



ADHD in Focus: From Diagnosis to Daily Life

Dr Blandine French



Agenda

What is ADHD

The impact of having ADHD

The impact of undiagnosed ADHD

Link to multiple disadvantages

Case study

Who am I?



Diagnosed with ADHD in adulthood

Went to university after diagnosis

- Undergrad at the University of Reading
- PhD at the University of Nottingham

ADHD family

Senior research fellow in ADHD access to care and awareness

Facilitate peer support groups for parents and adults

Lead local healthcare Neurodiversity network (<https://nottsneurodiversitynetwork.org.uk/>)



Women's Health

Joe Wicks under fire after suggesting surge in childhood ADHD is connected to ultra-processed foods



MSN

... have called him out on his claims.



Sky News

NH
AF

An
England has

NHS launches 'ADHD Taskforce' for autism and ADHD condition, with patients' views at centre

Record numbers of celebrities on 'I'm a Celeb' winner represents



The National.scot

Sam

neuro

I INTER

owing

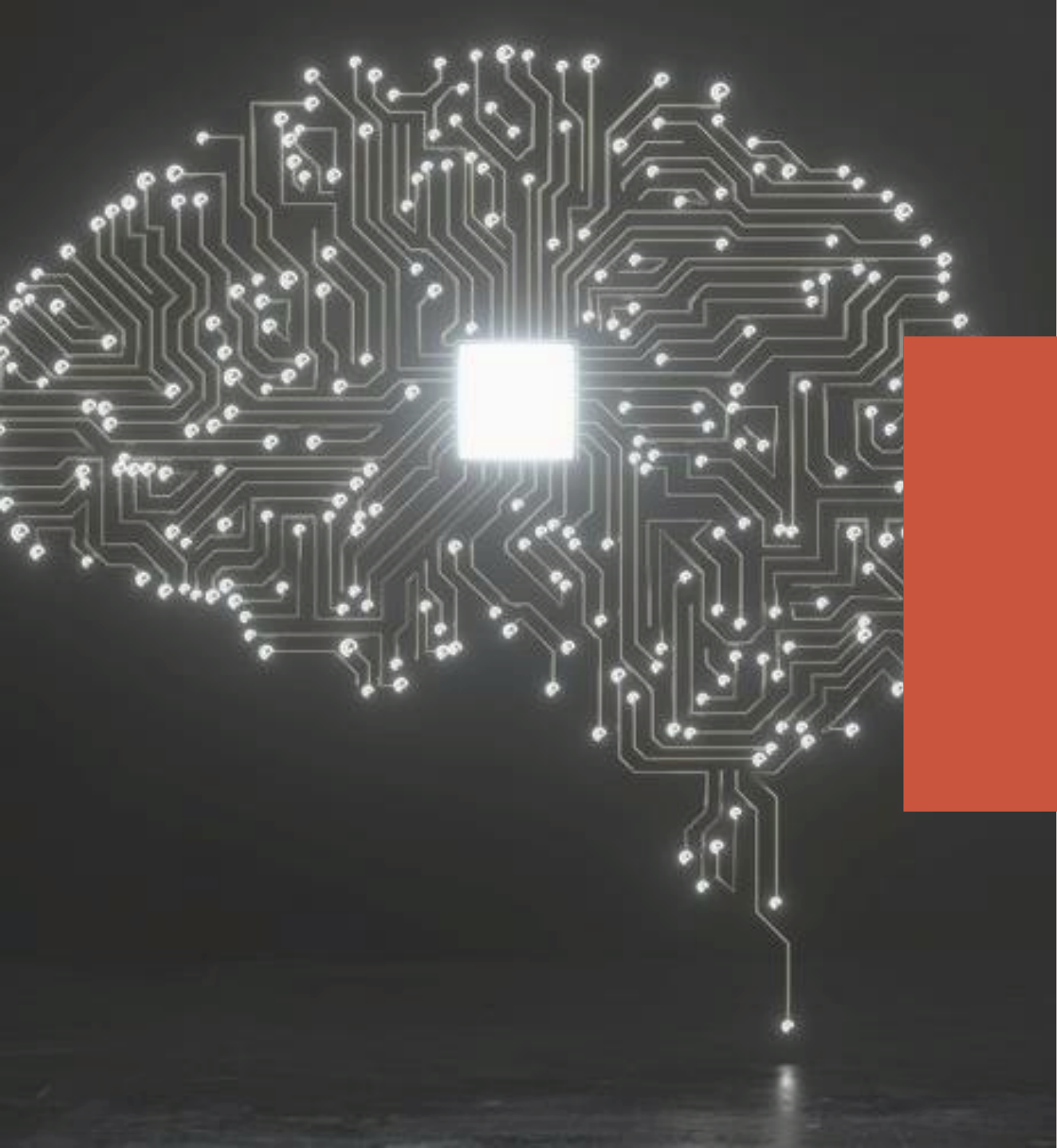


Special Needs Jungle

ADHD meds shortages impact pupil learning. These charities are offering schools inclusive strategies to help

ADHD medication shortages are impacting the learning of pupils affected. These charities are offering schools inclusive strategies to help.

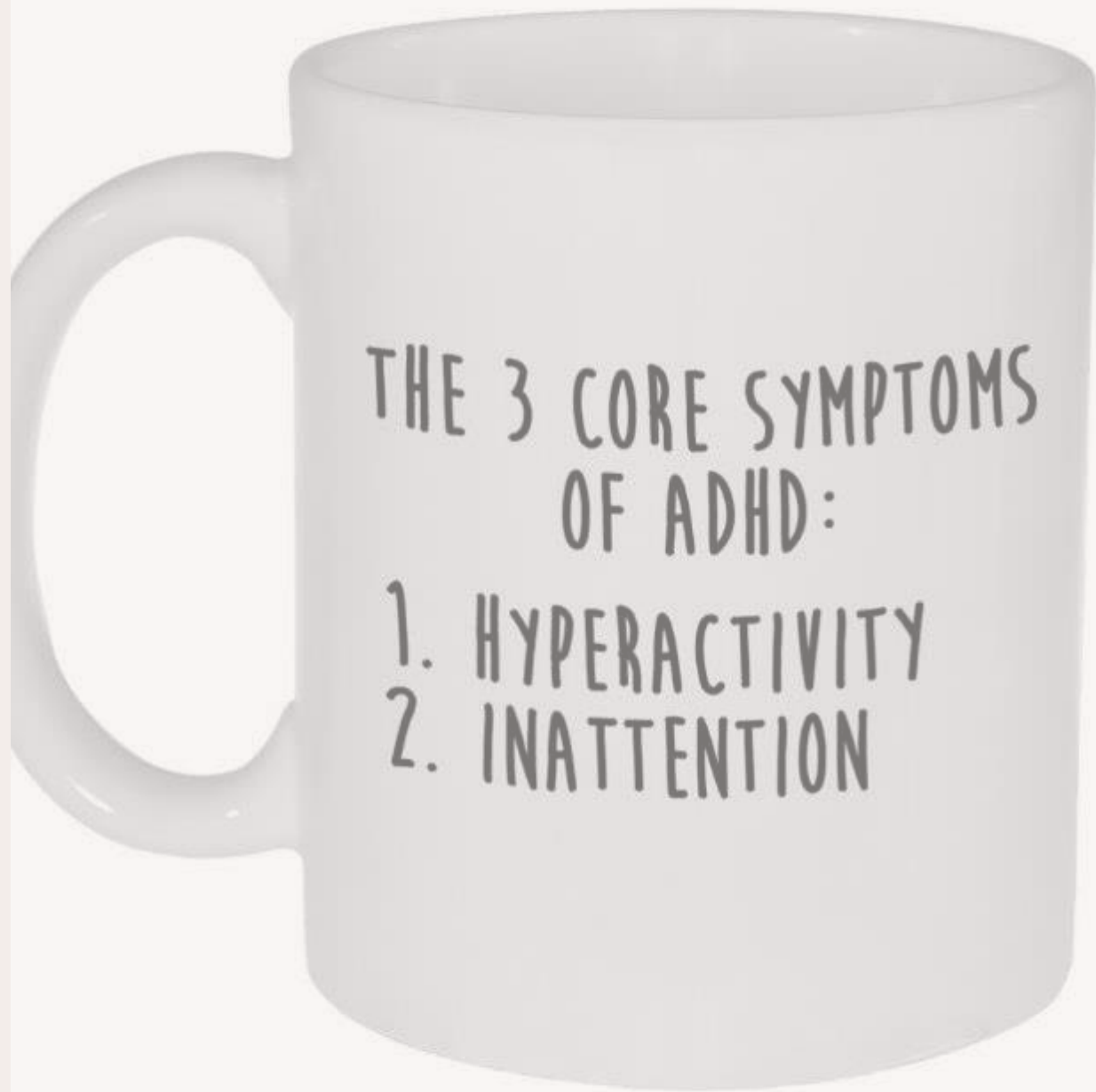




What is ADHD?

Stigmas versus facts

- ADHD is caused by excessive sugar consumption ❌
- Children who take ADHD medication are more likely to abuse drugs ❌
- ADHD is predominantly a genetic disorder ✔️
- People with ADHD often struggle to accurately estimate time ✔️
- ADHD is the result of poor parenting ❌
- Research studies show that the brain of individuals with and without ADHD are different ✔️
- ADHD has three main diagnostic features ✔️
- ADHD only occurs in boys ❌
- People with ADHD often struggle to make and retain friends ✔️
- ADHD behaviour is a result of underlying brain damage ❌
- ADHD is something you grow out of with the right treatment ❌
- Stimulant medication can make individuals with ADHD less hyperactive ✔️



What is ADHD?

3-5% of children and adults

Affects both boys and girls

70% genetic

Brain differences in structure and function.

Dopamine strongly impacts executive functions

Often co-occurring disorders (for instance: anxiety, dyspraxia, autism)

Treated with pharmacological and non-pharmacological interventions

Inattentive, hyperactive or combined

3-5% of population

Different way of thinking/working

Impacts:

- Social life
- Work
- Education
- Health
- Mental health
- Family



1-2 children in
every classroom

A close-up photograph of a hand moving a black chess piece on a board. The board is red with white circular markers containing numbers and symbols. A yellow piece is to the left, a green piece is to the right, and a red piece is partially visible on the far right. A clear hourglass with a red cap and base is on the left side of the board. The text "Not understanding the rules" is overlaid in the center.

Not understanding the rules



Social and relationship

Impulsivity, no filter

Emotional responsive

Masking

Can't always stop

Can't read situations

Can't function if unprepared

Social rules

Work and education Challenges

Questioning things

Narrow/hyper focus

Unpredictable attention

Miscommunications

Time blindness, procrastination

Managing workload

Difficulties with changes

Organisation

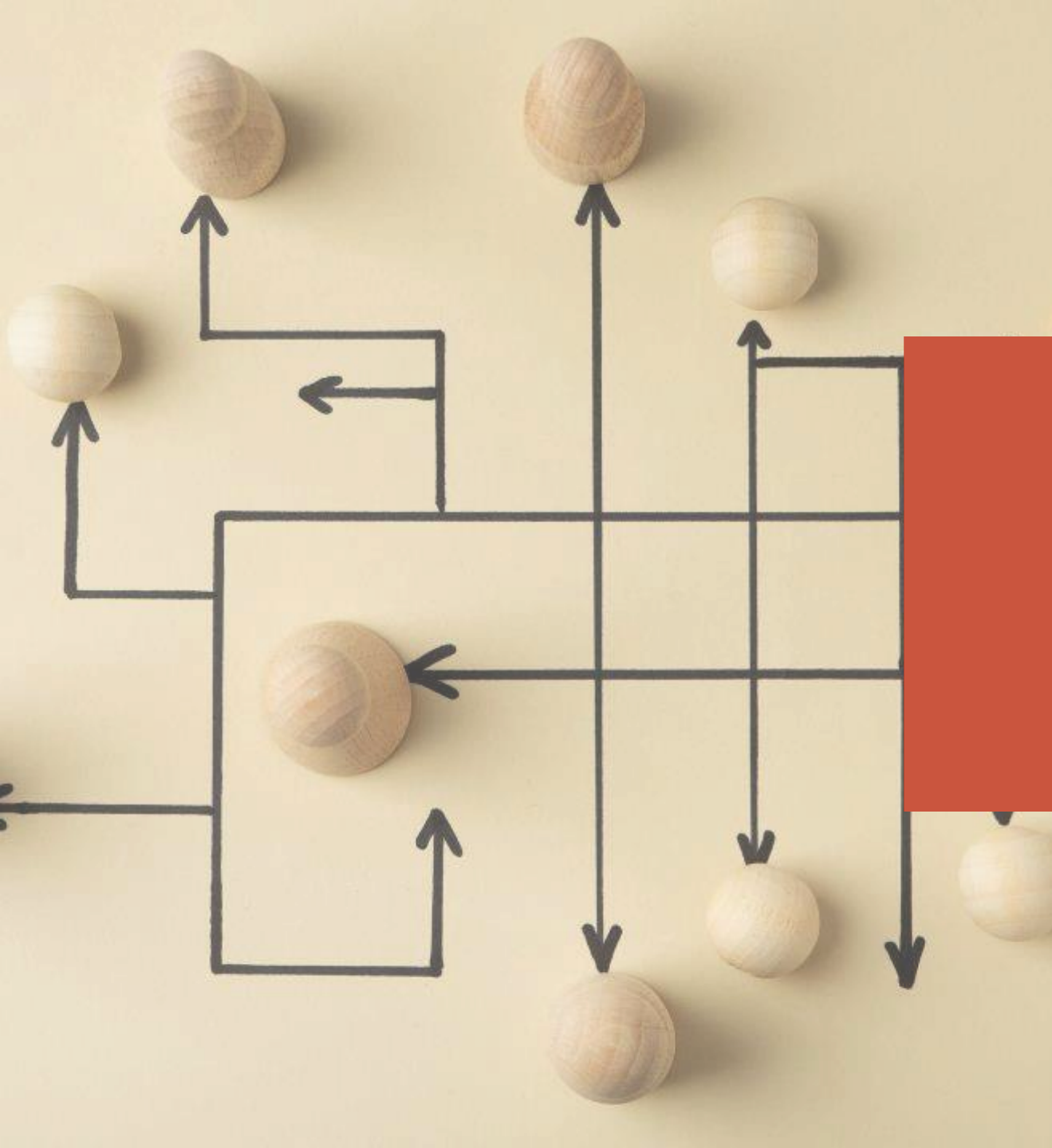
Sensory overload



*Different environments, life events,
situations,
will strongly affect how well you can cope*

C₃ H₄ A₁ N₁ G₂ E₁

ADHD is not linear



The impact of having ADHD

What people see

INATTENTION
HYPERACTIVITY
IMPULSIVITY



ANXIETY BIPOLAR
DEPRESSION POOR MEMORY
DIFFICULTY CONCENTRATING
DIFFICULTY FALLING ASLEEP
DISORGANIZATION
IMPAIRED SENSE OF TIME
DIFFICULTY PLANNING
EMOTIONALLY REACTIVE



**What
people
don't
see**

ADHD

Not one size fits all

Sensory

Clumsy

Masking

Sleep

Parenting

Memory

Perfectionism





French, B., Nalbant, G., Wright, H., Sayal, K., Daley, D., Groom, M. J., ... & Hall, C. L. (2024). The impacts associated with having ADHD: an umbrella review. *Frontiers in psychiatry*, 15, 1343314.

Risks associated with having ADHD

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) affects up to 5% of the population and is characterised by symptoms of impulsivity, hyperactivity and inattention. These symptoms are significantly impairing and ADHD carry additional costs for children and adults, including negative mental health, physical health, and societal outcomes.

Physical health

Around **50% of people with ADHD** have increased risk of sleep and/or teeth issues



increased risk of:

accidents or injury

higher instances of eating disorders or obesity

greater risk of drug or alcohol abuse (a means of self-medicating)



Mental health

Around **30% of people with ADHD** have risk of addiction to gaming or the internet



increased risk of:

depression, anxiety, suicide

low self-esteem and increased experience of gender dysphoria

risk-taking behaviour



Other impacts

Around **44% of people in prison** have undiagnosed ADHD and are at a higher risk of criminal and violent behaviour



increased risk of:

joblessness and unemployment

relationship difficulties and divorce

unwanted pregnancy

difficult social skills with peers





The impact of undiagnosed ADHD



Recount

Researching the economic cost of undiagnosed neurodiversity today


Adults with ADHD and ASD

➤ There are **over 4.7 million adults** living with ADHD and autism

➤ It is estimated that over **2.5 million of neurodiverse adults** have not received a diagnosis and therefore struggle to access care

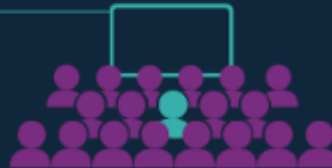


Children with ADHD and ASD

➤  Approximately **60% of children with ADHD or autism** will continue struggling into adulthood

➤ ADHD or autism **affects 5% of children**

➤ Around **1 child in every classroom** has ADHD or autism



➤ Many young people are still undiagnosed
Only **1% of children** are being treated for ADHD

Undiagnosed ADHD or autism can lead to:



increased risk of depression, anxiety and suicide



risk of drug or alcohol abuse (a means of self-medicating)



lower academic attainment and quality of life



significant risk of offending and imprisonment, and increased risk of injury



greater likelihood of social difficulty and divorce



In Europe, the total cost of **untreated ADHD** is **over £5 billion**



Potential cost saving would be **over £8 billion** if ADHD and autism is diagnosed





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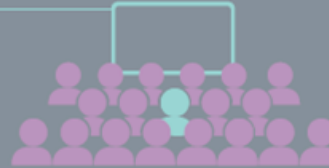


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Risks associated with undiagnosed ADHD/autism



Health

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Psychiatric inpatients
- Suicide
- Injuries
- Hospitalisation and GP visits



Offending behaviour

- Imprisonment
- Substance abuse
 - Drugs
 - Alcohol
 - Tobacco
- Antisocial behaviour



Day to day impact

- Driving
- Lower education
- Work
- Lower income
- Lower self-esteem
- Social and relationship issues

Five themes were generated from this analysis:

- The key role of relationship
- How mental health is the constant denominator throughout the process
- Understanding: the answer to post-diagnosis changes
- The flip side of diagnosis, the burden of a label
- Are you ready? The importance of timing

Qualitative study

French, B., & Cassidy, S. (2024). "Going Through Life on Hard Mode"—The Experience of Late Diagnosis of Autism and/or ADHD: A Qualitative Study. *Autism in Adulthood*.

Economic Evaluation


- Experiences of 900 adults
 - Diagnosed in childhood
 - Diagnosed in adulthood
 - Undiagnosed





Link with multiple disadvantages

ADHD symptoms and impact

A hand is shown balancing a row of wooden blocks on its index finger. The blocks are arranged in a line that slopes downwards from left to right. The hand is positioned in the center of the frame, with the index finger supporting the blocks. The background is a plain, light-colored surface.

Impulsivity

Hyperactivity

Inattention

Personal and emotional instability

Executive Dysfunction, control inhibition

Reward seeking

Careless mistakes

Joblessness

Losing homes

Remembering to pay bills

Failed relationship



Homelessness

- Childhood ADHD associated with elevated rate of homelessness in adulthood
- Rates of homelessness amongst ADHD samples, between 8-24%.
- Risk factors were mainly quantified in ADHD studies, including elevated substance use, school dropout, and coexisting mood and personality disorders
- High rates of undiagnosed ADHD (12% - 61%)

Criminal justice

- Involved with criminal system at:
 - Younger age
 - Higher rates of recidivism
 - More likely to make a false confession
 - Higher risk of critical incidents
- Risk ratio
 - 2.2 arrest
 - 3.3 convictions
 - 2.9 incarceration
- Between 25-45% of prison population
- Accommodations needed





Domestic abuse

- Higher risk of children abuse (difficult behaviour, parental ADHD)
- Higher risk of childhood trauma
- Higher risk of interpersonal violence as:
 - Perpetrator 2.5
 - Victims 1.78
- Higher risk of sexual violence as:
 - perpetrators 2.73
 - victims 1.84
- Lack of self-esteem in women

Substance misuse

- 25% of adults with ADHD have substance misuse
- Children with ADHD twice the risks of developing addictions
- Adolescents show earlier onset of substance use
- Greater misuse severity and chronicity
- Addictions that keep changing

- Self-medication
- Sensation-seeking behaviour





8/05/20XX

Poor mental health

- 50% of comorbidity
- Higher risk of:
 - Suicide and self harm
 - OCD (children only)
 - Bipolar
 - Anxiety
 - Depression
 - Eating disorders
 - Psychotic disorders
- The norm rather than the exception
- Usually seen for MH before ADHD

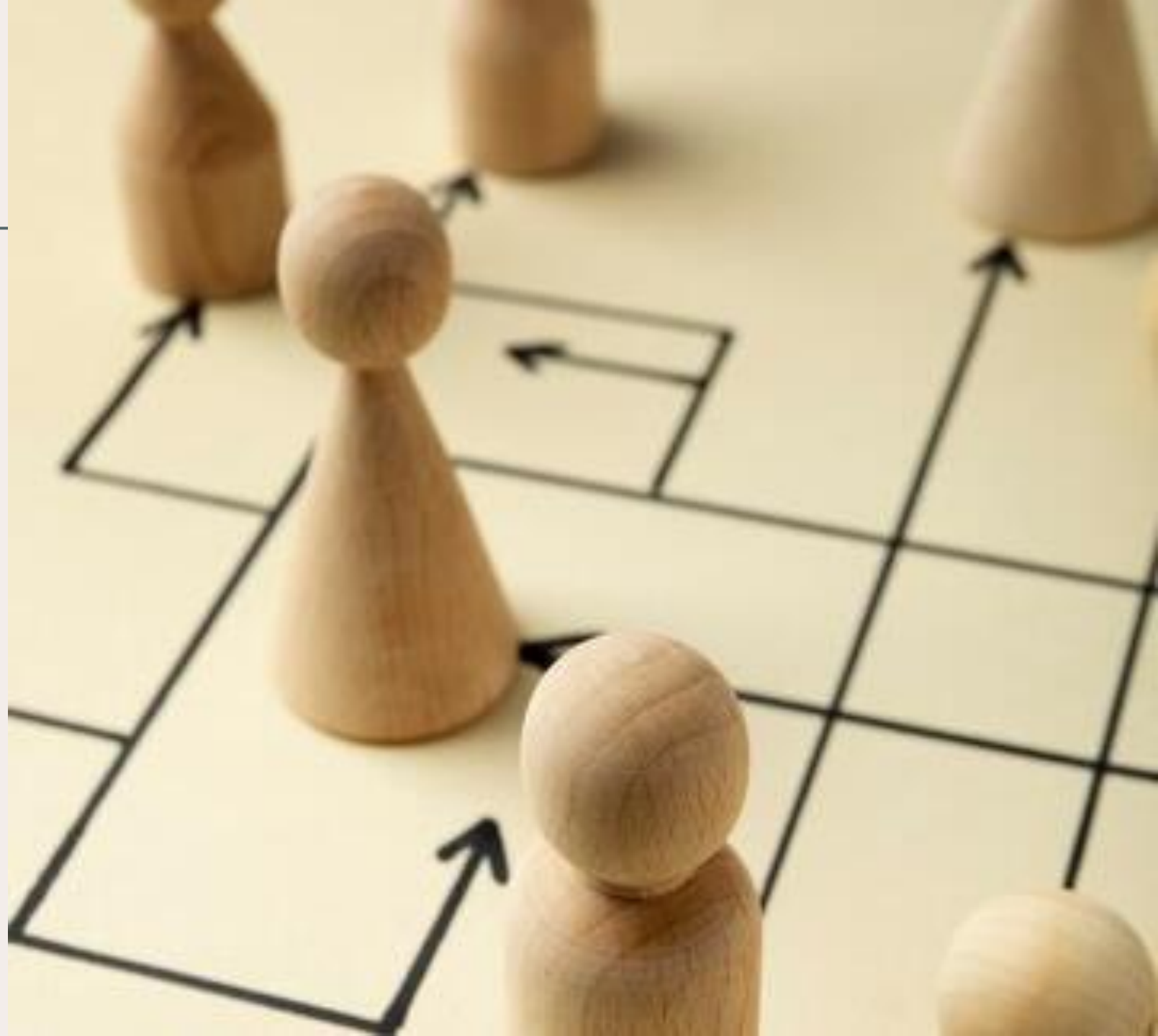
To keep in mind

Worse when untreated and unsupported

Look at comorbidities

Impact of family and environment

Direct link with ADHD behaviour





Case study



LLOYD

- Poor mental health
- Substance use
- Criminality
- Job/house insecurity

LLOYD

- 29 years old
- Unsupported ADHD
- Impulsive and hyperactive
- Risk-taking behaviour
 - Self-medication
 - Risky sexual activity
- Impulsive decisions
 - Let go from work
 - Quick marriage
 - Lost friends
 - Moved town
 - Dropped out of university
- Marriage broke down
- Attempted suicide twice





Positives

“Everybody is a genius.
But if you judge a fish
by its ability to climb
a tree, it will live its
whole life believing
that it is stupid.”



Recognising and encouraging strength

ADHD:

Hyperactive Distractible Impulsive

ALSO ADHD:

Passionate Outspoken Strategic
Creative Fun Caring Generous
Humorous Empathetic Spontaneous
Authentic Inclusive Charismatic
Futuristic Romantic Opinionated Kind
Big-Hearted Adaptable Intuitive
Memorable Friendly Honest Positive
Entertaining Curious Adventurous
Inspiring Brave Enthusiastic Eager
Resilient Influential Resourceful
Talkative Unique Musical Inventive
Imaginative Smart Energetic Awesome

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