



## FOR THE FRIDGE

# Tips on Returning to College for Adults with AD/HD

by Karen Sampson, MA

**FOR ADULTS AFFECTED BY AD/HD**, now is one of the best times in history to return to college, or to attend for the first time.

Many who had bad experiences when they were younger find achieving a degree possible with the improved understanding, accommodations, and systems of support now available for students with attention deficits.

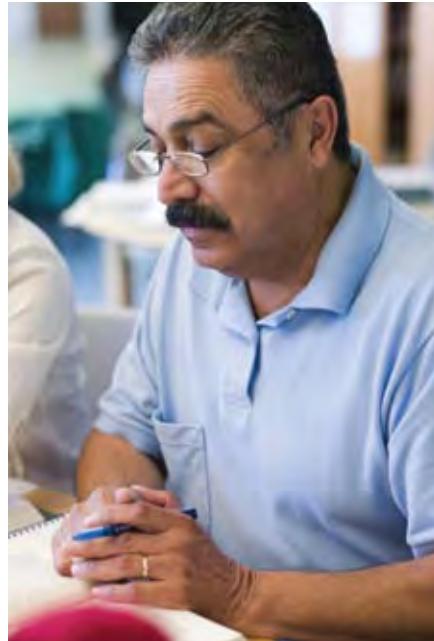
Is going to school the best move for you, in terms of career advancement, social and family life, and personal development? One option is to take one or two courses during a trial semester to find out whether to attend full-time or part-time.

Bear in mind that in postsecondary settings, students must be able to perform at the academic level of the college or university and select a school accordingly. When you apply, disclosing your diagnosis of AD/HD is entirely voluntary. Universities and colleges cannot deny admission based solely on a diagnosis of AD/HD. However, if you do share your diagnosis with the admissions staff, they will be in a position to help you find services to help you become a successful student.

### Look into disability services

Set up an appointment to discuss available services either in person or by telephone. Postsecondary schools that receive federal funding must provide "reasonable accommodations" for students affected by AD/HD; however, schools can differ widely in available services and accommodations. Questions to ask include:

- Is there a specialist in AD/HD on staff with the office of disability services?
- Are there disability support advocates who are members of the Association on Higher Education and Disability?
- How well educated are faculty members concerning adult AD/HD?
- Are there study skills courses or programs designed for students with AD/HD to address time management, organization, project planning, and studying?
- Is there a healthcare provider on staff



### After admission

Remember, there are no Individualized Education Programs in college. The office of disability services will work with students on individual accommodations in individual situations, however.

It is the obligation of the student (not the office of disability services) to self-identify learning challenges with each individual faculty member. Faculty members, within boundaries, decide the level of accommodations. The office of disability services can work with individual faculty members, at the request of the student and/or faculty member, after the student and faculty member have attempted to work out accommodations.

Make an appointment with the office of disability services early in the school year, before it begins if possible. Bring documentation concerning your diagnosis and how AD/HD affects your ability to study and learn. This is the office that will best help you have a successful college experience, but you must still advocate for yourself.

Unlike elementary and secondary schools, colleges and universities will not step in to help without your direct request. The disability services office will provide as much or as little assistance as you feel is necessary, but you must ask for it. Ask for help before you are overwhelmed, and ask for programs that will help you manage your time effectively. ☑

### Resources

Succeeding in College, What We Know No. 13: [help4adhd.org](http://help4adhd.org); Association on Higher Education and Disability: [ahead.org](http://ahead.org); Rights and Responsibilities of Postsecondary Students with Disabilities: [ed.gov](http://ed.gov); The Edge Foundation: [EdgeFoundation.org](http://EdgeFoundation.org)

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Services or accommodations that may be available include extended time for testing, note takers and recorded textbooks and lectures, coaching during weekly appointments, assistance with registration and course planning, and time-management training.

