

Preparing for a first session about ADHD

A first session is a conversation, not a test, and not something you can fail.
With ADHD, you also do not have to hold it all in your head on the day.

Preparing is optional, and the prep is for you, not the clinician. Bring notes if it helps; you will not be expected to remember everything in the room. You can fill in page 2, take it with you, or leave it at home.

i For use alongside therapy, not as a substitute. This sheet is for gathering your own thoughts before a first session, and none of the boxes needs to be answered fully. Working out what is going on, and what comes next, is built together with a clinician.

WHAT A FIRST SESSION USUALLY INVOLVES

A first session typically runs 50 to 60 minutes. The clinician introduces themselves, explains how the session works, and asks what brings you in. The middle is the conversation about what has been going on; the end is usually a sketch of what the work could look like. You do not need a tidy account. Early sessions are often spent setting up what comes next: what you and the clinician agree to work on, and how (Constantino et al., 2021).

WHAT TENDS TO BE USEFUL TO BRING

Anything that helps you remember

- Notes, because recall in the room can be harder for some people with ADHD
- Any earlier reports or school records, if you have them
- The Mapping, System Audit, or Timeline sheets, if you have done them
- One or two examples that capture how it actually shows up

WHAT YOU DO NOT NEED

The things people often worry about

- A diagnosis, or a sense of what is “really” going on
- A tidy story, in order, with no gaps
- To mask, or to perform being fine
- To have chosen between ADHD assessment and therapy

FOUR THINGS WORTH THINKING ABOUT BEFOREHAND

If you would like to do some thinking first, these are the four areas the prompts on page 2 cover. None needs to be answered fully. Bring what comes; leave what does not.

WHAT BRINGS YOU IN

Why now

What tipped you into making the appointment, and what you are hoping it might help with.

HOW IT SHOWS UP

The pattern, in your words

Where it lands, when it is louder, what it costs you. Not a checklist, just your own description.

WHAT HAS HELPED

Even a little

Conditions, supports, strategies that worked, and ones that never did however often you were told they should.

WHAT YOU WOULD WANT

A direction, not a cure

One or two things that would be different if this went well, in your day or how you see yourself.

THREE THINGS PEOPLE OFTEN WANT TO KNOW

What if I forget everything I wanted to say?

Very common, and the reason notes help. With ADHD, recall in the room can be harder, so bringing a few written points is sensible, not a sign you are unprepared. The clinician will also ask what they need to know.

Is the first session assessment or therapy?

Either can be a starting point, and the practice offers both ADHD assessment and therapy. The first session is mostly about understanding your situation and working out the right next step together, not a verdict on the day.

What if I mask without meaning to?

Many people do, especially if masking is a long habit. You do not have to perform being fine. Naming that you tend to mask is itself useful information for the clinician.

REMEMBER You do not need to perform a first session. Arriving is enough, notes are welcome, and the rest is built together.

Four prompts, four boxes

Fill any of the boxes that help you think.

Leave the rest blank. No box is required, and the order does not matter. A few sentences per box is plenty, and notes you can read aloud are perfect.

1 WHAT BRINGS YOU IN

What tipped you into making this appointment?

A few sentences in your own words. What is going on now, and what you are hoping it might help with.

2 HOW IT SHOWS UP

Where does it land, and when is it louder or quieter?

The pattern in your own words, not a checklist. Situations, times of day, tasks, the things it costs you.

3 WHAT HAS HELPED

What has helped, even a little, and what never did?

Conditions, supports, strategies, earlier therapy or other help. What worked, what did not, what you have stopped trying.

4 WHAT YOU WOULD WANT

If this went well, what would be different for you?

Not the perfect future. One or two things a useful change might look like, in your day or how you see yourself.

WHEN YOU ARE READY

Bring this if it helps. Leave it at home if it does not.

If you would like to talk before booking a first session, the Meet and Greet is a short call to see if we're the right fit, with no obligation to continue.

MEET AND GREET

Free

15 minutes

Online or in-person

No obligation