



ADHD Women Unite – Session Summary

Date: 9 April 2026

Duration: 58 minutes

Attendees: ~6–8 participants

Source: Transcript

Overview

This session explored ADHD in the workplace, focusing on:

- Lived experiences of work environments
- Challenges accessing and implementing reasonable adjustments
- Disclosure and stigma
- Gaps in employer understanding and systemic support
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The discussion was highly participant-led, with strong peer validation and shared problem-solving.

Key Discussion Themes

1. The Gap Between Diagnosis and Workplace Support

A central theme was the disconnect between receiving an ADHD diagnosis and actually getting meaningful support at work.

Participants described:

- Expecting legal protections to translate into real help
- Experiencing little to no change post-diagnosis
- Feeling like they were still “the problem”

“I thought once I was diagnosed, employers would help... didn’t turn out that way.”

This reflects a systemic implementation gap, not a lack of need. ¹

2. Knowing What You Need vs Being Able to Access It

A powerful tension emerged:

- Some participants don't know what adjustments they need
- Others know exactly what they need—but can't get it implemented

Examples included:

- Difficulty with organisation and filing systems
- Lack of structured support to follow through on strategies
- Isolation when support relies on one understanding manager

"I can tell people what I need... but there's no one there to help implement it."

Insight: Self-awareness alone isn't enough—support must be scaffolded.

3. Workplace Cultures: Understanding vs Dismissal

Experiences varied significantly depending on environment:

Positive examples:

- ADHD-informed managers
- Safe spaces to vent
- Neurodivergent peer groups at work

Negative experiences:

- Aggressive or dismissive managers
- HR deflection ("speak to your manager")
- Lack of occupational health involvement
- Fear of being seen as "dramatic" or "difficult"

Strong consensus: Understanding individuals ≠ supportive systems

4. Emotional Cost of Advocacy

Participants highlighted how exhausting it is to:

- Advocate for adjustments
- Navigate formal processes (grievances, unions, HR)
- Push back against organisational resistance

“It’s just emotionally draining... you put it off because it’s too much.”

Support systems often require the very executive function they fail to accommodate.

5. Disclosure Dilemma

A recurring concern:

- Whether to tell colleagues or employers about ADHD
- Fear of stigma or misunderstanding
- Uncertainty about how to disclose

Even when disclosed:

- Responses were often minimal or dismissive

Psychological safety is still lacking.

6. What Actually Helps (Practical Adjustments)

Participants identified several helpful strategies:

- Movement (standing desks, walking while working)
- Short breaks / Pomodoro-style approaches
- Writing notes by hand then typing (dual processing)
- Environmental control (quiet spaces)
- Accountability structures (e.g. seating position, proximity to authority figure)

Important nuance:

Some adjustments (e.g. breaks) are not always feasible in structured environments like lectures or meetings.

7. Education Gap & Misunderstanding of ADHD

There was strong agreement that:

- Employers, peers, and even families lack understanding
- ADHD is often minimised or misunderstood
- There is little proactive education from organisations

“If someone tells me they have something, I’ll research it... but people don’t.”

This reinforces the need for education alongside adjustments.

8. Structural vs Individual Responsibility

A key shift in the conversation:

- Moving from “what’s wrong with me?”
→ to
- “what structures need to change?”

Examples:

- Rest breaks vs extra time in exams
- Environmental adjustments vs expecting endurance

Group Dynamic Observations

- Strong peer validation and resonance
- Participants built on each other’s experiences
- Good balance of emotional sharing and practical discussion
- Moments of humour helped regulate intensity