

ADHD by Erynn Brook

Scientists: it's possible Da Vinci had ADHD as he struggled to finish many projects.

Me: the man was obsessed with birds and wanted to build a flying machine, of course he had ADHD.

Hundreds of unrelated, unfinished projects and fascinations? Yeah, ADHD for sure

thinking back to the hours I spent trying to work out how feasible it would be to build a functional submarine out of plywood in my backyard

I always felt a connection with Da Vinci because of his wide berth of expertises, though I'm a terrible artist. As a child I was always upset at the idea of only being able to be one thing when I grew up.

@TinyChurchMouse

I wanted to be an actor, a nun, a mom, and a priest... Ok, one of those was going to be a problem, but yeah...

When I was 5, I decided I wanted to go to the Mall & made my way most of the way there on my trike before my dad caught up w/ me in the car, and my career choices changed weekly... I was in highschool when I narrowed my choices down to those 4 career choices...

Having a revelation here... I always assumed my ADHD didn't start till middle school, but at 6-7 I wanted to be 5 different things (astronaut, doctor, archaeologist, dancer and artist, since you asked) and was quite preoccupied with working out how I'd merge them all.

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You can have ADHD and be a jerk. You can have ADHD and be a sweetheart. You can have ADHD and get nothing done and you can have ADHD and get everything done. You can be lots of things with ADHD.

But ADHD is not a desire to fidget or daydream. It's how your brain is wired.

Society has a fundamental misunderstanding of what ADHD is and what it feels like on the inside. It's absolutely maddening. We also have strong misunderstandings about how medication affects people with ADHD, it's not uncommon to think that meds turn off the ADHD. They don't.

ADHD is how your brain is wired. It's how you process information. Information in and information out. Anything relating to that process is coming into contact with ADHD. Every experience you've had has been informed by ADHD. You don't just have ADHD, you are ADHD. And that's ok!

Your brain is a complex network, writing and rewriting routes and pathways. ADHD is the landscape of your brain. And you can work with it, or you can work against it. You can pretend it's not there. But it's your brain and it's the only one you've got. So why not rock on?

"My 16yo nephew's friend group are handling both his depression/ADHD combo diagnosis & a friend's coming out with support, grace, love, & zero shame. The emotional intimacy & accessibility these young dudes share makes me happy sob & gives me so much hope for the future of men."

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#ADHD peeps. What do you do for a pick me up when you need more energy? Caffeine in coffee or Dr Pepper calms me down or can even make me sleepy. What other options are there? @danidonovan @ErynnBrook what do you do?

Nothing works as well as the b12 injection for me. Lots of things work SOME of the time, this works to keep me going.

Water and a snack - something spicy 🌶️

I like tea as the caffeine boost is more spread over time.

Caffeine does okay for me, but for refreshment exercise (aikido for me) helps, bonuses of calm & focus.

Keeping the tunes on helps too.

I'm recently diagnosed, tho, and not on meds (yet). So I may have amendments after my next Dr. visit this week. 😊

What a great question! I usually try and get my heart-rate up and/or blood bumping w some quick exercise. Caffeine relaxes & high sugar kills my macros & crashes me out quickly.

Sometimes I splurge on a Naked Juice. It might be more placebo than anything, but their “boost” options at least make me feel like I’ve got more gas in the tank. I also drink decaf coffee to get the feeling (and smell) of it without the anxious jitters of regular strength.

90s music and matcha frapps.

Listen to birds and clean.

A matcha drink (releases energy slowly)

This will sound stupid.. but I literally do push-ups. Gets my blood flowing, wakes me up, and clears my head for a bit. No real downside other than looking like a bit of a tool if someone sees me.

Literally a short walk around the block (15 minutes is usually enough). Gets the blood flowing, but also helps clear my head (lots of new stimuli outside!)

I put on some upbeat music and dance around. Even if I'm sitting down and just moving my shoulders it makes a big difference for me.

This is also why I work a lot at a standing desk. Trying to sit down and write at night I literally fall asleep at like 8pm a lot of the time. If I work standing, I stay awake and I end up moving more (doing calf raises or dancing at the desk) which also wakes me up more.

I always listen to some rock music when I need more energy to do something. I put on the headphones and start to walk around my room listening to music, it helps me to clear a little bit my mind and wake me up!

If you're working w/ a Dr./ re meds. I had a really good experience w/ Provigil tho I also struggle w/ fatigue related to my MS. (It's not in the same category as stimulants) anyhow it's not a self-help option or a 1st line ADHD med but you will see it further down the med lists.

A find a lot of the time my lack of energy is largely being affected by not drinking enough water. If that’s not a factor, in leu of water, sipping whiskey or wine can actually help my energy levels too.

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ADHD Organization/Disorganization

I received a message on twitter about ADHD and Organization/Disorganization. The response twitter thread has been screenshot and shared around on Facebook, but I thought I’d put some of the tips into a blog post for you!

Reads: "@ErynnBrook How do I deal with the whole ADHD and disorganization/forgetting things? I struggle with it in all aspects of my life, and my relationship with my gf is starting to suffer."

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There are lots of tools and tricks, but a big step is accepting that you will forget things, and that you’re not disorganized, you just organize differently.

This is how I experience it: I describe it as a database.

Imagine that your brain is like a computer system.

Rather than organizing things in a linear way, you organize by key words. You use piles like reminders, visual cues to remember things.

Remember back when you had to defrag your computer? Fragmentation occurs when files too large to be installed in one space split, and install themselves into available empty spaces. Defragging would rearrange files to put them back in order.

Fragmentation is what happens when you come home. You take off your shoes and leave them where they fall, you take off your coat and throw it over the nearest chair. Your keys end up on the first empty surface you see, even if that's the top of the fridge, and so on.

You're not disorganized, you're actually very efficient.

You're finding ways to do what you need to do with the least number of steps possible. Just like a computer.

The solution isn't to reorganize, it's to look at the system and see what isn't working for you.

So let's stay with the example of coming home. Do you have a key hook, right at eye level, on the inside of your door when you first come in? I mean no time to put your keys back in your pocket. Right there. If so, is there an empty hook for you?

Is there a closet in the entryway? Are you supposed to take off your coat, open a door, pick out a hanger, hang the coat on the hanger, put it back in the closet, close the door, and remember that you're trying to put away groceries? That's too much. Get a hook or a coat rack.

Where do shoes go? On the floor in the closet? Is there a pile of them? If you were to just kick them off would you get dust, dirt, mud, water, or snow on all the other shoes? Too many variables. Find a way to store shoes exactly where you take them off.

Do you carry a bag? Is there a place to put it? Are you expected to carry it to your room even though you don't need to unpack it? Put a hook by the door. Or a small table. Make a little "command center" where you can dump all your stuff.

For forgetting stuff, you've got too many tabs open.

Make appointments on the spot, whip out your phone and put it in your calendar right away. Especially things like medical appointments. You can always reschedule when they call to confirm if you need to.

There are lots of apps that can help with things like daily routines and to-do lists. The trick with these is that you will get excited about them and so into it and then you will get bored. You'll be less bored if others get involved with you.

I like Habitica, my husband and I are in a party together. This helps with daily chores type stuff, and it reminds me every day to check off my tasks. I'm leveling up and getting loot and it's totally adorable.

You rely on visual cues to remind you to do stuff.

That's why you have piles.

That pile of unfolded laundry reminds you to do the laundry, and also keeps a running tab in your mind of how much clean laundry you have so you know when to do laundry next.

When stuff is hidden away in drawers you might not notice until you open the drawer one morning that you're out of shirts. So you've actually developed these "disorganized" systems to keep you organized, in a way that works for your brain.

The trick is figuring out what the barriers are to using traditional systems and eliminating the barriers. Maybe you need wire baskets instead of drawers. Maybe hangers just aren't worth the trouble and you need hooks

instead. Or maybe you need to take the doors off your mug cabinet.

Everything in its place is actually a really good rule for ADHD brains if the place makes sense to you.

Someone else saying “this is where this goes” won’t necessarily work for your brain.

So it’s not something to beat yourself over the head with. If you use the coffeemaker every day then it doesn’t make sense to put it in a cupboard when you’re done. Make a coffee station.

This tip kept me alive in my 20s: get a credit card if you don’t have one. \$1000 limit should be enough. Put all your bills on that credit card. Schedule an automatic transfer from your bank account to the credit card that covers those bills in the middle of the month. No missed/late bill payments, no credit card debt, no phone or internet getting cut off cause you just didn’t get around to it. Also I strongly recommend getting into a budgeting habit, disorganization will show up in your money habits. I like YNAB (You Need A Budget).

Don’t commit to anything until you check your calendar. Don’t schedule things for “soon”. Put a deadline on it. Always check the calendar. This one is hard, because it’s probably a new habit. Repeat after me: “Let me just check my calendar.”

Basically, disorganization, or the feeling of disorganization, is overwhelm. You’re running too many active processes. You want to streamline them so that you don’t have to think about them all the time.

People think that ADHD brains just forget things once. We don’t.

We forget and remember a hundred times but there are things in the way because we struggle with putting tasks into a linear order.

I walk in the door and remember that I need to do dishes. But I have to take my shoes off first, and put away groceries, and I need to do dishes and dammit I should check the mail cause it’s been a few days, and I need to do dishes but the cat is hungry and someone texted me...

This is exhausting. And you’ve been doing this your whole life and you know things are constantly flying out of your brain or getting knocked out of the to-do lineup so you’re constantly anxious about them. Of course you’re disorganized! You’re overwhelmed!

So my best advice is to stop looking at stuff and start looking at processes.

Not just “I need to file those papers” but “why did I put them there in the first place?”

When my husband and I first moved in together he kinda took over the entryway. I bought myself an over the door hook for the closet door. Presto, no more coat on the sofa arm. One day he hung his coat on it and I burst into tears. I promise you, you don’t want to be messy. I know you don’t want to feel this way. You don’t enjoy frantically looking for things. You just don’t have the right system. Once you do, it won’t be an effort at all to adapt to it because it’ll be the more efficient option.

Once you find a better system, one that works for you, you’ll find that process doesn’t run in your brain anymore. I don’t know where my keys are (in my brain) because they’re always on the key hook. I don’t have to think about it anymore.

More brain space!

Something I hear a lot is: “How do you know when it’s a disorder vs. when it’s not caring?”

When it’s causing emotional distress, it’s not just an “I don’t care”. I think the key is whether they say “I don’t care” or “I don’t know”. “Why are the car keys in the fridge?”

“I don’t care.” = strange. Okay? But “I don’t know.” = alarm bells.

I actively hate forgetting to do dishes. It feels awful, I hate the dirty dishes, I hate not having dishes. I hate when my husband asks me to do dishes and I spend all day remembering to do dishes and then I’m exhausted and he comes home and I didn’t do the dishes. I hate it.

It's not that I don't care. I care very much.

I just cared so much that I didn't budget my brain energy properly and ran out of steam, or I had too many things in the way of me getting to it and I got lost.

Look for the systems, and adjust the systems. Look for the speedbumps. They're already there, whether it's a drawer, or an entryway, or a key storage system that just isn't clicking for you.

Coping mechanisms are very important, and I'll do a follow up soon on how sometimes our coping mechanisms can be harmful to those around us. You can get a head start by starting to identify what your coping mechanisms are, and whether or not you've built in bullying yourself as a way to get things done.

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Uni: if you were diagnosed with ADHD more than 3 years ago you'll have to get diagnosed again.

Me: why?

Uni: we don't accept childhood diagnoses for ADHD.

Me: I was diagnosed 5 years ago. At 23.

Uni: yeah. No good.

Me: but... 23... isn't...childhood?

Uni: 🙄

#AbledsAreWeird

Me: what accommodations would I get for registering with ADHD

Uni: more time on tests

Me: don't need that

Uni: then why are you here?!

Me: ...I keep ending up as project manager for 5 different group projects and melting down?

Uni: can't help. More time on tests?

#AbledsAreWeird

Inequitable Access to Education for Canadian Students with ADHD

<https://caddac.ca/adhd/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Education-Policy-Paper-FINAL.pdf>

Just cause I get bored answering the same question again...

Yes, it's "wrong". It's a loophole. It affects a lot more than me. Often younger kids who don't have 10 years of treatment and therapy behind them.

The short version of the "why is this fucked up" is that ADHD is classified as a disorder, which puts it in this weird loophole for accommodations because proving you have the disorder (diagnosis) is not the same as proving that/how you are disabled by the disorder (assessment).

In Canada this is regulated at the provincial level, according to your ministry of education. In Ontario, where I am, the human rights coalition has ruled that ADHD must be accommodated, but can't force the ministry of education to follow their ruling.

After being diagnosed, if you want accommodations, you have to get assessed, which is a series of expensive tests for your level of impairment in various areas: short term memory, executive function, information processing, etc.

Social-emotional effects are considered secondary.

Also a lot of post-secondary schools are trying to avoid discrimination lawsuits, so where the policy used to be

“just talk to your prof!” It’s sometimes now “don’t talk to your prof! Don’t tell them anything! They may say something ignorant! Just get accommodations!”

So you get re-diagnosed. You go take your series of tests that show just how disabled you are in key areas, accommodations are provided according to those key areas.

Tested low on information retention? Here’s a note-taker. Tested low on short term memory? More time on tests!

Tested high on distractability? Quiet room for tests.

Social-emotional regulation issues due to ADHD that look like anxiety and depression? Sorry, can’t test for that in a 2 hour chunk. And school wouldn’t know what to do anyway. Team work makes the dream work, kid! 😊

Also remember that scandal last week about rich folks getting people to prep their kids for tests? You saw the one about the dad who got an ADHD diagnosis for his kid right?

Stimulant drugs are seen as a study aid by NTs, abuse of ADHD medication in uni is rampant.

To be clear: if you don’t have ADHD then ADHD meds just get you high. And they’ve done research on this. It doesn’t increase performance in the slightest, it just makes you feel like it does.

But this abuse leads to massive stigma around ADHDers actually looking for treatment.

Every ADHDer I know who’s been through getting medication has run into this “exhibiting drug seeking behavior” thing at some point.

So you know what this all amounts to? A shit ton of barriers that are difficult to navigate. A lot of forms. A lot of appointments. A lot of shame.

Because of all this there exists no mechanism for people to be like “hey, I have ADHD, here’s where it really trips me up, these are the things that would help me do my best work. Or if that’s not possible could I at least do this so I don’t crash and burn?”

Unless more time on tests and a quiet room is all you really need.

Then you just need to fork over \$2000+ for a private assessment that proves that, fulfill your multiple appointments, submit multiple forms to, remind your profs, and be an executive function superhero. 🦸

Oh and assuming you don’t have any social or emotional effects of ADHD you won’t have any issue telling your NT friends to fuck off when they ask if they can “just try” your ADHD meds.

You won’t have any shame around taking your medication daily and making use of accommodations.

But even if you do have social/emotional issues due to ADHD, those issues are “secondary”, and there are no accommodations, so, when it comes to bureaucracy the best thing to do, when you have no other options and you’re melting down, is get an emergency medical certificate.

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I need visuals. I used to have a big calendar for the whole term with color-coded post-it’s for each assignment type stuck right on the due date, cause I could remember what the assignment was and when it was due but I always screwed myself by not remembering the overlap.

Yes! Something that works is better than something that’s perfect.

First figure out where the disconnect happens. Is he not writing down what to do in an assignment? Does he forget when it's due? Or is he struggling to break it down into steps?

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“Dear @ErynnBrook How do I apologize for things that I've done that are largely related to ADHD when I know that those things are most likely going to happen again? The apology feels really empty and meaningless.”

It doesn't feel like a real apology, and if your promise to just “do better” is vague, then you probably already know it's not going to happen and you feel shitty about it.

Is this a problem-problem? I mean, could this be a symptom of needing a medication adjustment? Or medication if you're not already taking it? Or therapy? Or coaching? Is this something that indicates that you need to step up your treatment in some way?

I think the first step is taking a step back and looking at the big picture.

It can get hard for us to connect the dots when we're not managing our ADHD properly, this is totally something you can ask your partner about.

Talking to your partner would be a good way to find out if this is a problem-problem, or a preference-problem.

Also if you're feeling that it's a problem, it's probably a problem-problem.

The truth is, and I know I'm not answering your original question, is that this is waaaaay deeper than just how to apologize. This is affecting your relationship, and it's affecting both of you in different ways.

If it's a preference-problem, then it's about building systems that work better for you and your partner, so back to the old organization thread.

Like, there are studies about this. Marital satisfaction is impacted by these things. Which impacts intimacy. Intimacy is impacted when one partner has ADHD and more so when the ADHD partner is male (studies are cis-het, unfortunately).

The studies also show that it can go the other way, as in intimacy can improve marital satisfaction which can help mediate the negative effects of ADHD on the relationship.

Here's the general “what happens” - you forget the thing cause that's how your brain is wired. Your partner notices you forgot the thing and they feel annoyed. But it's a little thing so they do it for you because you have ADHD and they know that. Go back to step 1, repeat x50.

Now they're not just annoyed, they feel like you're not listening to them and you don't care, they feel unimportant to you. You feel bad about forgetting the thing and you get more distant and more ashamed.

And the spiral goes down and down and the only way out is to talk to each other.

Oh, and if you notice your partner cleaning up, drop whatever you're doing and help. Like at the same time. Even if they've collected all the trash, you put on your boots and coat and take it out.

You're going to forget things, but how you show you're sorry is how you react when you're reminded. Your partner is important to you and they need to know that, you can show them that not by apologizing but by moving their requests to the top of your *important* list.

So my advice is to stop apologizing for your brain. If you're gonna talk about your brain, talk about it for intimacy purposes and not for excuses/apologies. If you're going to make things better, get up and pitch in while things are happening.

And maybe talk with your partner about the concept of nagging. Say you're gonna strike it from your brain. They may struggle a bit with giving you reminders and you might be annoyed when a reminder pops your bubble but you need reminders and they need you to do stuff.

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Lets do an ADHD Q&A thread! I'll start with an answer to my most received question "What do I do if I think I have ADHD?" And then answer questions you have! Feel free to DM for anonymity or reply here.

So you think you have ADHD!

First step, get a little notebook, or google keep, or a private Pinterest board, or a shoebox, whatever works for you. A place to keep clues.

Start hoarding hints of ADHD. Whether that's something I say or @danidonovan's comics or @dustyexner's tips.

It could be something you do or an article you read or results of an online quiz. Don't lose your treasure trove, you might need it. But just find a place to put the things that make you go "oh, maybe I do have ADHD?" You'll want to take it with you when you do step 2 which is...

Talk to your doctor. Just your regular family doctor. Your average GP. Your school nurse. Whoever your primary medical professional is. Bring your list of hints with you because their first question will be "why do you think that?"

Hot tip: if anyone in your immediate family has an ADHD diagnosis, that's an all-caps, underlined, highlighted, covered in glitter, hint right there. Be sure to mention that.

Question 2!

People who menstruate will have worse ADHD symptoms during part of their cycle. It's absolutely bonkers. The benefit of going on BC is that it'll hold your hormones stable so that your ADHD medication will be more consistently effective.

As a female I notice my symptoms are so much worse after ovulating compared to before and heard it has to do estrogen.

Can going on BC Fix this or would it make it worse by being all progesterone?

It still means med-tinkering though. If you're not taking meds then BC might help because again it's kinda stabilizing you hormonally, so you won't be up and down every few weeks, but it might not because medication is chemistry. Work with your doctor to figure out what's best.

Question 3! I'm gonna tag in @danidonovan for extra advice on this one.

So first thing would be identifying whether it's ADHD or bipolar related. The difference is subtle but key. ADHD "woohoo" or "I hate everything" episodes are situational.

Im diagnosed Bipolar as well, so, I'll start with this: besides conventional med management and therapy, are there tips to get through an extreme episode? (manic or depression) they come on quick sometimes, and I can't always talk to my therapist

Bipolar manic/depressive episodes are mood based and can last much longer. If it's an ADHD episode, have a snack (I'm not kidding, it's the most important), take a break, go for a walk, find a quiet corner and play a game on your phone, drink some water.

I'll ask others with bipolar diagnoses to chime in and reply with tips on how to get through a manic/depressive episode because I'm not bipolar so I don't think I can offer anything specific beyond what the internet articles might say.

Question 4!

I'm on vyvanse, so my answer really only applies to me. Vyvanse dosage is highly dependent on body weight. I gained a bit of weight and had to go up, I lost a bit of weight and had to go down.

@ErynnBrook can I ask how long you've been on the same ADHD meds? I'm worried I've built up tolerance to mine (Concerta) over the years and may need to change it...curious to hear others' experiences.

I was worried about the tolerance thing as well but my sister is also on vyvanse and she had to increase her dose when she went from barista to cafe manager.

It all depends on what level you need to function at, med adjustments are not unusual, but are rarely about tolerance.

Question 5!

Medication is commonly known as the most effective treatment. ADHD is a chemical imbalance, and medication helps with that imbalance. Some people are unable to take medication and work with their symptoms through therapy and systems for support.

I can honestly say that stimulant medication saved my life, and I've met many other ADHDers who say the same thing. Stimulants are in your system for a short time, there's a short adjustment period (2-3 weeks), and you usually notice a difference on day 1.

You don't have to take meds, you can stop at any time, and you are allowed to manage your health and wellness in whatever way works best for you. But properly administered medication is nothing to be afraid of, it's just a tool and you're in control.

I want people contemplating ADHD medicine who also live with anxiety disorders to know that ADHD meds do not MAKE you do things you might be avoiding due to anxiety.

What ADHD meds do is enable you to CHOOSE whether or not to do those things rather than being simply unable.

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If your primary caregiver is not comfortable diagnosing and treating ADHD on their own (some are), they should refer you to a specialist. If they give you the option of booking the appointment themselves, do it. It'll take away that step where you forget to call.

There are 2 levels of diagnosis. 1 is just getting the diagnosis and that's usually enough to start medical treatment.

The second level is assessment. This is not always needed. Assessment is a series of tests that measures how ADHD affects certain areas for you.

You may need assessment for insurance purposes, or for accommodations at school or work.

If your primary caregiver doesn't know about diagnosing ADHD they may try to send you for assessment first,

ask for a referral to a psychiatrist or specialist instead.

Assessment is often expensive and since you may not need it, you might not want to start with it. Be sure you understand where you're being sent and for what purpose.

Also: your primary caregiver should check your thyroid levels. Symptoms of ADHD and symptoms of thyroid issues can look so similar that sometimes the only way to figure out what's going on is to treat for one and see if things improve. So it's worth looking into.

Last: be honest with your doctor during this meeting about caffeine and/or nicotine intake during this meeting. It matters.

I haven't! But I can!

(I wrote during this meeting twice because that's how quickly I forgot that I had already written it 😅)

First question!

My diagnosis came as a bit of a surprise. I had assumed that I had depression and anxiety and spent about a decade trying to handle that with therapy and diet. I don't have depression or anxiety, unmanaged ADHD looks like them in me.

as a woman with ADHD did you have a hard time getting a diagnosis? what are some of the biggest challenges you've faced as a woman with ADHD?

I still struggle sometimes with convincing new providers that I don't have depression or anxiety, that when I show symptoms of those it means my ADHD is unmanaged. That can be a struggle.

I think the biggest struggle isn't the ADHD itself but the social idea of what it is.

The other big struggle for me is about gender constructs and ADHD.

ADHD means I struggle with things that are coded as "women's work" and though I hate that construct, I also hate feeling like a failure cause my laundry isn't put away. Y'know?

Come for the ADHD, stay for the feminism! 😅

ADHD appears differently across genders because society genders our behaviors, and because society has a gendered and narrow idea of what ADHD is.

There's no "girl ADHD" or "boy ADHD", we just have shit data, as a society. [twitter.com/OMalley_HG/sta...](https://twitter.com/OMalley_HG/status/1234567890)

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I've somehow started grinding my teeth, to the point of getting headaches. Never did that before Vyvanse. Anyone else?

Sounds like muscle tension, which does come with vyvanse. :-/

I'm a singer so I try to keep my jaw relaxed during the day and just hold all my unconscious tension in my shoulders and hips instead! Weeee!

But I do clench my jaw in my sleep.

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everyone has different reactions to caffeine anyway. But there's a lot of anecdotal evidence of people using caffeine to self-medicate, I know I did for years before I was diagnosed.

Stimulants can have a calming effect on ADHD brains, so you'll hear a lot of ADHD folks who say that they can go to sleep right after having a cup of coffee.

You might even hear some of those "bad parent" stories of parents giving their kids pop/soda to calm them down.

Studies show that caffeine can have a similar effect on ADHD brains to stimulant medication, but is not as effective as prescribed medications long-term.

One super important thing to know is that if you're a big caffeine drinker and you go on stimulant medication, you'll probably need to cut back on the coffee. Your doctor may not have mentioned this if you gilded the numbers when they asked how many cups you drink a day.

There's also a lot of statistics pointing to ADHD kids being twice as likely to consume caffeine and nicotine compared to their non-ADHD peers, BUT I have a cool study about that...

It's not just caffeine. It's caffeine and nicotine. And the difference for me was the difference between being a C student and a A student. Effects have faded but it was good while it lasted.

With stimulant medication treatment started before age 10 and continued, risk of substance abuse in ADHD kids drops to the same rate as their neurotypical peers.

So caffeine is actually a really good indicator that something is up! You might be able to medicate with caffeine to the point of functioning every day, but you won't get the long-term effects of medication.

Also if you're on medication and you notice your caffeine intake increasing, or nicotine, or any substance really, it might mean you need a med adjustment.

This probably happens to teenagers for a lot of reasons, but my guess is: 1) growing, and 2) increased cognitive load in secondary school.

Most medications are sensitive to body weight fluctuations, so the same dose won't work at 12 years old that worked at 6.

I'll add this (and I promise to be more concise): many people without ADHD and some with ADHD find that coffee helps them "focus." The research data doesn't support that it literally does that, but that doesn't mean it doesn't help a little. My general sense is that it mostly

I'm seeing a lot of anecdotal accounts of CBD. Pot has helped me with the racing brain in the past but I also can't get anything done on it. And I was going into acting at the time and felt it was affecting my short term memory so I stopped 😂

Anyone have thoughts on marijuana and ADHD? My quick sense is that ADHD increases risk of trying pot, but that, unlike nicotine (and, to a lesser extent, caffeine), MJ doesn't have any direct effect on ADHD (anxiety and tics, sure, which commonly co-exist with ADHD).

Some of you are saying that caffeine works better for you than medication. I do both. The caffeine does seem to have an extra or slightly different focus quality to it. Sometimes I'll do tea, because that's a different kind of focus too, Mark explains it a bit in his response [↑](#)

...Huh. I've never been diagnosed with ADHD, but caffeine seem to have either no effect or make me marginally sleepy. I figured I was just weird like that.

If you have ADHD and can't sleep this may help you adhdlullaby.com

👐👐👐 That's me! I am so envious of people who can't drink coffee after noon or they won't be able to sleep. I can drink coffee 5 mins before I go to sleep and it won't keep me up.

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know your learning style. I'm actually an aural learner with really strong semantic memory, so I don't usually take notes, I use my laptop to connect the the things being discussed to ideas/concepts I already understand. Once I have that link, the info is locked in.

I use cue cards for the links that I don't make automatically (usually names and dates, and who argued which concept) and just drill those in the days before a test/exam.

Take courses that sound interesting. If you stumble on a professor you really like take as many courses with them as you can. I really cannot emphasize enough what a difference it makes.

If you're considering grad school, grades are important. If you're struggling to get your marks up in a class it might be better to drop the class and take it again rather than power through. Be realistic about it but this is an option in higher ed that isn't often talked about.

I think the hardest thing for me was getting a handle on "done is better than perfect". Every project/paper feels like it needs to be the greatest ever, but I remind myself that school work isn't real life work and sometimes you just have to hand the thing in.

Even if it's a topic I'm super passionate about and the idea of making it the best thing ever is what propelled me to do it, sometimes I just have to hand it in. And sometimes I have to take the late penalty knowing it'll be better tomorrow. It's a lot of figuring yourself out.

A quick note on this:

I've also learned from years of doing this that my "done", while not perfect to me, is often pretty damn good to others. And that has helped a lot with getting things done while having ADHD.

I think the hardest thing for me was getting a handle on "done is better than perfect". Every project/paper feels like it needs to be the greatest ever, but I remind myself that school work isn't real life work and sometimes you just have to hand the thing in.

I've also learned that my idea of perfect will still have silly errors and that perfection is always going to be impossible for me. So while I still use the image to motivate me, I don't let it hold me back. I hope that helps!

I supervise an ADHD person. You are exactly correct: "Done is better than perfect". This is what it takes to make a ADHD person into a STAR.

I've learned that my "done", while not perfect to me, is often pretty damn good to most outsiders, so, it's gotten easier over time :)

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<https://twitter.com/i/moments/1100258214480756736>

Living With ADHD

ADHD is a complex disorder that is widely misunderstood.

1. I want to talk about ADHD. I was diagnosed with ADD when I was 13-years-old. To say it's misunderstood (both by people who have ADHD and people who don't have it) is an understatement. What people need to understand about those of us who have ADHD is we are not homogeneous
2. Because many people think those with ADHD all have similar symptoms and challenges, we don't often get the empathy and support we need. ADHD is something we live with every day, hour, minute. It can ravage our lives and you may not even be aware of it.

3. When people have asked me in the past to describe what ADHD feels like I get into details about how it impacts my life every day but I always add that for me that ADHD has caused me a great deal of emotional pain. It's a frustrating, infuriating disorder.

4. I want to be clear, I don't speak for everyone with ADHD but I have spoken to enough people over the last two years with ADHD that I feel comfortable speaking about it publicly.

5. People who don't have ADHD often oversimplify what it means to have ADHD. I don't blame them, they're not living with ADHD. But that's one of the reasons ADHD is so misunderstood because it's anything but simple. That's why it's so hurtful when people jokingly say "squirrel"

6. Whenever someone brings up ADHD. It makes it seem like it's just an issue of distraction. Wrong! For example, I read 2-3 books a week! I don't know many people with ADHD can do that. But for me taking clothes out of the dryer & folding them, that's like climbing Mt. Everest

7. Those of us with ADHD don't need your sympathy, we need your empathy. We need you to understand that we are capable of so much but just need you to understand what our limits and challenges are. We don't want you to see our limits/challenges as excuses...they're explanations

8. For example, people will often say that people with ADHD tend to procrastinate. That is a total misunderstanding of what ADHD is about. Procrastination has a connotation of intentionally putting something off for various reasons. We don't want to be this way.

9. For people with ADHD the issue is often the difficulty starting things. It is enormously challenging for us in certain categories. The simplest things can be exhausting and feel impossible to begin/finish. It's stuff that doesn't make sense to people without ADHD.

10. Which is often why we hide these things that we find challenging because they can be embarrassing. I once had someone with ADHD, who made a good living, tell me that for years they would pay bills when things got shut off. It was a cycle they found nearly impossible

11. To get out of, it destroyed their credit, and it was only when they got married and their wife took over that they fixed their bill paying issue. People with ADHD hide a lot of shame in this and we hold it in because people don't understand our diagnosis.

12. Because of this shame, we don't talk about ADHD generally. We may talk about it with close family members or a psychiatrist but we don't talk about it with our friends & certainly don't talk about it at work (I know this is a generalization and may not be true for you)

13. As egotistical as this may sound, I really hope to change that. I've been thinking about talking about ADHD for a few months and finally acknowledged how misunderstood it is among adults. Because we don't talk about it, ADHD has a big impact at work and home.

14. Now, I realize that being able to talk about it is a privilege. People rightly fear that they could be seen differently at work or may not get assignments they deserve. This is a step-by-step process that will take a while...but it's so important because ADHD has an impact

15. On people being successful at work and even getting a job. Some people think ADHD is over diagnosed...I don't know if it is or isn't, but I can tell you if it is, it's over diagnosed in kids. It's under diagnosed among adults. We know that if someone isn't diagnosed

16. As child, they're less likely to be diagnosed as an adult. Many people see ADHD (because of the hyperactivity component...which not all people with ADHD have) as a boy/man's disorder...which leads many women to not be diagnosed.

17. At home ADHD can have a big impact on relationships, we have a hard time staying organized and tidy. This can have an impact on relationships. I have taught myself many tricks over the years but many people with

ADHD aren't taught to be mindful of their ADHD.

18. Want to know why I have so many towels? Yes, I can be bougie...I'll admit it. But its because it allows me to keep my bathroom organized. I found that it was very hard for me, especially when I have a lot of things going on in my life, to lay my towel over the bar.

19. My towel would often end up on the floor and I didn't want to live that way anymore. So I realized that if I just put a basket in my bathroom I could toss towels in there. Is it crazy to use a towel once and wash it? No doubt...but the alternative wasn't very attractive

20. What I have learned about ADHD is that it can ravage ones life if you let little things slip. I knew if I kept dropping the towel on the floor, I wouldn't make my bed, I wouldn't put my clothes away. Then, that would lead me to get depressed with the state of my home

21. And that would then bleed into my work, etc. I have had mixed success explaining my triggers to people. Some think I'm making excuses or they just don't understand why a simple thing like hanging a towel is a challenge. But I'm not going to stop explaining it

22. Last year I was meeting with a company that wanted to hire me and I told them I have ADHD and would find it challenging to work in an open office environment..the people I was speaking to understood that and were happy to accommodate it. But it hasn't always been easy

23. One of the challenges for me is in order to focus on something like writing, unless I have the adrenaline that comes with not wanting to get scooped, I have to really shut out everything. But people don't understand that I can't do a back and forth when I'm in that zone.

24. In the past (before I learned what systems I needed in place) I would see an email come in from a friend or colleague asking to chat. I would tell them I was focused on work and they would often say "it'll just take a minute!" They didn't get if I gave them that minute

25. That there was a good chance I wouldn't be able to get back to my work. People would get annoyed and think I was being difficult. That's the reason I'm talking about ADHD now, I hope people on both sides of ADHD can be more mindful of what works and doesn't work. (cont)

26. The best way I heard ADHD symptoms described was "a Venn diagram with many circles." But it all boils down to this: we have things that challenge us, things that may seem simple/silly to you, but they're things that can quite take over and destroy our lives if not addressed.

27. That's why it's painful when people say they understand ADHD because a family member has it or they once dated someone with ADHD. It's why it's painful when people say things like "oh I'm so ADHD today." I often say to those people, "Really? Because I'm ADHD every day.."

28. We usually don't work with tough love, we work well with support. One of the kindest things a friend ever did for me is when I had a project to finish, she stayed in the room with me quietly working because she knew that I would feel motivated to get it done if she was there

29. We need you to understand that we don't intend to upset you with what seem like failures to you. We don't mean to let you down. When you have ADHD it's like seeing what you want in a glass case you don't have access to. We want to accomplish so much, we just need the keys

30. Speaking of keys, you know what changed everything for me? When I started taking medication (in my case, adderall) eight years ago. It changed my life in a way I can't explain in a tweet. What those of us with ADHD don't need from you is jokes about medication.

31. We don't need you to tell us that we must have lost weight cause we take medication, or if we are particularly productive one day, we don't need you to say things like we should take more medication. We don't you telling us that we should take less medication either

32. That's what doctors are for. We also don't need those of you who take adderall recreationally or once in a while to study an examine to mess up the system for us. Several years ago I had to go to 3 pharmacies to find adderall. That's not because people with ADHD abuse it

33. It's because people who don't have ADHD think it's great to pop an adderall before going out. Notice how I am not talking about people who are facing addiction. What we need you to understand is ADHD is our daily/hourly burden. It is a complex disorder that we can work with

34. But we need you to understand that we often know how best to work with it, you don't. We need you, if you value our work and value us as friends, spouses, to learn from us what our challenges are. We have so much to offer you if you give us a chance.