



# THREE THINGS I Know to Be True About ADHD in Adults

by Laura MacNiven

**DIDN'T KNOW IT**, but I grew up struggling with symptoms of ADHD. I regularly heard feedback like “*If you tried harder, you would do better*” or some variation of that. But I didn’t know *how* to try harder. I didn’t know why I wasn’t giving my best or why my brain seemed “asleep” until I faced a last-minute deadline. I felt anxious when I wasn’t meeting my potential but couldn’t see a way to make it better.

I thought it was simply who I was.

Now that I’m more knowledgeable about the way my brain works, I realize that ADHD is an important part of who I am. It’s just not *who* I am.

By understanding and accepting the way I learn, work, and undertake daily tasks, I’ve optimized my lens, and found ways to leverage my strengths.

If you’re struggling with symptoms of ADHD, know

that you can get there, too. It starts with self-awareness and exploration. It starts with these three things I know to be true about ADHD.

**You can’t treat ADHD through a lens of blame or indifference.**

Beware of making sweeping statements that take you away from facing ADHD head-on. This can get you fighting the

wrong fight and putting yourself down. It can be a direct route to finding yourself filled with shame and frustration.

Say you are struggling with school or work performance. You have good intentions, and you know you're capable, but you keep letting yourself and others down. As a default, you call yourself "lazy." If there's no visible reason for not succeeding, you must be doing it on purpose, right? You must be *choosing* to underperform. People around you affirm this—they don't know any better—and you get utterly stuck.

Instead, try shifting the lens.

Stop calling yourself lazy. Ask yourself "What is blocking me? What *specifically* is holding me back from meeting my expectations?" Learn how your brain works and realize that the way it communicates internally is a factor in why you aren't meeting your potential. Identify that you're struggling with symptoms of ADHD, which make it almost impossible to initiate tasks, especially when they are multi-stepped. Get the answer you have been searching for that explains why you have had to struggle in so many areas of your life. Use that awareness to make sense of your past, and present. Now you can get to work.

### **The deeper you dig into your version of ADHD, the better.**

Being a step ahead of ADHD is in the details. To create solutions and strategies that actually work, you need to dig into the minutiae of the way your brain processes information and acquaint yourself with the intricacies of your emotions as they relate to your focusing and execution abilities and difficulties.

Start by delving into your daily life and work to assess and notice where ADHD is impacting your wellbeing. What are the little, nagging, hard-to-define details that block you from following through? You're the only one who knows the inner workings of your brain—you are the one who has to get in there and outsmart ADHD's pesky, pervasive symptoms.

No detail is too weird. ADHD is sneaky and tricky, and the more data you have, the better equipped you'll be to outwit it. When you have ADHD, anything can get in the way of your goals: the color of your running shoes, your alarm clock, how you mentally prepare for an exam. The way you feel about any given task directly impacts your ability to engage and follow through. So when you analyze your inner dialogue and pinpoint exactly where your

momentum is breaking down, you start to gain control. This will lead to the development of nuanced and sophisticated strategies. There is no such thing as "too detailed" when it comes to self-awareness and your mental health. Dig in there. Get your hands dirty.

### **At some point, you have to accept your ADHD brain.**

If you have an ADHD-style brain, you always will. You were made that way, and you will forever deal with the push and pull and ups and downs of your prefrontal cortex. Things will be harder for you than they are for those around you. You'll have to fight to meet your own potential. Sometimes this will be frustrating, angering, exhausting. Sometimes you'll wish you had a neurotypical brain. You'll wonder what it would feel like to not experience resistance to every single thing.

Having ADHD is hard, especially in this day and age, when you need to handle so much coming at you at once.

The fight is real.

But, at some point, you have to stop battling yourself. Find a way to sit in the room with your

ADHD and just be. Learn how to float above your own life, see the symptoms for what they are, and take control of them. You will arrive at a place where you can own your struggles, apologize when you affect others, and make changes in your life when you need to. You'll shed your feelings of shame and see yourself through eyes of kindness—and be able to be yourself with ADHD. Through this acceptance, you can access the gifts you have to offer this world.

That's when things get exciting.

I've worked with hundreds of people with ADHD and have never met one person who doesn't have something unique and wonderful to contribute.

So, do the work to understand yourself and the way your brain works. Dig into your individual experience, like a dogged detective. Fight to get to a place of acceptance, and things will start to click.

One day, you will look around, you will breathe deeply, and you will feel content, at peace.

You've got this. Fight for your spark. The world needs you to. 🌟

