

# Understanding ADHD in Older Adults: Signs, Support, and Resources

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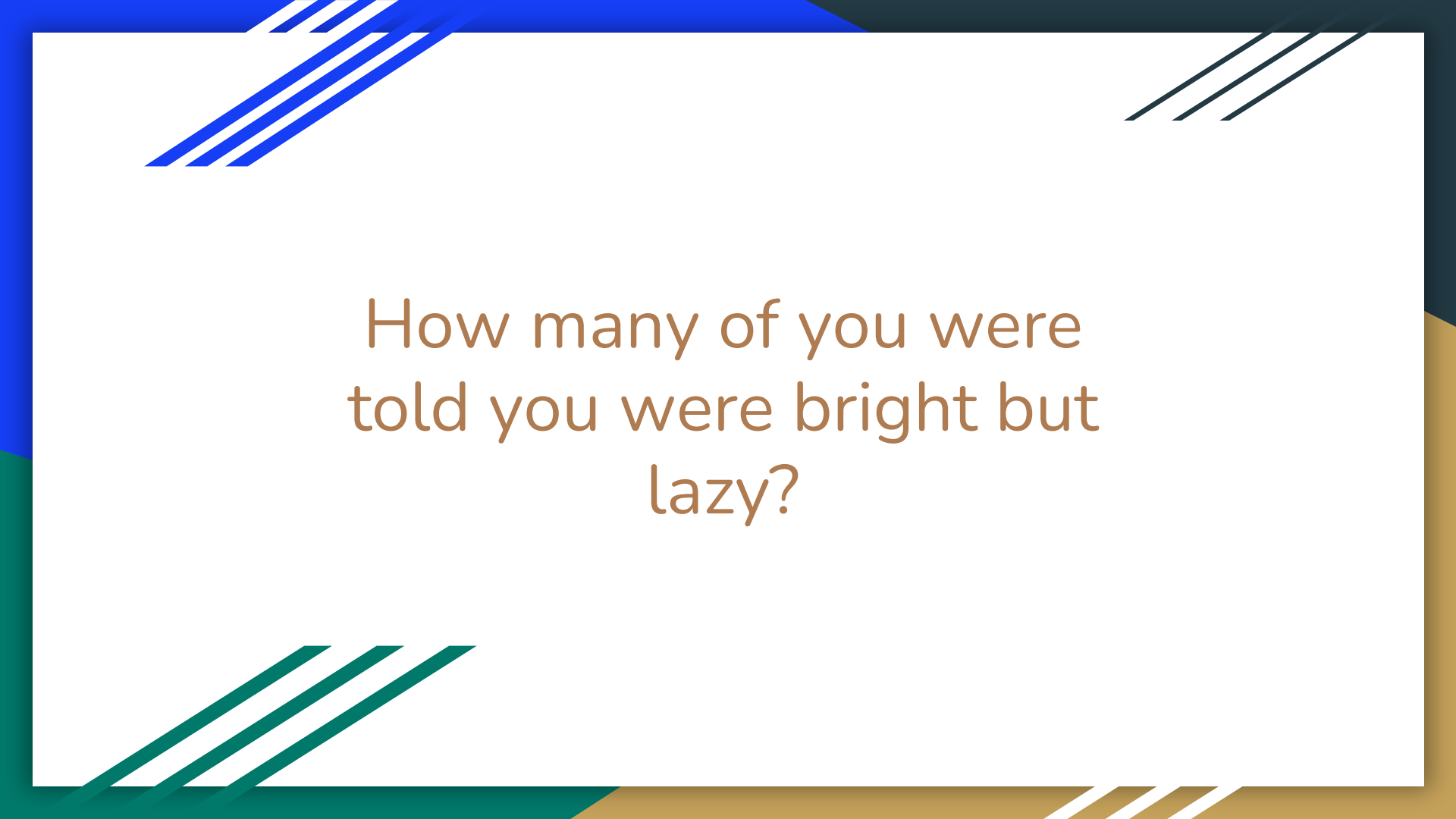
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Therapy

# Agenda

- Myths and Facts about ADHD
- What ADHD looks like in Adults
- ADHD and Retirement
- ADHD vs Normal Aging vs Dementia
- Emotional Impact
- Treatment and Support
- Resources

# Diaphragmatic Breathing

- Simple grounding exercise that can be used anytime, anywhere
- Shifts breath from the chest into the belly
  - Helps us feel calm by slowing our breath and relaxing the body
- Let's walk through it together
  - A short, guided practice



How many of you were  
told you were bright but  
lazy?

# ADHD Myths vs Facts

- ADHD isn't a real condition
- Only boys who cannot sit still have ADHD
- Everyone had ADHD
- People with ADHD should just try harder



# What is ADHD?

It is a neurological condition that affects our executive functioning system of the brain

Executive functioning (your CEO) is the part of the brain that is responsible for:

Memory, focus, attention, planning, prioritizing, executing tasks, impulse control, and emotion regulation

# Why it matters *now*?

- Enjoy retirement more
- Finish projects they've put off
- Manage finances more confidently
- Reduce marital tension
- Improve follow-through
- Retirement can unmask signs and symptoms of ADHD



# What does ADHD look like in Adults

## Core Symptoms:

- Difficulty sustaining attention (especially on boring tasks)
- Procrastination
- Losing things
- Poor time management
- Emotional reactivity
- Impulsivity (financial, verbal, decisions)

## In Older Adults:

- Chronic disorganization
- Trouble finishing projects
- Relationship strain
- Feeling “overwhelmed” easily
- Restlessness that feels internal, not physical

# Why was it missed?

- In the 60s–80s, ADHD diagnosis focused on disruptive boys
- Girls were underdiagnosed
- Cultural messaging: “Try harder”
- High-structure jobs (like Hydro One) may have masked symptoms
- Strong work routine → retirement removes scaffolding

# ADHD and Retirement

- Loss of external structure
- Increased forgetfulness
- Difficulty planning days
- Starting many projects but finishing none
- Increased irritability or frustration
- Spouse noticing symptoms more

# ADHD vs Normal Aging vs Dementia

ADHD: pattern and struggles are historical, distracted but memory is intact, trouble with starting tasks

Normal Aging: mild slower processing, occasional forgetfulness, slower recall

Dementia: progressive decline, memory loss that worsens, confusion or disorientation

# Emotional Impact

Many older adults carry shame.

- “Why can’t I get it together?”
- Feeling lazy
- Chronic self-criticism
- Relationship strain
- Financial impulsivity

# Treatment and Support


- Assessment by psychologist, physician, psychiatrist
- Medication (stimulants & non-stimulants)
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for ADHD
- Coaching
- Environmental strategies:
  - Visual calendars
  - External reminders
  - Body doubling
  - Routine stacking

# Self-Reflection

1. Looking back over your life, have you often been described as “bright but disorganized” or “capable but inconsistent”?
2. Did you perform well in structured environments (like work), but struggle more once that structure was removed in retirement?
3. Do you frequently start projects at home but have difficulty finishing them?
4. Have you noticed ongoing challenges with time management — such as underestimating how long tasks take or running late — even when you care about the outcome?
5. Do you find yourself easily overwhelmed by paperwork, planning, or decision-making, even though you handled complex responsibilities during your career?



Q&A



If you have any questions  
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