

In Focus
Week 1 Materials

Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder

Students often experience traits congruent with a neurocognitive disorder. When someone realizes that they may have ADHD or have just recently been diagnosed, they can experience any number of emotions. Examples may be relief, anger, confusion, etc. The Counseling Center is here to assist you with these common reactions and provide services to help you be as successful as you can be. We offer resources such as ADHD screenings (request an appointment on our website), individual therapy, group therapy, and In Focus. These resources can help you navigate among these symptoms/traits and can help you start identifying academic strategies that can help you during your time at UIUC.

You may be tempted to start googling everything you can about ADHD and other neurocognitive concerns. We would request that you refrain from that urge and visit the information and links we have provided for you here. There is so much misinformation on the internet, and that misinformation can be hurtful and harmful. We're here to support you, so please ask for help or assistance should you need it!

What is ADHD?

Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a neurocognitive condition that begins in early childhood and frequently persists into adulthood. Although it is more prevalent in childhood, with an estimated 7-8% of adults diagnosed in the U.S., approximately 4-5% of adults are diagnosed with the condition.

There are three broad sets of symptoms associated with ADHD: inattention and distractibility, hyperactivity, and impulsivity. It is not necessary to have symptoms from all three areas to meet criteria for ADHD and many adults experience primarily the cognitive symptoms of inattention and distractibility and specific behavioral symptoms. The degree of autonomy and independence provided in college, for example, can be a challenge for individuals with ADHD traits. Rigorous coursework in college also poses new challenges for individuals with ADHD as it becomes more necessary to pay attention during lectures and/or read assignments in order to understand the course material. The problems with attention-span and concentration have typically been long-standing for most adults with ADHD—as college students, these problems now interfere more substantially with their academic performance.

Activities commonly affected by ADHD

Driving: Symptoms related to ADHD affect driving in at least three ways: more likely to be distracted, impulsive, or speed while driving which all increases the risk of accidents. It is recommended that you develop a plan that reduces risk, including effectively managing symptoms like inattention, distractibility and impulsivity.

Finances: Adults with ADHD traits have trouble keeping track of their bills and often have no system for organizing their bills and paying them in a systematic way. Many adults with ADHD traits have turned over the management of their finances to parents, a partner, or automated service. Some utilize automatic bill pay services now available at many banks that are often

helpful. These are often useful strategies for managing finances more effectively.

Nutrition/Exercise: Adults with ADHD traits are less likely to exercise because regular exercise requires consistent planning and organizational skills. Adults with ADHD often eat a relatively poor diet because healthy eating can require menu planning, regular grocery shopping, and meal preparation. Adults with ADHD traits may benefit from having a plan to set up mealtimes and appointments to exercise.

Sleep: It is not uncommon for adults with ADHD traits to report poor sleep hygiene, problems with initial insomnia, a chaotic sleep schedule, elevated activity levels while asleep, excessive daytime fatigue, drowsiness while engaged in low stimulus activities, frequent napping and falling asleep during lectures and/or while reading.

Relationships: Adults with ADHD traits are more likely to have relationships with a greater degree of reported dissatisfaction. In clinical settings, one of the most frequent conflicts relates to the frustration directed toward the partner who has difficulty organizing and managing life activities. Partners of adults with ADHD should be aware of these potential difficulties and work with their partners to make a schedule for managing activities like chores cooking, etc.

Education: The major life activity most substantially affected by ADHD traits is academic performance. The most significant difficulties are often due to the lack of structure in college (universities are relatively unstructured and class attendance is frequently optional). Many students with ADHD traits report that they are frequently overwhelmed by the work assigned to them and they experience consistent difficulties with time management and organization.

Workplace: Adults with ADHD traits often experience difficulties in their occupational functioning because symptoms that affected their academic work will also affect their performance in the workplace. Frequent problems include problems with inattention and distractibility, problems completing assigned work, poor time management, missing deadlines, and difficulty managing multiple responsibilities.

Reading: Many adults with ADHD traits report substantial problems with reading comprehension and reading difficulties are one of the most significant issues affecting academic performance amongst college students diagnosed with this condition. This difficulty is related to problems with working memory, inattention and distractibility. Students with ADHD often rely on PowerPoint slides of class lectures and/or skim through assigned readings. They also tend to do poorly on multiple-choice exams because the strategies they utilize to read are largely ineffective.

Resources

Books:

- Taking Charge of Adult ADHD by Russell Barkley.
- Scattered Minds by Gabor Mate, M.D.
- Driven to Distraction (Revised): Recognizing and Coping with Attention Deficit Disorder by Edward M. Hallowell M.D. and John J. Ratey M.D.
- More Attention, Less Deficit: Success Strategies for Adults with ADHD by Ari Tuckman
- Delivered from Distraction: Getting the Most out of Life with Attention Deficit Disorder by Edward M. Hallowell and John J. Ratey
- The Mindfulness Prescription for Adult ADHD: An 8-Step Program for Strengthening Attention, Managing Emotions,... by Lidia Zylowska and Daniel Siegel
- You Mean I'm Not Lazy, Stupid or Crazy?!: The Classic Self-Help Book for Adults with Attention Deficit Disorder... by Kate Kelly, Peggy Ramundo and Edward M. M.D. Hallowell

Websites:

- Dr. Russell A. Barkley, PhD, specializes in ADHD information:
<http://www.russellbarkley.org/>
- [Totallyadd.com](http://www.totallyadd.com) Was created for adults with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADD/ADHD) and those affected by it, (family, employers, health professionals, etc.) Totally ADD liberates people from fear, shame, and stigma. Through education, humour, and social interaction, Totally ADD provides the tools and support people need to create a life they love.
- <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/add-adhd/managing-adult-adhd-attention-deficit-disorder.htm>
- <https://www.additudemag.com/>

Youtube Videos:

- **How is ADHD diagnosed?**
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rH4UzMcbmjU>
- **A new ADHD diagnosis: Here's What People Get Wrong**
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ALt-CZ8QtRw>
- **TEDxTalks-**http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uU6o2_UFSEY
 - Stephen is a Senior Directing major at Carnegie Mellon. He is also the current President of Carnegie Mellon's Film Club. He was diagnosed with ADHD as a child and speaks about his experience.

Procrastination

Some of the biggest challenges students experience while working on their academics relates to time management and procrastination. Everyone avoids working at times and some degree of procrastination is inevitable on large projects. There are several ways to determine whether procrastination is a problem for you, including an assessment of how it may be affecting our **productivity**.

If you have been experiencing problems with time management and procrastination, it is important to assess how these issues have been affecting your work. The following will direct you to a series of questions that will help you to assess whether procrastination is a problem affecting your work and, if so, what types of interventions might be most helpful:

- **Am I procrastinating?**
- **Why am I procrastinating?**
- **What are the consequences associated with my procrastination?**
- **What can I do about procrastination?**

The most important thing to consider when evaluating your time management skills is that procrastination always affects productivity. If you procrastinate consistently, it will be difficult to develop long-term goals because you are unable to predict reliably how often you will work.

There are many reasons why people procrastinate on their work, but there's always a reason. You may be procrastinating because you aren't confident about your skills, for example, and avoiding the work decreases your anxiety. The longer you avoid working, however, the more likely you are to feel guilty because they aren't making sufficient progress. Understanding the psychological dynamics that cause procrastination can help you resolve this issue effectively. The more clarity you have about why you procrastinate, the more effective you will become in developing solutions.

Procrastination Assessment

Am I procrastinating?

- Do you develop time management plans, but utilize them inconsistently?
- Do you find yourself thinking of reasons to avoid working?
- Do you work on some tasks (e.g., research) as a way of avoiding the task?
- Are you easily distracted by tasks that are unrelated to the work?
- Do you justify decisions to avoid the work with rationalizations that aren't true?
- Are you working in places where you are unable to be productive?
- Do you establish goals and then adjust them repeatedly because you aren't working consistently?

Why am I procrastinating on the work?

- Do I think of my work as a meaningful project?
- Is the work relevant to my professional goals?
- Do I enjoy working on the project?
- Does the project challenge me or am I bored by it?
- Do I feel supported by my advisor, colleagues and family?
- Do I feel recognized for my accomplishments?
- Do I feel confident in the work I am currently doing on the project?
- Do I feel overwhelmed by the work?
- Are my standards difficult or impossible for me to meet?
- Am I avoiding the project because I'm anxious about the job market?

What are the consequences associated with my procrastination?

- Do I feel guilty whenever I'm not working on the project?
- Do I avoid colleagues so that I won't have to talk about the work?
- Have I been unable to meet agreed-upon deadlines?
- Has there been conflict with my advisor regarding lack of progress?
- Do I feel anxious regarding my ability to meet time-to-completion goals?
- Do I have trouble concentrating on tasks related to the work?
- Have my relationships with important friends/partners been affected by my lack of progress?
- Have I experienced psychological symptoms such as anxiety, depression, substance abuse or sleep disturbance?

What can I do about procrastination?

- Have I developed a time-management plan that includes specific goals?
- Have I established reasonable goals?
- Do I have a way of monitoring my progress?
- Have I organized my time so that tasks don't seem overwhelming?
- Have I scheduled regular meetings with my advisor to address questions as they arise?
- Are there colleagues who can provide support and accountability?
- Do I have other interests that provide balance in my life?
- Do I allocate time for wellness activities, including sleep, exercise, recreation and friendships?

Suggestions for Managing Procrastination

- Don't plan on eliminating procrastination entirely; instead, develop a plan to manage procrastination so that you are doing it less frequently.
- Establish routines that help to organize and structure your time throughout the day. It is often helpful to designate a specific time when you will start working on the work and then hold yourself accountable to that commitment in the same way you would for any other responsibility.
- Identify ways that you justify the avoidance of work and challenge these thoughts patterns. Many students attempt to rationalize their procrastination by asserting that other tasks are more important or that tomorrow will be a more productive day.
- Don't rely on motivation to determine whether or not you are going to work. Develop a time management plan and make a commitment to work during the times allocated to the work. The more you think of your work as a job, the more likely you are to work even when you aren't motivated.
- Don't allow tasks with imminent deadlines to become more important than time allocated. This is often an effective way of procrastinating because there are frequently enough daily tasks to consume all available work time.
- Identify the reasons you are procrastinating and respond to them with a plan of action. It is often helpful to consult with a colleague or mentor who can help you identify obstacles to progress, support the work and hold you accountable.
- Develop short-term goals you can accomplish on a daily basis. The long term-work necessary to complete the work can seem so overwhelming that you may avoid working on it as a way of coping with the uncertainty.
- Minimize distractions in your workplace. This may include the use of software to manage electronic distraction, including social media, gaming and internet access if you are using these to avoid working.

Today's Plans

Task	How long will it take?	When will you start?	Actual start	Time finished	How close was the estimate? (+/- minutes)

From *The Smart but Scattered Guide to Success* by Peg Dawson and Richard Guare. Copyright © 2016 The Guilford Press. Purchasers of this book can photocopy and/or download enlarged versions of this material (see the box at the end of the table of contents).

Weekly Planner

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
7-8am							
8-9am							
9-10am							
10-11am							
11-12pm							
12-1pm							
1-2pm							
2-3pm							
3-4pm							
4-5pm							
5-6pm							
6-7pm							
7-8pm							
8-9pm							
9-10pm							
10-11pm							
11-12am							

"WHERE DOES TIME GO?"



Number of hours of sleep each night _____ x 7 = _____

Number of hours spent grooming each day _____ x 7 = _____

Number of hours for meals/snacks, including
preparation/clean-up time _____ x 7 = _____

Travel time to and from campus _____ x 5 = _____

Number of hours per week for regular activities
(chapter meetings, leadership/service activities,
intramurals, church, etc.) _____

Number of hours per day of errands, etc _____ x 7 = _____

Number of hours of work per week _____

Number of hours in class per week _____

Number of hours per week with friends, social
parties, going out, watching tv, etc _____

Number of hours per week for home/family
responsibilities _____

Total = _____

168 hours in a week
- _____ hours of activities
= _____ extra hours (What do I need them for?)

WHERE DOES TIME GO?

Example

Number of hours of sleep each night	$8 \times 7 = 56$
Number of hours spent grooming each day	$1 \times 7 = 7$
Number of hours for meals/snacks, including preparation/clean-up time	$3 \times 7 = 21$
Travel time to and from campus	$30 \text{ min.} \times 5 = 2.5$
Number of hours per week for regular activities (chapter meetings, leadership/service activities, intramurals, church, etc.)	6
Number of hours per day of errands, etc	$1 \times 7 = 7$
Number of hours of work per week	15
Number of hours in class per week	15
Number of hours per week with friends, social parties, going out, watching tv, etc	10
Number of hours per week for home/family responsibilities	0
	Total = 139.5

168.0 hours in a week

- 139.5 hours of activities

= 28.5 extra hours

Prioritizing Activity

Rate each activity in order of importance from 1-6, with 1 being the most important. Discard/say no to the 3 activities you think are least important.

- _____ Have coffee with friend
- _____ Meeting with academic advisor
- _____ Study for next week's test
- _____ Go to movie
- _____ Attend meeting for student organization
- _____ Volunteer for activity on campus
- _____ Read for tomorrow's quiz
- _____ Take on extra shift at work this week
- _____ Work on paper due in 10 days

Perfectionism

The majority of students have high standards and expectations regarding the quality of their work, but they may or may not describe themselves as “perfectionists”. The presence of high standards often provides some of the motivation necessary for students to excel academically. Many students have ambitious professional goals, they structure their work in ways that allow them to accomplish these goals and there is generally a high degree of job satisfaction whenever they have met these goals.

There are situations where high standards and expectations have a more negative impact on how someone feels about themselves and the work. These individuals tend to establish ambitious goals that are difficult to achieve and then evaluate their work unfavorably because they were unable to meet their standards. They may also be more likely to compare themselves to others in ways that intensify negative feelings about their work.

The literature often refers to both types of individuals as “perfectionists” but makes the distinction between more positive or “adaptive” forms of perfectionism on the one hand and a much more negative version of perfectionism that impedes work and affects self-confidence.

The negative type of perfectionism may impact work in several ways:

- It can increase the amount of time necessary to complete a task because the expectations are not attainable;
- There is little or no progress because the task is avoided as a way of coping with negative feelings about the quality of the work;
- The work is not shared with others due to shame which prevents feedback;

It is important to be aware that perfectionism can have a positive or negative impact on your work depending on how you respond to it. It may be helpful to ask yourself the following questions as a way of assessing how perfectionism has been affecting your work:

- Do I have unrealistic or unattainable standards for my work?
- Do I feel satisfied when others have evaluated my work in positive ways?
- Do I avoid my work because it feels impossible to meet my standards?
- Do I think of my work in ways that are highly critical?

Suggestions for Managing Perfectionism

- Evaluate whether or not you think that perfectionism may be having a negative impact on how you feel about yourself as a professional and if it is interfering with your work goals.
- Identify your emotional reactions to perfectionism. It may be helpful to recognize that perfectionism is often a strategy for avoiding negative feelings about yourself.
- Identify resources that can assist you in managing perfectionism more effectively by collaborating with your advisor or classmates regarding standards and expectations for your work.
- Establish time-related goals for completing sections of your work and try to keep these deadlines irrespective of how you assess the quality of your work.
- Identify factors that contribute to your perfectionism, including institutional expectations that seem to exacerbate perfectionism. If your teachers or classmates seem perfectionistic to you, they may not be effective resources for assisting with your perfectionism.
- Be careful to avoid the assumption that managing perfectionism means lowering your standards. It may be necessary to assess whether your goals are attainable and make adjustments that include a focus on quality and realistic goals.

Temptation Bundling

Pleasure and temptation	Procrastinating tasks/behaviors
Temptation bundling	
i.e., only watch the show you enjoy while exercising.	