



ADHD Women Unite – Session Summary

Topic: ADHD Coaching – What It Is, What to Expect, and How to Choose the Right Support

Guest Speaker: Liz Mulhall

Facilitator: Katherine Irvine

Format: Online peer support session via Microsoft Teams

Approximate Attendance: 10–12 participants

Key Themes: ADHD coaching, diagnosis aftermath, grief, workplace support, emotional regulation, Access to Work, coaching standards, self-understanding

Overview

This ADHD Women Unite session focused on ADHD coaching, including

- what coaching is
- how it differs from therapy
- what participants should expect from coaching relationships
- the importance of safeguards and boundaries within the growing ADHD coaching space
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The session combined psychoeducation, lived experience discussion, and practical guidance for women considering coaching support after diagnosis.

The discussion highlighted that many women feel “left” after diagnosis, often receiving confirmation of ADHD without any meaningful follow-up support. Participants reflected on grief, identity, workplace challenges, emotional dysregulation, and the practical realities of navigating life after diagnosis

Key Discussion Themes

1. The Emotional Impact of Diagnosis

Participants described diagnosis as both validating and emotionally overwhelming.

Women spoke about:

- finally understanding lifelong struggles
- recognising patterns that had existed since childhood
- developing more self-compassion
- grieving missed opportunities and lost potential
- feeling angry or sad that support had not come earlier

Several participants reflected that diagnosis reduced self-blame and helped them reinterpret behaviours they had previously labelled as laziness, failure, or weakness.

One participant described the diagnosis process as:

“a grieving period of what could I have been?”

Another reflected:

“I don’t tell myself I’m lazy now.”

The discussion highlighted that diagnosis alone often does not provide practical tools or emotional support for navigating life afterward.

2. Feeling Unsupported After Diagnosis

A major theme throughout the session was the lack of structured post-diagnostic support.

Participants described:

- being diagnosed and then feeling abandoned
- long waits for medication or titration
- uncertainty about what help exists
- not knowing where to turn next
- having no roadmap for adjusting life after diagnosis

Several women explained that although diagnosis validated their experiences, it did not automatically improve functioning, relationships, work, or emotional wellbeing.

One participant described the experience as:

“I just felt like I’d been left.”

Another reflected:

“I didn’t know what to do with the diagnosis.”

The conversation reinforced the importance of peer spaces and community-led support in bridging this gap.

3. ADHD Coaching – What It Is

Liz explained that she sees:

- diagnosis as understanding the “what”
- therapy as exploring the “why”
- coaching as focusing on the “how”

The discussion framed ADHD coaching as:

- practical support
- collaborative problem-solving
- behavioural understanding
- accountability and reflection
- helping people redesign systems and routines
- supporting emotional understanding and self-acceptance

Liz emphasised that coaching is not therapy and that good coaches should be aware of professional boundaries, especially when working with trauma, burnout, emotional dysregulation, or mental health difficulties.

4. Concerns About ADHD Coaching

A significant portion of the discussion focused on concerns around the ADHD coaching industry.

Important points raised included:

- anyone can currently call themselves an ADHD coach
- there is little regulation in the UK
- there is no universal accreditation standard
- some coaches may unintentionally move beyond their competence
- vulnerable newly diagnosed individuals may not know what questions to ask

Liz discussed the risks of:

- oversharing in coaching sessions
- blurred boundaries between coaching and therapy
- coaches projecting their own ADHD experiences onto clients
- coaches lacking sufficient supervision or training

Participants reflected on how difficult it can be to judge whether coaching is safe, effective, or appropriate.

5. Workplace Coaching and Access to Work

The session explored workplace ADHD coaching and the UK Access to Work scheme.

Participants discussed:

- receiving coaching through employers
- coaching attached to workplace adjustments
- technology-focused coaching
- uncertainty about whether coaching was actually helping

One participant described frustration that sessions had become “just a nice chat” without clear goals or outcomes.

This led to discussion around:

- the importance of defining outcomes early
- regularly reviewing progress
- recognising when a coaching relationship may not be the right fit
- understanding different coaching styles

Liz reassured participants that changing coaches is common and appropriate if support is not meeting needs.

6. Emotional Regulation, RSD, and Burnout

Participants spoke openly about:

- rejection sensitivity
- emotional overload
- masking
- burnout
- relationship difficulties
- feeling unable to manage intense emotional responses

Liz explained that many people arrive in coaching already in burnout or crisis due to long delays in support and years of unsupported ADHD.

Discussion highlighted the overlap between ADHD experiences and trauma responses, reinforcing the need for careful, ethical coaching practice.

7. Self-Acceptance and Compassion

A recurring message throughout the session was the importance of moving away from shame.

Liz described her aim in coaching as helping people:

- understand how their brain works
- reduce self-criticism
- build self-awareness
- develop practical strategies
- feel “okay” with themselves

Participants responded strongly to this theme, particularly around learning to stop interpreting struggles as personal failure.

Emerging Insights

- Many women experience a significant emotional adjustment period after diagnosis.
- Diagnosis without structured support can leave people vulnerable and overwhelmed.
- Peer support spaces help reduce isolation and normalise experiences.
- There is strong interest in practical “what next?” support after diagnosis.
- Participants value approaches that combine emotional understanding with practical tools.
- Concerns exist around the lack of regulation in ADHD coaching.
- Women want safer, more transparent pathways into ADHD support services.
- Workplace-focused coaching may not always address emotional or relational challenges.
- Self-compassion emerged as a major area of growth following diagnosis.