

# How To Send Me Apoplectic About ADHD

## 10 aggravating assumptions that boil my blood

Last year I was diagnosed with ADHD at age 41. I am not your ‘typical’ late-diagnosed ADHD woman (of course, the literal definition of ADHD is being neurodiverse, so there is no such thing as ‘typical ADHD’)! Unlike a lot of late-diagnosed women, I have Combined Type ADHD, with predominantly hyperactive and impulsive traits. Here I take a look at the most frustrating assumptions I have faced.

What really gets your goat about ADHD misconceptions?

### 1. ADHD is not real

I think this view is getting less traction than it used to, when I was younger I was suspicious of the condition myself. It is a nuanced and complex neurodiversity and it affects everyone in different ways, but it is very real and I know because I live it, and the medication helps.

### 2. Medication makes you lose your identity

I know there are people with ADHD who find that the medication does not work for them. No judgment on those people, we are all different. I was nervous to take it because anti-depressants always made me feel like a zombie. ADHD medication still makes me feel like myself, but just lets me function a bit better, helps me control my behaviour and lessens my anxiety. It does not ‘cure’ me, but it helps.

### 3. ADHD is a disease or a mental health illness

ADHD is a neurodiversity. It means my brain does not work in the usual way. I can’t ‘get better.’ Referring me to a mental health charity is to misunderstand ADHD (I’m talking to you, creditors): I can learn to live with ADHD, but I will always have it.

### 4. You should buy my organisation app!

This one really infuriates me, so excuse the abrasiveness of this rant. I am bombarded with adverts for products to help me function: *Use this planning app to improve your time management and magically solve all your ADHD problems!* I have evolved better organisation systems than any neurotypical person I know. I hit deadlines, my room is tidy, I can maintain focus. That’s partly because I experience less of the attention deficit symptoms of ADHD, but because I do have them, I have learned to manage them. Selling these types of products to people who are prone to impulsive spending is really low and targeting a vulnerability. You should be ashamed. If you think a fidget spinner is going to solve my problems, I will happily insert it into one of your orifices. There, much better.

### 5. ADHD is a learning disability so I will explain things reallllyyy slowllllyyy....

ADHD is not a learning disability. Yes, it affects executive function, but I have no problems with my intellect. My high academic performance at school probably masked a lot of my other symptoms, and it made me good at manipulating my environment and the people around me. When I deal with companies my request for

additional assistance is just that you are good at your job. If you make me wait and then explain things slowly, you'll wake my inner beast of apoplectic rage.

#### **6. It's cool to fake ADHD**

I cannot comment with authority, but I am aware that there are some younger influencers who have gained followings by allegedly 'pretending' to have ADHD, as well as other serious disorders and mental illnesses. I cannot stress how damaging this is to the community and insulting to people who really struggle. Spreading misinformation is harmful and it makes people more suspicious about the validity of diagnoses. ADHD might have some advantages, and it is intrinsically part of who I am. It is also extremely painful, distressing and has caused me lifelong pain.

#### **7. People with ADHD should just try harder**

ADHD people are not lazy, lacking in willpower, unfeeling and selfish. We might be difficult to be around, inconsistent, unreliable. We might seem to make ridiculous decisions and cause other people pain. This is not through a lack of trying. ADHD can cause untold guilt, and I have battled my whole life with the feeling I am a bad person. Things that are simple for other people are often incredibly difficult for me. I can also demonstrate extreme willpower and hyperfocus. I lost 50kg in one year. I care deeply about other people. I have lots of energy. We all experience ADHD differently and the symptoms don't necessarily indicate the inner struggle.

#### **8. We are Manic Pixie Dream Girls**

There is some romance about ADHD women falling into this common film trope. She is the adorable misfit, sent to heal the protagonist. We are not all the ditzzy, forgetful day dreamer, who is charming and lovable. Whilst I might add spontaneity and fun to your mundane existence, I will, ultimately, transform your life into chaotic terror. ADHD is not a quirky personality trait. So, maybe I am a bit wild and exciting, but mostly I am annoying, prone to overtalking and being inappropriate.

#### **9. Late diagnosed women only have inattentive ADHD**

I have the combined type as mentioned in the introduction. I have all of the impulsive and hyperactive traits, but fewer of the inattentive ones. This means I am hyperactive both mentally and in person, and I am very impulsive. Okay, I do lose things a lot, but I manage the inattentive symptoms a lot better. My late diagnosis has far more to do with my ability to manipulate the world around me and talk my way round a lot of situations, rather than masking: I have struggled to find much information about women like me.

#### **10. ADHD is all bad**

This is a conflicting viewpoint to some of the others, but there are some advantages to ADHD. I can hyperfocus on projects and be super productive. This duality often leaves me with a very conflicted sense of identity, but it gives me some special abilities, too. I have the energy to take on a lot of new challenges. I am brave about a lot of things other people find challenging. Travel across the world on my own? No problem. Completely change aspects of my life? Easy. Give presentations in front of

large audiences? I'm going strong. Need someone on your quiz team? I'm your (wo)man. Enjoy spending time with a passionate, charismatic nerd? Right this way. ADHD might make life hard, but it makes me the wonderful weirdo I am, and those are some pretty cool characteristics to have.

So that concludes my latest listicle! I hope you enjoyed it and maybe learned something, too. ADHD is something I am still learning to understand myself, and it's a rollercoaster! Despite there being a lot of challenges, it does bring some benefits, and it is different for everyone. I would love to connect with more ADHD sisters who felt like they recognised themselves in this, please say hi! ADHD life might be difficult for all of us, but it means we have some strengths others can only imagine, and we can achieve our dreams, even if the road there can be distracting and filled with magical detours, as we learn who we are and to love ourselves.