

# The ADHD Cheat Sheet for People Who Work With Me

*Someone handed you this because they trust you enough to be honest about how their brain works. That's not a small thing.*

## **What ADHD actually is (the 30-second version)**

ADHD is a neurological difference in how the brain regulates attention, energy, and emotion. It's not a focus problem — it's a regulation problem. The brain can focus intensely but can't always aim that focus where it needs to go, when it needs to go there.

It's not a choice. It's not laziness. It's not a lack of caring. And the person who gave you this is probably working twice as hard as you think they are just to keep up.

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## **What you might see — and what's actually happening**

**They're late again.**

Their brain doesn't process time the way yours does. Five minutes and forty-five minutes feel the same internally. They're not disrespecting your time — they're fighting a brain that doesn't come with a built-in clock.

**They seem distracted or like they're not listening.**

Their brain is processing everything in the environment at once. They're not ignoring you. They're trying to filter you in while their brain pulls them in six directions.

**Their work is inconsistent.**

ADHD brains run in cycles, not straight lines. Sprint, then crash. Judging them by their sprint-day output on a crash day is like judging a marathon runner at mile 24.

**They avoid 'simple' tasks but crush complex ones.**

Their brain needs a minimum level of stimulation to engage. It's not about difficulty — it's about brain chemistry.

### **They react intensely to feedback.**

Rejection Sensitive Dysphoria — their brain interprets even mild criticism as catastrophic rejection. A casual correction you forgot about five minutes later might replay in their head for days.

### **They interrupt or talk too much.**

Working memory in ADHD is unreliable. If they don't say the thought NOW, it's gone. It's a coping mechanism, not rudeness.

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## **What actually helps**

- Be direct. Don't hint. Say what you mean clearly.
  - Put it in writing. Verbal instructions vanish from working memory fast.
  - Give them a heads-up before transitions. 'In 10 minutes we need to switch to X.'
  - Don't ask 'why didn't you just...' Instead: 'What would make this easier next time?'
  - Separate the behavior from the person. Being late isn't the same as not caring.
  - Acknowledge what they do well. They're probably carrying more self-criticism than you know.
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## **What doesn't help (and what to try instead)**

- Don't say 'just focus' or 'just try harder.' Try: 'What would make this easier to start?'
  - Don't compare them to someone who doesn't have ADHD. Try: 'What works best for you?'
  - Don't take their forgetfulness personally. Assume good intent, then put it in writing.
  - Don't assume their inconsistency means they don't care. Try: 'I noticed you crushed it on Monday — what was different?'
  - Don't monitor or micromanage. Try: 'Check in with me when you hit [milestone].'
  - Don't give vague deadlines like 'whenever you get to it.' Try: 'Can you have this done by Thursday at 3pm?'
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## The most important thing

The person who gave you this isn't asking you to lower your expectations. They're asking you to understand that their brain reaches the same destination by a different route.

You don't have to become an ADHD expert. You just have to stop assuming their struggles are choices.

*Someone trusted you with this. That means something. Thank you for reading it.*

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