Key Takeaways from the Interviews

GENERAL ADHD CHALLENGES

- **Focus Issues**: Both interviewees mentioned struggling with maintaining focus, especially when faced with visual or auditory distractions.
- **"Out of sight, out of mind"**: Charlotte specifically noted that if something isn't visible, it's easy to forget about it. However, seeing *too much* at once can overwhelm and scatter attention.
- **Hyperfocus & Burnout**: Hayley described going into intense study sessions for hours at a time without breaks, which can lead to burnout.

DIGITAL PREFERENCES

- **Charlotte** prefers digital over physical because typing is second nature.
- **Hayley** prefers pen and paper due to control and speed of note-taking.
- Preference for **demand-based content** (Charlotte) or **organized but comprehensive pages** with anchor links (Hayley).

NOTIFICATIONS

- Both disable most notifications due to their distracting nature.
- Charlotte turns off *all* notifications and only responds to key contacts.
- Hayley reacts strongly to pings and vibrations — she even switches to "Do Not Disturb" if interrupted.

AUDIO, VISUAL, AND LEARNING

- **Charlotte** prefers reading because she reads very fast and finds it the most efficient.
- **Hayley** prefers **videos** — she finds it easier to absorb information when not "actively concentrating" like with reading.

BREAKS & STUDY HABITS

- Charlotte has unstructured breaks, sometimes planned, sometimes accidental long detours.
- Hayley experimented with **interval studying** (50/10) and found it helpful but difficult to implement consistently. She avoids breaks unless necessary.

FIDGETING & SENSORY SENSITIVITY

- Charlotte uses subtle fidget tools (bracelet, phone accessory) due to sensory sensitivity and stigma. She avoids clicky or loud tools because of autism-related sensory issues.
- Emphasis on **subtlety** and **non-stigmatizing designs** for support tools.

TOOLS & EXTENSIONS

- Charlotte uses **Microsoft Teams calendar** and **Discord channels** for reminders and coordination.
- Hayley uses **Sticky Notes** on her laptop for reminders. Study apps haven't worked well for her.

DESIGN IMPLICATIONS FOR DIGITAL ACCESSIBILITY

- **Minimalist interfaces** with options to toggle more details could help reduce overwhelm while catering to the "out of sight" challenge.
- **Customizable notification blockers** or "focus modes" that mute pings, remove pop-ups, and offer a gentle reminder system.
- **Personalized productivity tools**, like integrated sticky notes or to-do lists, ideally shareable (as with Charlotte and her boyfriend).
- **Subtle UX feedback and soft animations**, especially for sensory-sensitive users.
- Optional **fidget tool integrations** (e.g., on-screen tactile simulations or companion accessories) that don't "look" like ADHD aids.
- Accessibility tools that are **quietly functional**, avoiding overly bold "neurodivergent branding."

TRANSCIPTS

INTERVIEW WITH CHARLOTTE

Hi, thank you for agreeing to do this interview. Firstly, do you consent to being recorded?

Yes, I consent to being recorded.

Okay, so for the record, do you have ADHD?

I do in fact, have diagnosed ADHD.

How long have you had the diagnosis for?

I have had the diagnosis for about two years now.

And do you find it to be an active problem in your life?

Um, it is a problem actively in my life. Yes, however, I'm currently trying to find methods to mitigate the problem.

Right okay. So we're doing a project about digital accessibility with our client with a focus on ADHD due to its relevance right now with so many apps and services trying to compete for your attention. I'd like to ask what kinds of pitfalls you face with your ADHD?

Uh, pitfalls for me uh are definitely keeping focus. Uh, I have a very rapid fire mind where it goes from one thing to the next and trying to keep focus on a certain task is very difficult for me. I'm constantly just moving and moving, but I'm moving all over the place rather than one specific direction..

I see. So when you're working on school or, you know, whatever work you might be doing, maybe personal stuff, uh, involving writing…Do you prefer to use pen and paper, or do you prefer to use your computer?

I prefer to use my computer. Mostly because, uh, in school we got taught typing classes and I can now type without looking. So it's very much I can read and be typing and not have to think actively about this. Whereas with when I write with pen and paper, I have to actively think about what I'm writing, um typing is more second nature to me than actually writing is.

Okay, okay. And with websites or apps that you may use, do you prefer to have all the information, kind of available at once? Or you would you prefer a more demand-based kind of thing where you can choose what you want to see at any time?

I think for me, demand based would be better. Specifically for my ADHD, I have a very out of sight out of mind approach to things where if I don't actively see something, I may not think about it as much. So if I see everything on the screen all at once, that's a very big overload of information and I'm going to be bouncing from one thing to the next. Whereas if I have to actively go to look for the information I want to look for and click on the specific things, I don't have to worry about anything else.

That's interesting because we've got a question here as well where we want to know how you respond to notifications, whether it's sounds or visual stuff. Does that kind of play into it?

I have every single notification on my laptop and my phone completely turned off. Every single one. Um, I check my WhatsApp and my text frequently enough. And for calls, I have very specific numbers saved where it's like if you call me, I will answer right away. But I have everything turned off. It's so distracting. Because if I'm working on something and I hear like the ping from Discord or like the WhatsApp notification, I'm immediately going to stop what I'm doing, handle that, and then it's so hard to get focused back.

Right, because I would imagine if you if you go to whatever that notification came from, you're going to focus on that and then stay…

Because I have to pull up something, whether that be on my phone or my computer, I have to pull up the notification, and now the work that I was doing is now out of sight.

Okay. I just I wanted to know because do you never have like a thing where, for example, you have like a visual notification and because you're focused really much on what you're doing, you kind of ignore it?

I'm going to be honest. It was a problem where I'd see the notification and get completely distracted by it. I see the notification pop up then it's like, okay, well now I have to focus on this. I pull that up and now my work is out of sight.

And do you ever find when not having the notifications when you're working and you're thinking, okay, but what if I'm getting this message from this person?

Like, I don't see it so-

You don't see it so you don't think about out of side, out of mind.

Yup.

Got it, cool. ==Do you prefer watching videos, listening to audios or reading text when learning new information?==

I prefer reading for me personally. Uh, because I read ridiculously fast. Like I guess the best way to explain it is I process information very quickly. Especially with reading, it's a lot faster for me to just get through it. I couldn't tell you a words per minute, but it's enough where people have actively commented on it.

I just curious, um, does it depend on something that's kind of interesting to you, how fast you're reading it, or not really?

It doesn't really matter if I'm interested in or not. I kind of just read the same speed regardless.

Okay, cool. ==And do you ever listen to music, like, as far as like audio goes, do you listen to music while you read? Do you find it distracting?==

So I have specific playlists and specific sets of music or videos for different tasks. If I'm reading or I am actively writing…silence. If I'm doing like basic work where it's just, I don't have to think about it too much, I have instrumentals. And if I am doing work that I don't really care about, and it's not due soon, I kind of just listen to whatever.

What instrumentals or what genre?

Just anything really. It'll depend on what I'm feeling, uh, because a lot of the time I'll find like two or three songs for the month, listen to those on repeat, and then I get sick of them and then I pick two to three songs for the next month.

And does that just like, does that help the productivity for those tasks or is it just to have in the background?

If I'm trying to actively think or if I'm trying to actively brainstorm or do other things, if I have sound, it drives me insane.

So I guess having dealt with ADHD all your life, have you kind of already gauged what kind of music will help with that or what the correct have music for that specific moment is?

Yes. I couldn't tell you the thought process behind it. I just...it's instinct.

Alright. Um, are you already like actively using any like apps or browser extensions that help with, like your symptoms of like distraction? Well, I guess you've already said you just turn off your notifications.

For me, it's if I specifically write down, uh when I have to do things. So like I at the maybe at the start of the week or the beginning of the day, I'm like, okay, I'm meeting at this time at this day, if I write it down, even if I don't look at it, I remember that I wrote it down.

And you, an agenda like a digital thing or?

I have two places that I type everything out. In Microsoft Teams calendar for group work for school, there's an extension, so you can use it in the group. So everyone in the group can see it. It's nice. And then the other place I put it is in a Discord server with my boyfriend. So that way, if he sees something like I have a meeting at 7 PM, he has DND at 7:30. So he could see that I have a meeting and be like, oh, you need to go to another room to do that. So that way we're not talking over one another.

Okay, so you guys kind of keep track of each other. Do you ever do you take breaks while you're working?

Depends...There are days where I need to take a five minute break every hour.

And you time that?

No, just generally. And then there are days that I will go work for seven hours straight and not think about anything else. And by the time I look at the clock, it's dinner time. It really depends because it's not even a thing of like, oh, I like this task so much that I'm going to work on it for seven hours straight. There are days where I can work and there are days that I can't.

So you might be doing the same task this one day, like seven hours straight and then the other day, like you just-

Yep.

Yeah, okay. So during all those breaks, do you ever get like sidetracked? Like if you pick up your phone and you open Discord or something and you like chat to people?

My five minute breaks have sometimes turned into two or three hour breaks.

Do you ever try to mitigate that by putting your phone somewhere else or whatever?

Usually I set an alarm or if I start talking with somebody, it's like…hey, at this time send me a message that you're not going to talk to me anymore. And then, don't talk to me anymore.

Okay. <mark>Lastly we want to know if you fidget with anything, uh, physically or digitally?</mark>

So, uh, I have this bracelet my brother made me. It's tactile, so I can like feel the beads and then recently I got uh this little guy on my phone, who I didn't realize I could use, but I can kind of twist it around and feel the weight of it as well as like the string between my fingers It's because I'm not a huge fan of like traditional fidget toys. I think there's a really big stigma behind them and the people that use them. And I'd love to be like, well, not care what people think, but I do. No one's gonna look at this and think it's for ADHD. It's just a bracelet, so I can easily do this and nobody thinks anything else of it. It's also a lot less sound. I don't do well with a lot of like loud sharp, clicky sounds too. Like this is about as much as I can handle. But like the fidget cubes or things like that they're too obvious, they're too loud. I don't like it.

Is there a reason you don't like those clicky sounds? I'm just curious.

I also have autism. I have a lot of sensory issues regarding sound especially. I cannot handle loud sharp sounds. I can't handle sudden sounds. I'm very particular. So that also plays into a role of what things I feel comfortable or can fidget with.

So you prefer subtlety and the tactile sensation of things.

I prefer subtlety in general. A lot of things that are marketed towards ADHD or people with autism, it's very loud and proud in its marketing. And there is definitely some merit in that, of course, because we need to we need to make sure that these things aren't stigmatized. We need to make sure that people are okay with this.

But in the climate of what we have right now and the comments I just hear from other people, about ADHD, about autism and the people that have these conditions, people are looked down on for using these things. They are looked down on for engaging with the things that are going to help them. And loud and proud marketing makes me uncomfortable.

It's because like I still have this internalized feeling when I see these fidget toys, because if you remember when fidget spinners were a big thing…

They were blown quite out of proportion, right?

Yeah it went from…okay, this is a tool that can help people to…this is something everyone is going to use, and then it was stigmatized. And I really worry about some of the products that are being marketed to people with ADHD and autism because it's a thing of like, if somebody sees me use this what are they going to think?

Right, it makes you like a really easy target, I understand.

Yeah, and I'm very comfortable in the fact of my diagnosis. I've come to accept it and realize what I can do to help myself. I'll talk to people who I know about it, but I don't want to advertise it.

It kind of sucks too, because the obvious solution would be to make fidget toys that are less obvious, kind of like how you've got your bracelet, you know, that can just be a bracelet, so it's less obvious to people. But then by doing that, you kind of do reinforce the stigmatization with like "oh, we have to make it subtle now." You can't just fight against it and you have to go in hiding or mask the toy itself.

It is a very delicate balance, just in general with this kind of stuff, there are so many things to balance. And I guess personal preference as well. There might be people who don't care who are very out and proud about the fact they have autism and ADHD. And they basically make themselves a walking advertisement for that because in their minds it's like, well if I'm hiding it, I'm not helping others who have it. I need to make sure other people know that it's okay to have this.

And that's great! To be a role model in a way, by doing that. But that's not going to exactly force everyone out of their shell. And it's for very valid reason too.

I have no problems with anybody who wants to really emphasize themselves because I think it's really brave and just really great. I also completely understand people who never talk about it and will never say anything. Because yeah, it's safer that way, sometimes.

Okay, well, is there anything else that you feel is important that we haven't covered, that we should think about when doing this project? I think this last talk was very valuable.

No, I think those are my main things, yeah, not much else to say on that.

Thank you so much. Are you okay with us coming back to you in the future possibly if we need any more insight on your answers?

Yeah, I also know a lot of people with ADHD and autism, so if need be like, I have a couple of people I can easily send stuff to if you guys need help.

Thank you very much.

Lastly, would you like to remain anonymous?

No.

Okay, cool. Alright, thanks a lot, Charlotte.

Not a problem!

INTERVIEW WITH HAYLEY ALLEN

Okay, hi Hayley. Do I have your consent to voice recording you?

Yes, you have my consent.

Okay, cool. Now I understand you have ADHD, correct?

Yes.

Okay, so to explain a little bit, I'm working with my client, which is Studio Krom, and we are working to raise awareness for digital accessibility and make like websites and the digital world in general more accessible.
And we have chosen to concentrate on people with ADHD as we feel this is a problem that many people face and something which is often overlooked. And so my goal is to understand your pitfalls of using digital devices as someone who experiences different types of symptoms of ADHD, right?

Okay.

Okay first off, could you please introduce yourself?

Yeah. I am Hayley, I'm 20, I am a chemistry student and I have diagnosed ADHD.

Okay great. So I want to start by asking, do you prefer when working to use a pen and paper or computers or like a phone to write down notes and stuff?

Pen and paper.

And why?

Um, I find I can, it's, it's easier for me to like annotate, like I can write it down. I can write messily quickly. It's efficient.

So you feel more comfortable with a pen rather than typing, you feel it's like faster?

Yes. Because I can also control where I'm writing, you know, otherwise it's not just blank.

Okay. Do you prefer websites that have all information visible at once or content that like reveals itself slowly as you, or progressively as you need it? Does that make sense? So like, do you prefer to have like everything on like a screen, or would you rather have to like reveal each thing?

Yes. Well, I don't think it makes a difference. One thing that's nice, like if it's everything on one like thing like this, it will have like an index at the top and when you take it, it just takes you to that part of like the, so like it's not different tabs, but like you can go immediately to that point.

Okay I understand. Now, Do you prefer, um, watching videos, listening to audio or reading text when it comes to learning new information?

Watching videos.

Okay. And why do you prefer that medium over like, um, reading for example? Is it the visual aspect?

Um, I find if I read something, I might have to reread it to understand it. But if I'm hearing it, like I, I feel like since you're not concentrating with your eyes, it's easier to almost understand something, you know?

Okay. So that makes sense but I feel like personally, I feel like watching a video is the combination of visual and audio. So you are doing something with your eyes, whereas just audio, you're not doing something with your eyes.

Yes. Well like that, like, like, yes. I mean, like, you're not concentrating on reading. Like you have a visual aspect. Like you're still entertained by what is happening, but it's not banking on just like you concentrating like this.

What features or design elements do you find most distracting on a website? Okay. So like, for example, do you get bothered by like adverts? Do adverts draw you in?

What? Okay. This is just like a side note. I feel like most of the websites that I use day to day are chemistry websites. They're very straightforward. So not a lot of them are going to have pretty pictures or anything like that. So what does this company like, do they want you to have like, no, it's well, we're not making distracted by ads, but like most things don't have ads.

Yeah. Cause we still in the research phase I can not answer that, but we are thinking of a sort of browser extension that puts you in focus mode. So like any website that you go on, it like, like simplifies the page and takes away anything that distracts you and like turns off notifications, maybe has like a to-do list function on the side. Um, and it's like an app.

The to-do list function is cool. Yeah.

And like, I don't know, like looking into like combining like auditory things with it, that like, it like, I don't know. We're still in early phases. I can't tell you that.

I see, sounds intresting though!

Do you have any, um, apps or browser extensions already installed that help you with your symptoms when you on your phone or laptop? Like, and like, or do you use like a do not disturb function for example if you're trying to study or like, do you turn off notifications? And do you use like any like apps, like to-do list apps?

Um, I have like, um, sticky notes all over my computer. Like the, the, the Microsoft app sticky notes, like, I'll like, that's like my dropdown thing. And that's like, if I think of something, I'll put it there and it's all there. Then you can just see it every time you go on your computer.
I do, I have like a few study apps, but I find that they've never worked for me.

Okay. Um, how do you respond to notification sounds or visual, or visual alerts when using your like computer or phone? Are you like, for example, if you got a notification and you heard like ping, would you ignore it? Like if you were like in the zone or would it like set you off of your work? Do you think?

If I'm, if I'm busy working and I hear a ping, and I'm busy concentrating, I'll immediately switch my phone to do not disturb.
Like I hate it. I don't like it. Also like vibrations, like my watch now, like now that I have a watch, it vibrates and generally makes me tweak.

Do you make use of intermittent breaks and if yes, how long are they, do they affect your productivity? Do you time them, et cetera?

Mila, side note, for the first time ever, I did interval studying.

Okay. And how did it go?

I've never done that. I, because, okay. So when I take my concentration meds, my Ritalin, I find it that I'll either study, like I won't be able to study or I'll study for like seven consecutive hours and get so burnt out. Um, so I did like 50 minutes on, 10 minutes off, 10 minutes on, 10 minutes off. That was hard because like when you're in the zone, it's difficult to willingly break the zone to go have a break, you know? But it made the, it was honestly quite nice because it made it less daunting.
But sometimes like, it's quite disruptive. I don't really like taking breaks if I don't need to, like I'll probably, if I break, I will stop for a while.

And like, do you time these breaks? Like, do you say, okay, I'm taking 10 minutes off, (9:39) I'm setting an alarm?

Um, when I did the interval thing on purpose, yeah, I did the break.
I did the timer. But in general, if I break, I don't normally time it.
It'll be until I feel guilty and need to stop

Okay. And then finally, do you fidget a lot with physical or digital objects? Um, obviously I know you personally. So like, I think an example of this for you would be like, you fidget by like picking skin off your thumb.
Is that like the only way?

Well, I also have that, that game. I feel like, I don't know if that counts?

Yes, that counts. What game?

Nonograms. I don't know if that counts as a fidget thing, (10:27) but it doesn't require concentration. It's something for my hands to do, and I find that sometimes it helps with concentrating.

Okay. But do you, do you play this game? Like while you work?

Um, I play sometimes in the lecture if I'm not taking notes and I'm bored, but I still like need to listen and it doesn't like, I'll play it and listen to my class. Or yesterday I was watching videos on polymerization and it was boring. So I just did something with my hands while the video was going, but still watching the video. And then also if I'm watching a TV show, I normally do it. Cause you can, you still concentrate. It's just like something to fidget with.

That is like a digital fidget toy almost. Very interesting. Um, okay. Is there anything else that you feel that we haven't covered that you find important about your ADHD?

I don't know. You know me well. What do you, what do you think is something about me that I haven't brought up?

No, I think that's everything.

I think that's everything too.

Well, thank you for your participation. And, um, do you consent to like follow up questions or user tests in the future once we've developed a little bit more?

Yes.

Thank you, Hayley. Um, and I just want to ask, um, if we cited this interview transcript, would you want to be referred to as anonymous or is using your name okay? It's really up to you.

Use my name. Get me out there.

Okay. Thanks again.