

Your ADHD timeline: childhood, school, work, and relationships



A late diagnosis does not rewrite your history. It re-reads it. The events stay the same; the story you tell about why they happened is what changes.

This worksheet is for that re-reading: looking back across your life with what you know now, gently and without a clean verdict. Thin or patchy memory is welcome. You don't need a complete record, and nothing here is a test.

i For use alongside therapy, not as a substitute. Anything that stirs up more than you expected is worth bringing to a clinician.

WHAT THIS IS

A gentle re-reading, in your own time

- A way to look back with the understanding you have now
- Room to hold the relief and the grief side by side
- A record for yourself, or for a conversation if you want one
- Useful alongside therapy, or as a first step on your own

WHAT THIS IS NOT

A test, a diagnosis, or a tidy account

- Not a test of memory, and not something to complete
- Not a tool that confirms or rules out ADHD
- Not a verdict on your past, or on anyone in it
- Not something to perfect; blanks and uncertainty are welcome

THE RE-READING THIS IS FOR

When the ADHD frame arrives late, it rarely lands as one clean feeling. Research describes it as bitter-sweet, relief and grief at once (Morgan, 2024). Both can be true. Here is the shift the re-reading makes.

THE OLD STORY

“I was lazy, scattered, too much”

The version where the difficulty was a character flaw, and the effort it took to keep up stayed invisible, even to you.



THE RE-READ

“I was compensating for something unnamed”

The same events, read differently. A person doing well under conditions no one around you understood at the time.

THE RELIEF

There is finally an explanation

A recognised pattern with a name, and other people who share it. Many describe it as the moment a life finally made sense (Holden & Kobayashi-Wood, 2025).

THE GRIEF

There are years to account for

If it was always this, it could have been named sooner. The grief is not a problem with the diagnosis. It is a natural response, and it is allowed.

i A note on who this is for. Much of the research here describes women, but if the word does not fit you and the pattern does, the pattern is what this speaks to. Go at your own pace, in any order, and leave anything that feels too heavy for now. You can stop at any point.

HOW TO USE THE TIMELINE ON PAGE 2

- 1 Take one stage at a time**
Childhood, school or study, work, relationships. Any order. You do not need to do them all, or in one sitting.
- 2 Answer the same two questions**
What you might have told yourself then, and how you can read it now. A few words is plenty.
- 3 Let both feelings be there**
Relief and grief often sit together. Nothing here needs resolving today. Bring it to a session if you would like to.

AN EXAMPLE OF THE RE-READING, FOR ONE STAGE

STAGE	WHAT I MIGHT HAVE TOLD MYSELF THEN	HOW I CAN READ IT NOW
School	<i>“I was smart but lazy, I just never applied myself.”</i>	<i>I was working twice as hard to keep up, and nobody saw the effort it took.</i>

The events do not change. The story about why they happened is what the re-reading shifts.

REMEMBER The years before you knew were not wasted, and they were not your fault. You were doing your best with a map that was missing a whole region.

Morgan, J. (2024). Exploring women's experiences of diagnosis of ADHD in adulthood: A qualitative study. *Advances in Mental Health*, 22(3), 575–589. · Holden, E., & Kobayashi-Wood, H. (2025). Adverse experiences of women with undiagnosed ADHD and the invaluable role of diagnosis. *Scientific Reports*, 15(1), 20945.

Your ADHD timeline



Four stages, in any order.

For each one, the same two questions. Leave anything blank that you cannot recall or would rather not revisit. A few words is plenty, and a patchy sheet is still worth having.

STAGE	WHAT I MIGHT HAVE TOLD MYSELF THEN	HOW I CAN READ IT NOW	ANYTHING ELSE
1 · Childhood <i>before school got formal</i>			
2 · School or study <i>the years of reports and exams</i>			
3 · Work <i>jobs, training, the things you had to keep up</i>			
4 · Relationships <i>friendships, family, partners</i>			

WHEN YOU HAVE SAT WITH IT

There is no rush to feel only one way about this.

The relief and the grief can sit side by side, and for many people they do. If you'd like someone alongside you while you work out what it means, the Meet and Greet is a short call to see if we're the right fit. You do not need to have made sense of it first.

MEET AND GREET

- Free
- 15 minutes
- Online or in-person
- No obligation