



**JESSICA SHEPHERD
COUNSELLING**

What Actually Happens in ADHD Therapy

Demystifying the Process - Jessica Shepherd Counselling

The Real Truth About ADHD Therapy Sessions



Walking In

- No clipboard of forms - We keep paperwork minimal because ADHD brains hate admin
- Comfortable space - Fidget toys available, lighting that works for you
- Your pace - Some days you'll talk non-stop, others you might need silence
- No judgment zone - Late? Forgot something? That's just Tuesday for ADHD brains

What We Actually Talk About

Week 1-4: Getting to Know Your Brain

- How your ADHD shows up day-to-day
- What's working, what's driving you mad
- Your strengths (yes, ADHD has superpowers!)
- Past experiences with therapy/support

Month 2-3: Understanding Patterns

- Why you do the things you do
- Emotional regulation strategies that actually work
- Unmasking - discovering who you are without the performance
- Addressing shame and self-criticism

Month 4+: Building Your Toolkit

- Practical strategies tailored to YOUR brain
- Relationship skills and communication
- Work/school accommodations and advocacy
- Long-term maintenance and self-compassion

What Makes ADHD Therapy Different

Traditional Therapy Says:

- "Just make a schedule and stick to it"
- "Try harder to focus"

- "Everyone procrastinates sometimes"
- "You need better time management"

ADHD-Informed Therapy Says:

- "Let's find systems that work with your brain, not against it"
- "Your attention works differently - that's not a character flaw"
- "ADHD procrastination is neurological, not laziness"
- "Time blindness is real - let's work around it"



How Your ADHD Brain Responds to Therapy

The Hyperfocus Sessions:

- You'll talk for 45 minutes straight
- Breakthrough moments feel HUGE
- You'll want to implement everything immediately
- I'll help you pace yourself (dopamine crashes are real!)

The Scattered Sessions:

- Can't remember what you wanted to talk about
- Mind jumping between topics
- That's totally normal - we'll follow your brain's lead
- Sometimes the "random" tangents are where the gold is

The Overwhelm Sessions:

- Everything feels too much
- We might just breathe together

- Or go for a walk-and-talk
- Progress isn't always talking - sometimes it's just showing up

The ADHD Therapy Cycle

- Week 1: "This is amazing! I'm fixed!"
- Week 3: "Nothing's working, I'm hopeless"
- Week 5: "Oh wait, actually loads has changed"
- Week 8: "I can't remember what I was struggling with before"

This is completely normal. ADHD brains don't notice gradual change - we're built for novelty and crisis.

Practical Tools We Use

Visual Aids:

- Mind maps for complex feelings
- Emotion wheels when words aren't enough
- Timelines for understanding patterns
- Strength inventories for confidence building

Movement Integration:

- Walk-and-talk sessions
- Fidget tools during talking
- Standing/moving when needed
- Sensory breaks

ADHD-Specific Techniques:

- Body doubling for tasks
- Dopamine reward systems

- Executive function scaffolding
- Rejection sensitivity work

Addressing the Mask

What Masking Looks Like in Therapy:

- "I'm fine" when you're clearly not
- Performing "good client" behaviours
- Minimising your struggles
- Comparing yourself to neurotypical standards

How We Handle It:

- Permission to be authentically messy
- Celebrating ADHD traits as strengths
- Challenging internalised ableism
- Building genuine self-acceptance

Crisis Support Reality

What I Can Do:

- Help you create safety plans
- Teach grounding techniques
- Increase session frequency temporarily
- Connect you with appropriate crisis services

What I Can't Do:

- Be available 24/7 for emergencies

- Replace medical intervention when needed
- Fix everything in one session
- Make ADHD disappear (nor would we want to!)



What Progress Actually Looks Like

Not This:

- ✗ Suddenly becoming organised
- ✗ Never procrastinating again
- ✗ Perfect emotional regulation
- ✗ Fitting neurotypical standards

But This:

- ✓ Self-compassion when you mess up
- ✓ Strategies that work 70% of the time
- ✓ Asking for help without shame
- ✓ Recognising your ADHD strengths
- ✓ Better relationships and communication
- ✓ Reduced anxiety and depression
- ✓ Feeling like yourself, not a performance



The Messy Middle

Months 2-6 can feel chaotic because:

- You're unlearning years of masking
- Old coping strategies stop working
- You're discovering who you really are
- Change feels uncomfortable (even good change!)

This is where many people quit therapy. But this is actually where the real work happens.

Long-Term Relationship

ADHD therapy isn't a quick fix - it's a journey:

- Year 1: Crisis management and understanding
- Year 2: Building sustainable systems
- Year 3+: Maintenance and life transitions

Many of my clients stay for 2+ years, moving from weekly to monthly check-ins as they build confidence and skills.

What I Bring as Your ADHD Therapist

Lived Experience:

- I have ADHD too - I get the daily struggles
- No judgment about being late, forgetting, or struggling
- Real understanding of rejection sensitivity and overwhelm

Professional Training:

- ADHD-specific qualifications and ongoing education
- Person-centred approach that follows your lead
- Trauma-informed care for ADHD-related experiences

Practical Focus:

- Tools and strategies you can actually use
- Flexibility when life gets chaotic
- Celebration of small wins and progress

The Bottom Line

ADHD therapy isn't about fixing you - you're not broken. It's about understanding your unique brain, building on your strengths, and creating a life that works WITH your neurodivergence, not against it.

Ready to start your journey?

Book a free consultation at jessicashepherdcounselling.com

Jessica Shepherd, ADHD-CCSP DIP.COUNS MBACP
BACP Membership No: 00983954