



# INTRODUCTION TO ADHD IN THE WORKPLACE

# Introduction to ADHD: Summary Agenda

- What is ADHD?
- The challenges of having ADHD
- The positives of having ADHD
- Working with ADHD
- People thriving with ADHD

# About me: Neal Mankey

- Chair of ADHD UK, Partner Health & Social Impact Practice at McLean Public
- Diagnosed with major depressive disorder and ADHD in 2020 aged 41
- Background I talk to is private and public sector organisations about how creating an understanding environment for employees with ADHD will help all thrive
- Real background is struggling at everything, failing at things that are often obvious and simple to others, and falling wildly beneath my potential. And knowing it. Without knowing why.
- Diagnosis life changing – challenges remain but now a challenge I can meet.

# The name problem

The award for the worst named mental health condition goes to....

**Attention  
Deficit  
Hyperactive  
Disorder**

# The challenge of ADHD

- Official definition hard to understand:

*Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a neurodevelopmental disorder characterized by inattention, or excessive activity and impulsivity.*

- No snappy summary
- Neurotypical familiarity can breed contempt of ADHD traits

# Three Types of ADHD

Presentation changes with increasing age

**Predominantly  
hyperactive-impulsive  
(10-15%)**

**Combined type  
(50%-75%)**

**Predominantly  
inattentive  
(20%-30%)**

*“Internal energy that must be used”*  
 Fidgeting or squirming a lot  
 Constantly in motion.  
 Very hard to stand and wait.  
 Impatience (from that needing to action)  
 Talking nonstop.  
 Not waiting to speak.  
 Blurting out.  
 Interjecting without properly thinking.

*“Impaired ability to control attention”*  
 Difficult to focus  
 Easily distracted  
 Difficulty maintaining focus on one task

**Flip side of lack of control : Hyperfocus**

# ADHD in UK is poorly understood by many

ADHD has a higher incidence than other common mental health conditions but much less understood by the general population. Hindering individuals knowing to get help and people giving help.

Compare about much you know about:

- Autistic Spectrum (ASD) – 1%. 0.7m people.
- ADHD – 5% children / 3.5% Adults. 2.6m people.

# UK ADHD - History

- Started strong – 1902 first recognised British paediatrician Sir George Still. “*Abnormal defect of the moral\* control of children*”. Children could not control behaviour in the same way a typical child would.

\*1900’s definition of moral.

- 1930s – Some medication (Benedrine) was identified to help. Took some years for the research showing improved child patient behaviour and performance to be more widely recognised.
- 1968 – USA formally recognises “Hyperkinetic Impulse Disorder”
- 1980 – USA evolves the understanding and name to Attention Deficit Disorder (**ADD**) with or without hyperactivity.
- 1987 – USA Hyperactivity distinction removed. Name updated to **ADHD**.
- 2000 – USA enhances ADHD definition with three subtypes. (Combined type, predominantly inattentive, and predominantly hyperactive-impulsive.
- 2000 – UK Nice Guidelines/ NHS formally recognises ADHD in children for the first time.
- 2008 – UK Nice Guidelines / NHS formally recognises ADHD in adults for the first time.



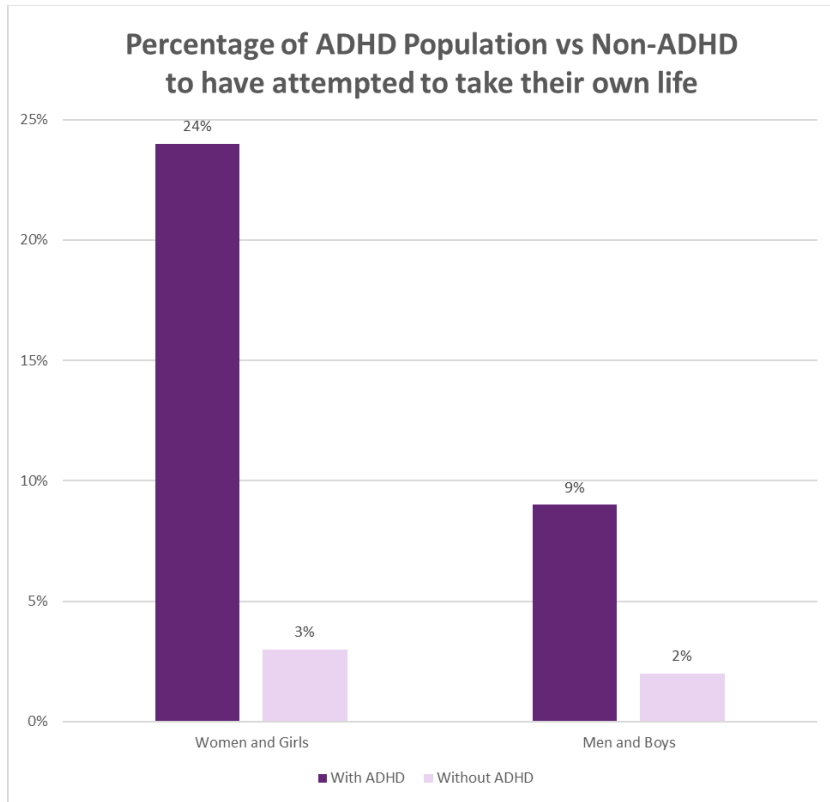
# Common. Lifelong. Genetic component

- **1 in 20 (5%)** of children have ADHD. 3-4% of Adults. **Around 1%** have a diagnosis.
  - 2.6 million people. But only c.350-500k are aware they have ADHD.
- **Large genetic component** (c.76% of ADHD explained genetically)
  - Severity differs for individuals within families
  - Challenge of undiagnosed family members thinking their way of living is “normal” – define normal!
- **Diagnosed at all ages.**
  - Particular bumps where structure changes: Changing school, further education, first job, change in job or company, having children, and retirement.
- **It is a lifelong condition.**
  - It doesn't “start” it has just always been there.
  - It is not going to go away.
  - Strategic Adaptations critical to success in life.
- **Strategic Adaptations work in many circumstances. But nothing works for every situation**

# Slide Warning

The next slide talks about statistics on suicide.  
It will last around 2 minutes

# How hard it is to live with ADHD is commonly underestimated



Figures on attempts to take own life provide clear data on the challenge of having ADHD.

Significant population representative Canadian Study of 21,744 people.

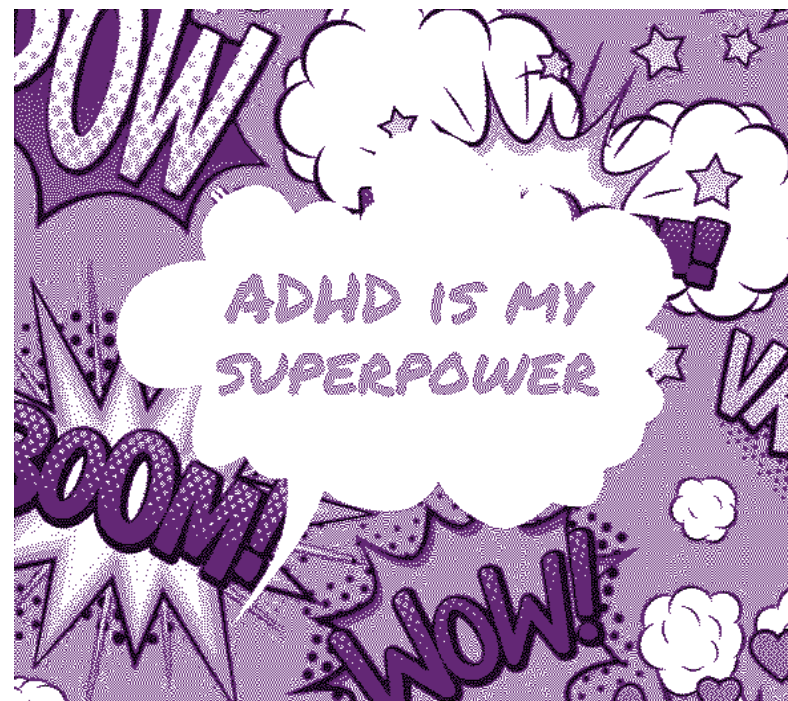
1 in 10 men or boys with an ADHD diagnosis will attempt to take their own life (9% vs 2%, 4 x baseline).

1 in 4 women or girls with an ADHD diagnosis will attempt to take their own life. (24% vs 3%, 7 x baseline)

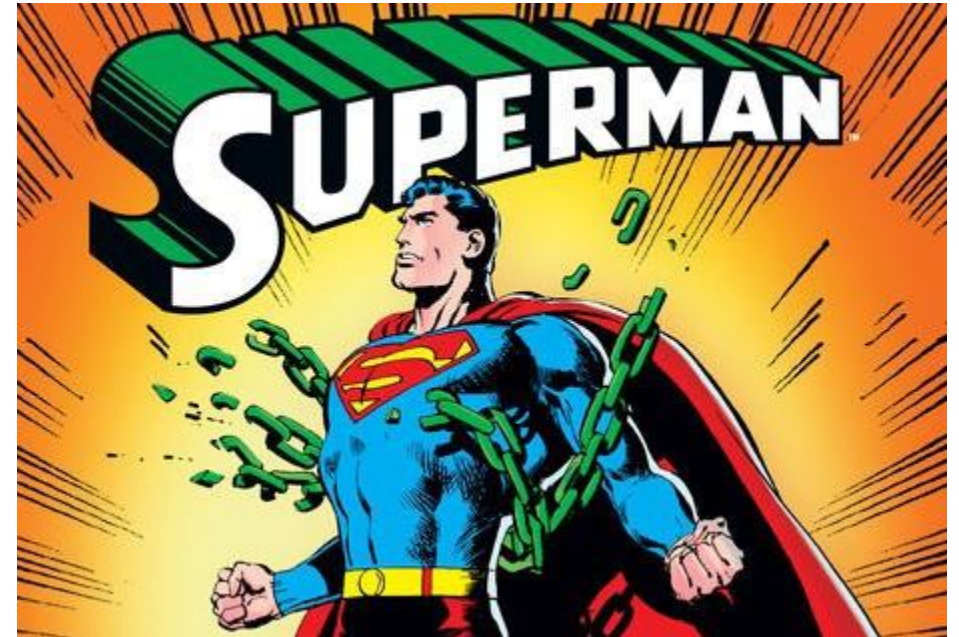
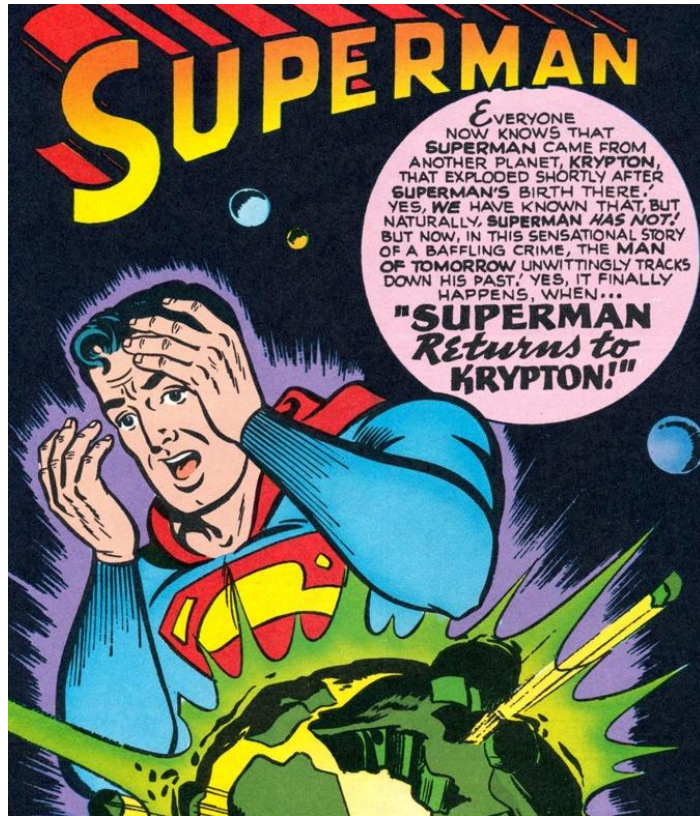
ADHD UK is funding research at the University of Glasgow into the link between suicide and ADHD

# Our views on these ...

“Everyone is  
a little bit  
ADHD”



# Superpower. Yes. But let's talk about the Kryptonite.



# Neurotypical Familiarity -> Contempt for ADHD Traits

ADHD Trait	Contempt Reaction or Contempt Opinion of ADHD person
Not waiting to speak / butting in when in conversations/ Impulsively speaking out.	They are rude. They don't care about my opinion. Not being provided the opportunity to learn from speaking out.
Losing track of conversations.	They are rude. They don't care about my opinion. Listening is a skill. They lack at it.
Fidgeting and moving while talking.	They are rude. Don't care for me. They want to leave. They lack basic control of self and cannot be trusted.
Forgetting.	They are dumb. They are rude. They don't care about me. If they used my system (often "a list") that would sort them.
Not being on time / poor organisation of self.	They are unable to do things. They do not care about me. They do not care about their work. If they used my system (often "a list") that would sort them. They should just leave on time.
Not paying attention.	They are stupid. They don't care about this.
They keep getting distracted.	They don't care enough about me / this work / this job
Hyper-focusing.	They're ignoring because they don't care about me / this deadline / their proper work They can concentrate so their lack of attention elsewhere shows just a lack of effort

# ADHDs Favourite Analogy: Racecar Brain with Bicycle Steering

More raw brain power than control.

Under steering = inattention

Over steering = hyperfocus

# Racecar Brain, Bicycle Steering

Race cars work best on race tracks.  
Conditions controlled to bring out their speed.  
But hit issues on normal roads.

**Strategic Adaptions** = A combination of:  
controlling conditions to be able to get to  
racing speed  
**AND**  
strategies to deal with the conditions you can't  
control.

Allowing ADHD people to be their best

Pagani Huayra  
£1.1m  
Stuck on gravel



Bugatti Veyron  
£1.6m  
Stuck on a  
road bump

Aston Martin DBS  
£250,000  
Stuck on a small mud  
area without grass





# Positive Traits

## Creative

**Diffuse attention** - allowing rapid switching between aspects of the task under consideration

**Flexible associative memory** - allowing them to remember and use more distantly-related ideas which is associated with creativity

**Impulsivity** - which causes people with ADHD symptoms to consider ideas which others may not have.

## Great in a crisis

Crisis generally require creativity PLUS absorbing large amounts of information quickly.

ADHDers' distractibility means often absorbing large amounts of information

**“ADHDER eats chaos for breakfast”**, crisis info crunching “just a normal Tuesday”.

## Positive use of Hyper-focus

The ability to focus on one topic or task to the exclusion of all else.

Can be used effectively to complete major tasks

# Positive Traits – Role Models with ADHD

## Creative

**Heston Blumenthal**  
Celebrated chef and innovator



**will.i.am**  
Globally recognised musician & producer.



## Positive use of Hyper-focus

**Naomi Osaka**  
World famous tennis player.  
2019 ranked #1 in world.



**Michael Phelps**  
The most decorated Olympian of all time with 28 medals.



# Celebrity+ADHD

ADHD in flow can lead to incredible insight and success.

Everyone benefits when everyone can engage effectively with the world.

**Lily Allen Knowles**  
Singer  
Actor



**Mel B**  
Singer



**Loyle Carner**  
Musician



**Olivia Blake MP**  
Politician.



**will.i.am**  
Globally recognised musician & producer.



**David Neeleman**  
Founder 5 airlines including JetBlue & Breeze Airways  
\$400m net worth



**Nadia Sawalha**  
TV Presenter



**Channing Tatum**  
Globally recognised actor



**David Kwan**  
Oscar nominated Director



**Tom Watson**  
Baron Watson of Wyre Forest  
Politician.  
Deputy Leader of the Labour Party



# The fight for ADHD fairness as shown in sport


**Michael Phelps**  
 The most decorated Olympian of all time with 28 medals.



**Simone Biles**  
 Most decorated American Gymnast of all time. 19 World Champion and Olympic Medals.



**Naomi Osaka**  
 World famous tennis player. 2019 ranked #1 in world.



# Michael Phelps

[Preschool] *"Teachers complained: Michael couldn't stay quiet at quiet time, Michael wouldn't sit at circle time, Michael was giggling and laughing and nudging kids for attention"*

[Kindergarden] *"His teacher, 'Michael can't sit still, Michael can't be quiet, Michael can't focus,'"*

[Elementary School] *"Your son will never be able to focus on anything."*

[To Michael] *"I had a teacher tell me that I would never amount to anything and I would never be successful."*

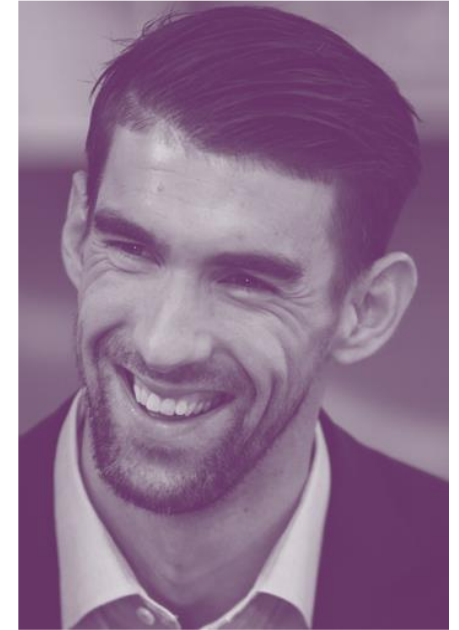
[Age 9]: Diagnosed with ADHD

[Age 10] Phelps's Family became a swimming family *"Michael's older sister Whitney at 15 was ranked first in the country in the 200-meter butterfly, though her career would be cut short by a back injury."*

*By 10, he was ranked nationally in his age group. Ms. Phelps watched the boy who couldn't sit still at school sit for four hours at a meet waiting to swim his five minutes' worth of races".*

[Age 11] Michael's swim coach: *'By 2000, I look for him to be in the Olympic trials', "By 2004, he makes the Olympics. By 2008, he'll set world records" "As it turned out, the boy would move four years faster"*

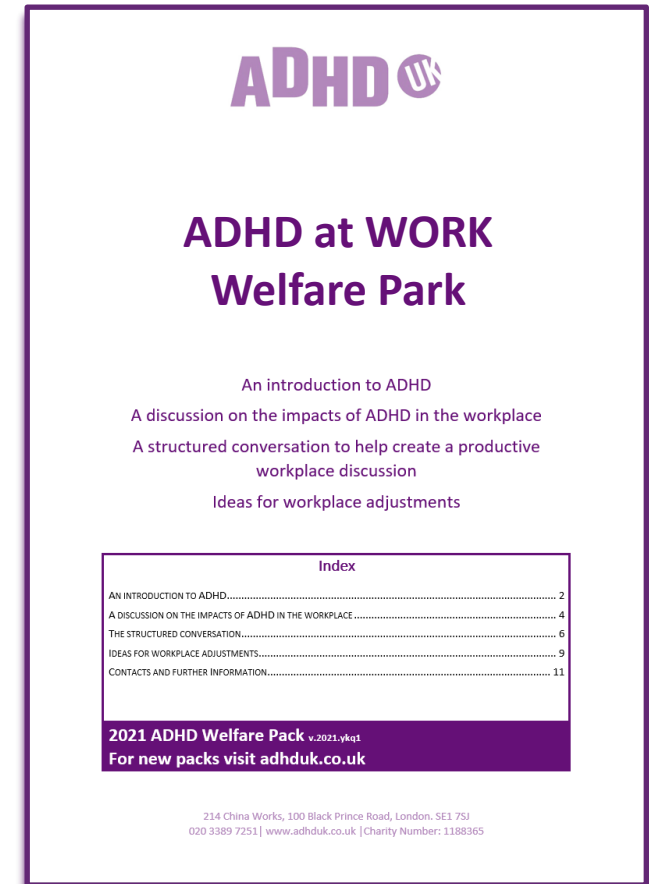
The author's concluding words: *"The moral of her story, which offers hope for parents of any child with a challenge like A.D.H.D.: Too many adults looked at Ms. Phelps's boy and saw what he couldn't do. This week, the world will be tuned to the Beijing Olympics to see what he can do".*



28 Gold Olympic Medals  
 5 world records  
 82 major competition medals.  
 8 times World Swimmer of the Year

# The ADHD at Work UK Welfare Pack

- We can't expect every line manager to be on top of the latest in ADHD and the workplace.
- Instead want them to have the tools to manage well.
- **We've created an annually updated welfare pack to facilitate getting the best out of ADHD employees and reduce the potential for the capability route.**



# Adaptations - Top Tips

## *“Essential for some. Good for everyone”*

- Separate the condition from the individual
- Have low distraction workspace options
  - Open plan office – provide a “library” area.
  - Working from home can be low distraction
- Talk about time
  - Not all timeliness matters.
  - Talk about systems to manage the day and the calendar.
  - Allow for hyperfocus. Allow blocking of time and turning off distractions. Do not disturb needs to really mean Do not Disturb.

# Adaptations - Top Tips

## *“Essential for some. Good for everyone”*

- **Support is essential.**
  - More check-ins on progress from line manager for large projects.
  - Increased clarity on requirements to avoid over working individual areas.
- **Acknowledge it’s a marathon not a sprint.**
  - We’re all individuals. There’s no one sized fits all solution. Different situations often need different solutions.
- **Be kind.**
  - Neurodiverse often have a history of rejection and people being aggressive. They may require more assistance getting over setbacks and be more sensitive to criticism.



# Pitfalls

Trait	Pitfall Response	Comments
Challenges around organising.	Suggesting the use of lists or other neurotypical solution.	A list system will almost certainly have been tried. It is not substantive enough a solution.
Timeliness.	Suggesting leaving earlier.	The issue is not about travel time. It is often about not being able to track time and about getting distracted with something else and not being able to snap out of it appropriately. The proposed solution therefore doesn't help with the actual issue.
Movement or fidgeting.	Suggesting more effort on self control.	Indicates a complete lack of understanding of the need for movement.
Not paying attention / getting distracted.	An emotional response that person with ADHD doesn't care about the individual they are speaking to or doesn't care about their work.	Almost certainly as upset about it as you are and would like to concentrate appropriately if they could.

# The Importance of Colleagues

- You being here learning about ADHD is important. Thank you.
- You learning and appreciating the difference between traits and behaviours is essential.
- Helping Strategic Adaptations happen and work is a team effort.
- You being here destigmatises Strategic Adaptations. Making people more likely to ask for them, be comfortable using them, and be able to benefit from them.

**YOU'RE  
BRILLIANT!  
THANK YOU!**

# The Five Key Take Aways

1. Having ADHD is a significant challenge but ADHD people can get to their amazing. It is hard and there is a lack of empathy.
2. Different not less. Define people by what they can do. Not what they can't
3. Getting it right results in both individual and organisation success. And can result is spectacular success for both.
4. Many adaptations are good for the whole workforce:  
*“Essential for some. Good for everyone”.*
5. Talking about it is important. You all joining today is important. Keep the conversation going. It's the way ADHD and neurodiverse people know it is OK. So thank you for being here.

# ANY QUESTIONS?

And please give us your feedback:  
[www.adhduk.co.uk/feedback/](http://www.adhduk.co.uk/feedback/)

And if you think you might have ADHD take our adult screener at : [www.adhduk.co.uk](http://www.adhduk.co.uk)

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