

title: **SWE Internship Interview with ADHD**

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Post Text

Hi everyone So I just got diagnosed with ADHD recently which is commonly due to concentration issues and remembering things. So I struggle most with recalling information or getting lost in details, switching from distraction to hyperfocus. ​ Now to my surprise, I got invited for an interview as SWE internship in FB but am not sure how to proceed. I really struggle memorizing coding solutions, but not the visual break down (pseudocode). I am capable of attacking a problem and taking considerations of why I would approach this or that, but I just can't always recall how to quickly code a directed Graph or all the traverse functions so quickly etc.... I just struggle even always remembering all the functions each data structure has and sometimes have to quickly peek (like in a Stack *joke). Should I disclose before the interview/during that I have it or not say anything at all...? I am just scared it will ruin my chances for good...

Comments

Commenter_2

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 13

> I really struggle memorizing coding solutions

You shouldn't memorise coding solutions, because the questions can change and frankly thats just not the way you should learn coding.

>but not the visual break down (pseudocode). I am capable of attacking a problem and taking considerations of why I would approach this or that

That is a very good skillset to have, even more important than memorising code, because this shows you can actually understand the problem and break it down and clearly explain your solution, so use this to your advantage. Any decent company or developer knows that people forget syntax and language specific things during an interview and if they are any good, they should appreciate your ability to break a problem down and explaining your reasoning.

This is what any good developers will look for, anyone can learn a language, it takes skill to understand the problem at hand, this doesn't seem to be an issue for you.

What I would do is, when you are doing the technical interviews, think out loud, say every decision are making out loud, explain the problem, how you would approach it, why you chose to do it this way so on and so forth. Then write your solution in pseudocode or do a combination of pseudocode + some syntax and explain to them you can't remember something specific, like "I'm sorry, but I am struggling to remember how to initialise a vector" etc etc, in most cases they will give you a hint or help you out.

This is also a good chance for you to see how they react to questions. Since this is an internship position, this is your chance to learn and that means you will be asking plenty of questions. To be honest if they react badly to this, then thats not a place you want to work for. Whether or not you want to mention your adhd is upto you, personally I would.

OP

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 2

Thanks a lot for all the tips, it's just sometimes I forget that there are some functions which

provide me "easier" approaches (for example in String manipulations) which I cannot recall or would check quickly on the Java doc.

I thought I'd mention it only, if I am asked about weaknesses and wrap it up "with a workaround"...but I'll try my best!

Commenter_2

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 1

> some functions which provide me "easier" approaches (for example in String manipulations)

I have been coding since I was 7 and I have a bit over 7 years of professional experience. I have worked with people who have been in the industry for 30+ years and all of us, google this shit.

I use a doc when I code, be it python, rust, C what ever, I can't code without a doc and an ide. My adhd affects my working memory and its severe.

Also, most interviews often don't allow string.reverse() or methods like that. Because its not you "solving" the problem. So I wouldn't worry about it.

I mentioned my disorder after I got the job, actually I got the diagnosis, few months after I started working, so I mentioned it to my supervisor in a 1 on 1, he also has adhd, which he told me after I said.

I would take /u/ebinsugewa advice on this and not mention it during the interview or wait until you have an offer. Since you mentioned the company provides diversity/disability options you could also ask about that, as in what kind of support do you offer, so on and so forth.

Hope everything goes well for you, as far as I am concerned you have nothing to worry about, you have one of the important skillset and just use that to your advantage. Good luck!

Commenter_4

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 1

It's not the way you should learn coding, but it's the best way to make it through initial interviews at the FAANG type companies. They're going to ask a lot of standard algorithmic type questions and often the interviewer will be looking for an exact book answer and won't accept anything else. If you can make it through the initial phone screen or first interview to get to someone who actually knows what they're talking about, then you might be able to demonstrate your problem solving or lateral thinking skills.

I also would not disclose my disability at all whatsoever until accepting a position. I personally wouldn't disclose period, but it's at least a protected status in the US assuming that's where OP. Much harder to prove discrimination during the interview process.

OP

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 1

I'm from Europe and apparently FB provides diversity/disability options (I saw it on their page) so I'm hesitating informing the recruiter...

But I'm trying to refresh everything as much as I can. Thanks a lot!

Commenter_4

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 2

Glad to hear! Certainly the accommodations in other countries are likely to be much better than here in the States. That would certainly change my stance quite a bit. Good luck on your interview! Please feel free to ask me anything if you think it might help.

OP

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 2

Ah thanks a lot, I really appreciate everyone's feedback!

Do you have any tools where I could save code snippets like a dictionary to look up or in general any tools to help coding with ADHD?

Commenter_5

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 1

In my experience that tool is called Google :D

You could use Dropbox/Google Drive or whatever cloud provider of choice. If you want to be really fancy you could host your own site with a wiki and use it for personal documentation or something like that.

My help for ADHD is going to be minimal unfortunately. Finding the right medication made me about 100 times better at my job. Highly encouraged. Secondly I landed in a position where our team makes extensive use of sprint planning and issue tracking. Making tasks small and manageable while also ensuring a regular deadline.

Don't stress too much about remembering syntax or standard library functions or anything. There can be shame associated with not remembering literally every detail about a technology due to the condition. But you can always just look them up to remind you. Your skills are what's important.

Unknown_User

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 5

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OP

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 2

Oh I really like the way you wrote me, I really thought approaching it the same way and just mention I have "memory loss" as a weakness or something...like just indirectly giving a hint...

But if you have any tools, tips or notes, feel free to share! And congrats a lot on your first SW job!! So cool!

Commenter_6

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 4

practice brother. ADHD cannot fuck with muscle (brain cell) memory.

focus on problem pattern detection too. there's like 20 or so question pattern. if you can pin point the problem pattern, you can start by applying the pattern.

OP

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 2

This is not true, as when it comes to memorizing you have to be fully present while processing the information and then start repeating and shifting it from short-term to long-term. I did several tests where they said I cannot keep focused enough to read it thoroughly from beginning to end or am not able to keep the attention while processing it where again it affects that I don't memorize it at all. (My fam runs alzheimer as well)

Ever since I was a child I struggled and they know it for years, but I never felt the urge to do something about it. Since university I had severe anxiety in stress situations because I was not able to recall important information however my psychiatrist told me that my brain adjusts. I for example memorize things visually, that's why drawn graphics and problem break downs work so well - but I am not able to just read through code without drawing/noting each line down what happens so I understand. Have to do it non-stop and am therefor slower in coding.

I still managed to have a 3.2 GPA, which is a good B student...? So some work arounds I do unconsciously prevent me from failing somehow.

But the 20 question pattern, I have never heard of it...could you recommend something?

Commenter_6

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 1

<https://hackernoon.com/14-patterns-to-ace-any-coding-interview-question-c5bb3357f6ed>

OP

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 1

><https://hackernoon.com/14-patterns-to-ace-any-coding-interview-question-c5bb3357f6ed>

Omg, this is by far the best summary I came across...thank you so much!!!! This is just on point, you should see my summaries (too many details, filtering important things is hard)

Commenter_6

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 1

you have to be able to follow upto certain lines of code to be able to write the next one.

do you know how much you can read/retain?

I have the same problem, however the solution is already an accepted practice.

if your algo needs you to do 5 things, separate the proble. task into smallers (5 things) and your code will look like.

main method

thing1

thing2

thing3

end method

each block will contain like 20 lines of code but when you are reading , you are reading only one task and working on a smaller task next.

this really helps to break up long ass codes. / reading long code.

OP

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 2

This is a great approach, thanks!

Commenter_7

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 1

I would not disclose your adhd to an interviewer or to anyone who you work with professionally.

OP

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 1

Oh wow...I just feel not like hiding, in the end: it can be a superpower as welll... :) I am grateful

I realized myself why I love working in interface projects (multiple interest).

Commenter_6

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 1

I am with thjs guy on this one. there are too many NT engineers incapable of empathy . I have long diatribe on why Not.

I wouldn't repeat that. but my two cents is it can adversely affect your short and long-term goal. and the sad part is that you won't even know it is the root cause for your lack of career gwoth