

Looking back at your story

What explanations have you been given - or wondered about - before ADHD?

For many adults, wondering about ADHD doesn't come at the beginning.

You may have been diagnosed with other conditions, treated for particular difficulties, or spent years trying to make sense of things yourself. Sometimes another diagnosis is right. Sometimes ADHD is there too. And sometimes an explanation has never quite accounted for the whole picture.

This isn't about deciding that a previous diagnosis was wrong. It is a chance to look back at what has been part of your story and notice whether anything still feels unexplained.

DIAGNOSES, DIFFICULTIES OR SUPPORT YOU HAVE BEEN GIVEN

- Anxiety / generalised anxiety disorder
- Depression or recurring low mood
- Bipolar disorder
- OCD or obsessive / compulsive difficulties
- PMDD or severe premenstrual difficulties
- Menopause / perimenopause
- Postnatal depression or other postnatal mental health difficulties
- Anger or anger-management difficulties
- Oppositional defiant disorder (particularly in childhood)
- Dyslexia
- Reading or writing difficulties
- Other learning difficulties
- Sleep difficulties
- Stress or burnout
- Trauma-related difficulties
- Eating difficulties / complicated relationship with food
- IBS or other recurring physical symptoms
- Something else

EXPLANATIONS YOU MAY HAVE WONDERED ABOUT YOURSELF

- Am I lazy?
- Am I selfish?
- Am I too sensitive?
- Do I have an addiction?
- Am I a narcissist?
- Am I a psychopath?
- Why can't I control this?
- Why do I keep doing things I regret?
- Why do I find things difficult that other people seem to manage?
- Why can't I just try harder?
- Is there actually something wrong with me?
- Something else

Looking at the bigger picture

Rather than asking whether one explanation was 'right' or 'wrong', look at the pattern across your life. Use these as prompts - you don't need to answer every one.

What explanations have felt useful?

Which diagnoses, descriptions or treatments helped you understand yourself? What did they explain well?

What still didn't quite fit?

Were there difficulties that continued even when something else improved? Were there patterns that nobody seemed to ask about?

How far back can you recognise the pattern?

Think about childhood, school, friendships, home life, study, work and relationships.

Where does it show up?

Is it present in one part of life or across several? Are there places where strong systems help you cope?

What have other people noticed?

Partners, parents, siblings, friends or colleagues may remember patterns you have normalised or forgotten.

What have you had to work unusually hard to manage?

Sometimes a difficulty is hidden by the effort, preparation, anxiety or structure it takes to keep things going.

A GENTLE REMINDER

Ticking something on the first page doesn't mean that diagnosis was wrong. People can have more than one diagnosis or difficulty. The question may be less "Was that actually ADHD?" and more:

"Did that explanation account for the whole of my experience?"

This reflection sheet is not a diagnostic tool. If you are concerned about your mental or physical health, speak with an appropriately qualified healthcare professional.