



ATTENTION DEFICIT DISORDER (ADD)

Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) is a diagnosis applied to children and adults who consistently display certain characteristic behaviours over a period of time. The most common behaviours include distractibility (poor sustained attention to tasks), impulsivity (impaired impulse control and delay of gratification), and hyperactivity (excessive activity and physical restlessness).

In our fast-paced, high-pressure late 20th century lifestyle, the deficit side of ADD is overemphasized. Few of us can remain focused, organized and efficient while bombarded with multiple demands of fast changing workplace environments, the multiple distractions of our workplace cubicle existence, and the need for constant updating and retraining. In fact, there are those who say that our contemporary lifestyle is "ADD inducing."

ADD is different in each person, so what may seem like a great ADD -friendly job to one person, may be a disaster for another individual with ADD. There are some common complaints of adults with ADD, including time management problems and organization. However, some adults with ADD have compensated by structuring their day and are extremely organized.

Many people have asked what specific jobs are best for individuals with ADD or ADHD, but each person is unique and both bring out different strengths and weaknesses in each person.

Every industry provides a wide array of jobs so that for any interest a job can be found. While an engineer with ADD might find it to be boring and tedious working in a large office, he might do well as an independent contractor where each job he undertakes is new and refreshing.

Put an ADD employee in an appropriate ADD-friendly work environment, pair him or her with a more detail-oriented person, give him projects which interest and challenge him and you may suddenly find that you have a highly motivated, top performing employee.

Persons with ADD In The Workplace

A diagnosis of ADD does not mean that accommodations are essential to ensure workplace performance. Many ADD-affected individuals perform well in their jobs, without requiring additional assistance.

As an employer, it is important to conduct a thorough evaluation process with the individual and perhaps his or her Open Door Group Employment Services Coordinator to determine what may be needed. Working with the individual to understand what the symptoms of ADD are and how ADD affects him or her will make for a far more accommodating environment. Breaking down the job task-by-task and looking at how the individual



performs at each is a good way of assessing where accommodations may help. They can be as simple as reorganizing a system or a new piece of equipment.

Technology and Adaptive Devices

Several tools can make life a lot easier for individuals with ADD in the workplace. Most are relatively simple tools that we use every day. These may include:

- Daily planner – this will help time management for individuals with ADD
- Personal Information management software – designed to help to keep a schedule, organize phone calls, and handle other memory-based tasks.
- Alarm Clock – to assist individuals to be on time
- Music – in order to block out distractions.
- Tape recorder –like a journalist would use to help with recalling details from a conversation
- Computer and software – to assist with writing, grammar checking, calculating, and organizing

Possible Accommodations for Individuals With ADD

(From The Job Accommodation Network)

Deficits In Reading:

- Tape-recorded directives, messages, and materials
- Reading machines
- Recording for the Blind and Dyslexic (<http://www.rfbd.org>)
- Screen reading software for computer use
- Coloured Mylar templates (coloured transparencies) for reading and scanning
- Colour-coded manuals, outlines, and maps
- Scanners which allow the user to enter hard copies into the computer system
- Reading Pen

Deficits In Writing:

- Personal computers/laptop computers
- Voice output software that highlights and reads (via a speech synthesizer) what is keyed into the computer
- Speech recognition software that recognizes the user's voice and changes it to text on the computer screen
- Locator dots for identification of letters/numbers on the keyboard
- Spell checking software/electronic spell checkers
- Software with highlighting capabilities
- Grammar checking software
- Form producing software that computerizes order forms, claim forms, applications, credit histories, equation and formula fields

Deficits In Mathematics:

- Fractional, decimal, statistical, and scientific calculators
- Talking calculators



- Computer Assisted Instruction (CAI) software for arithmetic/ mathematics
- Computer Assisted Design (CAD) software for architecture/engineering
- Large display screens for calculators, adding machines

Deficits In Organizational Skills, Memory, And Time Management:

- Day Planners
- Electronic organizers/schedulers
- Software organizers with/without highlighting capabilities
- LCD watches, data bank watches, timers, counters, and alarms
- Personal Information Managers (P.I.M.S.)
- Use of electronic mail (e-mail) for memory deficits

Managing The Physical Environment:

- Room enclosures/cubicles to reduce auditory and visual distractions
- Private office space
- Mapping of the workspace/office
- Use of headphones or ear plugs

This information was compiled by Open Door Group to assist BC businesses to have successful working relationship with persons with disabilities in our communities.

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