



DYNAMIC LEARNING SERVICES
WELCOME CHANGE

ADHD and Its Impact on Your Practice

Workshop #6- Environmental Engineering: Managing Your Surroundings and Workplace

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Agenda



Follow-up and Reflections



Managing your surroundings



Managing Workplace



Relationships



Discussion/Questions/Takeaways



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Follow-Up and Reflections

- Questions from last session?
- Comments/impressions/reflections from last session?
- What changes have you implemented in your week since our last discussion?

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ADHD and the Workplace

Change jobs more often

Have trouble meeting demands more often (e.g., working independently, finishing tasks, and getting along with the boss).

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Finding the Right Fit

1. **Self-assessment:** Before looking for a law firm, it's important for attorneys with ADHD to assess their strengths, weaknesses, and work preferences. Understand how your ADHD affects your work, such as your ability to focus, organize, and manage time.
2. **Set priorities:** Determine your top priorities for a law firm. Consider factors like the firm's size, practice areas, work culture, and location. Think about what aspects are non-negotiable for you.
3. **Seek guidance:** Talk to mentors, colleagues, or support groups within the legal profession who may have ADHD or experience working with attorneys who have ADHD. They can offer valuable insights and recommendations.
4. **Research firms:** Conduct thorough research on potential law firms. Look at their websites, read reviews, and consider their reputation in the legal community. Find out if they have experience or a track record of accommodating attorneys with ADHD or other neurodiverse backgrounds.
5. **Contact the firm's HR or recruiting department:** Reach out to the human resources or recruiting department to discuss your needs and inquire about the firm's policies related to accommodations, flexible work arrangements, and support for neurodiversity.
6. **Interview attorneys at the firm:** If possible, speak to current or former attorneys at the firm to get an insider's perspective on the work environment, culture, and support for attorneys with ADHD. Ask about their experiences and how the firm accommodates individual needs.
7. **Request accommodations:** During the interview process or after receiving an offer, don't hesitate to discuss your ADHD and the accommodations you might need. It's important to be open and honest with prospective employers about your needs and how they can support you.
8. **Evaluate firm culture:** Pay attention to the firm's culture and work expectations. Some firms may be more fast-paced and demand longer hours, while others may offer a more relaxed work environment. Choose a culture that aligns with your preferences and work style.
9. **Trial period:** If possible, consider a short-term or contract position with a firm to evaluate if it's a good fit for you before committing to a long-term position.
10. **Legal specialization:** Depending on your specific area of law, you may find certain firms more accommodating or better suited to your practice. Investigate firms that specialize in your chosen field.
11. **Trust your instincts:** Ultimately, trust your instincts when making a decision. If a firm doesn't feel like the right fit for you, it's okay to keep looking for a better match.



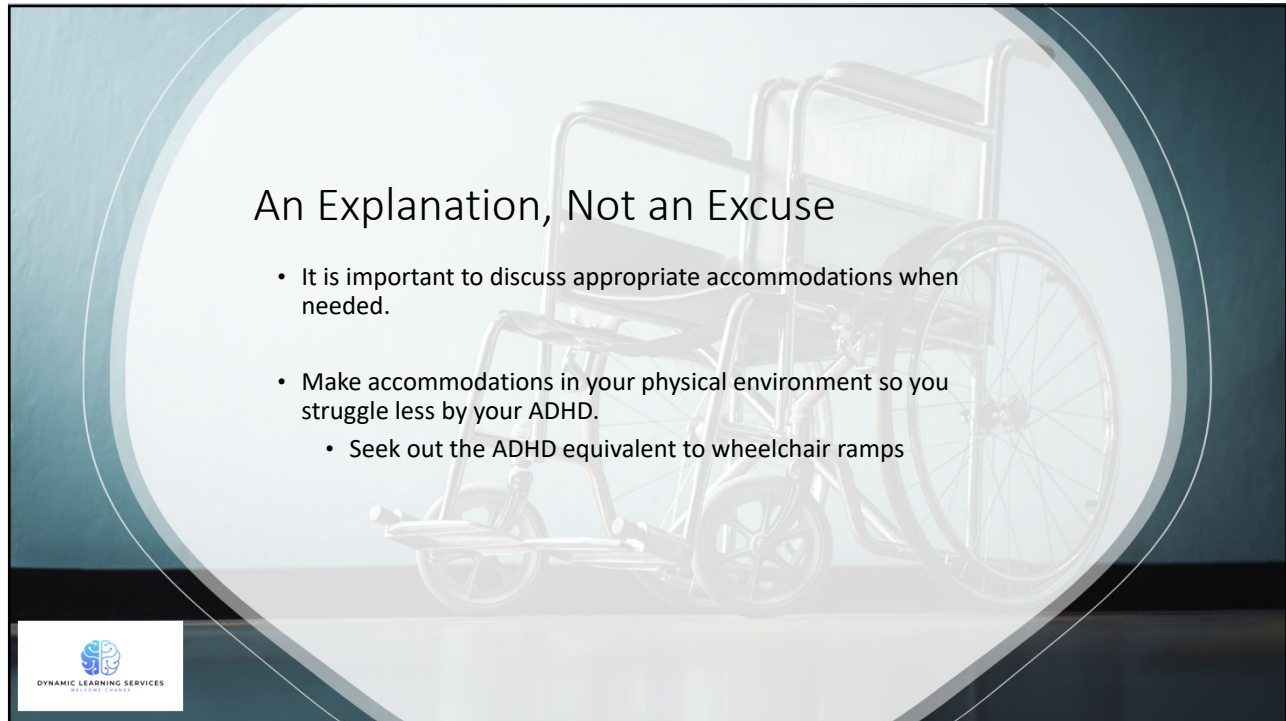
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Deciding When To Leave

- Determine the criteria for leaving and set a deadline for yourself.
 - Family
 - Financial
 - Stress/Anxiety/Depression
- Have an interim plan of action.
 - Go back to school
 - Part-time work
 - Unemployment




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An Explanation, Not an Excuse

- It is important to discuss appropriate accommodations when needed.
- Make accommodations in your physical environment so you struggle less by your ADHD.
 - Seek out the ADHD equivalent to wheelchair ramps




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Work Environment

- Distractions
 - If the office is in open space, try moving away from foot traffic. Consider using noise-canceling headphones. Go into an empty conference room when required to focus.
 - If in your own office, keep the door closed. Consider using a white noise machine. If there is an open-door policy, ask if it could be shut at certain times.
 - Be aware, that coworkers can be a huge source of distraction, so limit interference when possible. Ask the person how you can help them immediately in a gracious way.
 - Consider muting the ringer on your office phone.
- Emails
 - If you aren't required to provide rapid email responses, consider checking your emails in the morning, then close out of the program and check your email again at lunch and at the end of the day. Emails can be a huge distraction and is a cause of low productivity.
- Internet, Social Media, and Texts
 - Try to keep your internet browser closed. Refrain from texting friends or going on social media. Like emails, check texts 2-3 times a day (morning, afternoon, evening) so you can keep up with urgent and important. However, most emails and texts are usually things to distract you.



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Work Procedures

- Be careful of workplaces that expect you to be self-sufficient because adults with ADHD may need more structure.
- Adults with ADHD benefit from having rules or guidelines so they don't have to figure out what is acceptable or not.



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People at Work

- What type of supervisor will you have? Micromanager or hands-off?
- Is there a mentor if your supervisor won't be able to provide you with guidance?
- If your boss has more of a sink-or-swim attitude, it might be time for you to find another job.
- What is the job culture? Are coworkers supportive or does the job pit employees against each other in competition?



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How Attorneys with ADHD Can Manage Interpersonal Conflicts

- **Self-awareness:** Understand your ADHD symptoms and how they may affect your interactions with coworkers. Recognizing your strengths and weaknesses is the first step in addressing conflicts.
- **Active listening:** Make a conscious effort to actively listen when your coworkers are speaking. Avoid interrupting, and ask clarifying questions to ensure you understand their perspective.
- **Nonverbal communication:** Pay attention to nonverbal cues such as body language and tone of voice. These cues can provide valuable insights into the emotions and intentions of your coworkers.
- **Empathy and perspective-taking:** Practice empathy by trying to understand the feelings and motivations of your coworkers. Put yourself in their shoes to see the situation from their perspective.
- **Conflict resolution skills:** Learn and practice conflict resolution techniques. This may include techniques for negotiation, compromise, and finding common ground.
- **Take breaks:** Recognize when you need a break to recharge. ADHD can lead to mental fatigue, which can exacerbate conflicts. Short breaks can help you regain focus and emotional control.
- **Communication skills:** Work on your communication skills, including expressing your thoughts and feelings clearly and diplomatically. Use "I" statements to convey your perspective without blaming others.
- **Seek feedback:** Ask for feedback from trusted coworkers or supervisors about your communication and interpersonal skills. This can help you identify areas for improvement.
- **Collaborative work environments:** If possible, seek out work environments that are more conducive to your strengths and weaknesses. For example, consider positions that allow for flexible work arrangements or job roles that align with your interests and skills.
- **Support and accommodations:** Don't hesitate to communicate with your employer or HR department about your ADHD and request reasonable accommodations if necessary. These might include a quiet workspace, flexible hours, or additional support.
- **Stress management:** Learn and practice stress management techniques, such as mindfulness, relaxation exercises, and regular physical activity. Reducing stress can help you manage your ADHD symptoms more effectively.
- **Continuous improvement:** Remember that personal growth and skill development are ongoing processes. Regularly assess your progress and be open to making adjustments as needed.



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How Can Coworkers Manage Interpersonal Conflicts When Working With an Attorney Who Has ADHD?

1. **Understand ADHD:** Educate yourself about ADHD and its symptoms, as understanding the condition can help you be more patient and empathetic. ADHD often leads to impulsivity and difficulties with attention and focus, which can manifest in conversations.
2. **Private Conversation:** Initiate a conversation with your coworker in a non-confrontational and non-judgmental manner. If the coworker's behavior is negatively impacting the work environment, consider having a private and respectful conversation with them. Express your concerns about their communication style and its impact on productivity and team dynamics.
3. **Provide Constructive Feedback:** Offer specific examples of situations where their communication disrupted workflow or affected the team negatively. Be constructive in your feedback, suggesting improvements without being critical.
4. **Set Clear Expectations:** During meetings or discussions, gently remind the individual to stay on topic or provide cues when they're going off on a tangent. Frame this as a way to help keep the conversation productive.
5. **Use Active Listening Techniques:** Practice active listening and acknowledge the person's input. This can help them feel heard and reduce the urge to monopolize conversations. Ask questions for clarification to keep the discussion on track.
6. **Encourage Taking Notes:** Suggest that the coworker with ADHD take notes during meetings to help them stay organized and focused on the main points.
7. **Propose Agendas:** Advocate for the use of agendas in meetings. Having a structured outline can help keep the conversation on track and prevent excessive off-topic discussions.
8. **Engage Moderators:** In group discussions or meetings, assign a moderator or facilitator who can guide the conversation, ensuring that everyone has a chance to speak and that the discussion remains on track.
9. **Encourage Breaks:** Suggest short breaks during long meetings or discussions, allowing everyone to refocus and re-center. This can be beneficial for colleagues with ADHD.
10. **Lead by Example:** In your own interactions, model effective communication by staying on topic and being a good listener. This can set a positive example for your colleague.
11. **Involve HR or Management:** If the issues persist and are significantly affecting productivity or creating a hostile work environment, consider involving HR or management. They can provide guidance, resources, and accommodations as needed.
12. **Stay Mindful of Your Reactions:** Be aware of your own reactions and emotions when interacting with your coworker. Try to remain calm and avoid reacting negatively to their behavior.
13. **Encourage Self-Awareness:** Help your coworker develop self-awareness about their actions and their impact on the team. They may not always be aware of how their behavior affects others.



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Cultivating Allies at Work

- Try cooperative coworker tutoring when you need to learn something important for your job.
- Find coworkers who excel in areas you find challenging and figure out how to offer a strength of yours they don't have.
- Find a coworker who will have your back and you return the favor. If you or your coworker forget information, meetings, and materials, lean on each other, where the other person provides the missing item/information.
- Schedule regular review meetings with your supervisor to gain feedback on your performance instead of only during performance review time.



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Remembering Instructions



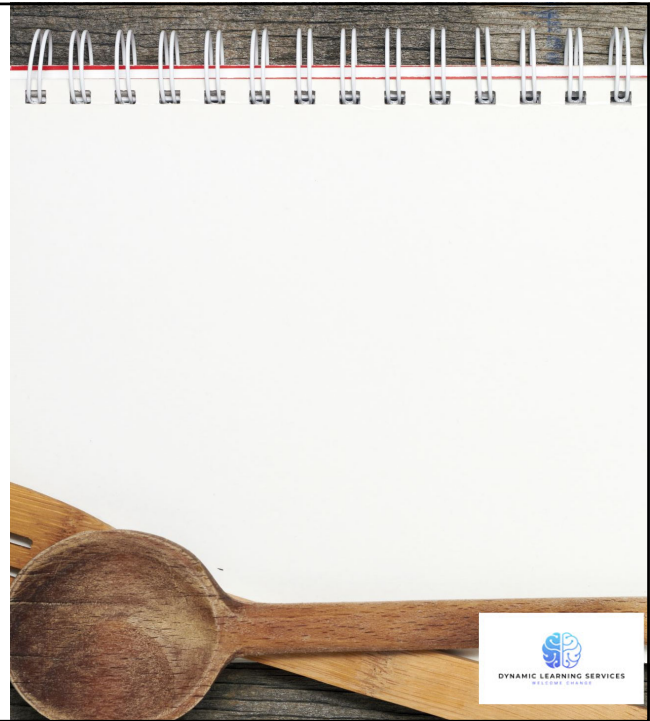
- Write down the instructions. *If it's not written down, it doesn't exist.*
- Don't get lost in the details at first.
- Repeat and recap. "Okay, let me make sure I've got this. First I'm going to... Next...."
- Give context and meaning to each step of the instructions.



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Finding Focus and Retaining Instructions

- Find an instructional cooking video online that is between 5 and 15 minutes long.
- Get out your notebook and pen to write down the instructions given in the video.
- Plug a pair of earbuds or headphones into a separate device. Place one earbud in one ear, or adjust the headphones so only one ear is covered. Play some sort of distracting music that you don't like in that ear.
- Play the cooking video on a separate device, with the volume on so your other ear can hear it.
- Without pausing the video at any point, write down the instructions. It will be hard, but it's supposed to be.



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Assertive Communication

- Set up realistic expectations with your supervisor.
 - If they ask for a project to be completed by Friday at 5pm and you know you have other projects, instead of committing to the deadline where you know it will be challenging for you to meet, inform your supervisor about the other pending projects and ask for a later deadline for the new task.
 - You might be able to able to negotiate the deadlines of the other projects if your boss wants you to prioritize the new assigned task.
 - If your boss insists on the deadline, at the very least you informed them of the competing demands, which is better than accepting the new project without informing them in advance.



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Requesting Accommodations at Work

- **Extended or Flexible Work Hours:**
 - Adjusted work hours to allow for more productive times of the day.
 - Flexible scheduling to accommodate doctor's appointments or therapy sessions.
- **Quiet Workspace:**
 - A private or quiet workspace to minimize distractions and interruptions.
- **Task Organization:**
 - Use of electronic or physical task lists and reminders to help with time management.
 - Use of project management software to track tasks and deadlines.
- **Breaks and Short Walks:**
 - Short, regular breaks to help manage restlessness and maintain focus.
 - Permission to take short walks when needed to re-energize.
- **Assistive Technology:**
 - Access to specialized software, such as text-to-speech or voice recognition software.
 - Noise-canceling headphones to block out distractions.
- **Written Communication:**
 - Providing written instructions or summaries of important meetings or discussions.
 - Use of email or written communication for important instructions.
- **Coordinated Case Management:**
 - Assistance with case management, including task delegation and tracking.
- **Supportive Supervision:**
 - Regular check-ins and feedback sessions to help attorneys stay on track.
 - Clarity in communication and expectations.
- **External Training or Coaching:**
 - Access to training programs or coaching for time management and organization.
- **Medication Management:**
 - Flexible scheduling for medication if necessary.
 - A secure and private location for medication storage.
- **Reduced Non-Essential Tasks:**
 - Delegation of non-essential or administrative tasks to support staff.
- **Quiet or Private Meeting Rooms:**
 - Access to private meeting spaces for client consultations or focused work.
- **Job Sharing or Part-Time Options:**
 - Consideration for part-time work or job-sharing arrangements to reduce stress.
- **Emotional Support and EAP:**
 - Access to an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for emotional support and counseling.
- **Ergonomic Adjustments:**
 - Ergonomic office furniture and equipment to minimize physical discomfort.
- **Job Rotation:**
 - Opportunities for job rotation or variety in tasks to maintain interest.
- **Clear Documentation and Procedures:**
 - Providing clear documentation and standardized procedures for tasks and responsibilities.



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Making Accommodations Requests

- Include your diagnosis of ADHD.
- Mention the steps you are taking to address your brain differences.
- State how your ADHD makes getting things done more challenging.
- Outline what accommodations you need to be able to do your job effectively.

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Questions/Comments



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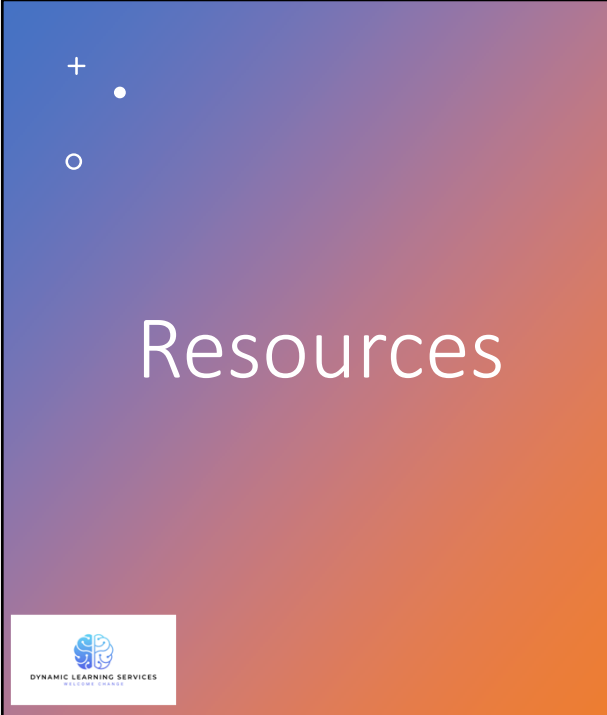


Takeaways


- Self-Care (Non-negotiable time for self)
- Reflect, reflect, reflect (Thinking about Thinking)
- Be kind to yourself
- Healthy eating, daily exercise, and good-quality sleep
- The strategies and exercises discussed in the workshops do not replace the need to explore additional supports when needed (i.e., executive functioning coaching, psychotherapy, and medication).



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Resources



- Barkley, R. (2022). Taking charge of adult ADHD.
- Boissiere, Phil. (2018). Thriving with adult ADHD.
- Dawson, P. & Guare, R. (2009). Smart but scattered.
- Kaufman, C. (2010). Executive function in the classroom.
- Leahy, R.L. (2003). Cognitive therapy techniques a practitioner's guide.
- Ramsay, J.R. & Rostain, A.L. (2015). The adult ADHD tool kit.
- Solden, Sari. (2005). Women with attention deficit disorder.