

A YOUNG PERSON'S GUIDE TO

THRIVING
WITH

ADHD



Developed by

Shire

*ADHD, attention deficit
and hyperactivity disorder.

If you've just found out you have ADHD, you might be upset, even a bit annoyed. But you may also be relieved, because it explains why you do things in a certain way. And you may want to find out more about ADHD and where you can look for help if you need it.

This booklet is about living with ADHD, with tips to help you and advice about getting support.

If there's anything you don't understand, talk to your parent, carer or teacher.

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WHAT is ADHD?

A person with ADHD has differences in brain development and brain activity. Put simply, your brain works differently compared with someone who doesn't have ADHD, so you learn in a different way, and you may sometimes behave differently. You can't change it, but you can learn to manage it, and it can even give you certain advantages!

What causes ADHD?

The different parts of our brains talk to each other all the time. Having ADHD means that some parts of your brain talk in a different way to other people, in particular, areas that control memory, attention and behaviour.

These differences in your brain can make some things harder for you – like concentrating at school, wanting to fidget when you should be sitting still, or shouting out when you should be listening.

However, the way your brain works with ADHD may also make you more creative, better at problem solving or able to do lots of things at once.



ADHD AND YOU

Growing up isn't easy. You have to take on responsibilities, school work is harder, and you get more homework. On top of this, changes in your body can affect your emotions and your self-confidence.

If you live with ADHD, growing up can be even more of a challenge. You could find you get angry or frustrated, you might react badly or get irritated if things go wrong, and you may find it difficult to be motivated. In fact, most people of your age have similar feelings — but with ADHD, everything can seem more intense and harder to handle.

PARTICULAR SYMPTOMS OF ADHD

ADHD can also impact on your life in other ways. Have a look through the following list. Do any of them sound a bit like you?

Then read on for advice on how to get help, either on your own or with a parent, carer or teacher.

Attention issues

It's the 'AD' in ADHD: sometimes you find it hard to concentrate, other times you focus totally on things that interest you. Maybe you're easily distracted or you can't concentrate on a task. You might also avoid doing things that need more focus.

Hyperactivity

The 'H' in ADHD. This is where you find it hard to sit still, or you drum your fingers, tap your feet, play with your hair or just generally mess about.



Impulsiveness

This means you can find it difficult to wait your turn, or be impatient. Maybe you interrupt all the time or blurt out answers to questions or try to do something before you fully understand what's needed.

Difficulties with social skills

Having ADHD can make it harder to make and keep friends, perhaps because you don't fully understand how other people feel, or you make them feel awkward or uncomfortable.

Disorganised

With ADHD, you might forget things that have been planned, missing appointments and forgetting equipment. You may also not leave enough time to finish your work.

Mood swings

ADHD may make you more sensitive to all the changes that happen as you grow up. In turn, that can cause conflicts, confrontation, anger and frustration, which can sometimes make things worse.

ONE
IN EVERY
CLASS WILL
ON AVERAGE
HAVE ADHD

And now the good news...

By now, you will be aware of the effects that ADHD has on your life. Firstly, what you need to know is that you are not alone – worldwide, around 5% of children have ADHD. What this means is that in a class* of around 30 children, one will have ADHD.

This means that lots of people have gone through what you're dealing with. Although it might not feel like it now, with the right help and some effort on your part, you can thrive with ADHD, do well at school and have a good time with your friends, and also with your family.

The key thing is if you feel like you need some help, make sure you talk to your parent, carer, teacher or doctor. They are there to support you.

*in a non-selective mainstream school

Managing ADHD

Now you know a bit more about what causes ADHD and how it affects your brain, and your daily life, let's look at a list of helpful ways to deal with some of the issues ADHD can cause you in your daily life:

Making 'The Deal'

Making 'The Deal' is where you agree to do something with your parent, carer or teacher, like being on time, tidying your bedroom, or being organised at school. You should try to make 'The Deal' in writing, and if you keep your side of the bargain, agree to get a reward!

Keep 'The Deal' simple, - and don't try many deals at once - build them up over a period of time so that you get used to completing them.

Medication

If your symptoms are causing you impairment your doctor may prescribe medication to reduce the symptoms of ADHD. Some children manage without medication, while others take it all the way through school and continue when they go off to college.

Remember that medication doesn't 'cure' ADHD, but it does help with the symptoms, which is why you need to take your tablets as prescribed. This can be hard at times, so make sure to get your parent, carer or teacher to help you.

Dealing with stress

Having ADHD might make you feel stressed, and if you're stressed it can lead to things like:

- Problems sleeping
- Eating less (or more)
- Feeling anxious or irritable
- Feeling angry or losing your temper
- Worrying
- Making risky decisions
- Headaches
- Tension

A good way to deal with stress is to do some relaxing routines. This could be finding somewhere that's quiet and comfortable, laying down on your back (or standing with your back against a wall) and closing your eyes. Then do some or all of these two or three times:

- *Frown as hard as you can, hold it while you count to 10, then relax your face for a count of 20*
- *Spread your fingers out as far as they will go, hold it for 10, and relax for 20*
- *Tense your stomach muscles for 10, relax for 20*
- *Flex your feet and straighten your legs, holding for 10, then relax for 20*

You might find it hard to 'relax for 20' at first, but keep trying because you'll get better with practice. And don't worry if you start to feel tired - that means you really are relaxing!

Sleep

Do you ever feel like you can't switch off at night?

People with ADHD sometimes find it difficult to get to sleep, or to get enough quality sleep, and this can make the symptoms worse. Being tired all the time isn't fun, and worrying about it can make things worse!

Try these things to help you get a better sleep:

- *Do some sport or exercise because this can really help make you tired*
- *Keep your routines and checklists on a sheet of paper next to your bed, and have a read through before you switch off the lights, so you aren't worrying about things you might have forgotten*
- *Go to bed a bit earlier, and do some of the stress-beater exercises*

Did you know?

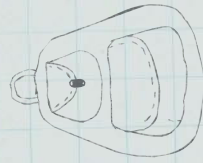
- *Better sleep can improve your concentration at school*
- *Half-an-hour more sleep can improve your school performance*
- *More sleep can reduce your ADHD symptoms*

Getting organised

Routines, checklists and timetables are a great way to help with some of the chaotic characteristics of your ADHD. Your parent or carer may set up some routines, checklists or timetables for you, which can help you stay more organised, and help with what you do every day. If you write things down, it can help you remember better.

For instance, if you write down what you need for school, or have your school timetable next to your bed, you're less likely to forget stuff. Sticky notes help as well, but not too many, and make sure you write neatly!

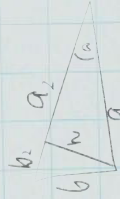
Why not combine a routine as part of 'The Deal' and agree a reward for sticking to it!



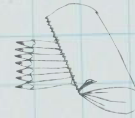
sports kit



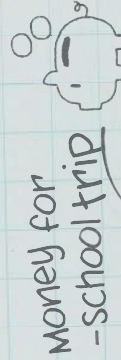
Lunch box



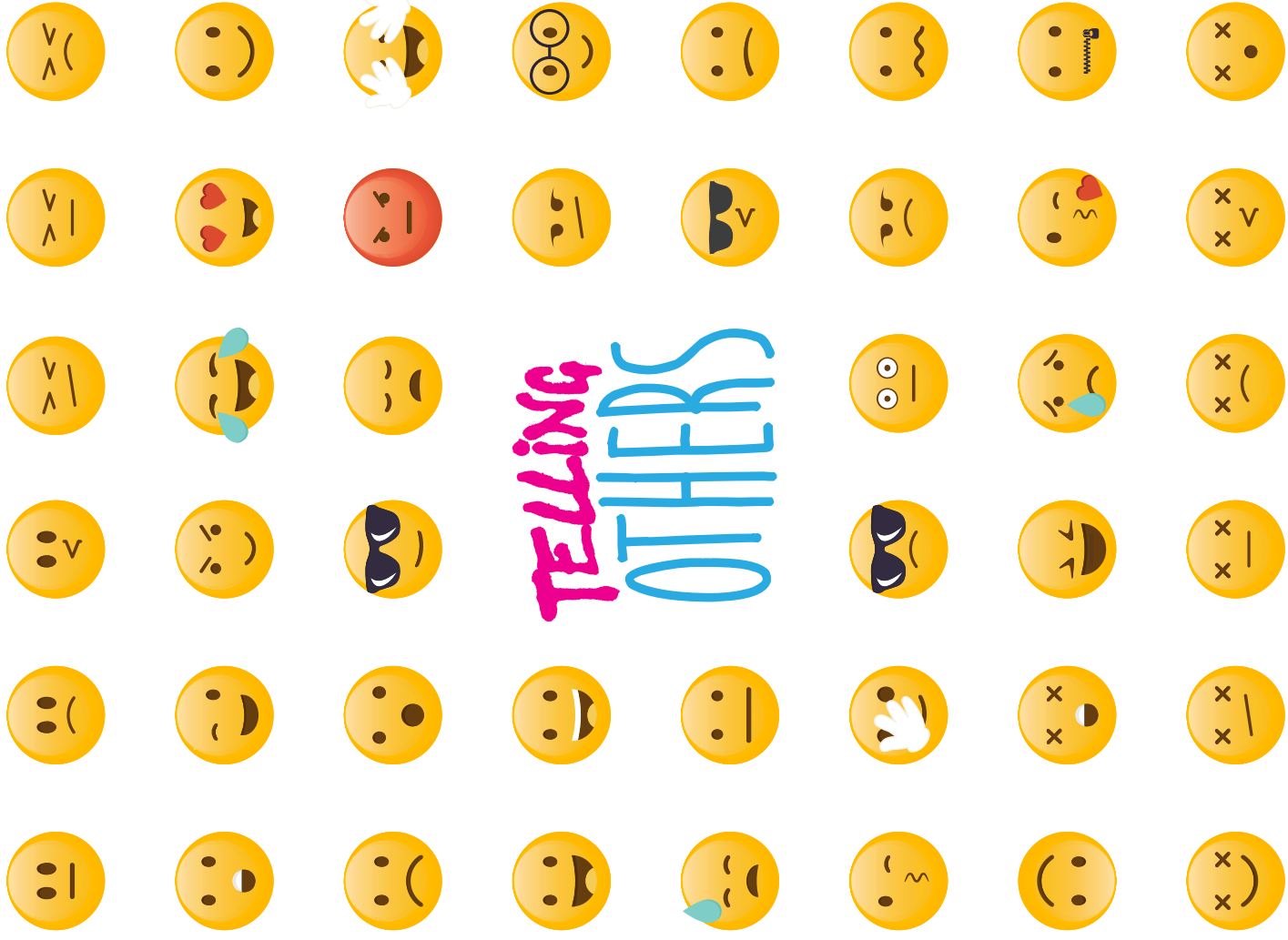
Maths-homework



pencil case



money for -school trip



TELLING OTHERS

Unfortunately, there are many ideas about ADHD that are simply not true, and some people have negative feelings about it. But, ADHD isn't an illness, and it's not 'spreadable', so don't feel you have to say anything to anyone!

However, now you've found out about having ADHD, you might feel you need to tell everyone about it. Think CAREFULLY before you talk to people about your ADHD, as once you've told someone, you can't 'untell' them - so it's important to get it right.

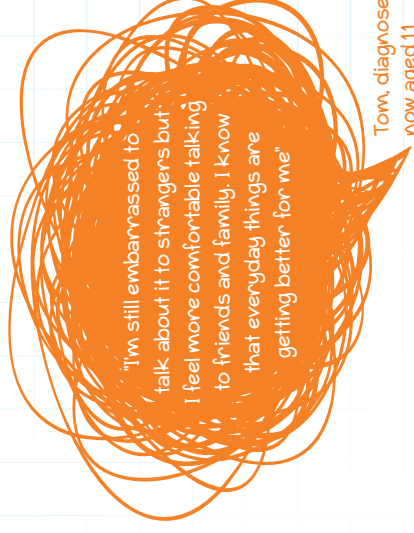
Who, how and when to tell

If you have one particular friend who you know you can really trust, maybe you want to tell them first, so you can get their thoughts and maybe find out if they can help you. You might find it easier to talk to them outside of school, on the phone, or maybe on a sleepover.

If you have several close friends, you might feel more comfortable sharing your news with them as a group. Just be careful to think about whether everyone in the group is a really good friend and whether you trust them to have your best interests at heart.

If you want to tell your brother or sister about your ADHD, think about whether you want to do this alone in your own way or with a parent or carer.

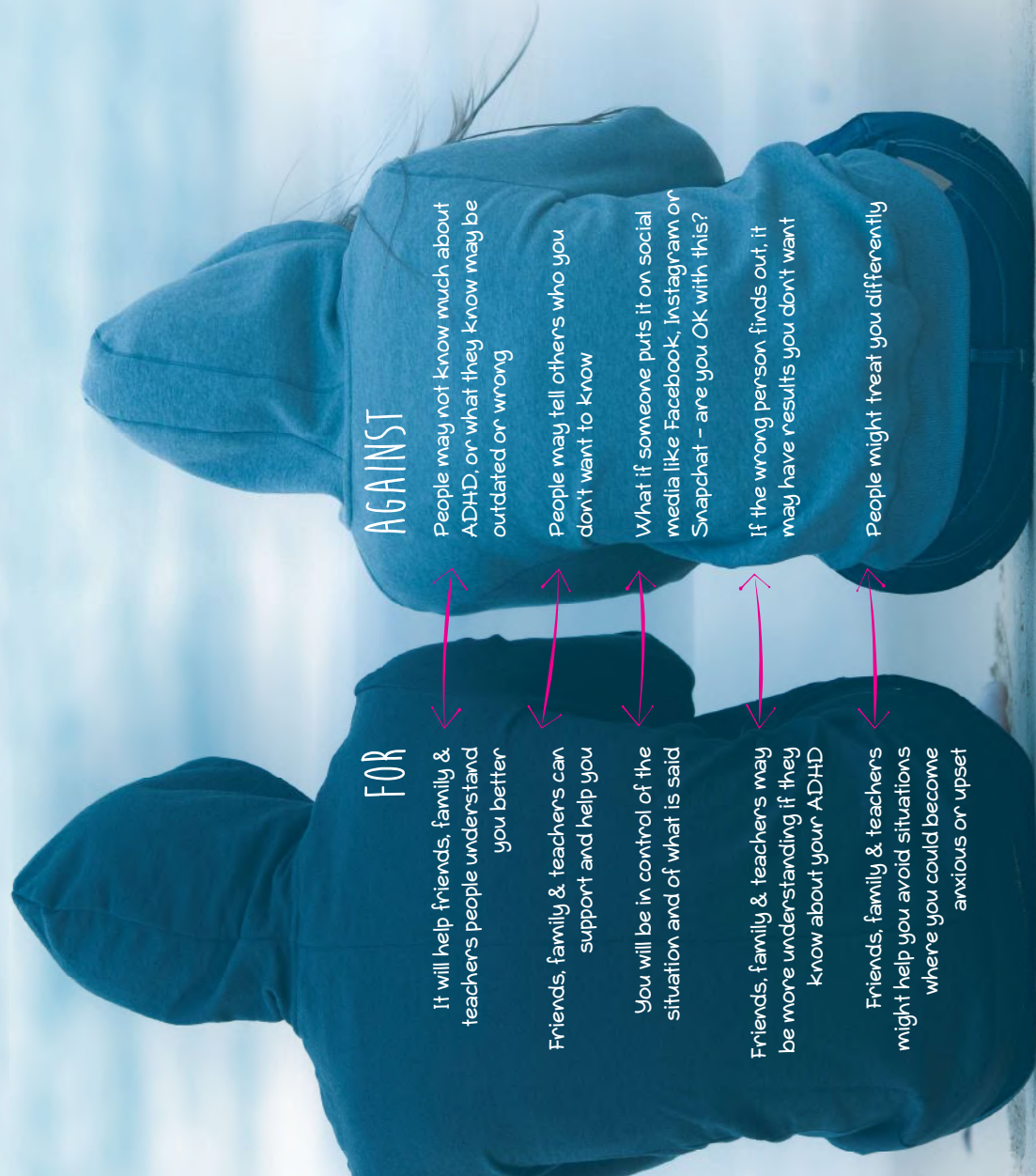
Whoever you tell, remember that most people don't know about ADHD, so you'll have to explain about how your brain is slightly different, and why you might behave differently from others. Think about what you want them to know about you and ADHD, and practice it in your head before saying it. Don't make a big deal about it and remember you don't have to tell them everything - just what you're comfortable with.



Tom, diagnosed at 10
now aged 11

Deciding whether or not to tell

Think about these arguments for and against telling people, and maybe talk it over with your parent or carer.



Before you tell anyone about your ADHD, remember...

- You have plenty of time to tell people about your diagnosis, so take your time
- Learn as much as you can about ADHD, because this will give you the confidence to discuss how it affects you
- Choose wisely: not everybody needs to know. The decision on who to tell is yours
- And never forget: you have lots of strengths to be proud of!

Moving to a NEW SCHOOL

Having ADHD at school can be one of your biggest hurdles. And moving to a new or bigger school can make this even more difficult, because there are more demands and responsibilities – but there are also more opportunities and new friends.

Being organised

As someone with ADHD, you might find it hard to get organised at school – and if you're moving to another school, the routines will almost certainly be different. The result might be some or all of the following:

- You get lost and arrive late for lessons
- You get distracted between lessons
- You arrive for lessons feeling too lively, talkative or over-active
- You forget to write down what homework to do, or you forget to do it, or you do it but forget to take it back to school and hand it in
- You don't take the right books and equipment to school, or home for homework

To make life easier, try these tips:

- Use a planner and write things down to stay organised – maybe tape a copy of your timetable to your locker as well as having one at home and in your school bag
- Keep a second set of pencils and pens in your locker in case you leave them at home
- Ask your teachers if it is ok to have something to fiddle with in class, like a small "squeeze ball" or a "fidget spinner" that you hold in your hand*
- If you can, keep a second set of sports kit at school in case you forget to bring it in
- For homework, ask if you can finish some of it at school before you go home, or if you can keep a second set of books at home in case you leave them at school

*if allowed in your school

- Try not to butt in on conversations

- Don't let anyone wind you up so you get into trouble
- Try to sit near people who won't distract you or annoy you
- Ask for a time-out card if a break would help you to calm down when you get frustrated
- Do some sport at school or after school – this will help you release energy and will probably help you sleep better
- Agree a sensible time that you will go to bed on school nights so you don't get too tired
- Have fun – a new school can mean loads of great opportunities, school trips and lots of new friends

Medication

A move to a new school might mean you have to change your medication's routine. If you need to take medication in school hours get your parent or carer to check with the school about whether you need to leave your medication in the school office, or if you are allowed to keep it with you. If you're worried about this, speak with your parent or carer and/or your teacher.

Things that might mean you avoid or forget your medicine:

- *New routines*
- *Class teachers may not remind you to take your medicine*
- *Pressure from friends to do other things at break times*
- *Lack of time*

If you think any of this is a problem, think about ways to remember to take your medicine wherever you are. You could keep a reminder on your phone calendar or a note in your school planner or inside your locker. Think about what would work for you, but don't forget your medication – it's there to help you.

Remember to
exercise regularly and
eat a healthy balanced diet
- make a note if any foods
seem to influence your
hyperactivity to share with
your doctor

Learning

Secondary school is more demanding, and you may find that your ADHD causes you to do things like:

- *Leaving work unfinished, or finishing in a rush*
- *Poor handwriting, especially at the end of longer pieces of work*
- *Not listening to instructions*
- *Failing to note down homework*

To help, ask your teacher to help create a work plan for you, with targets that you can work on. These can include:

- *Putting your hand up to answer questions*
- *Waiting until it's your turn to speak*
- *Asking your teacher to check your homework diary or school planner at the end of each lesson*

Homework

Moving to secondary school probably means getting used to regular homework, and you may need time to adjust to this.

There are ways you can avoid some of the challenges you might face in moving to a new or bigger school. Some ideas that might help:

- Write down your homework instructions properly
- Check that you can read what you noted down earlier
- Concentrate for long enough to complete your homework
- Ask your teacher if you can record homework instructions on a smart phone or similar device
- Use a computer to type up school work rather than handwriting
- Get into a routine of "homework first/play second"
- Let your teacher know if homework is taking you longer than expected
- Go for after-school homework sessions if available: people with ADHD often need three times longer to complete homework at home rather than at school

Remember!

Many school difficulties can be helped by good communication between you and those that care for you. Always let your parent or carer know how things are going – don't keep things to yourself. If there is a teacher you really like, who you can talk to if things are getting tough, this can really help. Why not ask your school about this?

If you have not settled down into the routine of your new school after a few weeks, be sure to tell someone. Your teacher may suggest a meeting to make plans to help you become more organised and make school an easier place.

And finally

There's always a way to thrive with ADHD - You can do it! Try to follow the tips and solutions in this booklet and you'll be on your way!

REAL LIFE STORIES YOU CAN THRIVE WITH ADHD

"It was very reassuring to find out that lots of celebrities have ADHD as it shows you can still do well with ADHD"

Ed diagnosed at 13
now aged 16

"I now feel 'normal'. I can relate to boys my age. I have finally made friends as they understand me.
More importantly I understand myself now and I'm not angry at everything"

Nathan diagnosed at 8
now aged 14

"I'm happy that I've been diagnosed with ADHD because it means I get the help I need without being judged for my behaviour"

Ali diagnosed at 4
now aged 12

"At first I was overwhelmed being diagnosed with ADHD, but I slowly got used to it and now I use my ADHD to drive my interests"

Ed diagnosed at 13
now aged 16

RESOURCES

PLACES TO GO TO FIND INFORMATION

Support groups

There are many ADHD-specific resources to help you. These are a few that you may find useful, but there are lots more that you may find great: use the internet and ask around to find out.

Please be aware that Shire does not control all of the websites noted in this leaflet. We are not responsible for, nor do we necessarily endorse, the contents of these other websites.



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