

AuDHD Recognition and Daily Support Workbook

A patient guide with reflection pages, practical planning tools, and optional focusing activities

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Use one page at a time. Skip any activity that feels stressful. The exercises help you notice patterns and prepare for a conversation with a qualified clinician; they do not diagnose autism or ADHD.

Name (optional): _____ Date started: _____

How to use this workbook

Read a short section, then write only what feels useful. Return to pages as your needs change. You may type into this document, print it, dictate responses, or discuss questions with a support person.

When I have...	Try...
2 minutes	Circle one need and write one next step.
10 minutes	Complete a worksheet or a focusing activity.
More energy	Review patterns and choose one support to test this week.



AuDHD is a community term used by people who have both:

- Autism spectrum disorder (autism)
- Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)

AuDHD is not a separate diagnosis in the DSM-5-TR. A person can, however, meet criteria for both autism and ADHD.

This handout can help you better understand your experiences and prepare for a conversation with your care team. It cannot diagnose autism or ADHD.

What AuDHD Can Feel Like

Autism and ADHD can overlap in ways that are confusing. Your strengths, needs, and challenges may change from day to day.

Some adults with AuDHD may experience:

- A strong need for routines, but difficulty creating or keeping routines
- Deep focus on interests or projects, but difficulty starting everyday tasks
- Trouble with time, planning, organization, remembering steps, or finishing tasks
- Sensory overload from noise, lights, crowds, clothing, smells, or touch
- Fidgeting, pacing, stimming, or needing movement to think and regulate
- Feeling exhausted after socializing, meetings, masking, or busy environments
- Difficulty recovering after unexpected changes, conflict, or criticism
- Strong emotions, shutdowns, or feeling overwhelmed when demands build up
- Feeling misunderstood at work, school, home, or in relationships
- Years of being called “lazy,” “too sensitive,” “too much,” “scattered,” or “not trying hard enough”

These experiences don't mean something is wrong with you. They may be signs that your brain and nervous system need support that better fits your needs.

Signs That It May Be Worth Exploring

You may want to learn more about autism and ADHD if you recognize long-term patterns such as:

- Your struggles began in childhood, even if no one recognized them at the time.
- You have worked very hard to appear organized, calm, social, or “fine,” but doing so is exhausting.
- You do well in a crisis or with an interesting task but struggle with routine responsibilities.
- You repeatedly experience burnout, especially after periods of high work, family, social, or sensory demands.
- You need quiet, alone time, movement, or familiar routines to recover.



- Anxiety or depression treatment has helped somewhat but has not fully explained your day-to-day difficulties.
- A child, sibling, parent, or partner is diagnosed with autism or ADHD, and their experiences feel familiar.
- You have spent much of your life blaming yourself for patterns that may have a neurodevelopmental explanation.

Having some of these experiences does not confirm AuDHD. Anxiety, trauma, depression, sleep problems, medical conditions, substance use, and other concerns can cause or worsen similar symptoms.

Why Some Adults Are Recognized Later

Many adults were not identified in childhood because they:

- Did well academically or professionally despite high stress
- Were quiet, compliant, or internalized their distress
- Learned to copy others socially or memorize conversation “scripts”
- Overprepared, people-pleased, or pushed through exhaustion
- Had family members who viewed similar traits as normal
- Were diagnosed with anxiety, depression, trauma-related symptoms, or another condition first
- Were not recognized because of gender, race, culture, access to care, or outdated stereotypes

A late diagnosis or self-recognition process can bring many emotions. Relief, grief, anger, validation, uncertainty, and sadness about past misunderstandings can all be normal responses.

Getting an Assessment

What a Comprehensive Assessment May Include

An assessment for autism and ADHD usually looks at the whole picture, not just one checklist.

Your care team may ask about:

- Childhood development, school experiences, friendships, behavior, and learning
- Current difficulties at work, school, home, in relationships, or with health care
- Attention, organization, time management, impulsivity, sensory needs, and social communication
- Mental health, sleep, trauma history, substance use, and medical conditions
- Family history of autism, ADHD, learning differences, or mental health conditions
- Input from someone who knew you in childhood, a partner, or another support person, if available
- Old report cards, school records, evaluations, or written observations, if available

You don't need perfect childhood records to seek evaluation. Many adults do not have access to them.



Screening Tools

Online questionnaires and self-screeners can help you notice patterns and decide whether to seek an assessment. They cannot diagnose autism or ADHD on their own.

A positive screener means, “This may be worth exploring.”

A negative screener does not always rule out autism or ADHD, especially if you mask, have learned coping skills, or have symptoms that look different from the questions asked.

Appointment Preparation Worksheet

Bring this list to your appointment if it is helpful.

My main concerns

- The difficulties I want help with:
- How these difficulties affect my work, school, home, health, or relationships:
- What I hope to gain from assessment:

Childhood and school memories

- Things that were hard for me as a child:
- Feedback I often received:
- Subjects, interests, or activities I focused on intensely:
- School records or family members who may offer helpful history:

Current patterns

- Tasks I avoid, forget, or cannot start:
- Sensory situations that are difficult:
- Times when I feel most focused or capable:
- Situations that lead to overload, shutdown, or burnout:
- Supports that already help:

Other health information

- Current medications and supplements:
- Sleep concerns:
- Mood, anxiety, trauma, substance-use, or medical concerns:
- Questions I want to ask:



Management and Support

There is no one “right” way to manage AuDHD. Helpful support is usually a combination of practical tools, environment changes, mental-health care when needed, and treatment for ADHD symptoms when appropriate.

The goal is not to make you less yourself. The goal is to reduce unnecessary struggle and help you live more safely, healthily, and sustainably.

1. Make Your Environment Work Better for You

Small environmental changes can reduce overload and support attention.

Examples:

- Use earplugs, noise-canceling headphones, or quiet spaces when possible.
- Reduce bright lights or visual clutter.
- Keep frequently used items in one visible, consistent place.
- Use written instructions instead of relying on memory alone.
- Build extra transition time before appointments, meetings, errands, or social events.
- Plan recovery time after demanding events.
- Break large tasks into the smallest possible first step.

Try this: Instead of “clean the kitchen,” start with “put one item in the dishwasher” or “clear one section of the counter.”

2. Support Executive Function

Executive function is the set of skills that helps you start, plan, remember, organize, estimate time, and switch tasks.

Helpful tools may include:

- One calendar system rather than several competing systems
- Visual reminders, alarms, timers, and checklists
- A weekly “reset” time to review appointments, medication refills, meals, and bills
- Body doubling: doing a task while another person is nearby or working alongside you
- Automatic bill pay, prescription refills, grocery delivery, or recurring reminders
- A written “next step” list rather than a large to-do list
- A “minimum viable day” plan for low-energy days



My Minimum Viable Day

On a hard day, the essentials may be:

- Medication or health task:
 - Food and hydration:
 - Hygiene:
 - One urgent responsibility:
 - One calming or regulating activity:
 - One support person I can contact:
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3. Care for Your Nervous System

Autistic and ADHD nervous systems may become overloaded by too much sensory input, uncertainty, social demand, conflict, or pressure. Signs of overload may include:

- Irritability
 - Brain fog
 - Feeling panicked or frozen
 - Difficulty speaking or finding words
 - Crying, anger, or feeling emotionally numb
 - Needing to leave suddenly
 - Needing silence, sleep, movement, or solitude
 - Difficulty doing basic tasks
 - Helpful regulation strategies may include:
 - Taking a quiet break before reaching overload
 - Moving your body: walking, stretching, pacing, dancing, or using a fidget
 - Using familiar music, comforting textures, weighted items, or calming scents if helpful
 - Eating and drinking regularly
 - Reducing decisions and nonessential demands
 - Using direct phrases such as: “I am overloaded. I need 20 minutes of quiet before I can continue this conversation.”
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4. Therapy and Skills Support

Therapy can be helpful when it respects your communication style, sensory needs, and goals. Some people benefit from:

- Cognitive behavioral therapy for anxiety, depression, or ADHD-related challenges
- Acceptance and commitment therapy for values, flexibility, and self-compassion
- Dialectical behavior therapy skills for intense emotions, distress tolerance, and relationships
- Trauma-informed therapy when trauma is part of the picture
- Occupational therapy for sensory needs, routines, and daily living
- ADHD or executive-function coaching
- Peer support from neurodivergent communities

You may benefit from asking for:

- Direct language instead of vague questions
 - A written agenda or summary after sessions
 - Clear, concrete goals
 - Fewer worksheets or smaller assignments
 - Sensory adjustments, such as telehealth, low lighting, fewer interruptions, or planned breaks
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5. Medications for ADHD Symptoms

Medication may help some people with ADHD symptoms such as inattention, impulsivity, task initiation, restlessness, and follow-through. Common medication groups include:

- Stimulants
- Nonstimulants

Medication may be considered alongside practical supports, therapy, sleep care, and accommodations. It does not treat autism itself or remove sensory needs, identity, or the value of environmental supports. Before starting or changing medication, discuss:

- Your main treatment goals
 - Sleep, appetite, anxiety, mood, and heart-health history
 - Current medications, supplements, caffeine, nicotine, alcohol, or other substances
 - Pregnancy, breastfeeding, or family-planning concerns when relevant
 - Past medication benefits and side effects
 - How you will track whether the medication is helping
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Medication Tracking Notes

- Medication:
 - Goal symptom:
 - What improved:
 - Side effects:
 - Sleep:
 - Appetite:
 - Mood:
 - Questions for my care team:
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Work, School, and Accommodations

You may be able to request changes that help you do your work or education more effectively. You do not have to disclose more personal health information than is necessary to request support. Helpful accommodations may include:

- Written instructions and clear task priorities
- Meeting agendas in advance
- Quiet workspace or noise-reduction tools
- Flexible scheduling or remote work when available
- Regular check-ins with a supervisor, instructor, or advisor
- Extra time for complex tasks or exams
- Permission to use planners, reminders, assistive technology, or breaks
- Reduced interruptions during focus-heavy work
- Clear deadlines, expectations, and feedback

Simple Accommodation Request Language

“I work best when priorities and instructions are provided in writing. Could we use a brief written task list or follow-up email after meetings?”

“A quieter workspace or permission to use noise-reduction headphones would help me focus and complete my work accurately.”



Relationships and Communication

AuDHD can affect communication, energy, conflict, and shared responsibilities. Direct communication can reduce misunderstandings. Try using clear statements such as:

- “I need time to think before I answer.”
- “I am not upset with you. I am overloaded and need quiet.”
- “Please tell me directly what you need rather than hinting.”
- “I remember better when plans are written down.”
- “I want to have this conversation, but I need a break first.”
- “Unexpected changes are hard for me. Please give me as much notice as possible.”

Your need for rest, predictability, sensory comfort, and direct communication is valid.

Burnout: When Your Usual Coping Stops Working

Burnout can happen when demands remain too high for too long. It can affect autistic adults, adults with ADHD, and adults with both. Possible signs include:

- Feeling unable to keep up with basic tasks
- Losing skills that usually feel manageable
- Increased sensory sensitivity
- Severe exhaustion that rest does not quickly fix
- Pulling away from people or responsibilities
- More frequent shutdowns, meltdowns, panic, or tears
- Increased hopelessness, depression, or anxiety
- Difficulty eating, sleeping, bathing, working, or responding to messages

Helpful first steps may include:

- Reduce nonessential demands.
 - Ask for practical help.
 - Simplify meals, errands, and household tasks.
 - Take time away from overstimulating environments when possible.
 - Review sleep, physical health, mood, medications, and substance use with your care team.
 - Make a gradual return plan instead of trying to “catch up” all at once.
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When to Seek Urgent Help

Seek immediate crisis support or emergency care if you feel unable to stay safe, have thoughts of ending your life, are considering self-harm, feel out of control, are experiencing psychosis, or cannot meet basic needs such as food, water, shelter, or essential medication.

In the United States, call or text 988 for the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. If there is immediate danger, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department.

Key Messages to Remember

- AuDHD is a common term for having both autism and ADHD.
 - You can be capable, intelligent, caring, and still need meaningful support.
 - Needing routine while struggling to maintain routine is a common AuDHD experience.
 - You don't need a diagnosis to start using helpful supports.
 - Medication may help ADHD symptoms for some people, but it is only one possible support.
 - Environmental changes, direct communication, sensory care, executive-function tools, and rest can make a real difference.
 - Your goal does not need to be looking neurotypical. A good goal is living with more stability, health, access, and self-understanding.
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My sensory and energy map

Mark what tends to drain or restore you. Patterns may change by place, time, and stress level.

Situation	Early sign in my body	What helps
Noise or light	_____	_____
Crowds or conversation	_____	_____
Unexpected change	_____	_____
Task switching	_____	_____
Other	_____	_____

My earliest reliable signal of overload:

One change I can try before I reach overload:

Demand and recovery planner

Upcoming demand	Expected energy cost 1 to 5	Recovery time or support
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

If a plan changes, my gentlest fallback is:



A task starting worksheet

Choose one task. Make the first action small enough that you can do it in about two minutes.

Prompt	My answer
The task	_____
Why it matters today	_____
The first visible action	_____
What might interrupt me	_____
A reminder or body double	_____
A stopping point	_____

After trying: What made starting easier?

Communication practice

Complete a sentence you could use with a clinician, colleague, friend, or family member.

When _____ happens, I notice _____.

I would find it helpful if _____.

If I need a pause, I can say _____.



Gentle focus activities

These are optional attention breaks, not tests. Set a comfortable timer or stop whenever you wish.

Word search

Find the words below in straight horizontal, vertical, or diagonal lines. Words may read forward or backward.

ROUTINE REST FOCUS PAUSE SLEEP SUPPORT ENERGY QUIET PLAN SPACE

T	R	E	R	Q	N	Y	V	Q	N	P	C	C	O	L
D	N	S	Y	M	B	G	Q	H	M	A	E	D	O	G
F	A	U	R	M	L	F	K	L	U	G	O	E	B	C
R	R	A	E	Z	Y	U	T	X	G	U	W	D	L	B
G	O	P	N	D	E	S	O	S	P	L	A	N	B	S
D	P	U	W	Q	E	S	J	V	E	N	E	R	G	Y
S	X	P	T	P	X	C	U	W	L	R	Z	D	Z	T
T	P	I	D	I	A	F	Q	L	U	C	K	D	F	R
U	W	A	T	N	N	W	I	F	B	C	G	L	V	O
D	G	R	C	I	P	E	C	F	A	I	Y	D	S	P
P	T	G	M	E	L	D	T	E	I	U	Q	X	Q	P
F	B	H	M	T	F	O	C	U	S	B	G	G	Y	U
P	U	M	B	Y	W	W	N	O	I	H	H	D	I	S
C	V	S	F	F	U	K	B	A	P	F	T	I	B	P
W	A	I	Y	Y	A	G	U	Z	O	V	H	O	R	N



Spot and sort

Circle each letter A below. Count at your own pace, then check by scanning one row at a time.

ABDACBADDCABC
CDABACDBACAD
BACDABCADBACA
DCBADACBADAC

My count: _____ I felt: ☐ calmer ☐ unchanged ☐ more activated

Five senses reset

Write one thing you notice for each sense. Skip any sense that feels uncomfortable.

Sense	What I notice
Sight	_____
Sound	_____
Touch	_____
Smell	_____
Taste	_____

Pattern break

Continue each pattern in any way that makes sense to you. There is no speed goal.

○ □ ○ □ ○ _____

1 2 4 1 2 4 _____

What activity helped me focus or settle today?



My next seven days

Day	One essential task	One support or recovery break
Mon		
Tue		
Wed		
Thu		
Fri		
Sat		
Sun		

A support I want to discuss with my care team:

One strength I noticed while using this workbook:

Safety note: This workbook is educational. If you feel unable to stay safe, seek immediate local emergency help. In the United States, call or text 988 for crisis support; call 911 for immediate danger.

