

What Does Inattentive ADHD Feel Like?

The following is from an unidentified post six years ago at r/adhd, condensed and edited by Cynthia Hammer, MSW



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For me, ADHD feels like fog, sleepy white fog. It's always there but occasionally it clears up enough to allow me to watch a movie. The fog makes it difficult to focus on the outside world. I can't focus very long as it requires so much effort.

I spend a lot of time in my head and often fail to listen, see or understand what is important.

Usually when I talk with someone, it feels forced. I only pay attention 50% of the time at best. I listen for a bit and then scatter. I miss body language cues, mostly the micro-expressions, because of not paying attention.

There is a self-critical monologue running in my head. It causes me to lose focus on everything I do. If I'm talking, I stop mid-sentence, forgetting what I was saying because the voice in my head seized my attention.

I often lose things by putting them down without registering that I did or by not remembering where I put them.

I make careless mistakes, particularly with repetitive tasks. I make mistakes, even when I focus on trying to be error-free.

I am erratic. Sometimes I do a big chunk of work, but more often than not, I procrastinate and put things off. When the consequences of procrastination build up, I complete the task when there is just enough time left. But every now and then, I underestimate how much time will be needed.

I get interested in a project and start with an initial flurry of activity. But then procedural steps rapidly diminish my interest and enthusiasm. I rarely finish what I start.

I choose immediate rewards over future ones. This makes it difficult to maintain habits that would improve my life.

I have a poor memory for names, places and facts, but have an awesome memory for concepts and abstract ideas.



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I find it difficult to switch tasks as I lose information during the switch. When I switch back, I have to start again because I forgot needed information.

When I get excited, I become impulsive and talk over other people. It's not easy to arrange my thoughts in a logical order. I forget parts of what I want to say. I talk about one thing and then realize I should have talked about something else first. Too often, I present my ideas as an incomprehensible jumble.

My school results were average, with an occasional good grade for a subject that interested me. Here are comments from my report cards, "easily distracted, has potential, needs to apply himself."

I failed university a couple of times, partly due to my ADHD symptoms and partly due to depression which resulted from my undiagnosed inattentive ADHD.

My ADHD cost me promotions at multiple jobs because of careless mistakes and poor follow through on promised tasks.

It causes significant problems with my partner. I haven't been a true, mature, partner and our relationship often falls into a parent-child dynamic.



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For most of my life, I had the recurring belief, without knowing why, that I was different. I experienced so much emotional turmoil that I became numb to it. What I missed, and still do to a lesser degree, is emotional control. I long for it, even now.

I am disorganized in both my inner life and outer life. I have a messy memory as well as a messy desk, messy clothes, messy rooms, messy kitchen cupboards, messy filing cabinets. Everything in my life is a mess.

The good news is that medication creates solid improvements in many of my core symptoms.

My emotional control is better which leads to better decisions. It's easier for me to work for delayed rewards. I pay better attention in conversations and for longer periods of time.

Sadly, the benefits from medication slip away at the end of the day as it wears off. I hope, over time, to develop habits to mitigate the drop off.

I'm sad I need medication to be a better me, the me I want to be.