

# MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING

## Mental Health & Wellbeing

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# Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, or ADHD, is a common neurodevelopmental disorder that affects one in twenty Australians – about 1 million people. ADHD is frequently misunderstood and under-diagnosed. However given the right treatment and strategies, ADHD can be managed. With symptoms typically present in early childhood and persisting into adulthood, the particular challenges that may be faced can be harnessed and used as strengths to employ across all areas of life.

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## What is ADHD?

ADHD is caused by brain differences that can affect attention and behaviour in different ways. Typical characteristics of ADHD can include inattention, hyperactivity and impulsivity. ADHD can make university, and life, very difficult. Individuals with ADHD may struggle to:

- Maintain their concentration
- Perceive or manage time
- Organise their tasks
- Recall information
- Evaluate the consequences of their actions
- Control or adjust their emotions and behaviour

Although students with ADHD may experience deficits with attention and concentration, there are also numerous strengths and positive characteristics that these individuals embody that are inclusive of but not limited to, curiosity, creativity, energy, enthusiasm, hyper focus, loyalty and determination.

There are three main types of ADHD - Hyperactive/Compulsive, Inattentive, and Combined. Each type of ADHD has its own characteristics. If you would like further information regarding the behaviours associated with ADHD, please check out [ADHD Australia](#).

Remember: Individuals with ADHD are not lazy, they do not need to try harder, they have not watched too much TV or spent too much time gaming. ADHD is a medical condition, and it can be managed.

If you would like to speak to a health professional about ADHD, please reach out to your GP to seek further advice. Your GP will be able to discuss your concerns and make the appropriate referrals (psychologists, psychiatrist, counsellors, etc.), if needed.

## Strategies to manage ADHD

ADHD affects everyone differently and there are numerous, effective ways of managing ADHD. You may be interested in trying one, two or a combination of the strategies listed below. Try one or two strategies at a time so you don't want overwhelm yourself. Try to dedicate some time to each of them and see what works for you.

- **Engage in self-care practices:** Taking the time to establish a routine that helps you look after yourself can make a big difference, especially in the long-term.
- **Exercise regularly:** To manage the hyperactivity and inattention associated with ADHD, it can be useful to engage in 15-30 minutes of exercise daily. Exercise has proven to improve an individual's ability to self-regulate, maintain attention and assist in clear thinking.
- **Sleep:** It is important to maintain a regular sleep pattern to ensure you are getting enough sleep to manage day-to-day life. Not getting enough sleep may make your symptoms and experiences more challenging. Try avoiding alcohol and limiting caffeine intake later in the day, create a predictable bedtime routine (quiet time before sleep, reduce screen time, have a hot shower or bath before bed). In addition to this, also try to maintain a regular morning routine, both on weekdays and on the weekend.

- **Healthy food habits:** It is important to eat at regular intervals throughout the day. Try eating small meals throughout the day and limit foods high in sugar and fat.

## ADHD and my studies

ADHD can make it hard to manage due dates, stay organised, avoid procrastination and focus on assignments, all of which can make doing well at university harder. However, there are lots of strategies you can try to help support you in your studies, you just need to find the right ones that work for you.

- **Create structure and useful habits:** Be consistent and follow routines that work for you to maintain productivity and efficiency.
- **Define spaces:** Designate specific areas for things like keys, bills, and other items that can be easily misplaced.
- **Use a calendar/app:** Use a planning app or a calendar on your smartphone or computer that can help you remember appointments and deadlines. You can also set up automatic reminders – so nothing slips your mind. You can find app recommendations below.
- **Use timers:** Allot yourself limited amounts of time for each task and use a timer to tell you when your time is up. Remember to give yourself enough time – people always underestimate how long a task will take.
- **Use colours and lists:** Colour-coding and making lists can be very useful to help manage forgetfulness.

## University Support

WSU resources:

If your ADHD is creating barriers that may affect your study or you want support to optimise your study then the WSU [Counselling Service](#), [Disability Service](#), or [Student Welfare Service](#) may be able to help.

- **WSU [Counselling Service](#).**

Students can access free, short term, confidential counselling services. Face to face, Zoom or phone appointments can be made by telephoning 1300 668 370. Our office hours are Monday to Friday 9.00am - 4:30pm. Alternatively, or email [counselling@westernsydney.edu.au](mailto:counselling@westernsydney.edu.au)

- **WSU [Disability Service](#).**

The Disability Service is free to access with Disability Advisors assisting students to meet their full potential. If you have a diagnosed physical, psychological or medical condition that impacts on your studies, such as ADHD, you may be eligible for an [Academic Integration Plan \(AIP\)](#), developed by the Disability Service. Contact the Disability Service on 1300 668 370, email [disability@westernsydney.edu.au](mailto:disability@westernsydney.edu.au) or make contact via [WesternNow](#).

- **WSU [Welfare Service](#).**

Academic, Personal and Financial Hardship, International Support and Accommodation: 1300 668 370 or via [WesternNow](#).

- **Multifaith [Chaplaincy](#)**

Multifaith Chaplaincy can provide confidential conversation and care, support for stress

management and anxiety with links to religious groups and faith communities. For more information, please call Daniel Jantos on 0402771543 or email [d.jantos@westernsydney.edu.au](mailto:d.jantos@westernsydney.edu.au).

- **WesternLife**

[WesternLife](#) - Join thousands of students at Your Virtual Community to share experiences, learn new things, connect with new friends, and engage with events or discussions that interest you!

- **Disruption to Studies**

Consider applying for [Disruption to Studies](#) and [Requests for Extension](#) if you feel as though your studies have been significantly impacted.

- **Deferred Exam**

[Deferred Exam](#) – You can apply for a Deferred Exam no later than 5.00 pm on the second working day after your scheduled exam if you are unable to attend a final exam due to serious illness, misadventure or other exceptional circumstances beyond your control. Submit a [Student Form](#) and attach supporting documents online for application.

- **Withdrawal Without Academic Penalty**

[Withdrawal Without Academic Penalty](#) is an option available after the Census Date of the teaching term provided that you meet eligibility.

- **Leave of absence**

A [Leave of Absence](#) is a temporary break from studying. Once you have completed one or more subjects in your enrolled program, you can apply for a Leave of Absence. A Leave of Absence can be taken as either six or twelve months. The maximum amount of leave you can take during your program is twelve months. Please note, you must submit your application before the relevant census date

If you are considering any of these options, please reach out to the counselling service for support and guidance. If you are an international student, please make sure you seek advice particularly if you are considering withdrawing without penalty or taking a leave of absence as these may have [implications for your visa conditions](#).

# Community Support

## Community resources:

- [Lifeline.](#)

Lifeline (24 hours crisis counselling) - **13 11 14**

Lifeline SMS Counselling Service - between 6pm- Midnight you can text **0477 13 11 14** and somebody will text you back! You can find more information [here](#).

- [Mental Health Telephone Access Line](#)

[Mental Health Telephone Access Line](#) - 1800 011 511

This Mental Health Line is staffed by mental health professionals that can help and provide you advice about your needs and discuss referrals to local mental health services. It is available to everyone in NSW and operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

- [ADHD Australia.](#)

ADHD Australia was established to stand up for, and support, people impacted by ADHD in order to optimise outcomes for individuals, their families and the community at large.

- [ADHD Foundation in Australia.](#)

ADHD Foundation in Australia is a not-for-profit registered charity and we are here to help "because EVERYONE deserves a chance to shine"

- [Health Direct.](#)

General information regarding ADHD and caring for a child with ADHD.

- [ADHD Centre, Helpline: 02 9889 5977](#)

The helpline is happy to take call from anywhere within Australia and is open Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday between 10:30am and 4:30pm AEST

- [ADHD Support Group Nepean.](#)

Monthly meetings at the South Penrith Neighbourhood Centre,(behind Southlands Shopping Centre), 3 Trent Street, South Penrith.

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/adhdsupportgroupnepean/>

Email: [adhdnepeanpenrith@gmail.com](mailto:adhdnepeanpenrith@gmail.com)

- **ADDults With ADHD.**

Provides free information, support and self-help resources to adults and families. They have a helpline (noted below) and hold an Annual Conference and quarterly ADHD Awareness Afternoons with guest speakers, either at North Ryde or Ultimo locations.

Website: [www.adultadhd.org.au](http://www.adultadhd.org.au)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/ADDultswithADHD](http://www.facebook.com/ADDultswithADHD)

Email: [info@adultadhd.org.au](mailto:info@adultadhd.org.au)

## Resources

- [Podcasts](#)
- [Videos](#)
- [Apps](#)

### Podcasts

#### **'Understanding Adult ADHD – The Psychology Sisters'**

This podcast episode, the psychology sisters delve into the diagnostic criteria for ADHD, the neurosciences about what causes ADHD and the stigma around the disorder.



<https://podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/understanding-adult-adhd/id1463750699?i=1000534618857>

<https://open.spotify.com/episode/6s0GPcXUcjUTW4ZytVd0YE>

## **'The ADHD Adults Podcast'**

The ADHD Adults Podcast (in)expertly covers issues around ADHD in adults, sharing evidence-based information and personal experiences. They indulge in a range of topics across their episodes to give a well rounded and real psychoeducation about ADHD.

<https://podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/the-adhd-adults-podcast/id1591127163>

<https://open.spotify.com/show/2oYZwGakI7shJFG0IJ8JMt>

## **'I have ADHD Podcast'**

The I have ADHD podcast provides a clear, concise and fun education to adults with or learning about ADHD. Explore Kristen Carder's website for further information and experiences.

<https://ihaveadhd.com/podcast/>

## **10 ADHD Podcasts**

If you would like to explore some more podcasts relating to ADHD, follow the link below and see what works for you. Some topics in the podcasts include: Sticking to

goals, money management, actioning plans, symptom management, mindfulness, over-coming shame, organisation, procrastination strategies and so much more.

<https://www.additudemag.com/slideshows/best-adhd-podcasts-audio-resources/>

## Videos

### **What is ADHD?**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xMWtGozn5jU&list=PLvq9Tp5JZ8oDV3SIpSjX25Twp9FHKqi\\_I&index=24](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xMWtGozn5jU&list=PLvq9Tp5JZ8oDV3SIpSjX25Twp9FHKqi_I&index=24)

### **Recognizing ADHD in Adults | Heather Brannon | TEDxHeritageGreen**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Am-XbS0y0hE>

## Apps:

- **[Trello](#)**: ADHD Australia recommends Trello to help you stay organised. Trello is the visual tool that empowers your team to manage any type of project, workflow, or task tracking.
- **[Smiling Mind](#)**: If you are experiencing symptoms of stress, anxiety or depression in addition to your ADHD, you may find it helpful to try mindfulness. Smiling Mind offers a free app to help you practice your daily meditation and mindfulness exercises from any device.
- **[Headspace](#)**: Learn to manage feelings and thoughts with the lifelong skill of everyday mindfulness, any time of the day.

Still struggling?

ADHD can be very challenging. Asking for help is an important step in managing this condition and realising your full potential!

If you are still struggling, reach out to the WSU counselling team for support and advice. If you prefer to seek support from a service outside of the university, it may be helpful to speak to your General Practitioner regarding a [Mental Health Care Plan](#) and referral to a psychologist, or you can speak to a counsellor or other health professional. Remember you are not alone and there will always be someone out there who is willing to stay with you through your hard times.

**Please find the attached PDF document [here](#).**

References:

[Health Direct – Attention Deficit Disorder](#)

[The positive aspects of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder: a qualitative investigation of successful adults with ADHD](#)

[Tips on How to Focus With ADHD](#)

[Observed Behaviours of ADHD](#)

[Tips for Managing Adult ADHD](#)