a day as a way of coping with what was ahead of me. Living in secret of course! HELL!





I would massively restrict, coupled with excessive exercise as a coping mechanism. Shame and guilt would set in and the cycle would begin again. Easter was no different.

How very sad, as I look back now from a place of healthy recovery of the endless boxes of chocolates given, devoured and purged as I frantically tried to soothe my pain often to the sound of neighbours enjoying laughter with families, grandchildren and friends into the wee small hours of the morning.

I sincerely hope that my story can be of help to others who have a similar journey to my own. Reach out for help – it is there! Your life is too valuable not to. I am filled with gratitude for the much healthier place I am in today. I do not binge and purge or pursue many of the

other characteristics I spoke of. Mind you, the challenges and chatter in the brain are there but I have strategies in place to help. Yes, it's been my strong unrelenting determination to fight for a better existence for decades, but also to reiterate the absolute value of professional help. Especially to have a God given psychotherapist who specialises in ADHD, grounded in her knowledge of ED, who took me to my family of origin as the platform for our initial work!

**The following ideas and resources have helped me with ADHD and ED and it's my hope they may help you too:**

1. A therapist who is very grounded in knowledge of ADHD and ED.
2. A psychiatrist that specialises in this field of ADHD and ED....absolutely critical.
3. A dietitian who has a sound knowledge of ED, working alongside a GP.
4. Learn through recommended programs, selective YouTube videos like Russell Barkley (renowned ADHD specialist), and the Butterfly Foundation.
5. Attend adult ADHD seminars and conferences, and always take a non-ADHD friend/family member to help enlighten them and bring about a greater understanding.
6. Find support groups where you can get identification and not feel so incredibly alone.
7. Break the silence. Whatever one's experience, reach out...there is help available.
8. Seek out even one trusted friend to 'walk the walk' with you. Someone that will love you and not judge you, accept you and not reject you, and learn with you your uniqueness and giftedness.
9. As mentioned before, physical exercise, outdoors etc. explore creativity and have fun! Or create it.
10. 'Psychology Today': articles on ADHD/ ED.
11. Ted Talks; one for example, Laura Hill ED from the inside out.
12. Dr Gregory Jantz a leading specialist in ED with podcasts on YouTube called "Hope and Possibility".
13. Carolyn Costin; YouTube and books. Long-term founder of an eating disorder centre in the USA.
14. Eating Disorder Hope. Dena Cabrera and YouTube.
15. Marc Brackett I found personally invaluable. Author and YouTube on "Permission to Feel". Check out his interview with Brene Brown on his excellent work on emotional intelligence.





# Asking for Special Considerations for Uni Exams



Not every school, university or workplace understands the need to accommodate and establish a diverse learning environment that supports and promotes the learning needs of the ADHD community.

Firstly, ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) is a neurodevelopmental disorder that can affect a person's ability to concentrate, pay attention, and control impulsive behaviour. These difficulties can make it challenging for students to stay focused during lectures, complete assignments on time, and stay organised with their study materials.

## Reluctance to Request Accommodations

Being labelled is the reason given by young adults who contact the ADHD Helpline.

They know they should have their ADHD considered to provide them with the best chance at success, but the reluctance to do so can cause much anxiety and stress.

Here are some of the fears we hear regularly:

- Feelings of cheating or being put at an unfair advantage.
- Losing or being criticised by friends.
- Not wanting to be labelled with a disability.
- Being overwhelmed by the process of applying and having accommodations approved.

## Benefits of Accommodations for ADHD

### Reaching your Potential

By seeking support for ADHD, students can develop strategies to manage their symptoms, such as improving their time management skills, staying organised, and breaking down assignments into smaller, more manageable tasks.

These strategies can help students to be more effective and efficient in their studies, leading to better grades, more extraordinary academic achievement, and a more fulfilling university experience.

### Self-Achievement and Self-Esteem

Students with ADHD may struggle with tasks that seem easy for others. As a result, they may feel like they are not meeting their expectations or the expectations of others, which can erode their self-confidence and self-esteem.

Seeking support for ADHD can help students better understand and accept their condition. This can lead to a more positive self-image and self-acceptance, boosting self-esteem and confidence.

By understanding that ADHD is a neurodevelopmental disorder affecting many people, students can shift their focus away from feelings of shame and towards feelings of self-acceptance and self-compassion.







### A More Enjoyable University Experience

Students can develop a more robust support network, boosting self-esteem and confidence.

By working with academic advisors, disability services, and mental health professionals, students can create a sense of community and support that can help them to feel more confident in their ability to manage their symptoms and succeed in their studies.

Students can develop new skills, meet new people, and build a community outside the classroom. This can help them to feel more engaged in the university experience and more connected to the broader community.

By joining clubs, sports teams, or volunteering opportunities, students with ADHD can develop a sense of purpose and accomplishment.

### Increasing Opportunities for Postgraduate Study Later

By accessing support resources and developing effective strategies to manage their ADHD symptoms, students can improve their academic performance.

This can be particularly important for postgraduate study, where the academic demands are often more intense and challenging than undergraduate study.

By improving their grades and developing strong academic skills, students with ADHD can increase their chances of being accepted into postgraduate programs.

### Securing Future Support

By accessing support resources and services, students can establish a track record of their ADHD diagnosis and their university support. This can be important if they need to apply for accommodations or aid in the future, such as in postgraduate study or the workplace.

By having a documented history of their ADHD diagnosis and the support they received, they can provide evidence of their needs and make it easier to access support in the future.

### How to Get Started

Joining a support group and meeting other students in similar positions will help you realise that you are not alone and can share experiences with people who understand.

The Office for Student Disabilities Service in your Tafe or University might run a support group or will have the details of one held on campus. Make enquiries early!





The ADHD Foundation is your ADHD Australian national community. Your donation helps to support the work that we do, and is appreciated more than you know.

With generous financial and volunteer support the ADHD Foundation has achieved many milestones in ADHD Foundation. To help us continue our work you can contribute in various ways:

- Financial Support – via our online donation button
- Corporate partnerships – please connect with us at [office@adhd.foundation.org.au](mailto:office@adhd.foundation.org.au)
- Pro-bono and/or in-kind as an individual or an organisation – your expertise is valued
- Use your workplace giving to add value to the work that we do
- Philanthropy or grants

### Membership

Be sure to register for **our Membership portal** for free additional resources and support.

### Helpline

Email our team, **fill in our contact form** if you are seeking support for yourself or loved ones.

### Donate

We would be very grateful if you are able to provide a **tax deductible donation** to support our work.

Contact the office for media enquiries, partnerships, admin and other enquiries.

Post Address: PO Box 22 Epping NSW 1719  
[www.adhdfoundation.org.au](http://www.adhdfoundation.org.au)

