

What is ADHD?

The opening slide is displayed. No one is speaking. The following information appears on the screen: The LD@school logo is shown.

Text reads: “Brought to you by LD@school.”

LD@school is identified as a signature initiative of the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario (LDAO).

The LDAO logo is shown.

What is ADHD?

ADHD is often talked about in a very simple way, but in reality, it is more complex.

Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, or ADHD, is a neurobiological condition that affects attention, impulse control, and self-regulation. It’s not about intelligence, it’s not about laziness or lack of motivation.

ADHD affects how the brain processes information, uses energy, and responds to the environment. Because of this, it can show up differently from person to person.

In this video, we’ll look more closely at some of the ways ADHD can show up, including experiences like hyperfocus, creativity, energy, and big-picture thinking.

These are not labels or categories to define a person, but ways to better understand how ADHD may show up in different situations.

The goal is to build a clearer understanding of how ADHD works, and how experiences are shaped by context, support, and environment.

How ADHD Can Show Up ?

ADHD is often described using three main presentations. These help us understand patterns, but they’re not strict categories.

Some people may show patterns that are primarily inattentive, sometimes referred to as the inattentive presentation. This can include difficulty sustaining focus, trouble staying organized, or having a hard time following through on tasks and instructions.

Others may show patterns that are primarily hyperactive or impulsive, sometimes referred to as the hyperactive-impulsive presentation. This can include restlessness, high levels of movement or talk, and difficulty waiting or controlling impulses.

Video Transcript: “What is ADHD?”

Some people experience a combination of both, often referred to as the combined presentation.

It is important to remember that these are not fixed categories. Many people see themselves in more than one, and this can change over time and across situations.

Experiences Associated with ADHD

ADHD can look different from person to person. Some people may recognize certain patterns in how they focus, think, or respond to their environment.

In this part of the video, we will look more closely at a few of these experiences. These aren't the same for everyone, and they are not always strengths or challenges on their own...

... but they are ways of understanding how ADHD may show up depending on the person, the context, and the supports in place.

Hyperfocus

One experience someone with ADHD might describe is hyperfocus, which can happen when something feels especially interesting or important.

In some situations, this can support sustained attention, creativity, and productivity, especially when the task is meaningful or engaging.

In other situations, it can make it difficult to shift attention, stop a task, or respond to other expectations.

Creativity

Some people with ADHD describe experiencing creativity in different ways. This can include making connections quickly, generating new ideas, or approaching tasks from a different perspective.

Sometimes, this way of thinking can support problem-solving, innovation, and creative expression.

In some situations, it can feel harder to organize ideas, follow a structured process, or finish a project.

High Energy

Some people with ADHD describe having high levels of energy. This can show up as a need to move, talk, or stay actively engaged with what's happening around them.

Video Transcript: “What is ADHD?”

In some situations, this energy can support enthusiasm, engagement, and active participation, especially in dynamic or interactive environments.

At other times, it can feel harder to stay still, regulate activity levels, or match the expectations of the environment.

Flexibility & Action

Some people with ADHD describe being more willing to try new things or act quickly in the moment.

In some situations, this can support exploration, creativity, and a willingness to take initiative or approach new opportunities.

In other situations, it may lead to acting without enough time to think things through, or taking risks that have unintended consequences.

This can also be connected to how the brain manages impulse control and decision-making in the moment.

Empathy

Some people with ADHD describe experiencing emotions deeply, and being highly aware of how others are feeling.

Sometimes, this can support empathy, connection, and strong relationships with others.

In other situations, it may feel harder to take a step back, manage emotional responses, or see a situation from different perspectives.

Experiences of empathy in ADHD can vary, and may include strong emotional awareness alongside differences in understanding other people’s perspectives.

Big Thinker

Some people with ADHD describe thinking in broader or more connected ways, often seeing patterns or relationships between ideas.

In some situations, this can support big-picture thinking, creativity, and the ability to generate new ideas or make connections across topics.

In other situations, it can feel harder to focus on details, follow step-by-step processes, or organize ideas in a structured way.

This way of thinking can also be connected to how the brain processes information and makes associations between ideas.

Video Transcript: “What is ADHD?”

Bringing It Together

Across all of these experiences, ADHD is complex, and it looks different for each person.

The same patterns can feel helpful in some situations and more challenging in others.

That is why understanding ADHD matters. It allows us to move beyond labels and focus on what each person needs to learn, work, and thrive.

With the right supports, environments, and relationships, individuals with ADHD can better understand themselves and how they learn.

Ultimately, the goal is not to define ADHD in one way, but to support meaningful understanding across different contexts.

The closing slide is displayed. No one is speaking. The following information appears on the screen: The LD@school logo is shown.

Text reads: “Learn more at LDatschool.ca.”

The LDAO logo is shown, with the text: “LD@school is a signature initiative of LDAO.”