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ADHD and Biological females

- ✓ There are key differences between biological males and females with ADHD
- ✓ Females assigned at birth = 2X the ADHD symptoms with declining estrogen (inattention + impulsivity)
- ✓ Rapid changes in estrogen, particularly declines in estrogen, increase the risk for ADHD symptoms (Eng et al., 2024)
- ✓ Mid-cycle impacts and end-of-cycle impacts (impulsivity and negative affect respectively) (Eng et al., 2024)

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ADHD, Sex and Women

Some strategies to help manage ADHD for biological females include:

- ✓ Use a period tracking app
- ✓ Speak to your health care provider about increasing ADHD medication dosage during PMS periods
- ✓ Communicate with your partner about the times when your ADHD symptoms are intensified
- ✓ Recognize and honor your periods of fatigue
- ✓ Work with your health care provider to address other symptoms that may be occurring in conjunction with your ADHD symptoms
- ✓ Discuss birth control medication options that would not create a drop in hormone levels

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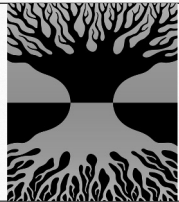
When we are talking about SEX, we mean PLAY!

- Sex = play
- Sex = pleasure
- Sex = fun
- Sex = enjoyable
- Sex = solo
- Sex = partnered
- Sex = being present

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Common ADHD and Sex problems

- Attention problems
- Transition problems
- Sensation problems
- Hyperfocus problems
- Anxiety
- Sexual dysfunctions
- Intimacy problems/Masking
- Poor body awareness/connection



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ADHDers can struggle with sex

- I am in hyperfocus over here, there's no time for sex
- I am distracted during sex - I just can't stay focused during sex
- All my energy is put into this other project
- I lose focus during sex so I must not like my partner/this activity/sex in general
- The courtship hyperfocus is done and I've cooled off to my partner
- I struggle with sexual problems so there is not point to having sex
- Solo sex is easier than partnered sex
- I can't sit in my body long enough to figure out how I feel. Do I want sex? Do I want a cookie? Do I want to sleep? No idea...I am bothered by sounds, smells, weird sensations during sex, so forget it!
- I am bored during sex
- I am embarrassed by my sexual problems so I don't bother!

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ADHD and sexuality

- ✓ People with ADHD reported higher numbers of sexual partners
- ✓ Higher rates of condomless sex
- ✓ Higher STI diagnoses
- ✓ Higher number of unplanned pregnancies and more emergency contraception use
- ✓ ADHDers are more often identified as engaging in some form of infidelity
- ✓ Divorce rates are higher for people with ADHD
- ✓ There is often less relationship stability and reduced relationship satisfaction

Soldati et al, 2024; Rohacek et al., 2022; Margherio et al., 2021; Tuckman, 2019; Young et al., 2023; Hetz et al., 2022; Barkley, 2015

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ADHD and sexuality

People with ADHD report:

- ✓ Having more diverse sexual experiences
- ✓ More consensual non-monogamous sexual experiences
- ✓ More gender fluidity
- ✓ More bisexual experiences even if they do not report being gay
- ✓ Perceive themselves as being kinkier than people who do not have ADHD

Getting stuck in the same sexual routine might not maintain attention during sex. Tuckman (2019) reported that individual differences may be more important as it relates to novelty than having ADHD; however, in his survey, ADHD men did report more interest in having sexual variety in their lives than non-ADHD men.

Tuckman, 2019; Young & Cocallis, 2023; Hetz & al, 2022; Young et al, 2023

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Sex requires attention!

Distractibility is often a problem for ADHDers during sex

You must be able to pay attention to:

- The idea of having sex
- Feelings of pleasure
- A partner and their needs AND your needs
- Staying in the present, not the past or the future
- Your actions or other people's actions
- The connection with your body (interoceptive awareness)

Chapter 3: What is that noise? How ADHD can impact your focus during sex

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Sex requires attention!

- ✓ Keep things interesting!
- ✓ Avoid boring, mechanical sex
- ✓ Ensure that external noises and obvious distractions are resolved (e.g. privacy, environment, background noise, etc)
- ✓ Find compromise that build on variation rather than intensity

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Sexual novelty and ADHD often go together

- I'm bored
- I need more intensity
- I need to try new things and/or new partners
- Increased risky sexual behaviors e.g. STI, unplanned pregnancies, multiple partners, etc (Weyandt et al., 2024)
- Sexual impulsivity

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Use sexual novelty to create attention!

Excerpt Chapter 5:

The need for novelty may explain why people with ADHD report having more diverse sexual experiences, more non-monogamous sexual experiences, more gender fluidity and more bisexual experiences even if they do not report being gay (Tuckman, 2019; Young & Cocallis, 2023; Hetz & al, 2022; Young et al, 2023). For people with ADHD, getting stuck in the same sexual routine might not maintain your attention. This can create other problems in your relationship. It is notable that Tuckman (2019) reported that individual differences may be more important as it relates to novelty than having ADHD; however, in his survey, ADHD men did report more interest in having sexual variety in their lives than non-ADHD men. Sexual novelty and ADHD often go together. If you are finding sex boring, transitioning towards sex can be uninspiring and even unpleasant. Address the issues that are leaving you sexually uninspired!

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Transitions

- We struggle to transition INTO sex
 - I am not that interested in sex, I can't get into it....
- We struggle to transition OUT of sex
 - I am so interested in sex that I can't stop....

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Transitions INTO sex = Learning to start

- Getting the ball rolling!
- Transitions – all of them, not just the sexual ones...
- Dealing with hyperfocus
- Dealing with impulsivity (poor starts...)
- Dealing with relationship dissatisfactions

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Transitions INTO sex

- ✓ Paying attention to the idea of having sex
- ✓ Having sex that is interesting enough to catch and maintain your attention
- ✓ Effectively managing situations when you are bored by your partner's sexual initiation and/or distracted by your hyperfocus
- ✓ Start even if you aren't feeling it in the moment
- ✓ Communicate your interest to move towards sexual play

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The biggest issues that I have getting started sexually include:

- ☐ Impulsivity: I go too fast and upset my partner
- ☐ Chores: I don't do enough around the house and my partner is busy doing all the tasks
- ☐ Time blindness: I lose track of time and never get around to it
- ☐ Lack of effort: I don't try
- ☐ Lack of novelty: I get bored
- ☐ Relationship issues: I am angry
- ☐ Lack of communication: I don't talk about it
- ☐ Lack of touch: We don't hug, kiss or touch frequently
- ☐ Hyperfocus: I am too busy and I forget how good it feels
- ☐ Personal beliefs/values: I don't believe I should do it
- ☐ Other: _____

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Transitions INTO sex = Learning to start

- ✓ Drop the expectation that sexual desire must exist before you engage in sexual play
- ✓ Stop waiting for arousal to happen without any help or encouragement
- ✓ Rather than being focused on sexual frequency, explore sexual transitions
- ✓ Accept that transitioning towards sex may take a bit of time and attention; it just doesn't happen without some effort
- ✓ Consider that sexual engagement with yourself and/or with a partner is an important goal to achieve in your week

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Transitions OUT of sex = Learning to stop

Hypersexuality vs Sexual Eagerness = the presence of subjective distress

- Eagerness is often how ADHDers view activities that might traditionally be seen as impulsive by neurotypicals
- I can be eager to try new things and jump out of airplanes. I see this as a good thing. It isn't impulsivity – I did think about it, but I want to do things that are FUN
- Impulsivity is: "Hasty actions that occur in the moment without forethought, which may have potential for harm to the individual or others" (APA, 2022). They go on to say, impulsivity can occur due to a desire to obtain an immediate reward or an inability to delay gratification. Impulsivity means that you make important decisions without considering the long-term consequences of your decision making (APA, 2022).

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Transitions OUT of sex = Learning to stop

There is a moderate correlation between ADHD and hypersexuality!

Reasons are multivaried

- ✓ Dopaminergic system differences?
- ✓ Reduction in ADHD symptoms with orgasm?
- ✓ Sex as coping?
- ✓ Attempts to deal with the wired but not tired feeling?
- ✓ Difficulties with transitions?
- ✓ Hyperfocus?
- ✓ Stimming?

These are only theories, we just don't know why....

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Transitions OUT of sex = Learning to stop

- There may be a relationship between being preoccupied with sex and ADHD inattentive presentation and perhaps the combined presentation (Hetz et al., 2022; Young et al., 2023)
- ADHDers who are primarily inattentive may struggle with too much sex and transitioning out of sex, more than ADHDers that are hyperactive/impulsive
- One study identified self-esteem as an important moderator in this relationship (Reid et al., 2011)
- Sex as coping may also be higher for ADHDers (sex might be used to resolve the wired but not tired feeling/edgy feeling)

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Solo sex becomes an issue when it:

- Becomes too intense and the feeling cannot be replicated in real life
- Excludes a partner
- Takes up too much of your time
- Reduces your partnered sexual skills
- Leads you to believe that you won't find a partner who would be ok with your sexual interests and preferences
- Reduces your desire to engage in hygiene-related activities
- Leads you to engage in sexual fantasies that are illegal or harmful to others

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Transitions OUT of sex = Learning to stop

Create a visual reminder of your chores, tasks and other priorities so you can clearly see them throughout your day. Set reminders to help you focus on your other responsibilities. Find ways to make your other life priorities matter to you!

Focus on other priorities to transition out of sex:

- ✓ Maintain a visual reminder of your tasks, priorities and things to do!
- ✓ Set reminders on your phone or use apps to remind you of other priorities/responsibilities
- ✓ Ask someone to be an accountability partner to help you stay on track
- ✓ Work with an ADHD coach!
- ✓ Attend an ADHD support group!
- ✓ Participate in a workshop to improve your executive functioning

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Not all ADHDers are hypersexual

- ADHD males report higher levels of sexual aversion and having little desire for sexual contact than non-ADHD males
- ADHD females reported more sexual aversion than neurotypical females
- Some people with ADHD are uninterested in sex

Bijlenga et al., 2018; Soldati, 2019

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Sensory issues during sex

Sensory issues that occur during sex can lead to only having solo sex or avoiding sex altogether

- ✓ Tastes
- ✓ Smells
- ✓ Textures (semen, saliva, sticky)
- ✓ Temperature
- ✓ Noise
- ✓ Lighting
- ✓ Body sensations (hair, skin)
- ✓ Touch

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Sensations during sex

Chapter 8 - What is that smell? Sensory issues and ADHD
Label it, work around it, drop it!

- ✓ Salt/blow job gels
- ✓ Wet spot protection
- ✓ Hygiene
- ✓ Earplugs (e.g. loop earplugs)
- ✓ Sunglasses/eye covers
- ✓ Textiles

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Sensations during sex

- Hypersensitivity to textures, sensations, smells, taste or certain sounds can push you out of the sexual experience and out of your body!
- Hard touch is a common request in the neurodivergent community
- If you prefer hard touch and wish to avoid soft touch that is perfectly acceptable!

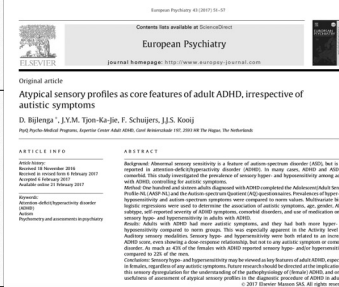
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Sensations during sex

- ✓ ADHD folks have sensory problems too!
- ✓ Sensory issues are not only a problem for AS folks in the neurodivergent community

Bijlenga et al., 2017

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Sexual problems/sexual dysfunctions

- ADHDers were significantly more likely to have distressing problems with sexual function than controls including greater difficulty reaching orgasms, greater orgasm dissatisfaction, and greater sexual distress. (Goldberg et al., 2024)
- ADHD is associated with the presence of sexual dysfunctions (Soldati, 2020)
- While some researchers feel that this relationship between ADHD and sexual problems is mediated by anxiety and depression rather than ADHD itself; research is continuing to demonstrate this link (Goldberg et al., 2024; Abdel-hamid et al., 2021).
- Jabalkandi et al. (2019) indicated that males and females with ADHD had more sexual problems than non-ADHDers in all aspects of sexuality; for example, in biological females, there are difficulties with desire, arousal, orgasm, satisfaction, pain and lubrication. For biological males, it's difficulties with orgasm, erectile function, intercourse satisfaction and overall sexual satisfaction.

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Sexual problems/sexual dysfunctions

- Premature ejaculation (PE) can be quite common in ADHD populations.
- PE is typically occurring if you ejaculate within 30 seconds to one minute of genital stimulation, vaginal insertion and/or if you ejaculate without control.
- Soydan et al. (2013) reported that in their sample, 42.1 percent of premature ejaculation clients had ADHD
- The combined presentation subtype appears to be more likely to have PE (Bijlenga et al., 2018)
- Note: PE has also been related to low levels of vitamin D as well as other chronic health conditions (Canat et al., 2019).

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Interoceptive awareness



Interoceptive awareness = perception of the internal state of the body

- People with ADHD consistently report difficulties with mind-body connection (Kruttschmidt et al, 2024)
- Mind-body connection is important for sex, sexual pleasure and sexual control
- Drop the need and pressure for orgasm – orgasm is not the point of sexual play!
- Breathwork, mindfulness practice, massages, yoga... this can be hard!
- Practice grounding into the body to help with these concerns

Chapter 4 - What is that feeling? Being in your body to achieve sexual pleasure

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Sex requires movement

- ADHD is reported to be linked to greater problems with chronic pain, obesity and eating disorders, food allergies, autoimmune diseases, endometriosis, fibromyalgia, and body focused concerns
- Biological females with ADHD report more sexual pain

- ✓ Set yourself up for success!!
- ✓ Use wedges, sex furniture, pillows, to make yourself comfortable
- ✓ Learn about managing chronic pain
- ✓ Consult a movement specialist to help!

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Sex requires movement

Some people with ADHD suffer physical health concerns. In fact, you may be more likely to have autoimmune difficulties, chronic pain problems or other illnesses that get in your way (APA, 2022; Kerekes, 2022; Barkley, 2015; Garcia-Angibay, 2022). Food allergies/sensitivities are also frequently reported by people with ADHD (Jiang et al, 2018). There are therapies designed to help you with chronic pain including Pain Reprocessing Therapy based on the book *The Way Out* by Alan Gordon, resources such as the Curable app, as well as specific books to help you with the distress of having a chronic illness such as *Finding Freedom in Illness* by Peter Fernando and *How to be Sick* by Toni Bernhard. If you are suffering from chronic pain, seek out additional assistance. Ask health professionals who are specialized in dealing with physical ailments and chronic illnesses for help to address your particular concerns.

If your physical movement is compromised, find ways to set yourself up for success. There are wedges, different types of sex furniture and supports that can help make sex more comfortable. Explore and search sexual aids, sexual furniture and sexual pillows to make yourself and your partner more comfortable. You can also consult a physiotherapist or a movement specialist to help you find ways to enhance your physical comfort in sexual situations. Ensuring physical comfort during sex is a great place to start making sex fun again! (Excerpt chapter 2)

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Intimacy... Yikes!

Fear of intimacy is known to be increased in ADHD clients (Hertz & al, 2022)

- ✓ Masking
- ✓ Fear of disclosing sexual interests, sexual history or areas of sexual exploration to your partner
- ✓ Communication deficits
- ✓ Lack of trust as a result of previous relationships or past sexual experiences
- ✓ Sexual violence and relationship trauma

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Rejection Sensitivity Dysphoria

- RSD is a sexual arousal killer!
- Tantrums just aren't sexy... and create a ton of anger as well as trust issues in relationships
- Relationships that fall into a parent-child dynamic aren't sexy either (Orlov, 2010)
- Relationship dynamics and emotional dysregulation can impact both relationship and sexual satisfaction

Dodson, 2023

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Neurodivergent Safety

- Research identifies, over and over again, that neurodivergent people are at greater risk of being sexually victimized as well as experiencing domestic violence (Young & Cocallis, 2023; Wymbs, & Gidycz, 2021; Gotby et al, 2018; Wymbs et al, 2017; Wymbs, 2021).
- ADHDers are also at greater risk of being a victim of physical violence (Ghirardi et al, 2023)
- There have been limited attempts to address neurodivergent victimization (see Holliday, 2012 and Brown, 2013 for details) and no prevention strategies or services for neurodivergent people (Wymbs & Gidycz, 2021).

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Potential safety concerns

- ☐ Going off with strangers
- ☐ Being intoxicated in an unsafe place
- ☐ Not noticing someone's sexual interest in you
- ☐ Being misunderstood in your intentions or your communication
- ☐ Not telling friends or family where you are
- ☐ Taking unnecessary risks
- ☐ Assuming that people have your best interest in mind
- ☐ Sexual impulsivity
- ☐ Disregarding a partner's past harmful behaviors towards others

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Sexual health matters!

Effective ADHD interventions....not neurotypical interventions are key to improving sexual functioning!



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Conclusion...

- ✓ Research tells us one important thing about ADHD and sex, the more you manage your symptoms of ADHD overall, the better your sex life will likely be (Tuckman, 2019)
- ✓ Identify issues related to ADHD and sexuality for you and your partner
- ✓ Create a plan to address these issues
- ✓ Work with a professional who is well versed on the impact of ADHD on sexuality

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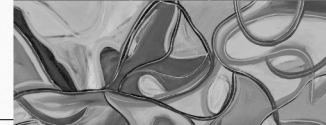
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