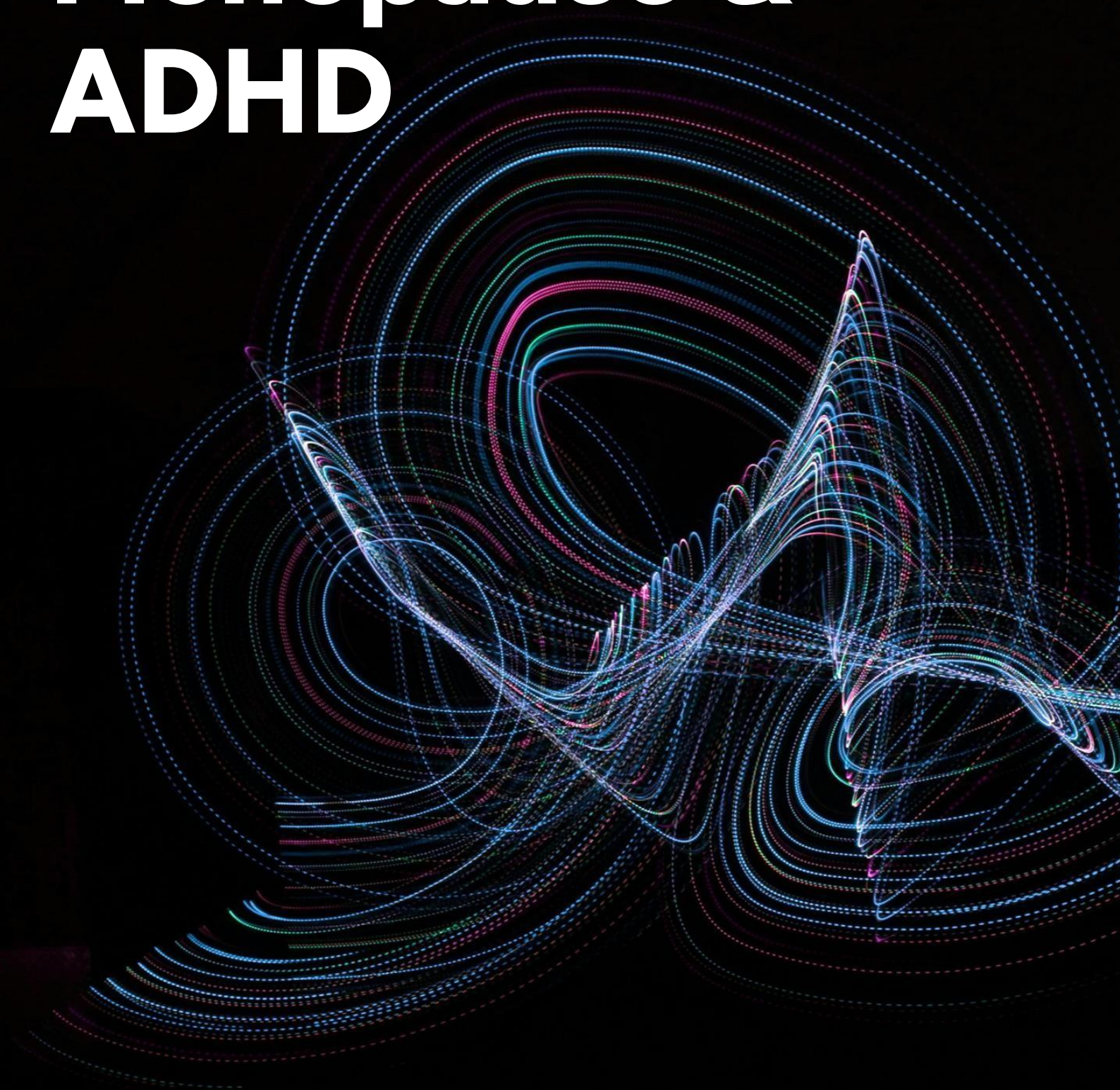


Menopause & ADHD



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1. My Personal Journey: Menopause & ADHD

While everyone's experience is different, understanding my own neurodiversity has helped me make sense of many challenges I have faced throughout my life.

I was diagnosed with dyslexia in my early twenties, which explained some of the difficulties I had experienced with processing information, organisation, and confidence in educational settings (I was a school refuser for much of my childhood). Over time, I developed strategies that enabled me to work successfully and build a rewarding career.

At the age of 44, I experienced a medically induced menopause. As many women describe, this brought a range of physical, emotional, and cognitive changes. I noticed increased difficulties with concentration, memory, organisation, and mental fatigue, often referred to as "brain fog."

A year later, at 45, I was diagnosed with ADHD. Receiving this diagnosis helped me understand that some of the challenges I had experienced throughout my life were not personal failings, but characteristics of a neurodivergent brain. It also helped explain why the menopause transition had such a significant impact on my ability to manage symptoms that I had often unconsciously masked or compensated for over many years.

Looking back, I can now see how dyslexia, ADHD, and menopause intersected in ways that affected my confidence, wellbeing, and daily functioning. Understanding these connections has enabled me to access appropriate support, develop effective coping strategies, and advocate for greater awareness of both neurodiversity and menopause in the workplace.

My hope is that by sharing my experience, others may recognise aspects of their own journey, feel less alone, and be encouraged to seek support where needed.

2. Understanding Menopause & ADHD:

Both Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and menopause can significantly impact an individual's daily life, wellbeing, and work performance. While ADHD has traditionally been associated with childhood, increasing research and awareness have highlighted that many women continue to experience symptoms throughout adulthood, with some only receiving a diagnosis later in life.

For women with ADHD, the menopause transition can present unique challenges. Hormonal changes may intensify existing ADHD symptoms or lead to difficulties that have previously been manageable. Understanding this connection can help individuals, colleagues, and employers create supportive environments that promote wellbeing and productivity.

3. What is ADHD?

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a lifelong neurodivergence and disability. People with ADHD show a persistent pattern of inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity that interferes with day-to-day functioning and/or development.

There are 3 types of ADHD presentations; inattentive, hyperactive-impulsive and combined type. Not everyone with ADHD is hyperactive-impulsive and 50-75% of those with ADHD have the combined type.

ADHD presents differently in each person, and many women develop coping strategies that mask symptoms for years before seeking assessment or support.

ADHD in Women:

Historically, ADHD has been underdiagnosed in women and girls because symptoms often appear less overt than the hyperactive behaviours typically seen in boys. Instead, women may experience:

- Chronic overwhelm
- Emotional sensitivity
- Difficulties with memory and organisation
- Anxiety and low self-esteem
- Persistent feelings of underachievement



Research suggests that many women are not diagnosed until adulthood, with some first seeking support during perimenopause or menopause when symptoms suddenly become more noticeable.

A study conducted by Hardy and Kovacs (2021) suggests that hormonal fluctuations during menopause can influence neural pathways that are already distinct in individuals who are neurodivergent. In addition, menopause can play a role in an individual discovering their neurodivergence, as characteristics become more apparent. (National Autistic Society, 2024).

4. Understanding Menopause

Menopause is a natural stage of life that marks the end of menstrual periods due to declining hormone levels, particularly oestrogen and progesterone. The transition typically occurs between the ages of 45 and 55, although it can happen earlier or later.

Symptoms may include:

- Hot flushes
- Night sweats
- Sleep disturbances
- Brain fog
- Memory difficulties
- Mood changes
- Anxiety
- Fatigue
- Reduced concentration



For many women, these symptoms can affect both their personal and professional lives.

5. The Connection Between ADHD & Menopause

A growing body of evidence suggests that declining oestrogen levels can impact brain functions associated with attention, memory, and emotional regulation. These same areas are often already affected in individuals with ADHD.

Oestrogen plays an important role in supporting dopamine, a neurotransmitter linked to focus, motivation, and executive functioning. When oestrogen levels fluctuate during perimenopause and menopause, dopamine activity may also be affected.

Increased ADHD Symptoms:

Women with ADHD may notice worsening of:

- Forgetfulness
- Distractibility
- Difficulty concentrating
- Time management challenges
- Emotional dysregulation
- Mental fatigue

Brain Fog & Executive Function Difficulties:

Many menopause symptoms mirror ADHD symptoms, including:

- Poor concentration
- Difficulty recalling information
- Reduced processing speed
- Problems planning and organising tasks



As a result, some women report feeling as though their ADHD symptoms have suddenly become much worse.

Emotional Wellbeing:

Both ADHD and menopause can affect emotional regulation. Individuals may experience:

- Increased anxiety
- Mood fluctuations
- Irritability
- Reduced confidence
- Feelings of overwhelm

Without appropriate understanding or support, this can contribute to stress, burnout, and reduced workplace engagement.

6. Workplace Impact

The combination of menopause and ADHD can create additional workplace challenges.

Employees may experience:

- Difficulty managing competing priorities
- Increased mistakes due to concentration difficulties
- Challenges during meetings
- Struggles with memory and information retention
- Reduced confidence in decision-making
- Mental exhaustion from masking symptoms



It is important to recognise that these challenges do not reflect a lack of capability or commitment. Often, individuals are working exceptionally hard to maintain performance while managing symptoms.

7. Workplace Strategies & Support

Employers can make a significant positive difference through reasonable adjustments and supportive workplace practices.

Practical Adjustments

- Providing written instructions alongside verbal communication
- Offering clear deadlines and expectations
- Breaking larger tasks into manageable steps
- Allowing flexibility in work schedules where possible
- Providing quiet workspaces or noise-cancelling equipment
- Reducing unnecessary interruptions

Supporting Memory & Organisation

- Use of digital calendars and reminders
- Task management tools
- Meeting notes and action summaries
- Checklists and visual prompts
- Prioritisation support from managers

Creating an Inclusive Culture

- Encouraging open conversations about wellbeing
- Avoiding assumptions about performance changes
- Offering regular check-ins and support
- Demonstrating understanding and empathy
- Promoting menopause and neurodiversity awareness

Supporting Wellbeing

- Access to Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs)
- Occupational Health support
- Menopause support groups
- Neurodiversity networks
- Flexible working arrangements
- Mental health and wellbeing resources

ADHD and menopause can intersect in ways that significantly affect concentration, memory, emotional wellbeing, and workplace performance. For many women, hormonal changes during perimenopause and menopause may intensify ADHD symptoms or bring previously unrecognised challenges to the forefront. Understanding the relationship between menopause and ADHD is not only beneficial for those directly affected, but also helps foster a workplace culture built on empathy, flexibility, and wellbeing.

Remember: experiencing challenges related to ADHD and menopause does not reflect a person's ability or potential. With the right support, individuals can continue to succeed both professionally and personally.

