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# Workbook for ADHD Women: Navigating Workplace Accommodations

## 1. Introduction

### The Importance of Workplace Accommodations

Accommodations are crucial for you as an ADHD person as they create a more inclusive and supportive work environment. These adjustments help manage the symptoms and challenges associated with ADHD, enabling employees to thrive and reach their full potential. By implementing accommodations, employers can foster a workplace that recognizes and values diversity, including neurodiversity.

### Purpose of This Workbook

This workbook aims to guide you through understanding your rights, assessing your needs, and planning how to request workplace accommodations. It includes practical steps, checklists, and reflection spaces to help you articulate your needs and communicate effectively with your employer.

## 2. Understanding Your Rights

**Legal Protections Under the ADA** The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal civil rights law that protects individuals with disabilities, including ADHD, from discrimination in the workplace. The ADA mandates that employers with more than 15 employees must provide "reasonable accommodations" to employees with disabilities. These accommodations are adjustments or modifications to the job, work environment, or hiring process that enable individuals with disabilities to perform their job duties effectively.

Here is a list of things companies don't have to do or that someone seeking accommodations has to prove regarding accommodations for ADHD in the workplace:

**Companies are not required to provide accommodations that would cause "undue hardship."**<sup>12</sup> Undue hardship is subjective but generally means accommodations that are too expensive or impractical for the company, considering its size, resources, and structure.<sup>12</sup>

**Companies are not required to provide accommodations that lower quality or production standards** because the employee must be able to perform the essential functions of the job with or without the accommodations.

**An employer is not required to provide personal use items such as glasses or hearing aids.**

**An employee seeking accommodations may have to prove they have ADHD with documentation from a medical or healthcare professional.**

**The employee must disclose their ADHD diagnosis to their employer.** Employers cannot be expected to provide accommodations if they are unaware of the employee's ADHD.

**An employee must prove that their ADHD "limits major life activities in some way."** This means mild cases of ADHD that don't negatively impact the employee's personal or work life may not qualify for ADA protection.

**An employee may be asked to formally request accommodations from their employer, either verbally or in writing.**<sup>9</sup> While sometimes an accommodation can be identified and provided without a formal process, this is not always the case.

**What Are Reasonable Accommodations?** Reasonable accommodations might include flexible work schedules, noise-canceling headphones, structured communication, or the use of assistive technology. *The ADA defines these accommodations as adjustments that do not cause "undue hardship" to the employer, meaning they should not be excessively costly, disruptive, or difficult to implement.*

### Reflection: Understanding Your Rights

→ What new information did you learn about your rights under the ADA?

### 3. Deciding Whether to Disclose Your ADHD

Deciding whether to disclose your ADHD at work involves carefully weighing the benefits and potential drawbacks. On the positive side, sharing your diagnosis can help you access necessary accommodations, making it easier for you to feel comfortable at work, reducing stress and burnout and improving job performance. It can also promote a more inclusive work environment by fostering understanding and empathy among your colleagues. Additionally, being open about your ADHD can be a relief, helping you make sense of your experiences and find the right resources and treatment. However, you may worry about facing stereotypes or discrimination from coworkers and supervisors who don't fully understand ADHD. There's also the concern that your workplace might focus more on perceived deficits rather than your strengths, potentially overlooking your unique contributions. Lastly, the process of disclosing your diagnosis can be stressful, requiring documentation from healthcare providers, which can be both costly and time-consuming.

#### Pros and Cons of Disclosure

☺ **Pros:**

- Access to necessary accommodations.
- Reduces stress and burnout
- Helps colleagues and supervisors understand your experiences.
- Can reduce stigma and promote a more inclusive work environment.

☹ **Cons:**

- Concerns about privacy and maintaining confidentiality.
- Documentation process
- Fear of potential discrimination or negative stereotypes.
- Risk of discomfort or anxiety from drawing attention to differences.

## What are some Factors to Consider Before Disclosing ADHD?

Deciding whether you will disclose your ADHD in the workplace may not be easy. Here are some things to factor in. Before disclosing your ADHD diagnosis in the workplace, it's essential to consider several factors that might influence your experience:

- ❑ **Company Culture:** Reflect on whether your workplace values diversity and inclusion. Look for signs like workshops on neurodiversity, employee assistance programs addressing mental health and disabilities, and neurodivergent individuals in leadership roles. A supportive company culture is more likely to respond positively to your disclosure.
- ❑ **Manager's Attitude:** Consider your manager's leadership style and experience with neurodiversity. A manager who values integrity, builds trust, and promotes open communication is more likely to provide effective support. It's also helpful if they have experience working with neurodivergent employees or are open to learning about different communication and management strategies.
- ❑ **Workplace Policies and Practices:** Check if your company has formal policies supporting employees with disabilities, such as reasonable accommodation or flexible work arrangements. The presence of these policies, especially those prioritizing individualized support and employee well-being, increases the likelihood of receiving the accommodations you need.
- ❑ **Personal Comfort Level:** Assess how comfortable you feel about disclosing your ADHD. Weigh the potential benefits of receiving accommodations, like a quieter workspace or a more flexible schedule, against the risks of social stigma or discrimination.
- ❑ **Documentation and Disclosure Process:** Understand your company's process for disclosing disabilities and requesting accommodations. Some organizations require formal documentation, like a diagnosis from a healthcare professional. The process can be stressful and may require persistence and self-advocacy to ensure your needs are met.

### Reflection: Weighing the Decision to Disclose

Remember, the decision to disclose your diagnosis is a personal choice. There's no right or wrong answer, and what works best for one person might not be suitable for another.

- Do I need specific accommodations to perform my job effectively?
  
- Am I comfortable discussing my ADHD with my employer?
  
- Am I prepared to educate my employer about ADHD and my specific needs?
  
- What are your main concerns about disclosing your ADHD?
  
  
- What benefits do you anticipate from disclosing ?

## 4. Identifying Your Needs and Strengths

**Assessing Challenges in the Workplace** If you've decided you want to disclose getting specific about the specific challenges you face due to ADHD is a critical step. Common issues may include difficulties

with focus, managing distractions, staying organized, or how information is communicated. Understanding these challenges will help you articulate your needs clearly. When navigating workplace challenges as an individual with ADHD, embracing a neurodivergent-affirming approach can significantly enhance understanding and strategy development:

When addressing workplace challenges with ADHD, consider these key points:

❑ **1. Understand Your ADHD Traits:**

Knowing your specific challenges can help you figure out what you need to succeed at work. In general, do you understand your ADHD?

❑ **2. Review Your Work Experiences:**

- What are your main challenges?
- Do your strengths match your job duties?
- How well do you get along with your bosses?
- Does your workplace make your ADHD symptoms better or worse?

❑ **3. Be Clear on Work Challenges**

Many with ADHD face similar challenges, such as:

- ◇ **Time Management & Organization:** Struggling with deadlines, staying organized, and handling paperwork.
- ◇ **Focus and Distraction:** Finding it hard to concentrate, especially if the workplace is noisy.
- ◇ **Interactions with Others:** Sometimes missing social cues or reacting strongly to feedback.
- ◇ **Sensitivity to the Environment:** Feeling overwhelmed by too much noise or activity.

- ❑ **4. Focus on Your Strengths:** While it's important to manage challenges, don't forget your strengths, like being good at coming up with new ideas, being creative, working well in fast paced settings, and being flexible.

## My Challenges and Strengths

→ **Challenges:**

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→ **Strengths:**

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## Identifying Potential Accommodations

→ What specific accommodations do you think would help you overcome your challenges?

**Types of Accommodations** Some Examples of reasonable accommodations include:

- Flexible work schedules to manage energy levels and focus.
- Working from home if the job can be done from home as well
- Noise-canceling headphones to reduce distractions.
- Working from a different location like a quiet office
- Clear, written instructions for tasks and projects.
- Meetings with your Supervisor
- Use of assistive technology, such as task management apps.
- Regular breaks to release pent-up physical energy.
- Structured tasks and clearer communication to reduce misunderstandings.
- Different working hours

→ Can anyone help you with this brainstorming process?

→ How would these accommodations improve your productivity and well-being?

→ Are there tools or resources you currently lack that could assist you?

## Delete this page Reflection: Understanding Your Needs and Strengths

→ How do your strengths complement your work tasks?

→ What accommodations do you think will be most beneficial for you?

## 5. When and How to Disclose Your ADHD

### When Should I Disclose My ADHD?

Deciding when to disclose your ADHD is a personal decision that depends on your specific circumstances and the workplace environment. Here are some key factors to consider:

- **Emergence of Challenges and Need for Support:**
  - You might choose to disclose your ADHD if you encounter significant challenges in the workplace that relate to your ADHD. For example, if you struggle with organization, time management, or focus, and these issues impact your job performance, disclosing your diagnosis can be a proactive step toward accessing necessary support and accommodations.
- **Changes in Job Responsibilities or Workplace Environment:**
  - If your role changes or the work environment evolves (e.g., a shift to an open-plan office or new responsibilities), these changes may exacerbate ADHD-related challenges. Disclosing your diagnosis at this time can facilitate a conversation about potential accommodations to help you navigate these new conditions.
- **Building Trust and Establishing Relationships:**
  - Some individuals feel more comfortable disclosing their ADHD after establishing trust and rapport with colleagues and supervisors. In workplaces that prioritize mental health awareness and open communication, you may feel more confident sharing your diagnosis once you feel a sense of belonging and acceptance.
- **Performance Reviews and Career Advancement:**
  - Disclosing ADHD during performance reviews or when seeking career advancement opportunities can be strategic. This timing allows you to frame your disclosure within the context of professional development, linking your need for accommodations to your career goals. However, it's essential to consider potential biases and evaluate the workplace culture before choosing this moment.

## Timing Your Disclosure

- Am I experiencing challenges that significantly impact my job performance?
- Has there been a change in my job responsibilities or work environment?
- Do I feel comfortable and have established trust with my colleagues and supervisors?
- Am I preparing for a performance review or seeking career advancement?

## Who Should I Disclose To?

The person you choose to disclose your ADHD to can significantly influence the outcome. Consider the following options:

→ **Direct Supervisor:**

- Your direct supervisor is often the first point of contact for discussing work-related issues, including the need for accommodations. They are usually involved in implementing accommodations and can provide immediate support.

→ **Human Resources (HR):**

- HR professionals are responsible for ensuring compliance with employment laws and workplace policies, including those related to disability accommodations. Disclosing to HR can help ensure that your request for accommodations is documented and handled appropriately.

→ **Colleagues:**

- In some cases, you may choose to disclose your ADHD to trusted colleagues. This can foster a supportive work environment and help them understand any accommodations or adjustments you might need. However, consider the potential for confidentiality issues.

## Choosing Who to Disclose To

- Is my direct supervisor the person I should ask or the one I feel safe asking about the disclosure process?
- Would disclosing to HR ensure a formal and documented process for accommodations?
- Are there also trusted colleagues who could provide support and understanding?

## Reflection: Deciding When and To Whom to Disclose

- What are your main concerns about timing your disclosure?
- Who do you feel most comfortable discussing your ADHD with, and why?

## 6. Making the Disclosure : Preparing for the Conversation

- ❑ **Gathering Documentation** Before discussing accommodations, gather any necessary documentation to support your request. This could include a diagnosis from a healthcare provider, letters of support, or specific recommendations for accommodations.
- ❑ **Developing a Proposal** Prepare a clear and concise proposal that outlines the accommodations you are requesting and explains how they will help you overcome specific challenges. Be specific and provide examples of how these adjustments will improve your job performance.

### My Accommodation Proposal Requests

- ❑ **Accommodations Requested:**
  - 
  -
- ❑ **How These Accommodations Will Help:**
  - 
  -
- ❑ **Choosing the Right Time and Setting** Schedule a private meeting with your supervisor or HR representative. Choose a time that allows for an uninterrupted conversation where you can discuss your needs in a comfortable and focused environment.

### Reflection: Preparing for the Conversation

- How do you feel about discussing your needs with your employer?
- What key points do you want to make sure to communicate?

## 7. Navigating the Conversation

**Communicating Your Needs** During the conversation, clearly explain how ADHD affects your work and the specific accommodations you are requesting. Use examples to illustrate how these adjustments will help you perform your duties more effectively.

### How I Will Communicate My Needs

→ **Key Points to Discuss:**

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- 

**Responding to Concerns** Be prepared to address any concerns or questions your employer may have. They may worry about the cost or feasibility of the accommodations. Emphasize how these adjustments will not only help you but also benefit the workplace by improving your productivity and job satisfaction.

**Negotiating Accommodations** Be open to discussing various options and finding a compromise that works for both you and your employer. Remember, the goal is to find reasonable accommodations that meet your needs without causing undue hardship for the employer.

### Reflection: Navigating the Conversation

→ How did the conversation go? What went well and what could have been improved?

→ What follow-up actions are needed?

## 8. Implementing and Evaluating Accommodations

**Putting Accommodations into Practice** Once accommodations are approved, it's important to understand how they will be implemented. This includes knowing who is responsible for what, what resources are available, and the timeline for implementation.

**Monitoring and Adjusting Accommodations** Regularly assess the effectiveness of the accommodations. If they are not meeting your needs, communicate this with your employer and work together to make necessary adjustments.

**Maintaining Open Communication** Keep an open line of communication with your employer and HR. Regular check-ins can help address any issues promptly and ensure that the accommodations continue to be effective.

### Reflection: Implementing and Evaluating Accommodations

→ Are the accommodations meeting your needs? If not, what changes are needed?

→ How can you continue to communicate effectively with your employer about your needs?

## 9. Resources and Support

**External Resources** Several organizations provide valuable resources and support for individuals with ADHD, including:

- **Job Accommodation Network (JAN):** Offers guidance on workplace accommodations and disability employment issues.
- **CHADD (Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder):** Provides resources and support for people with ADHD.
- **Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC):** Enforces laws against workplace discrimination.

**Workplace Support Networks** In addition to formal accommodations, informal support networks, such as mentors or workplace support groups, can provide guidance and encouragement. Having a mentor who understands your challenges and strengths can help you navigate workplace dynamics and advocate for your needs effectively.

## 10. Conclusion

**Encouragement and Final Thoughts** Advocating for your needs is an important step toward creating a supportive and productive work environment. Remember, requesting accommodations is your right, and doing so can lead to greater job satisfaction and success. By understanding your rights, identifying your needs, and communicating effectively, you can work with your employer to create a work environment where you can thrive.

### Reflection: Final Thoughts

- What are your main takeaways from this workbook?
- What steps will you take next to advocate for yourself in the workplace?

This workbook is designed to empower you with the knowledge and tools needed to navigate the process of requesting workplace accommodations for ADHD. Use the checklists, worksheets, and guided questions to help you plan and communicate your needs effectively. Remember, you have the right to a supportive and accommodating work environment.