

## Some people with ADHD succeed in periods of stress, new study shows

### Level 2: Intermediate

#### 1 Warmer

a. Do the quiz on your own. Then check your answers at the end of this worksheet.

#### ADHD Quiz: True or False?

- ADHD only affects children.
- ADHD stands for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.
- People with ADHD are always hyperactive.
- ADHD can make it hard to focus on one task for a long time.
- ADHD is the same for everyone who has it.
- Everyone with ADHD takes medication.
- ADHD is part of neurodiversity, which includes different ways people's brains work.

b. Work with a partner. Discuss the questions below.

- Did you get all the answers to the quiz correctly? Which ones did you miss?
- Do you know someone with ADHD?
- What is *neurodiversity*? Have you heard this word before? What does it describe? Do you agree with it? (If you don't know what neurodiversity is, you can check the end of this worksheet or search it online.)

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#### 2 Key words

a. Match the words with their definitions. All the words appear in the article.

- |                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| 1. cope _____        | a. changing or varying frequently, often in an irregular or unpredictable way   |
| 2. downtime _____    | b. a period in which the symptoms of a disease or condition decrease or disappear   |
| 3. fluctuating _____ | c. consistent, stable   |
| 4. impulsivity _____ | d. a period of time when something is not in use or is inactive   |
| 5. neither _____     | e. acting on sudden desires or urges without careful thought or consideration of the consequences   |
| 6. relief _____      | f. refers to not one nor the other of two options, choices or possibilities   |
| 7. remission _____   | g. to deal successfully with a problem or difficult situation   |
| 8. steady _____      | h. recorded someone or something's progress or development over a period of time  |
| 9. thrive _____      | i. a feeling of comfort or happiness that arises when a distressing or unpleasant situation has ended or when a feared event does not occur |
| 10. tracked _____    | j. to grow and succeed healthily and robustly, often in a positive environment or after overcoming challenges                               |

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b. Use some of the key words from the previous exercise to complete these sentences. You may need to change the form of the word.

1. Tom's mood has been \_\_\_\_\_ lately. Sometimes, he feels happy, and some other days he feels overwhelmed.
2. She felt a great sense of \_\_\_\_\_ when she finally submitted her essay.
3. The doctor informed her that the \_\_\_\_\_ could be temporary, so he advised regular check-ups.
4. Mandy's recovery has been slow but \_\_\_\_\_. She is consistent in her treatment.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ Alex nor Ben has answered my emails.
6. It is sometimes difficult for him to \_\_\_\_\_ with too much stress, so he gets angry all the time.
7. His \_\_\_\_\_ often leads him to make rash decisions without really considering the consequences.
8. Spending some \_\_\_\_\_ reading quietly helps me to relax after a busy day.

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**Hannah Harris Green**

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- 1 A recent study has revealed that some people with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) cope best during periods of high stress.
- 2 Maggie Sibley, a clinical psychologist and psychiatry professor at the University of Washington and the study's lead author, initially set out to learn whether it is possible for adults to recover from ADHD. In an earlier study, published in 2022, she investigated a data set that tracked 600 patients with ADHD over 16 years, starting from childhood.
- 3 "What we found was this pattern of fluctuating ADHD, and most of the people that were getting better, they would then get back to ADHD again," he said.
- 4 For the more recent study, published in the Journal of Clinical Psychiatry, she went back to that same data set to try and figure out what circumstances might lead to relief from ADHD symptoms.
- 5 Her study identified three different groups of ADHD patients: those who experienced periods of apparent full recovery, those who experienced partial remission, and those whose ADHD symptoms remained steady over time.
- 6 People who experienced temporary full recovery were most likely to experience it during times of stress. Those who had periods of partial recovery were also more likely to experience anxiety.
- 7 Arij Alarachi, a psychology PhD student at McMaster University, says it makes sense that ADHD would respond differently to different circumstances. "ADHD comes in a lot of different shapes and sizes," Alarachi added.
- 8 "ADHD patients may do best when they have to rise to the occasion ... deadlines [could feel] helpful, or when things are more urgent, you're able to be your most productive and hyperfocus," said Sibley.
- 9 Sara Vranes, who was diagnosed with ADHD at 36, relates to this idea. She sees her ability to hyperfocus under pressure as a "superpower". Vranes now works with homeless communities, but had 15 years of experience as a midwife before that, and she says she was most calm in crisis.
- 10 "I was able to handle it because my brain can hyperfocus. I could see everything clearly and see a process in my mind, and act on it in real time." During downtime, however, she's often anxious and can't focus.
- 11 More than half of adults with ADHD also experience anxiety. But, Sibley's study shows this might not always be a bad thing.
- 12 We call it a protective factor in ADHD," she said, explaining that multiple studies have found that children with ADHD and anxiety respond better to behavioural treatment than children who just have ADHD.
- 13 Alarachi said that in her research, too, she's come across people with ADHD who say anxiety helps them keep impulsivity in check. They will say: "My anxiety [has] helped me stop myself from maybe acting on some of those impulses, or it's made me think about some of the consequences."
- 14 Anxiety and impulsivity might be more extreme in people with ADHD, "but somehow they're cancelling each other out in a way that kind of makes neither of those processes as problematic as they might be on their own, which is kind of an interesting concept", Sibley added.
- 15 Alarachi and Sibley agree that people with ADHD should look within to figure out how best to relax and keep their anxiety to a reasonable level where it's useful. "I always tell people with ADHD, you have to learn to write your own owner's manual," Sibley said.

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#### 3 Comprehension check

a. Choose the correct option to complete the sentences.

1. Recent research has shown that individuals with ADHD **manage well / feel overwhelmed / experience difficulties** under pressure.
2. Arij Alarachi explains that it is logical for ADHD to behave differently **in times of stress / in different circumstances / when facing deadlines**.
3. People with ADHD may find it difficult to concentrate **under pressure / when things are urgent / during downtime**.
4. Sibley explains that anxiety is actually a **'protective factor' / 'bad thing' / 'kind of behavioural treatment'** when it comes to ADHD.
5. In fact, anxiety helps those with ADHD control their **thinking processes / impulsivity / negative thoughts**.
6. Experts agree that each individual should find strategies to make sure their anxiety **remains at a reasonable level / doesn't have negative consequences / is not perceived**.

#### 4 Key language

a. Choose the correct verbs to complete the phrasal verbs from the article.

1. Maggie Sibley, a clinical psychologist and psychiatry professor at the University of Washington and the study's lead author, initially **watched / took / set** out to learn whether it is possible for adults to recover from ADHD.
2. "What we found was this pattern of fluctuating ADHD, and most of the people that were getting better, they would then **move / get / take** back to ADHD again," she said.
3. For the more recent study, published in the Journal of Clinical Psychiatry, she **made / took / went** back to that same data set.
4. Alarachi and Sibley agree that people with ADHD should look within to **figure / look / discover** out how best to relax and keep their anxiety to a reasonable level where it's useful.

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**b. Match the phrasal verbs from the previous activity with their meanings below.**

1. to discover \_\_\_\_\_
2. to make an effort to achieve something \_\_\_\_\_
3. to return to, review \_\_\_\_\_
4. to return to a previous state or condition \_\_\_\_\_

**c. Use the phrasal verbs in tasks a and b to complete the sentences below.**

1. He \_\_\_\_\_ to become the best in his field and worked really hard to achieve it.
2. Shall we \_\_\_\_\_ to the first paragraph and recheck if there are still mistakes?
3. Sorry, I got distracted. Let's \_\_\_\_\_ to planning the meeting.
4. She finally \_\_\_\_\_ a solution that everyone accepted.

## 5 Discussion

**a. Discuss these questions.**

1. Do you work well under pressure?
2. Which situations make you feel anxious or stressed?
3. Do you have any strategies or techniques that help you cope with stressful situations?

## 6 In your own words

**a. Prepare and take part in a debate about seeing ADHD as a neurodiversity. Work with your group for 10-15 minutes and prepare your argument. Use the prompts below to guide you to come up with arguments. You can also look at the opposite group's prompts and prepare counterarguments to what they might say.**

- Group 1: Pros of ADHD as a Neurodiversity
- Group 2: Cons of ADHD as a Neurodiversity

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#### Pros of ADHD as a Neurodiversity:

Focus on the value of recognising different brain types, the benefits of understanding strengths in ADHD, and the importance of inclusion.

- How can recognising ADHD as neurodiversity benefit people with the condition?
- What strengths or unique abilities do people with ADHD have that should be recognised?
- How does neurodiversity help remove the stigma of ADHD?

#### Cons of ADHD as a Neurodiversity:

Focus on concerns that ADHD might be downplayed or misunderstood, or the challenge of medical treatment when viewed as a diversity instead of a disorder.

- Are there challenges in treating or diagnosing ADHD if it's seen as part of neurodiversity?
- Could viewing ADHD as neurodiversity limit resources or support for those who need treatment?
- How can society better support those with ADHD if it's considered a disorder?

#### b. Hold the debate.

##### Useful language:

*First, I will talk about ... Then I will discuss ... Finally, I will conclude with ...*

*This means that ...*

*Let me give you an example ...*

*To clarify, let me explain ...*

*In addition to that, ...*

*On the other hand, ...*

*To summarise, ...*

*I see your point, but I don't agree with it because ...*

*I see it differently. For example ...*

*That's an interesting perspective, but I would argue that ...*

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#### WARMER ADHD QUIZ

Answers:

ADHD only affects children. (False)

ADHD stands for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. (True)

People with ADHD are always hyperactive. (False)

ADHD can make it hard to focus on one task for a long time. (True)

ADHD is the same for everyone who has it. (False)

Everyone with ADHD takes medication. (False)

ADHD is part of neurodiversity, which includes different ways people's brains work. (True)

#### Neurodiversity

is the idea that people's brains work in different ways. This means that everyone thinks, learns and processes information differently. For example, conditions like ADHD, autism and dyslexia are all part of neurodiversity. Instead of seeing these as problems, neurodiversity focuses on the strengths and unique abilities of each person. It reminds us that there is no 'right' way for a brain to work.