



SHVETS production/Pexels, CC BY-SA

What is ADHD coaching and do I really need it?

Published: October 7, 2022 2.28pm AEDT

Emma Sciberras

Associate Professor, Deakin University

Daryl Efron

Associate Professor, department of paediatrics, The University of Melbourne

Mark Bellgrove

Professor in Cognitive Neuroscience, Director of Research, Turner Institute for Brain and Mental Health, Monash University

ADHD coaching has been in the news this week, with the release of new guidelines for diagnosing and managing attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder.

The evidence-based clinical guidelines recommend ADHD coaching could be considered for adolescents and adults as part of a holistic treatment and support plan.

What is ADHD coaching? Do you really need it? And how do you go about finding coaching support?

Read more: I think I have ADHD, how do I get a diagnosis? What might it mean for me?

Remind me again, what is ADHD?

ADHD is a neurodevelopmental condition. It involves difficulties focusing attention (for example, in class or at work) and/or excessive levels of activity (for example, being restless and constantly on the go) and/or impulsivity (for example, acting without thinking). These symptoms would be above and beyond what you would expect for a person's age.

It is most commonly diagnosed in childhood but is increasingly being recognised in adults. ADHD can occur in males or females and often occurs with other difficulties, such as autism and learning disorders.

Read more: How can you support kids with ADHD to learn? Parents said these 3 things help

ADHD coaching is just one aspect

The guidelines recommend a range of supports for people with ADHD. This includes offering medication and non-pharmacological supports. ADHD coaching is one type of non-pharmacological support.

It involves working with a person to provide education about ADHD, building on individual strengths and resources, and developing new strategies and systems in daily life to help minimise the impact of ADHD symptoms.

ADHD coaching shares common elements with a type of psychological "talk" therapy known as cognitive behavioural therapy, which has strong evidence to support it.

So allied health professionals, such as psychologists, already use elements of ADHD coaching.

There is also a specialised form of life coaching for people with ADHD provided by an "ADHD coach". This sometimes draws on the experience of people living with ADHD to help others achieve their personal goals.

Read more: ADHD medications have doubled in the last decade – but other treatments can help too

Does ADHD coaching help?

There are few high-quality research studies evaluating the effectiveness of ADHD coaching, and the advantages of using this approach is unclear.

So the guideline's recommendation that ADHD coaching "could" be considered as part of a treatment plan for adolescents and adults, was made after input from health professional groups, as well as from people living with ADHD.

We'd like to see more high-quality research evaluating the use of ADHD coaching.

Read more: ADHD looks different in adults. Here are 4 signs to watch for

Who provides ADHD coaching?

As many allied health professionals use elements of ADHD coaching in their clinical practice, we suggest talking to your main health-care provider to discuss whether ADHD coaching may be right for you, and to discuss referral options.

When choosing the right professional help, consider whether in-person or telehealth sessions would be better, and whether input from someone who is living with ADHD is important.

If choosing an "ADHD coach", rather than an allied health professional who provides health coaching as part of their practice, make sure they have received appropriate training and are a member of the International Coaching Federation.

Can I get it on Medicare?

The reality is that many people will have to go through the private system to access health care for ADHD.

This may include a Better Access plan to see a private psychologist for partially rebated sessions. So, this usually involves some out-of-pocket costs.

If you chose to see an "ADHD coach" (someone who is not an allied health professional like a psychologist), this is not covered by Medicare, so you will have to pay.

Coaching support may form part of a plan under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). But few people with ADHD receive NDIS funding.

Read more: Should ADHD be in the NDIS? Yes, but eligibility for disability supports should depend on the person not their diagnosis
