

# ADHD and Relationships

Those with ADHD have many positive traits and are often said to be fun, exciting, spontaneous and help others to be present.

However, ADHD can affect relationships with partners, families, friends and at work. The typical features of hyperactivity/impulsivity and inattentiveness often cause issues with communication and the required skills to create or maintain long term connections.

## Strengths of ADHD

There are many strengths that someone with ADHD traits can bring to relationships

- **Outgoing, sociable, funny**, and often the “life and soul of the party”
- **Exciting**, easy to talk to, easily makes friends and often accepting of others
- **Spontaneous** and having a **contagiously high energy**
- **Resilient** and often bounces back
- **Creative**, resourceful, knowledgeable, and witty
- Able to **hyper-focus** on tasks and people too (which can be flattering)

## Challenges of ADHD and the impact on relationships

- **Reliance on others** for structure, organising and reminders
- **Impulsivity, anger**, and a **short-temper** can lead to arguments and saying/doing regretful things
- Managing **intense emotions** and **frequent mood changes** may make it difficult to live with others
- **Hyperactivity** and **restlessness** can make it difficult to relax and sit still when others want to
- **Distractibility** may include zoning out of conversations and struggling to focus on one person
- **Communication problems** include talking excessively, difficulty waiting turn, and interrupting others
- **Poor time management, disorganisation**, and **forgetfulness** with errands, special occasions, events, and staying in touch with family and friends

### How those with ADHD may feel:

- Frequently **criticised** and **nagged**
- **Loneliness**, having few close relationships, flitting between people, or losing touch
- Becoming **easily bored** and needing **novelty** can make it hard to maintain relationships
- Having **conflict** with family, friends or at work

### How non-ADHD loved ones may feel:

- **Ignored, underappreciated**, boring, or not listened to
- Having **unequal relationships**, partner feeling like a parent/carer, taking on more chores
- Despite being fun, it can feel like an **emotional rollercoaster** and difficult to **manage the pace**

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# Strategies for Relationships

Being aware of your behaviour, learning how ADHD affects you, and accepting how your brain works will help with the challenges you face in all relationships.

## Strategies for types of relationships

### At work/formal situations

- Ask for an **agenda** in **advance** of meetings
- Think about what's **appropriate**, **watch others**, and follow **social cues**
- Find **allies or trusted colleagues** for support
- Under the **Equality Act 2010**, your employer must make **reasonable adjustments** to support you. For further information, check out our "Work" support guide online

### In family/friend relationships

- **Use diaries, planners** and your **phone** to keep track of birthdays, dates, and plans
- **Apologise** if you interrupt someone or let them down
- Make **staying in touch** a priority or routine, e.g., have a regular time to call
- Do things **together** such as chores, shopping, and exercise
- Talk about how **ADHD affects you** and **accept help** from others

### In romantic relationships

- Be **honest** and **communicate**
- Expect **compromise**, share responsibilities, and work to your strengths
- Choose **like-minded partners**, and find **hobbies** you both enjoy
- Have set times to **remove distractions** and **be in the moment** together
- Accept when either you or your partner **need time alone for your individual needs**. For example, if your partner needs to relax but you're always on the go

## Communication tips

- **Listen** without defending or interrupting
- **Clarify** what's been said to avoid misinterpreting and show you're listening
- If you miss something, ask them to **repeat**
- Figure out **when** and **where** you find it **easiest to communicate**. You might prefer a space without distractions and set a time to talk – or you may need more stimulation and find going outside easier, such as walking or driving
- Have your non-ADHD loved ones **write down what's been discussed** for you to look back to
- Don't try to **cover too many topics** in one conversation
- Allow time to **cool off** following any conflict and address issues when things are calm

Visit our webpage for more information on ADHD

Web [www.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/adhd](http://www.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/adhd)

