

# Focus Forward: ADHD Skills Group



# FOCUS FORWARD: ADHD SKILLS GROUP

Developing effective learning skills for post-secondary success

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Kitchener



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# PREFACE

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**The Focus Forward: ADHD Skills Group** was developed in response to a recurring narrative in advising appointments: students with ADHD arriving with similar needs, facing similar barriers, and carrying a heavy, private fear that “everyone else finds this easy and I’m the only one who struggles.” Many described feeling isolated or “defective,” without the foundational ADHD education that would help them understand their own attention, motivation, working memory, and executive function patterns. They were working hard, but without a clear understanding of why certain things felt more challenging for them, or which strategies could make a meaningful difference.

This resource was created to meet those needs directly. It provides practical, evidence-informed learning strategies and a space to normalize ADHD experiences, so students can replace self-blame with self-understanding and isolation with community. The program’s design reflects what students told us they needed most: structured skill-building, regular opportunities to ask real-time questions, time to share what’s working (and what isn’t), and a peer community that supports, motivates, and accepts. With this, success can feel more attainable, and the post-secondary experience can become a smoother journey for neurodivergent learners.

Because many institutions see the same patterns, we chose to publish this as an open educational resource. The full curriculum—weekly session plans, learning outcomes, slide decks, and facilitator speaking notes—is intentionally packaged for easy replication. Our goal is to remove barriers for educators and learning centres that want to offer ADHD-specific programming but may lack the capacity to build it from the ground up.

Students can also use this OER independently when a group isn’t available. The content is clear and actionable, and the facilitator notes add context for self-directed learning. However, the full benefits of the program—particularly the connection, validation, and shared problem solving that emerge within a peer community—are best experienced in a group setting, along with the motivation and accountability this type of community fosters.

Ultimately, Focus Forward invites students to understand their learning profiles, experiment with strategies that fit, and experience belonging alongside peers who “get it.” We hope it helps institutions expand access to meaningful ADHD support and helps students replace the myth of “I should be able to do this like everyone else” with the reality of “I can do this in ways that work for me.”

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## Land Acknowledgment

At Conestoga College, we would like to acknowledge that in Kitchener, Waterloo, Cambridge, and Brantford, we are located on the Haldimand Tract, the land promised to the Haudenosaunee people of Six Nations, which includes six miles on either side of the Grand River. This is the traditional territory of the Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, and Neutral peoples. Recognizing the land is an expression of gratitude and appreciation to those whose environment we reside in and a way of honouring the Indigenous people living and working on the ground for thousands of years.

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# AUTHOR ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Another special thank you to **Rachel Stuckey, Instructional Designer, OER**, for all your support and patience in helping me publish this OER.

**Note:** The format of this OER was inspired by the [ADHDe Project](#) at the University of Windsor. Any similarities pertain to structure and presentation only; all program content is original to the *Focus Forward: ADHD Skills Group*.

# ATTRIBUTIONS

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## Multiple Formats Available

This OER is available in multiple formats, including PDF. To download, select the format from the [“Download this book” dropdown menu beneath the cover image on the title page](#).

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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**Emily Nascimben** is a Learning Specialist with over a decade of experience supporting neurodivergent learners across K–12, post-secondary, and community settings. She holds a **Bachelor of Applied Science** in Child, Youth and Family Studies from the University of Guelph, a Children’s Mental Health Certificate from Conestoga College, and additional training in developmental disabilities and evidence-informed educational practice.

Emily developed this program while working as a **Learning Skills Advisor at Conestoga College** in response to a growing need among students seeking support with ADHD-related academic challenges. Her goal was to help students build the strategies, skills, and self-understanding needed to navigate academic demands with greater confidence and independence. The group format was intentionally designed to offer peer-to-peer connection, affirm neurodiversity, and reduce the sense of isolation that many students with ADHD experience.

**Grounded in learning science, executive-function research, and a neurodiversity-affirming approach**, the program focuses on strengthening executive functioning, developing practical learning strategies, and fostering sustainable academic habits.

The **Focus Forward: ADHD Skills Group** ran for three consecutive semesters and received strong positive feedback from student participants as well as partners across Learning Services, Accessible Learning, Counselling, and Faculty.

# INTRODUCTION: PROGRAM DETAILS & GETTING STARTED

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## Focus Forward: ADHD Skills Group Description

A 12-week program aimed at supporting success among students with ADHD by offering a space where they can explore the complexities of ADHD to better understand themselves and how their ADHD impacts their learning. Students will have the opportunity to discuss common challenges and share experiences among a community of peers who can relate.

With a combination of mini-workshops, structured group discussions, and unstructured group consultation time, the Focus Forward: ADHD Skills Group will provide students with an opportunity to develop their learning skills with support from a Learning Specialist.

### Purpose

- To offer academic support to students with ADHD, including but not limited to those who:
  - Are new to the college learning environment
  - Have been newly diagnosed
  - Are exploring a possible ADHD diagnosis
  - Are struggling academically
  - Are returning to school after a significant gap in time
- To facilitate a community of peer support and reduce isolation among students with ADHD.
- To implement a group consultation model for students with common challenges and needs.
- Focus on developing effective learning skills.
- Provide students with ADHD an opportunity to share personal experiences and strategies, and to discuss topics relevant to being a student with ADHD.
- To help us, as Learning Skills Advisors, better understand the needs and unique challenges that this group of students face and get feedback on how we can better support students with ADHD.
- To create a community that offers a sense of belongingness and normalizes the experiences of individuals with ADHD.

## Rationale

Compared to their peers, it has been found that students with ADHD typically complete fewer years of school and graduate at half the rate of students without disabilities (Daffner et al., 2022, p. 114). Students with ADHD have been found to experience more academic difficulties, like earning fewer credits and achieving lower GPAs, and are at a greater risk of dropping out due to poor academic performance (Daffner et al., 2022, p. 114; DuPaul et al., 2018, p.14). Compared to their peers, students with ADHD typically complete fewer years of school and graduate at half the rate of students without disabilities (Daffner et al., 2022, p. 114).

As Learning Skills Advisors, we see many students with ADHD who struggle with college learning, and these students typically share many common challenges, which require similar types of support. This makes a group consultation model a practical and efficient way to support this group of students.

Research tells us that “good study habits and motivation to study are predictive of GPA,” emphasizing the importance of providing academic support services early on to “help students improve their study skills and increase their academic self-efficacy and motivation to study” (DuPaul et al., 2018, p. 13). Research has also found that accessing student academic support services, such as tutoring, workshops, and study groups, is predictive of higher grades and a greater likelihood of graduation than for students who do not (Daffner et al., 2022, p. 115).

Additionally, we recognize that students with ADHD tend to report feeling alone in their struggles, so a group consultation model may also provide social benefits. Students would have the opportunity to identify with others who can relate to their challenges and with whom they can share experiences and discuss strategies they have tried. Given that challenges with maintaining motivation have been identified, along with the increased demands on executive functioning, as a key factor contributing to the difficulties that students with ADHD experience in college (DuPaul et al., 2018, pp. 2, 13-14), we hope this type of peer support will have a positive impact on student motivation and promote accountability.

## Supporting Research:

- According to research, 4.5% of college students hold an ADHD diagnosis, and among undiagnosed students, an additional 10% report clinically significant ADHD symptoms (Thomas et al., 2014, p. 643).
- According to one source, among those with ADHD, it has been found that only 21% pursue post-secondary education, with only 5% achieving graduation (Dupaul et al., 2018, p. 2).
- “The novel challenges and stressors that are prevalent in the college environment may even initiate higher levels of ADHD symptom presentation and impairment and create a unique and potentially challenging environment for individuals with ADHD” (DuPaul et al., 2018, p. 2).
- “College-age adults with a current ADHD diagnosis or symptoms are more likely to report lower grades, more academic and social concerns, poorer academic and social adjustment, and lower self-esteem and

emotional stability” (Thomas et al., 2014, p. 643).

## Program Details

- *Weekly 1-hour sessions held either in-person or virtually.*
  - *In a 15-week semester, sessions would be held during weeks 2-7, and 9-14*
    - No sessions during week 1 startup, mid-semester break (reading week/student success week), or final exam week.
- *Program participants – recruitment options:*
  - Openly advertise to students and offer open registration (e.g., website, posters, social media).
  - Target specific group participants through direct invitation/referral – email at-risk students or coordinate with other campus partners who can promote the group and refer specific students (e.g. accessibility advisors, learning specialists, student wellness centre, counsellors, doctors and nurse practitioners, faculty, etc.). If requesting referrals from other service areas, be specific about which students you are targeting, for example, students who:
    - (a) Have ADHD (diagnosed or suspected) and are new to college learning,
    - (b) Have recently received an ADHD diagnosis,
    - (c) Are newly exploring the possibility of an ADHD diagnosis,
    - (d) Are returning to school after a significant period of time.
- *Sessions would incorporate:*
  - Small semi-structured group consultation focused on group discussion and skills development, led by a Learning Skills Advisor
  - Facilitated group discussions on topics relevant to students with ADHD, with the purpose of sharing experiences that normalize ADHD and exploring different strategies.
  - Special guest facilitators with relevant expertise and/or visitors from campus partners who can provide information on other relevant services and supports available to students.
- *Guest Speakers/Facilitators – examples of possible options include:*
  - Health Promotion Specialist –
    - Possible Topics: ADHD & sleep, importance of prioritizing sleep, tips for improving sleep hygiene, practical ways to make sustainable healthy lifestyle habits (importance of eating well and getting adequate physical activity to support both physical and mental health), etc.
  - Counsellor / Mental Health Practitioner –
    - Possible Topics: the link between ADHD & mental health, emotional regulation and coping strategies, managing thought distortions/errors in thinking, coping with test anxiety, strategies to support motivation and positive behaviour change/developing healthy habits, sub-

- stance use, etc.
- Peer Wellness Navigator –
  - The importance of self-care and why you should prioritize your mental and physical health, finding balance and managing stress to avoid burnout, ideas for beneficial ways to spend short breaks between studying, ways you can reward yourself for hard work, etc.
- Assistive Technology Specialist –
  - Possible Topics: AT tools to support focus, productivity, organization, time management, note-taking, test-prep and studying, etc.
- Accessibility Advisor / Accommodation Advisor –
  - Possible Topics: Self-advocacy, types of accommodations, why students with ADHD are entitled to accommodations, how to qualify for accommodations, rights for students with disabilities, etc.
- *Promote Relevant Events, Workshops, Internal and External Resources*

## Weekly Facilitation Notes

Each week of the program covers a different topic relevant to students with ADHD. Below are details to help you facilitate these workshops, including additional speaking points to complement the provided slides, discussion prompts, and optional group activities.

Remember to make this your own. This guide is simply a framework; you can include as much or as little of the content as you like, and may consider adding additional topics or resources to suit your students' needs.

Below is a general guideline for structuring sessions; however, some topics have more content than others, and some may generate more discussion than others, so use your judgement on how best to facilitate your group sessions.

During each session, be sure to refer students to any relevant student services or provide additional resources, as needed.

### Introductions (10-15 minutes):

- Welcome the group, brief share about anything new and exciting in their lives – a quick “pulse check” to gauge the group.
- Ask about their week – challenges, accomplishments, new strategies they have tried, e.g.
  - Who has a success they would like to share?
  - What challenges have been coming up for you this week?

- ◦ Has anyone tried any new strategies they would like to share about?
- ◦ Are there any new goals you are working on or would like to work on?
- ◦ Is there anything on your mind that you would like to discuss this week?
  - These topics can be saved for after the “workshop” portion of the group.

### Weekly Topic (20-30 minutes):

- Announce this week’s topic.
- When appropriate, ask the group what they know about the topic.
- Try to gauge level of interest in the topic and facilitate engagement (e.g. “who has ever struggled with \_\_\_\_\_” or “how many of us could use some new tips to help us \_\_\_\_\_”)
- Depending on the number of students in the group and the facilitator’s preferences, direct students to ask questions along the way or to save their questions until the end. Having students raise their hands as questions arise would be advisable, as it creates an opportunity for group interaction and enriching open discussion.
- Present the slideshow and facilitate group discussions during/after.
- Accept any final questions or comments before transitioning (time permitting) to #3.

### Group Consultation (15-30 minutes):

- When appropriate, and if students are engaged, you can continue discussing the weekly topic and presentation for the remainder of the session.
- If students seem ready to move on or have other topics of interest or priority to discuss, you can address those questions at this time.
- Students can ask specific questions or share experiences (challenges and/or successes), related to the weekly topic, or otherwise.
- Students can request support with planning/prioritization, developing study plans, breaking down assignments, etc.
- If/when appropriate, a breakout group can be opened for individuals looking for specific help, while others use the remaining time to get work done (group body-doubling)

## Weekly Session Topics

Below is a list of the weekly topics for each session of the 12-week program. The weekly topics follow an inten-

tionally structured progression that aligns with common student needs across a semester: establishing foundational organization skills early, preparing for midterms and exams with enough lead time to be impactful, and addressing sleep, mental health, and metacognition at points when students are most likely to benefit. Facilitators are welcome to adapt the progression to suit their own institutional timelines or student needs.

When organizing this group, special guest speakers were arranged to facilitate weeks 6, 8, 9 and 11. There is limited content and resources provided in this program for these topics, so supplementing with additional information or inviting an expert guest facilitator may be advisable. Below are some suggested guest speakers for those topics:

- **ADHD & Sleep (week 6)** – consider having a health promotion specialist, mental health practitioner, nurse or other similar visitor.
- **Assistive Tech & Learning Tools (week 8)** – consider having an Assistive Technology Specialist, or similar visitor.
- **Finding Balance & Managing Stress (week 9)** – consider inviting a Peer Wellness visitor, a counselor, or another mental health practitioner.
- **ADHD & Mental Health (week 11)** – the ideal guest speaker would be a mental health counsellor, social worker, or similar expert professional.

## Program Schedule & Weekly Learning Outcomes

### SESSION 1: Understanding ADHD

- Explain core characteristics of ADHD and how they may present in academic environments.
- Identify personal strengths and challenges associated with ADHD as an adult learner.
- Identify common myths and facts related to ADHD.
- Build an understanding of ADHD symptomology and executive functioning, and how they can impact learning and other aspects of life.
- Through introspection, gain a clearer understanding of how ADHD shapes our focus, motivation, and learning patterns.
- Reframe ADHD through a strengths-based and neurodiversity-affirming lens.
- Identify available student support services at the college and how to get connected.

### SESSION 2: Time Management & Organization

- Identify common time-management challenges linked to ADHD.

- Understand the concept of Time Horizons and why tools and strategies are necessary for effective time management and organization.
- Explore and apply tools and strategies to improve personal time management and organization.
- Evaluate which organizational systems best align with individual learning preferences.

### **SESSION 3: Procrastination & Prioritization**

- Distinguish between urgency and importance when evaluating academic and personal tasks.
- Identify personal procrastination patterns and contributing factors.
- Identify and apply preferred prioritization strategy to manage current and upcoming tasks.
- Apply the SMART goal framework to set and achieve a personal or academic goal.

### **SESSION 4: Managing Assignments & Productivity**

- Break down a complex or long-term assignment into manageable steps.
- Estimate time and effort required for individual task components.
- Create and follow a realistic, flexible plan to initiate and complete each task by a set deadline.
- Identify tools and strategies to support focus and productivity.

### **SESSION 5: Midterm Prep – Study Strategies**

- Identify two most effective study strategies and how they can be implemented in a study session.
- Identify strategies to help maintain focus.

### **SESSION 6: ADHD & Sleep**

- Explain the relationship between ADHD, sleep, attention, and executive functioning.
- Identify personal sleep challenges and barriers common among students with ADHD.
- Experiment with implementing at least one sleep-supportive habit or strategy.

### **SESSION 7: The Study Cycle – Reading & Note-Taking**

- Describe the phases of the study cycle and their purpose.
- Apply active reading, note-taking, and review strategies that support attention and retention.

### **SESSION 8: Assistive Tech & Learning Tools**

- Identify assistive technology tools that support focus, attention, productivity, time-management, orga-

nization and other ADHD-related learning needs.

- Select appropriate AT tools to support personal learning needs and evaluate their effectiveness in improving academic performance.

## **SESSION 9: Finding Balance & Managing Stress**

- Recognize signs of stress and burnout, and identify the academic and personal impacts associated with them.
- Identify support systems, boundaries, coping strategies and self-care activities that contribute to balance and well-being.
- Practice coping strategies to support stress management and overall well-being.

## **SESSION 10: Metacognition**

- Define metacognition and how reflective practice can contribute to improved academic performance.
- Use self-awareness and reflective questioning to assess effort, performance, and strategy effectiveness, and to inform intentional decision making.
- Use the What-If-Calculator to evaluate grade potential based on academic progress.

## **SESSION 11: ADHD & Mental Health**

- Describe ADHD as a neurotype within a neurodiversity framework rather than a deficit-based medical model.
- Describe the intersection between ADHD, mental health, and executive functioning (i.e. emotional regulation, impulse control, flexible thinking, self-monitoring, etc.).
- Use respectful, strengths-based, and non-oppressive language when discussing ADHD and other neurodivergent identities.

## **SESSION 12: Exam Prep – Studying & Test Taking**

- Analyze exam requirements and course learning outcomes to identify what content to prioritize when studying.
- Develop and implement a realistic, flexible study plan that incorporates effective time management, prioritization, and task breakdown strategies.
- Identify cognitive, emotional, and environmental factors (including distraction, sleep, and anxiety) that impact studying and test performance.
- Apply evidence-based study strategies to improve retention and academic performance.
- Select appropriate academic, assistive technology, and wellness supports to enhance learning, self-regula-

tion, and exam readiness.

# SESSION 1: UNDERSTANDING ADHD

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## Learning Outcomes

After completing this session, participants should be able to:

- Explain core characteristics of ADHD and how they may present in academic environments.
- Identify personal strengths and challenges associated with ADHD as an adult learner.
- Identify common myths and facts related to ADHD.
- Build an understanding of ADHD symptomology and executive functioning, and how they can impact learning and other aspects of life.
- Through introspection, gain a clearer understanding of how ADHD shapes our focus, motivation, and learning patterns.
- Reframe ADHD through a strengths-based and neurodiversity-affirming lens.
- Identify available student support services at the college and how to get connected.



*An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/adhdskillsgroup/?p=5#h5p-1>

[Download Session 1 PowerPoint File \(new tab\)](#)

## Slide 2: Group Guidelines

- **The Basics:**
  - Arrive on time and stay to the end, when possible

- Mute your mic when not in use
- Use the “Raise Hand” button to ensure everyone has an equal opportunity to share
- You are encouraged to turn your camera on if you are able/comfortable
- **Respect:**
  - Everyone’s experiences with ADHD are unique. What works for one person might not work for another.
  - Be open-minded and non-judgmental when others share their thoughts, strategies, or struggles.
  - Avoid interrupting or dismissing someone’s contribution — all voices matter here.
- **Confidentiality:**
  - What is shared in the group stays in the group
  - Respect privacy (do not record or screenshot sessions)

## Slide Notes:

- Consider writing a formal policy outlining expectations for group participation, respectful conduct, informed consent, and confidentiality to ensure a safe, inclusive, and supportive environment for all peer-group members. Below are some basic “ground rules” that can be modified as needed.

## Slides 4-14: ADHD Myths & Facts

### 1. **ADHD is being overdiagnosed. (FALSE)**

- The rise is related to an uptick in **awareness** and **symptom recognition**, not overdiagnosis (Mowlem et al., 2018).
  - We see more ADHD diagnoses because we have a better understanding, awareness and assessment measures to identify it.
  - Studies suggest that less than 20% of adults with ADHD are aware that they have it (Ginsberg, 2014).

### 2. **Males are more likely to be diagnosed with ADHD than females. (TRUE)**

- Research reports a ratio of males-to-females diagnosed with ADHD between 2:1 to 10:1, with elevated male-to-female ratios found among clinical research than population-based samples (Slobodin & Davidovitch, 2019).
  - Among children, **15% of boys** have ADHD versus **8% of girls** (Centers for Disease Control, 2024).
  - Among adults, the gender difference is less significant, with **5.4% of men** and **3.2% of**

**women** diagnosed with ADHD (National Institute of Mental Health, n.d.)

- A 2018 study found that the higher male-to-female diagnosis ratio is seen in clinical samples but not in population samples, **suggesting a possible sex bias in the diagnostic process of ADHD** (Mowlem et al., 2018).
  - Historically, studies have relied on subjective measures of ADHD, including few, if any, female participants
  - Evidence that this diagnostic discrepancy and subsequent referral bias result from the **differentiated presentation of ADHD symptoms** among females, as compared to males.
- Women tend to be older when they're diagnosed. Many don't know for sure they have ADHD until they're in their 30s or 40s.

### 3. Everyone with ADHD experiences the same symptoms. (FALSE)

- According to the DSM-V, there are three types of ADHD:
  - **ADHD, impulsive/hyperactive:** It involves acting without thinking and difficulty sitting still, staying on task and slowing down.
  - **ADHD, inattentive:** Common characteristics include poor concentration, disorganization and being easily distracted.
  - **ADHD, combined:** Symptoms fall in both categories of ADHD.
- All symptoms exist on a continuum, so it is possible for neurotypical brains to also experience some of these symptoms, either occasionally or to a lesser degree.
  - The diagnosis of ADHD is made based on the number and type of symptoms present, as well as the length of time those symptoms have **significantly** impacted their daily life.
- This means that anyone can experience some symptoms of ADHD at times, but without the quantity, severity, or degree of impact on daily functioning, long-term, that someone with a diagnosis may experience.
- Symptoms can also present very differently between males vs females.

### 4. People with ADHD should avoid taking medications to treat their symptoms. (FALSE)

- In many cases, ADHD medications are warranted and can significantly reduce the impact of symptoms (Ginsberg et al., 2014; Karniski, 2025; Silvers, 2024).
- Physiological basis – *ADHD is a **neurological disorder** resulting from the **deficiency of a neurotransmitter**, or a group of neurotransmitters, in specific areas of the brain* (Diamond, 2013; Milioni et al., 2016; Mowlem et al., 2018).
  - Neurotransmitters are chemicals that transmit signals between nerve cells.
  - One key neurotransmitter often deficient in individuals with ADHD is **norepi-**

**nephrine**, along with its building blocks, **dopa** and **dopamine**.

- Plays a crucial role in the **“fight-or-flight” response**, influencing, **attention**, and helping to regulate **energy levels**.
- Stimulants and nonstimulants...
  - **Stimulants**: In theory, the primary stimulant medications used to treat ADHD stimulate specific cells within the brain to produce more of this deficient neurotransmitter. That’s why these medications are called stimulants (Karniski, 2025; Silvers, 2024).
    - It’s unknown exactly how they work to relieve ADHD symptoms.
    - Unfortunately, they don’t work for everyone; up to 30% of patients do not respond to stimulant medications.
  - **Nonstimulants**: these medications work by mimicking the effects of norepinephrine in the prefrontal cortex’s receptors, increasing concentrations of norepinephrine and dopamine in the prefrontal cortex (Karniski, 2025; Silvers, 2024).

#### 5. **Adults can develop ADHD. (FALSE)**

- Those who get diagnosed with ADHD later in life actually had it their entire life; they’ve just successfully **managed or masked** the symptoms until now.
  - Gender, co-occurring mental health conditions (like anxiety) and culture or ethnic background can impact the presentation of symptoms and influences biases in diagnosis.
- Having a **high intellect** can mask the symptoms of ADHD.
- For example, you may have gotten good grades in elementary school but had to work twice as hard as your friends.
- As life becomes more chaotic in adulthood, their intellect can no longer help them manage the overwhelming details of work, family and household.
- A requirement for an ADHD diagnosis is to experience symptoms in childhood **before age 12**, even if those symptoms weren’t obvious to everyone else (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).
- Other things like stressful life events, sleep deprivation, etc. that occur in adulthood can mimic symptoms of ADHD

#### 6. **Everyone experiences symptoms of ADHD. (TRUE)**

- Many symptoms are common to everyone, to an extent, but DSM-V criteria for diagnosis require that:
  - 5 or more symptoms must be present in either symptom category
  - Symptoms must have persisted for at least 6 consecutive months
  - Symptoms must have been present before age 12

- Symptoms must be present in at least two different settings (e.g., home and work)
- Symptoms interfere with social, academic, or occupational functioning

## 7. **People with ADHD are more likely to experience sleep disorders. (TRUE)**

- Insomnia:
  - Those who are rarely hyperactive during the day may still experience racing thoughts and nighttime energy spurts that interfere with sleeping, leading to insomnia.
  - Nighttime can present the perfect opportunity to hyperfocus on a project, as there are less distractions. Unfortunately, this makes it difficult to settle down for sleep and can lead to a dys-regulated sleep-wake schedule.
  - Over time, insomnia may worsen as people start to develop feelings of stress associated with bedtime.
  - Many people with ADHD experience daytime sleepiness and difficulty waking up as a result of poor sleep.
  - Others experience restless, non-refreshing sleep with multiple nighttime awakenings.
  - (Okano et al., 2019; Pacheco, 2025; Uygur, 2025)

## 8. **People with ADHD are at an increased risk of developing mental health disorders. (TRUE)**

- **More than 3/4** of adults living with ADHD have another mental illness. The most common mental illnesses are (Fuller-Thomson et al., 2020; Ginsberg et al., 2014; Kessler et al., 2006):
  - Depression
  - Bipolar disorder
  - Social anxiety disorder
  - Substance use disorders
  - Personality disorders.
- Stats:
  - 80% of adults and 43% of children with ADHD have at least one co-occurring mental health condition (Kessler et al., 2006)
  - 42.7% of individuals with substance use disorder have ADHD (Kessler et al., 2006)
  - Up to 40% of children and 50% of adults with ADHD also have an anxiety disorder (Gair et al., 2020, Katzman et al., 2017).
  - A Canadian study found that 1 in 7 adults with ADHD attempted suicide compared to 1 in 37 adults without ADHD (Fuller-Thompson et al., 2020).
  - It also found that 1 in 4 women with ADHD has attempted suicide (Fuller-Thompson et al.,

2020).

- 32% of students with ADHD do not graduate high school (Breslau, 2011)
- Adults with ADHD are 20% less likely to be employed and earn an average of 16% less than their counterparts (Kuriyan et al., 2013).

### 9. **Special accommodations for ADHD are an unfair advantage. (FALSE)**

- Students with ADHD are at a distinct disadvantage, and school policies, accommodations, and education legislation concerning disabilities seeks to decrease this disadvantage as much as possible.
- ADHD is a real and meaningful diagnosis. Longitudinal studies tell us unequivocally that the diagnosis of ADHD confers risk for a host of negative outcomes, including not completing high school, dropping out (Breslau et al., 2011; Kessler et al., 2006; Kuriyan et al. 2013).
- In Ontario’s colleges and universities, the duty to accommodate under the Ontario Human Rights Code—clarified in the OHRC’s Policy on accessible education—requires institutions to remove barriers and provide academic accommodations (e.g., extended test time) up to the point of undue hardship to ensure equal access; province-wide accessibility planning continues under the AODA and proposed Postsecondary Education Standards (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2018; Ontario Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility, 2022).
- **TIP:** If you have an official diagnosis, are in the process of being assessed or have previously received Special Education support or had an IEP in high school, consider registering with Accessible Learning and meet with an Accessibility Advisor to find out what support and accommodations may be available to you.

### 10. **People with ADHD have an executive functioning deficit. (TRUE)**

- Next we will begin a deeper conversation about the various types of executive functioning skills and how challenges in these areas impact individuals with ADHD (Diamond, 2013 ; Milioni, 2016).

## Slide 15: Understanding ADHD as an **Executive Functioning Deficit**

- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
- We do not have a deficit of attention, but instead, we have an excess.
- Many people with ADHD do not exhibit symptoms of “hyperactivity”

## Slide Notes:

- We do not have a deficit of attention, but instead, we have an excess; or more specifically, we have difficulties regulating our attention, so extraneous stimuli that most people can tune out alerts our sensory system (Keith, 2021; Thomson-Levin, 2023).
- People with ADHD often struggle to filter out irrelevant stimuli; instead of tuning things out automatically, we end up paying attention to everything, which makes distractions harder to ignore.
- Many people with ADHD do not exhibit obvious symptoms of “hyperactivity” and the type of behaviour we think of as “hyperactive” are less common or better managed in adulthood
  - In part, this is because throughout your lifetime, you learn how to find balance or manage the excess energy (e.g. physical activity, job choice, etc)
- Diagnostic categories:
  - Hyperactive/Impulsive
  - Inattentive
  - Combined (both hyperactive/impulsive and inattentive)
- Hyperactivity can present in different ways:
  - Inability to sit still
  - Extroverts
  - Motor mouth, over talking
  - Busy mind (mental chatter)

## Slide 16: What is Executive Function?

- A set of cognitive processes that support goal-directed behaviour by regulating thoughts and actions through cognitive control, selecting, and successfully monitoring actions that facilitate the attainment of chosen objectives.

## Slide 17: ADHD is an Executive Functioning Deficit

- *Graphic depicting ten interrelated dimensions of executive functioning, highlighting the bi-directional and cascading influence of deficits within any single domain on performance across the others (Diamond, 2013).*
- *(Diagram created by Emily Nascimben)*

## Slide Notes:

- *Diagram illustrating the complexities of ADHD*
  - The intertangled mess of executive functioning processes and how they impact one another (the interdependent relationship between these cognitive processes).
- **Emotional Control:** ability to manage emotions and direct your behaviour, keeping feelings in a moderate range, mood swings
- **Flexible Thinking:** adjust behaviour to unexpected changes
- **Working Memory:** ability to hold information in your mind to complete tasks, keeping key information in mind while using it
- **Organization:** keeping track of things physically and mentally (information, tasks, etc.)
- **Impulse Control:** decision making, slowing down to think before act
- **Time Management:** being aware of time passing, time blindness
- **Planning & Prioritization:** set and meet goals, ability to plan steps to reach goals
- **Task Initiation:** taking action to get started on tasks
- **Attention & Focus:** ability to regulate and direct your attention, maintain focus on the task at hand
- **Self-Monitoring:** be aware of how you are doing in the moment, the ability to self-evaluate your own behaviour

## Slide 18: Strengths of the ADHD Brain

- **Hyperfocus**
  - Ability to focus intensely on meaningful tasks.
  - Ability to stay “in the zone” for long stretches.
- **Creativity**
  - Ability to think in original and imaginative ways.
  - Ability to find unique solutions to problems.
- **Novelty Seeking**
  - Ability to feel energized by new ideas and experiences.
  - Ability to stay motivated when things are fresh or different.
- **Curiosity**
  - Ability to ask questions and explore new topics.
  - Ability to notice interesting details others may miss.
- **Tenacity**
  - Ability to stick with goals that matter.
  - Ability to push through challenges with determination.

## Slide 19: ADHD Super Powers

- Qualities:
  - Perceptive
  - Outspoken
  - Compassionate
  - Humility
  - Loyal
  - Adaptable
  - Problem-solvers
  - Brainstorming
  - Energetic
  - Enthusiastic
  - Competitive
  - Passionate
  - Hyperfocus
  - Resilience
  - Authenticity
  - Unique perspective
  - Willingness to take risks
  - Entrepreneurship
  - Leadership
  - Open-minded
  - Imagination
  - Creativity
  - Empathy
  - Optimism
  - Spontaneous
  - Innovative
  - Hardworking
  - Vitality
  - Curiosity
  - Sense of humour
  - Calm under pressure
  - Eager
  - Intuitive thinker
  - Self-aware

- Resourceful
- Tackling new challenges
- Tenacity

## Slide 20: Famous People with ADHD

### Slide Notes:

- Many of these individuals are well known for having ADHD; others you may not have been aware of. Similarly, some of these individuals are confirmed to have diagnoses, others are suspected or assumed (particularly the historical figures).

# SESSION 2: TIME MANAGEMENT & ORGANIZATION

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## Learning Outcomes

After completing this session, participants should be able to:

- Identify common time-management challenges linked to ADHD.
- Understand the concept of Time Horizons and why tools and strategies are necessary for effective time management and organization.
- Explore and apply tools and strategies to improve personal time management and organization.
- Evaluate which organizational systems best align with individual learning preferences.



*An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/adhdskillsgroup/?p=27#h5p-2>

[Download Session 2 PowerPoint File \[new tab\]](#)

## Slide 4: Common Time Management Issues

- **Disorganization** – missing or mixing up deadlines
- **Procrastination** – running out of time and handing things in late

- **Overwhelm** – Not knowing what to do or where to start
- **Balance** – difficulty juggling work/school/life balance, not enough time, feeling behind

### Slide Notes:

- Discuss common challenges students experience with managing their time
- Ask the group whether they have experienced these difficulties, whether they have strategies to avoid these problems, if these are areas they hope to work on, etc.

## Slide 5: Create a Semester Plan

- An overview of all evaluations by week, across each course.
- Use your **Instructional Plan** to find the following details for each course:
  - All graded evaluations (tests, quizzes, exams, assignments, etc.)
  - The due date/time for each
  - The percent value each assessment is worth.
- Choose an option that works best for you.
  - 4-month wall calendar
  - Online app (add reminders)
  - Spreadsheet

### Slide Notes:

- Visual example of a completed Semester Plan template
- Visual example of a 4-month semester calendar
- Show students how to find the necessary details to keep track of their course evaluations, using their instructional plans

## Slide 6: Instructional Plans

- A guide to your courses and an essential planning and study, too.
- Use this to create your **Semester Plan**.
- Purpose:
  - Evaluation summary (grade breakdown)
  - Weekly Schedule – tells you what you need to do each week for your course.
    - Key Concepts/Learning Outcomes (what you will learn)

- Required preparations (e.g. readings)
- When assessments are due

## Slide Notes:

- This tool is designed to help you plan and prioritize your time effectively, and works best when used in combination with a planner/agenda or digital calendar app.
- Explain the layout:
  - Column with the number and dates for each week of the semester
  - Vertical section for each course
    - Column for each graded evaluation (assignments, projects, essays, tests, quizzes, exams, etc.)
    - Column for the due dates (assignment deadlines, test dates, etc.)
    - Column for the weighted (%) value of each evaluation

## Slide 7: Your Semester Plan

- *Visual of sample completed semester plan template*

## Slide 8: Why We Need Time Management Strategies

- **Humans are bad at judging time.**
  - We all perceive it differently
  - Some people are stronger at “seeing” time horizons (the future, events in the future, perceiving the time needed to meet the demands)
  - Others have “*time blindness*” or a much shorter ability to see time horizons (less ability to effectively perceive time, making it difficult to plan ahead).
- **We can’t remember everything – and the busier we get, the easier it is to forget!**
- **Typical Development of Time Horizons by Age Range:**
  - Age 2: Now
  - Ages 3-5: 5-20 minutes
  - 1st Grade: Several hours
  - 3rd grade: 8-12 hours
  - Ages 12-16: 2-3 days
  - Ages 17-23: 2-3 weeks
  - Ages 23-35: 3-5 weeks
- **Executive Functioning is not fully developed until 23-26 years of age!**

## Slide Notes:

- Discuss.
  - This is *typical development*.
  - Consider this in the context of program timelines: 2-5 weeks at best!
  - Consider the implications for those who are neurodiverse.
- **The takeaways:**
  - Humans are bad at judging time. – we all perceive it
  - Some people are stronger at “seeing” time horizons – the future and the events in the future along with the demands that go along with these demands
  - Others have “time blindness” or much shorter ability to see time horizons.
  - we can’t remember everything – and the busier we get the more we forget

## Slide 9: Time Management Tools

- Paper: will you carry this with you all the time?
- Digital calendar: will the mobile device be a distraction?
- Mobile app: will the mobile device be a distraction?

## Slide Notes:

- Discuss options:
  - Planning tools only work if it’s always with you and “at hand”
  - Paper: can be cumbersome.
  - Do you routinely leave objects and things behind?
  - Will you always have a writing tool with you to make changes or add things?
  - Tech: will you get distracted with other features on your mobile device?
  - Other pros or cons?

## Slide 10: Hybrid Approach

- Record To-Do lists and keep track of homework activities in your notebook or notepad
- Add reminders for your task list, build a weekly and monthly calendar
- Update your term calendar that is displayed in home study space and shows dates for major assignments, tests, and exams

## Slide Notes:

- Discuss what this might look like...
- You can use any mix of things that works.
- If you know something works for you keep using it. But maybe add something else to it if you need to
- Just be careful that you don't make things too complicated!
- Get support to help figure out the right strategy & tools from a learning specialist

## Slide 11: Using a Weekly Planner

- *Used to schedule your time weekly by day and time.*
- **To start, add all fixed dates:**
  - Regular weekly events (e.g. lectures, work/volunteer/co-op schedule, etc.)
  - All test dates and assignment deadlines from your Semester Plan.
  - Any other personal obligations (appointments, social events, etc.)
- **Next, add flexible dates:**
  - Check for upcoming due dates, estimate how much time you need to allocate for each task and schedule specified blocks of time to complete them.
  - Other important responsibilities (laundry, groceries, pay bills, etc.)
  - Personal tasks (meals, exercise, self-care, etc.)
- **\*Tips:**
  - Colour code your events for clarity
  - Use pen for fixed dates/events and pencil for flexible ones
  - Remember to **schedule your weekly planning time** in your agenda.

## Slide Notes:

- Discuss how to use a weekly planner effectively.
- Discuss the benefit of a vertical style layout with hours, allowing you to visualize the finite hours in your day for those who struggle with time blindness
- REMEMBER: Set aside a regular time each week to review your semester plan and schedule the following week by blocking off the time required to complete any assignments/reading/studying in your planner/agenda.

## Slide 12: Use Your Time Mindfully

- *Organization and time management is all about:*
  - **Planning** – thinking ahead, using helpful tools
  - **Prioritizing** – figuring out what is important
  - **Scheduling** – booking blocks of time to work on specific tasks
  - **Flexibility** – managing expectations and being realistic

### Slide Notes:

- We all have massive to-do lists and a million things to do – but just because we have a lot to do doesn't mean we are accomplishing the things we want to- or that we are making progress on goals that are important.
- This is why it's important to take stock of how we are using our time.
- Consider time tracking – use a timer to track how long it takes you to complete typical daily routines to help you plan more effectively.
- The goals you set during the first 3 weeks of a semester affect your performance for the rest of the term (Van Blerkom, 2012).

## Slide 13: Organization Tips—Using Tools to Offload Memory

- Employ external memory aids to reduce cognitive load and minimize forgetting:
  - Calendars
  - Day Planners
  - To-do lists/
  - Notebooks
  - Sticky Notes
  - Alarms
  - Timers
  - Digital notifications
  - Productivity apps
  - Smartwatch
- \*Remember to check your calendar, planner and to-do list regularly!

## Slide Notes:

- Reduce your mental load by using external tools to offload memory—notes, reminders, apps—to offload your memory and keep track of information, so you don't have to rely on remembering everything yourself.

## Slide 14: To-Do Lists

### Getting Started

- Consider keeping a **Primary To-Do List** of all tasks on one page (adding new tasks as they arise)
- Start a new page each day to create a **Daily To-Do List** by selecting your top priorities from your primary list.
- Be practical about what you can accomplish in a day and set **realistic and attainable goals** that you will feel good about at the end of the day.

### Organization

- Include **task details** (e.g. course, assignment name, % value)
- Use a ranking system to **flag priorities**
- **Colour code** (e.g. by course, by task type, etc.) using highlighters or different coloured pens
- **Break down** bigger tasks (write each step as an individual task)
- **Estimate** how long each task will take to complete
- **Schedule** blocks of time in your **day planner** (remember breaks, consider energy levels, prioritize sleep, etc.)

## Slide 15: Organization Tips—Managing Course Materials

- Use a different **binder/notebook** for each class (or use dividers)
  - Print and store instructional plans, keep handwritten notes, etc.
- Create separate **folders** for each course for saving **digital files**
  - Download and save instructional plans
  - Store notes, assignments, other course content
- Bookmark important websites/resources
  - Bookmark important sites and resources for easy access
  - Organize bookmarks using Bookmark Folders

- Use Bookmark Bar for frequently used sites (e.g. Student Success Portal, eConestoga)
- Managing emails (create folders to organize emails, setting up inbox rules, etc.)

## Slide 16: Formatting Options for Note-Taking

- *A brief overview of note-taking formats: Cornell Notes, Outlining, Presentation Slides, Mind Maps, Digital note-taking*

### Slide Notes:

- Cornell Notes
  - The Cornell Method provides a systematic format for condensing and organizing notes. After writing notes in the main space, use the left-hand space to label each idea and detail with a keyword. This columnar note-taking technique provides an easy format for pulling out major concepts and ideas. It is simple, efficient and saves time and effort. It's not the only note-taking system, but it's a useful one.
  - METHOD:
    1. Before class, rule your paper with a margin on the left.
    2. During class, take down information on the right-hand side.
    3. When the instructor moves to a new point, skip a few lines.
    4. After class, complete the phrases and ideas as much as possible.
    5. For every significant bit of information, write keywords in the left margin.
  - **To review:** cover your notes, leaving only the key words exposed. Say the keyword out loud, then say as much as you can of the material that is covered.
  - When you have said as much as you can, check the covered material to see if it matches what was written.
- Outlining:
  - Good setup for easy review later
  - Course outline can help with preparing the outline, or concepts for the week from the instructional plan
- Presentation Slides: You can select how many slides per page and leave yourself room for notes
  - Print them off before class or add to OneNote file
  - Add to them during class
  - Write down timestamps if recording
  - Use symbols

- Mind Maps: great for making connections, relating content, a visual depiction
- Digital: reminder about organization
  - Set up folders for each course to organize notes
  - Use MS OneNote – set up a “notebook” for each class with “sections” for each week/unit, and “pages” for each lecture/concept

## Slide 17: Digital Tools to Support Note-Taking

- Microsoft Word
- Microsoft OneNote
- Mindomo
- Read & Write Gold
  - Convert digital text files into accessible formats
  - Listen to books using the built-in screen reader
  - Use spell check and word prediction to edit text and build vocabulary
  - Highlight facts for research in e-books and web content, then collect and organize facts in a Word document
  - Create a vocabulary list
  - And more!

# SESSION 3: PROCRASTINATION & PRIORITIZATION

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## Learning Outcomes

After completing this session, participants should be able to:

- Distinguish between urgency and importance when evaluating academic and personal tasks.
- Identify personal procrastination patterns and contributing factors.
- Identify and apply preferred prioritization strategy to manage current and upcoming tasks.
- Apply the SMART goal framework to set and achieve a personal or academic goal.



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/adhdskillsgroup/?p=31#h5p-3>

[\*\*Download Session 3 PowerPoint File \(new tab\)\*\*](#)

## Slide 4: Procrastination is an EMOTIONAL REACTION

- Procrastination is NOT “*laziness*” or “*forgetfulness*”.
  - We are trying to avoid doing something that will make us feel bad.
  - We choose to feel good now at the expense of long-term goals.
  - Can become a habit rather than a conscious thought.
  - Try to untangle your emotions from your tasks.

- Understanding why you are procrastinating can help you resolve the root problem.
- Contributing Factors:
  - Unpleasant emotions
  - Expecting perfection
  - Distant sense of future self
  - Thought distortions (errors in thinking)
  - Environmental distractions
  - Belief that motivation initiates action
- *Emotions that can lead to procrastination: ANGER, ANXIETY, BAD MOOD, BOREDOM, DELAY, DESPAIR, DREAD, FEAR, FRUSTRATION, GUILT, IRRITABILITY, LACK OF FOCUS, LACK OF INTENTION, NEGLIGENCE, NERVOUSNESS, OVERTHINKING, PERFECTIONISM, REMORSE, RESENTMENT, RESTLESSNESS, SHAME, SLEEPINESS, STRESS, UNCERTAINTY, UNEASE, WORRY*

## Slide Notes:

- Why do we procrastinate? What are the consequences?
- Procrastination is an emotional reaction to something. We are trying to avoid doing something that will make us feel bad.
- **Awareness is the First Step:** to overcome procrastination you need to have an understanding of the REASONS WHY you procrastinate and the function procrastination serves in your life.
- Motivation: stay motivated for **productive reasons** (reasons for learning and achieving that lead to positive, productive, satisfying feelings and actions). These reasons are in contrast to engaging in a task out of fear of failing, or not making your parents angry, or not looking stupid, or doing better than other people to “show off.”
- Positive self-talk (Talk to yourself in ways that remind you of your goals and replace old, counter-productive habits of self-talk. Instead of saying, “I wish I hadn’t...” say, “I will ...”)
- think about how good you’ll feel in the end

## Slide 5: Getting OUT of the Procrastination Cycle

- **Procrastination cycle (*graphic*):**
  - Anticipating task → Negative feelings about task → Delaying task (temporary relief) → Alternative Behaviour → Loss of time, increased pressure → Resulting negative emotions → REPEAT
    - **Cyberslacking:** an ‘alternate behaviour’, typically internet/technology based, like watching

TV, gaming, social media, etc. (source of lost time, temporary positive feelings)

- Countermeasures:
  - Self-compassion
  - *self-forgiveness*
  - *Finding meaning in the journey to the destination*
  - *Visualizing future self*
  - *Collecting all necessary information to complete the task*
  - *Setting up your environment for success*
  - *Knowing that action can trigger motivation*

## Slide Notes:

- Discuss how countermeasures can help exit the procrastination cycle, enter TASK INITIATION and eventually, as motivation kicks in and momentum builds, TASK COMPLETION.
- Discuss the slippery slope of cyberslacking and how time-blindness can lead to significant time-loss (particularly considering the ADHD super-ability to hyperfocus on tasks of high interest).

## Slide 6: Facts About Procrastination

- **We are more likely to procrastinate when goals are vague or abstract**, compared to when goals are concrete and clearly defined (use SMART goals).
- People who procrastinate tend to have **lower grades**.
- Procrastination is negatively correlated with **happiness**.
- **Chronic procrastination can impact your health:**
  - Higher instances of mental health problems, stress, and lowered general well-being.
  - Increases the likelihood of experiencing headaches, colds, and digestive problems.
  - Linked to heart disease and cardiovascular illness.
    - A survey of over 700 people discovered that people who procrastinate have a **63% higher risk of poor heart health**.

## Slide Notes:

- (Sirois, 2022)
- SMART Goals: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Timely
  - Discuss why this strategy works

- Try examples – create SMART goals as a group based on student suggestions (e.g. improve my sleep hygiene)
- Have students create their own SMART goal to try this week
- More interesting facts about procrastination (Cherry, n.d.):
  - There is a disparity between procrastinators' intended and actual work habits, a phenomenon referred to as the ***intention-action gap***, whereby they work less than they intend to.
  - This gap generally grows as the amount of time between the intention and the action grows, meaning that it tends to be greater for actions that are far in the future.
  - At the same time, this gap tends to narrow as the deadline for an intended action approaches, and it may even reverse, meaning that, when finishing tasks right before the deadline, procrastinators often end up doing more work than they originally intended.
  - People tend to discount the value of outcomes that are far in the future (a phenomenon known as ***temporal discounting*** or ***delay discounting***), which can lead to procrastination.
  - Procrastination often occurs when people display a ***present bias***, and choose to engage in activities that they feel reward them in the short-term, at the expense of activities that are more rewarding in the long term.
  - People sometimes procrastinate because they feel disconnected from their future self, a phenomenon known as ***temporal self-discontinuity*** or ***temporal disjunction***.
  - Different aspects of ***perfectionism*** are associated with procrastination in different ways.
    - Specifically, ***perfectionistic concerns***, which are characterized by excessive preoccupation with other people's opinions, negative self-evaluations, and an inability to experience satisfaction even after successful performance, are associated with higher rates of procrastination.
    - Conversely, ***procrastination strivings***, which are characterized by the tendency to set excessively high personal standards and demand perfection from oneself, are associated with lower rates of procrastination.
  - People sometimes procrastinate due to ***sensation seeking***. For example, this can involve postponing a task because of the expectation that it will be more exciting and enjoyable to work on it right before the deadline, when there's intense time pressure.
  - People who are ***externally oriented*** (i.e. believe that outcomes that they experience depend primarily on external factors outside their control) tend to procrastinate more than people who are ***internally oriented*** (i.e. believe that outcomes that they experience are within their control).
  - At both the phenotypic and genetic levels, procrastination is strongly associated with ***impulsivity*** (the tendency to take rash action without thinking or planning) and ***goal-management failure*** (the tendency to fail to set and pursue short and long-term goals).
  - procrastinators tend to have brain structures that make them less future-oriented, so they are more focused on the present than on the future compared to non-procrastinators, and accordingly are less willing to engage in aversive tasks that are important to their long-term goals.

- Cherry, K. (n.d.). *Procrastination facts and statistics*. Solving Procrastination. <https://solvingprocrastination.com/procrastination-facts/>

## Slide 7: Strategies to Minimize Procrastination

- Know yourself:
  - Consider **why** you procrastinate
  - Consider **how** you procrastinate
  - Consider your **attention span**
  - Consider your **energy level** throughout the day
- Can you...
  - **Delegate it**
  - **Dump it**
  - **Double up**
- Make a plan and schedule your time.
- Manage distractions (digital, environmental, emotional)
- What tools could be helpful?
- Forgive yourself – those who forgive themselves for procrastinating are less likely to procrastinate on future tasks!

### Slide Notes:

- Awareness is the first step... Know yourself:
  - Consider **why** you procrastinate – Understanding this can help you develop preventative strategies
  - Consider **how** you procrastinate – Can you remove/manage distractions?
  - Consider your **attention span**
    - How long can you remain focused and on task?
    - How often do you need to schedule breaks?
  - Consider your **energy levels** throughout the day
    - When do you work best?
    - Early bird or night owl?
- Can you:
  - DELEGATE IT – Ask for help
  - DUMP IT – Forget it, not important
  - DOUBLE UP – E.g. study while doing laundry

- Make a plan and schedule your time.
- What tools could be helpful?
- Forgive yourself – those who forgive themselves for procrastinating are less likely to procrastinate on future tasks!

## Slide 8: About Procrastination

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### Why do we procrastinate?

### What to do about it...

Not sure how to do the task or what's involved

Review the assignment outline/instructions and rubric, it might not be as much work as you initially thought! *(or book a Learning Skills appointment for support)*

Feeling overwhelmed or helpless (not sure where to begin)

Break the task down into smaller chunks and schedule each individual task *(or book a Learning Skills appointment for support)*

Feeling like there is plenty of time to complete task

Look over your schedule, estimate how much time each part of the assignment will take (or how long you will need to study each unit) and schedule your time over the days/weeks leading up to the due date *(or book a Learning Skills appointment for support)*

Lack of motivation/interest

You may not enjoy every assignment, think “big picture” – how will it feel once it's done?

Fear of the outcome or fear of being evaluated

Consider what cognitive distortions may be impacting your thinking (e.g. over-generalizing, emotional reasoning, jumping to conclusions), *or consider meeting with a counsellor ↓*

Stress/ anxiety/ perfectionism

Book a FREE appointment to talk to a counsellor!

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### Slide Notes:

- *Chart showing reasons why we procrastinate and what to do about it.*
- Discuss.
- Have students think of a time they procrastinated and try to analyze why, and what a good strategy to try in the future to avoid procrastinating.
- Share.

## Slide 9: Common Thought Distortions (Errors in Thinking)

Type	Meaning	Examples
<b>Black and white thinking</b>	It's all or nothing, no grey area in between.	Perfectionism – if it's not done perfectly, it's garbage. Using "always" or "never" statements.
<b>Mental filter</b>	Dwelling on the negatives, while ignoring the positives.	Noticing your failures but not recognizing your successes.
<b>Disqualifying the positive</b>	Finding reasons to discount positive things (insisting that your accomplishments or positive qualities "don't count").	I only won the race because I got lucky, I'm not actually that fast.
<b>Mind reading</b>	Jumping to conclusions and assuming we know what others are thinking/feeling.	No one chose me to be in their group, so that means no one likes me or there's something wrong with me.
<b>Fortune telling</b>	Arbitrarily making negative predictions about the future.	It's never going to work out, there's no point in trying.
<b>Overgeneralizing</b>	Viewing a negative event as an indication of everything being negative.	I did poorly on this exam, I'm terrible at taking tests, I'm never going to be able to graduate, I'm a failure.
<b>Labelling</b>	Identifying with your shortcomings and internalizing them.	Thinking "I'm such a failure" instead of "I made a mistake"
<b>Personalization / Blame</b>	Blaming yourself for something you weren't entirely responsible for, or blaming others and overlooking how your own attitudes/behaviours may have contributed to a problem.	If I hadn't done ____, this wouldn't have happened.
<b>Using "should" statements</b>	Criticizing or shaming yourself or others (using words like should, shouldn't, ought to, have to, must...)	I should have thought of that... I should have practiced more... you shouldn't think that way...
<b>Magnification / Minimization</b>	Blowing things out of proportion (catastrophizing) or shrinking the importance of something inappropriately.	If I don't pass this test, I'm going to fail the course, I will never graduate and my life will be a complete failure.
<b>Emotional reasoning</b>	Your reasoning comes from how you feel.	"I'm so embarrassed, I must be such an idiot" or "I don't feel like doing this, so I won't"

### Slide Notes:

- Chart showing types of thought distortions, what they mean and examples.
- Ask students if any of these resonate with them
- What can you tell yourself to counter that thought?

- <https://arfamiliesfirst.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Cognitive-Distortions.pdf>

## Slide 10: Prioritization—Using the 'Time Management Matrix'

- Prioritization Matrix

### Notes:

- Explain how it works

## Slide 11: Prioritizing Activity

- Prioritization activity

### Notes:

- Complete the activity as a group or have students try independently, then discuss.
- Remind students that answers may vary from person to person, depending on their personal values, preferences and life situation; there are many factors that may influence your decision.
- Discussion questions:
  - Did you always agree? Why/why not?
  - In which quadrant should we try to spend most of our time? Why?
  - Can you: DELEGATE IT, DUMP IT, or DOUBLE UP on any items?
  - What did I add? Why?
  - What are the consequences of spending time in each quadrant?

## Slide 12: Consequences of Prioritization Errors

- Consequences – spending too much time in each quadrant creates prioritization traps.

## Slide Notes:

1. Urgent & Important = **Firefighter's Trap**
  2. **NOT Urgent & Important** = \*spend most of your time here!
  3. Urgent & NOT Important = **Can't say 'no' Trap**
  4. NOT Urgent & NOT Important = **Procrastinator's Trap**
- Discuss pros and cons of this strategy
    - Better for people who have a hard time deciding what to prioritize
    - More structured framework for decision making
    - Potentially more time-consuming

## Slide 13: Strategy: 1-2-3 To-do List

1. Today
2. This week
3. Later

## Notes:

Discuss pros and cons of this strategy...

- Big lists are overwhelming and sometimes contribute to procrastination or leave us feeling discouraged when we see we have only crossed a couple items off the list
- Creating a smaller list for the day/week can help you make sure you tackle the priorities and feel like you accomplished your goals for the day/week, even if that's not everything from your to-do list.
- Etc.

## Slide 14: More Strategies to Combat Procrastination

- **Positive self-talk:** Talk to yourself in ways that remind you of your goals and replace old, counter-productive habits of negative self-talk.

- Instead of saying, “I wish I hadn’t... ” say, “I will ...”
- **Motivation:** Stay motivated for *productive reasons* (reasons for learning/achieving that lead to positive, satisfying feelings) rather than engaging in a task out of fear of failing, disappointing others, not looking stupid, or doing better than peers to “show off.”
  - E.g. “learning this will help me be successful in my career” or “doing well on \_\_\_ will make it easier to \_\_\_.”
- **Visualization:** Picture yourself after completing the task successfully, how do you feel?
  - Think about how good you’ll feel to have it completed.
- **The Seinfeld Strategy:** “Don’t break the chain!”
  - Use a calendar to mark each day you completed a specified task to build momentum.
- **The One Thing Rule:** commit to doing one productive thing a day.

## Slide Notes:

- A study published in Neuron showed that **imagining a threat elicits almost the same response in the brain as experiencing it in real life** (Reddan, Schiller & Wager, 2018).
- This paper’s researchers suggest **an effective way to cope with a threat is to imagine it, but without the negative consequences.**
- Close to 90% of our thoughts today are believed to be the same as yesterday!
- People commonly use visualization techniques to get motivated and build their confidence.
- Ancient Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu once said,

*“Watch your thoughts, they become your words;  
watch your words, they become your actions;  
watch your actions, they become your habits;  
watch your habits, they become your character;  
watch your character, it becomes your destiny.”*

# SESSION 4: MANAGING ASSIGNMENTS & PRODUCTIVITY

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## Learning Outcomes:

After completing this session, participants should be able to:

- Break down a complex or long-term assignment into manageable steps.
- Estimate time and effort required for individual task components.
- Create and follow a realistic, flexible plan for initiating and completing each task by a set deadline.
- Identify tools and strategies to support focus and productivity.



*An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/adhdskillsgroup/?p=38#h5p-4>

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## Slide 4: Managing Assignments—Gather Essential Information

### 1. Basic Details:

- **Weighted value** of the assignment (% of your grade)

- **Deadline** (date, time)– are there checkpoints?

## 2. Specific Requirements

- Locate and analyze the **assignment instructions**
- Locate and analyze the **rubric**
- **Ask your professor** about anything you don't understand

## Slide 5: Managing Assignments: Identify Specific Requirements

- What do you need to **hand in**?
  - Assignment format (e.g. written paper/essay, research project, annotated bibliography, literary review, case study, PowerPoint presentation, other)
  - Is there a **template**? (If not, find out the expected layout/structure)
- Specific **requirements/restrictions**?
  - Page/word limit
  - Resources you must use, or must NOT use
  - Number of reference sources
  - Grading expectations (**see rubric**)
- Is **APA** required? (visit APA@Conestoga or see a Writing Consultant)
  - Font & Layout
  - Paper Format
  - In-text Citations
  - References
- **Where** to submit the assignment?
  - (e.g., upload to Dropbox, post in Discussion, hand in hard copy, etc.)
  - Acceptable **file format(s)**
  - **File name** specifications (e.g. firstname\_lastname\_coursecode)

## Slide 6: Task Breakdown Strategy

- **What is it?**
  - Taking a large assignment and dividing it into smaller chunks, providing a step-by-step plan to complete the task.
- **Why use it?**
  - Reduces feelings of stress and overwhelm by making the task more manageable.
  - Helps you plan your time to complete the assignment before the deadline.
  - Helps to ensure that *all* required components have been completed to meet assignment requirements/expectations.
  - Setting goals and planning your time will allow you to get other important tasks done, too!

## Slide 7: Creating a Task Breakdown

- List all subtasks
  - Organize the task list by priority, creating a step-by-step action plan
- Estimate timeline
  - How long do you expect each individual task to take?
- Schedule blocks of time
  - Use a day planner or calendar to schedule blocks of time to complete each step of task breakdown between now and the deadline.
- Follow your task breakdown plan carefully
  - Check each step off after completion.

## Slide 8: Task Breakdown Template

- *Example of Task Breakdown Template and completed sample breakdown for writing an essay.*

### Slide Notes:

- *Optional: encourage students to try using this template!*
  - Provide an opportunity for them to pull up an upcoming assignment and work through complet-

ing the template to help them initiate the task.

- Remember to make a concrete plan (remember SMART goals): Use a day planner, preferably an hourly agenda with a vertical weekly layout (column-style) for time blocking.
  - This will allow you to visualize the finite hours available each week, which is particularly helpful for those who experience time blindness.
  - Day Planner / Weekly Agenda, ideal layout:
    - Days of the week run **vertically in columns**, left to right
    - Hours run **top to bottom**
- REMEMBER: Set aside a regular time each week to review your semester plan and schedule the following week by blocking off the time required to complete any assignments/reading/studying in your planner/agenda.

## Slide 9: Managing Distractions

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### Ways we procrastinate

### Strategies to combat procrastination

#### Electronics Distractions

(e.g. phone, TV, etc)

- Turn off phone.
- Work away from TV

#### Online Distractions

(e.g. Facebook, Reddit, YouTube, etc.)

- Turn off the internet.
- Work away from the computer.
- Install a social media blocker or website blocker like “AntiSocial”

#### Environmental Distractions

(e.g. noise, friends, roommates)

- Designate “Do Not Disturb” study time.
- Work in quiet area or wear headphones

#### Emotional Distractions

(e.g. boredom, forgetfulness, feeling overwhelmed, anxiety)

- Reward yourself for completing boring work!
  - Use a planner
  - Break down tasks and study in short bursts.
  - Prioritize.
-

## Slide Notes:

1. Have students make a list of common distractions, interruptions, and ways they get off track.
2. Limit distractions as much as possible in advance by making a contingency plan for distractions/interruptions you foresee so you can proactively avoid them.

## Slide 10: Pomodoro Method

- Pomodoro technique visual & screenshot of pomofocus.io
  - Makes longer study sessions more manageable with short work intervals and regular breaks.
  - Helps you manage your time and stay on track.
  - Works well with the Task Breakdown strategy

## Slide Notes:

- Pomodoro:
  - **Pomodori:** 25-minute work intervals
  - **5-minute break** after each work interval
  - **Longer break of 20 – 30 minutes** after every 4th pomodori.
    - Breaks up longer study sessions with regular breaks.
    - Helps you manage your time effectively.
  - Explain/demonstrate how to use pomofocus.io (how to adjust settings for length of study sessions and breaks, how to assign tasks to each pomodoro, adjust alarms/notifications, etc.)
- (image) Pomofocus. (2026). *Pomodoro timer interface* [Screenshot]. <https://pomofocus.io/>
- [What is the Pomodoro Technique? – Smartpedia – t2informatik](#)

## Slide 11: Body Doubling

- Can be done in a variety of ways:
  - In-person with a study buddy
  - Joining/forming a peer study group
  - Virtually via MS Teams/WhatsApp/FaceTime, etc.

- Using an online platform, like:
  - [The ADHD Body Double: A Unique Tool for Getting Things Done – ADDA – Attention Deficit Disorder Association](#)
  - [Flow Club](#)
  - [Focused Space – a body doubling platform you’ll actually use](#)
  - [Focusmate—Virtual body doubling for getting anything done](#)
  - [Deepwrk: Body Doubling Website | Body Doubling App](#)

## Slide Notes:

- Ask students if they have ever tried body-doubling and what their experience was like

## Slide 12: Body Doubling Benefits

- Improves focus
- Reduces feelings of overwhelm
- Learn new skills
- Boosts motivation
- Mutual accountability

## Slide Notes:

- Helps overcome/avoid procrastination
- Improved productivity and task completion rate
- Bonus: Makes the task more enjoyable – dopamine response to social interactions
- Discuss other body doubling benefits:
  - Mutual accountability
  - Helps focus
  - Improved efficiency and task completion rate
  - Boosts motivation
  - Helps with getting started
  - Models good productive behaviour
  - Feeling you are “in this together” (feel supported, less isolated, reduced stress/anxiety over task)
  - Makes the task more enjoyable – dopamine response to social interactions

# SESSION 5: MIDTERM PREP & STUDY STRATEGIES

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## Learning Outcomes:

After completing this session, participants should be able to:

- Identify two most effective study strategies and how they can be implemented in a study session.
- Identify strategies to help maintain focus



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/adhdskillsgroup/?p=45#h5p-5>

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## Slide 4: All Learning Strategies Have Value

- *Chart of learning strategies organized by level of efficacy.*

### Slide Notes:

- The following table outlines a number of various study strategies, organized into categories based on their level of efficacy.

- Many students use the method of re-reading course materials or “going-over” notes as their main study strategy.
- Research shows that this is actually one of the least effective strategies for learning and retaining concepts, which may be a surprise to you.
- It is important to note that none of these strategies are “wrong” or “bad,” but if your only study strategies are coming from the “low efficacy” category, perhaps it is time to consider adding some higher efficacy strategies to your practice.
- On the next slides, we are going to highlight the top two most effective study strategies that you can employ.
- Dunlosky, J., Rawson, K. A., Marsh, E. J., Nathan, M. J., & Willingham, D. T. (2013). Improving students’ learning with effective learning techniques: Promising directions from cognitive and educational psychology. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 14(1), 4-58.

## Slide 5: Strategy 1—Retrieval Practice/Self-Testing

- A.K.A. Self-Testing/Quizzing
  - The practice of “recalling” or bringing information to mind (drawing from your memory)
  - Testing yourself to practice remembering information.
  - Retrieval practice strengthens your ability to retain information by helping you transfer learnings to your long-term memory.
  - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b0Lg\\_J6l95o&t=3s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b0Lg_J6l95o&t=3s)

### Slide Notes:

- According to research, retrieval practice is the best way to retain information that you learn.
- It is simply practicing bringing information to mind.
- It is sometimes referred to as self-testing because it involves testing yourself and practicing remembering information to revisit it and reinforce the pathways back to those memories.
- *Watch video:* Conestoga College Student Success. (2020, September 24). *Test Prep: Try Retrieval Practice to Strengthen Your Memory*[Video]. YouTube. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b0Lg\\_J6l95o&t=3s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b0Lg_J6l95o&t=3s)

## Slide 6: Why is Retrieval Practice Effective?

- Traditional strategies like rereading and highlighting involve taking information in.
  - Storing information in your memory
- Retrieval practice focuses on taking information out.
  - Recalling information from memory

### Slide Notes:

- Many students use traditional strategies, such as re-reading, highlighting or re-writing notes, which focus on taking information **in**.
- These strategies alone do not result in effective learning.
- Retrieval practice focuses on taking information **out**, and research shows that it is very effective.

## Slide 7: How Do I Practice Retrieval?

- *Note: the best time to do this isn't immediately after you learn something, but after you have started to forget it.*
- Use multiple strategies:
  - **“Brain Dump”** – Write or draw everything you remember from memory, then check notes for accuracy and important points you missed.
  - **Flashcards** – go beyond words and definitions (use pictures, diagrams, etc.)
    - Check out [The complete guide to making and studying flashcards online](#).
  - **Practice Questions or Tests** – from textbooks, headings, study groups, study guides, course outlines (then check answers).
  - **Concept / Mind Maps** – show connections.
  - **Draw / Label Diagrams**
  - **Teach** – practice explaining concepts to someone else.
  - **Study Group** – discuss course content with peers, quiz each other.

### Slide Notes:

- These retrieval strategies will not only help you to retain more of the content you are studying, but it will also help you to identify gaps in knowledge or any material that may require some extra review.

- A **brain dump** is when you simply jot down or state everything you can remember about a given topic or concept. Afterward, you check your notes for accuracy – were you correct? Is there anything you missed?
- You can also create **flashcards** (either digital or physical)
- Look for **practice questions** – you can check your **textbook** for **review questions**, work with a **study group**, and develop questions using the **key concepts** or from your instructional plan. You can also check your course shell for any review material your instructor may provide. learning outcomes
- Some other ways to practice retrieval include drawing **mind maps**, **labelling** or **drawing diagrams**, **teaching** the content to someone else or joining a **study group** to discuss content with peers.

## Slide 8: Strategy 2—Spaced Repetition

- A.K.A. Distributed Practice
- Breaking up study sessions over time (a number of days/weeks) rather than studying in one massed practice.
- The opposite of “cramming.”

### Slide Notes:

- The process of breaking up study sessions over time, rather than one mass practice (also known as “cramming”).
- You can see the example of how 5 hours of studying can be spaced out across several days leading up to the test or exam.
- This gives you the opportunity to forget and then remember again.
- This is the basis of retrieval practice: the struggle to remember information helps strengthen retention by transferring knowledge from your short-term to your long-term memory (strengthening synapses, or connections between neurons in the brain).
- Watch video: Conestoga College Student Success. (2020, September 24). *Avoid Cramming! Study with Spaced Practice*[Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UOKJT7gLbYo>

## Slide 9: Why Is Paced Practice So Effective?

- Moves information from short-term to long-term memory.
- No procrastination and no need to cram.
- Allows you time to forget so that you can practice retrieval.
- Keeps attention elevated.

### Slide Notes:

- Explain diagram – the information processing model of how memory works
  - Information = sensory input
  - Attention = selection
  - Encoding = storage/organization/association
  - Maintenance/rehearsal = review/retrieval
- Cramming only allows you to use short-term memory.
- Our short-term memory can only hold a small amount of information for a short period of time.
- Spaced practice uses long-term memory – spreading out studying over multiple days and weeks. It gives your brain time to store the information.
- Spaced practice allows your brain to forget and then learn to remember again.
- Forgetting is an important piece of the memory process.
- Each time you leave the concepts you are studying and come back to them later, you have a chance to forget some of them, and the struggle to remember or the need to look up the answers will help reform and reinforce the pathways back to those memories.
- In addition, you will be sleeping between your study sessions, and sleep is very important for consolidating memories and transferring information from short-term to long-term memory.

## Slide 10: But How Do I Stay Focused?

- Maintaining focus during a study session can be challenging!
- Remember:
  - Schedule breaks
  - Reward yourself
  - Capitalize on the time of day you are most alert
  - Plan ahead – how can you avoid distractions?

- Strategies to help you stay on task:
  - Identify and manage distractions...
  - Pomodoro Method...
  - Interleaving...
  - Body Doubling...

## Slide Notes:

- Discuss.
- Ask students what strategies they use to support focus and productivity.

## Slide 11: Strategy 3—Interleaving

- Switching between different topics to break up longer study sessions.
- Like spaced repetition (distributed practice) on a smaller scale.
  - Helps with retrieval by giving time to forget and then remember again.
- Why is it effective?
  - Reduces topic exhaustion.
  - Helps to maintain attention and focus over longer periods.
  - Requires the brain to activate prior knowledge and continually retrieve information from memory.

## Slide Notes:

- Exam time can be busy, and you may be juggling studying for multiple exams at the same time, as they are all within days of each other.
- Simply switching between different topics to **break up longer study sessions**.
- Similar to spaced repetition (distributed practice) on a smaller scale.
- Why is it effective?
  - Helps to maintain attention and focus.
  - Helps with retrieval by giving time to forget and then remember again.
- First Diagram – Point out the difference between blocking and interleaving. Discuss when this strategy may be helpful:
  - For those who have a hard time staying focused for long periods
  - For topics that are less interesting/stimulating (or that are particularly challenging and mentally taxing), as prolonged focus can be difficult

- To break up longer blocks of study time (e.g. when preparing for exams)
- The second diagram shows an example of how each interleaving block for a topic can be structured.
- \*Try using the Pomodoro Method to incorporate an interleaving practice; apps like popfocus.io can help you make a plan and stick to your schedule.
  - Pomodoro technique structure:
    - Pomodori: 25-minute work intervals
    - 5-minute break after each work interval
    - Longer break of 20 – 30 minutes after every 4th pomodori.
  - Breaks up longer study sessions with regular breaks.
  - Helps you manage your time effectively.

## Slide 12: Learning & the Brain

*Consider other factors that impact our ability to learn and retain information.* For example:

- **Emotions** – content linked to strong emotions stands out in our memory.
- **Organization** – making connections to other content or experiences helps us organize our memories for better recall.
- **Motivation** – contributes to resilience and perseverance; motivated students are hard-working and goal-oriented, leading to higher achievement.
- **Environment** – sensory input (sights, sounds, smells) from the environment can have positive or negative effects on focus/attention and learning/memory formation.
- **Attention/focus** – managing distractions and choosing optimal study times.

### Slide Notes:

- We talked about the importance of retrieval practice and repetition when studying to help strengthen the synapses (connections between neurons in the brain)...
- But other factors also affect our ability to retain the information we learn or create a memory.
- *The activity of millions of neurons across many different regions of your brain must be linked to produce a coherent memory that interweaves emotions, sights, sounds, smells, event sequences, **and other stored experiences.***
- For example,
  - **Emotions** – content linked to strong emotions stands out in our memory.
  - The emotional response to an experience (content that evokes strong emotions will be more likely

to be stored in memory).

- **Organization – making connections to other content or experiences helps us organize our memories for better recall.**
- **Motivation**
  - **contributes to resilience and perseverance;** motivated students are hard-working and goal-oriented, leading to higher achievement.
  - *Motivated learners take responsibility and initiative, show curiosity and a willingness to try, put forth genuine effort, and take pride in their work.*
- **Environment** – sensory input (sights, sounds, smells) from the environment could have positive or negative effects on learning/memory formation (attention/focus).
  - In some cases, these environmental factors can help can strengthen memories (you remember what was going on or where you were when you learned something) or could pose a distraction, inhibiting/interrupting your focus/learning/memory formation.
- **Attention/focus** – managing distractions and choosing optimal study times (when most alert/energetic).
- Discuss additional factors of importance, like SLEEP & NUTRITION
- Fields, D. R. (2020). The brain learns in unexpected ways: Neuroscientists have discovered a set of unfamiliar cellular mechanisms for making fresh memories. *Scientific America*, 322(3), 74-79.  
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8284127/>

## Slide 13: Apps & Assistive Tech for Studying

- **PowerPoint:** Use *Present* view to run the deck, add the PowerPoint app to your phone for flashcards on the go!
- **Quizlet:** Create practice tests, games, and other study tools. Check out [9 different ways to study](#) & [7 Quizlet tips and tricks](#).
- **Brainscape:** Smarter flashcards for spaced repetition. Check out [Brainscape's bank of pre-made quizzes, covering many subjects](#).
- **Read&Write Gold:** Use tools like [highlighters](#), [collect highlights](#), [vocabulary tool](#), text-to-speech, etc.
- **Mindomo:** Create mind maps. [How to study with mind maps](#).
- Visit [Tech to Help You Learn](#) for more info!

## Slide Notes:

- There are many great apps and digital tools that can support your study skills, with a few of them listed here. You can also visit Tech to Help you Learn for support with using technology to support your learning.
- **Create flash cards with PowerPoint.**

# SESSION 6: ADHD & SLEEP

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## Learning Outcomes:

After completing this session, participants should be able to:

- Explain the relationship between ADHD, sleep, attention, and executive functioning.
- Identify personal sleep challenges and barriers common among students with ADHD.
- Experiment with implementing at least one sleep-supportive habit or strategy.



*An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/adhdskillsgroup/?p=51#h5p-6>

**[Download Session 6 PowerPoint File \(new tab\)](#)**

## Slide 4: ADHD & Sleep

- Higher rates of certain **sleep disorders**.
- Symptoms may go undiagnosed.
- Between 43% and 85% experience symptoms of **insomnia**.
- Experience **more severe** insomnia and poor sleep quality.

## Slide 5: ADHD & Insomnia

- **Racing thoughts** and **nighttime energy** spurts interfere with sleep.
- Nighttime can present the perfect opportunity to **hyperfocus** on a project with fewer distractions.
- Makes it difficult to settle down for sleep and can lead to a **dysregulated sleep-wake schedule**.
- Poor sleep often results in **daytime sleepiness** and **difficulty waking up**.
- Others experience **restless, non-refreshing sleep** with multiple **nighttime awakenings**.
- Over time, insomnia may worsen as people start to develop feelings of stress associated with bedtime and the consequences of not sleeping.

### Slide Notes:

- Between 43% and 85% of adults with ADHD experience symptoms of **insomnia** (a prevalence significantly higher than observed in the general population).
- Studies consistently find that adults with ADHD experience **more severe insomnia and poor sleep quality** compared to the general population.
- People who aren't outwardly hyperactive during the day may still experience a busy mind or bursts of energy at night, making it hard to fall asleep and contributing to insomnia.
- Nighttime often becomes a prime time to hyperfocus because there are fewer distractions. While this can feel productive, it can also make it harder to wind down and can disrupt the sleep-wake cycle.
- Over time, difficulty sleeping can become a pattern, especially if bedtime starts to feel stressful or is associated with frustration about not being able to sleep.
- Many individuals with ADHD feel tired during the day or struggle to wake up because their sleep is poor or inconsistent.
- Some people experience restless or non-restorative sleep, including frequent waking throughout the night.

## Slide 6: Circadian Rhythm Sleep Disorders

Most individuals with ADHD are **more alert in the evening**, making it difficult to honour school and commitments, or prioritize self-care.

- **Delayed sleep-wake phase disorder** (or delayed sleep phase syndrome) is a commonly reported circadian rhythm sleep disorder among people with ADHD.
  - Involves a delay in the sleep-wake cycle of 2+ hours.

- Can make it harder to fall asleep at night
- Can result in excessive tiredness, confusion, and lack of alertness the following morning.

## Slide Notes:

- A smaller pineal gland, irregularities in the body's internal clock, and delayed melatonin release may contribute to circadian rhythm sleep disorders in people with ADHD.
- Taking melatonin supplements at targeted times or using bright light therapy may help regulate the sleep-wake cycle and diminish the effects of DSPS.

## Slide 7: Restless Leg Syndrome

- People with restless legs syndrome (RLS) experience tingling sensations in the legs that make it hard to fall asleep.
- RLS or other types of periodic limb movement disorders may occur in **almost 50% of people with ADHD.**
- Those with both ADHD and RLS appear to spend longer in stage 1 light sleep, which is not as restorative.
- Researchers believe RLS is caused by iron and dopamine deficiencies, which are commonly associated with ADHD.

## Slide 8: Does Sleep Really Matter?

### Yes!

It Improves:

- Concentration
- Problem-solving ability
- Decision-making skills
- Mood
- Social skills

## Slide Notes:

- Research from MIT says, **YES!** (Okano et al., 2019)
- Two professors at MIT conducted a study, where they had a class of 100 students wear Fitbits to assess the impact of physical activity on test scores... Although no correlation was found, the study revealed some interesting results related to sleep and test performance.
- **3 key factors correlated with better grades**, accounting for nearly **25% of the variance** in students' academic performance...

## Slide 9: Sleep Is Important!

### 1. **Duration: 7-9 hours**

- It's the sleep you get during the days **when learning is happening** that matters most (not just the night before).

### 1. **Quality:**

- No matter how many hours of sleep you get, **going to bed after 2 AM** will have a *negative* impact on your test performance.

### 1. **Consistency:** getting the same amount of sleep each night will have a *positive* impact on your performance.

- *Even just a 30-minute variation in total sleep night-to-night can negatively impact performance.*

## Slide Notes:

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Only about **1-3% of people** are able to perform at their best **on 6 hours of sleep or less**, as a result of a **genetic mutation**; "*natural short sleepers*" do not experience the harmful health effects that most people do when they sleep less than the recommended hours (Del Pozo, 2022).

- Research finds that **sleep improves retention and comprehension** of what was studied the day before, with a **10-30% improvement**. So, it is better to get a good night's rest than to keep studying.

- Sleep is an essential function that plays a HUGE role in the **consolidation of new memories**, and instead of thinking of it as a chore that we're required to do, we should instead think of sleep as just **another phase of the learning process**, *where all of the hard work you put in during the day gets recognized, re-organized, and stored for easy access next time you need it.*
- During sleep, our brain is busy **processing** and **consolidating** our experiences, thoughts, feelings and learnings, so sleeping actually makes you *more likely to remember things*.

## Slide 10: Sleep Deprivation & Executive Functioning

- To understand the impact of sleep deprivation on the ADHD brain, consider the symptoms of ADHD and Sleep Deprivation...
- **ADHD + Sleep Deprivation = the “double whammy”** of executive functioning impact

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ADHD – difficulties with...	Sleep Deprivation – difficulties with...
Inattention/ distractibility	Focus/alertness, poor attention to detail (reduced attention span, microsleeps)
Impulsivity	Poor decision-making, reduced cognitive control, reduced inhibitory control
Poor working memory	Mental fatigue,
Task initiation and follow-through	Disorganization, difficulties with complex tasks
Planning and organization	Reduced mental capacity, lack of mental clarity and acuity
Emotional regulation	Emotional dysregulation (moodiness, irritability, easily overwhelmed)
Cognitive flexibility	Difficulties adapting to changes or new information, slowed mental processing

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### Slide Notes:

- To understand the impact of sleep deprivation on the ADHD brain, let's take a moment to look at some of the symptoms of ADHD and Sleep Deprivation...
- ... We see that both impact executive functioning in similar ways.
- To understand the impact of sleep deprivation on the ADHD brain, consider the symptoms of ADHD and Sleep Deprivation...
- **ADHD + Sleep Deprivation = the “double whammy” of executive functioning impact**
- Because individuals with ADHD already struggle with executive functioning, sleep deprivation exacerbates our symptoms, further impairing our executive functioning.

## Slide 11: Tips for Improved Sleep Hygiene

- Cutting off sugar, caffeine, and alcohol intake within a few hours before bedtime
- Avoiding screen time for an hour before bed
- Avoid doing stimulating activities and projects that require hyper-focusing in the evening
- Making the bed a stress-free zone reserved for sleep and sex
- Getting enough exercise and sunlight during the day
- Developing a bedtime routine that you enjoy, such as reading a favourite book, spending time with pets, or taking a warm bath
- Keeping the bedroom dark, cool, and quiet, using a white noise machine if necessary to block out intrusive noises
- Going to bed and waking up at the same time every day, choosing a time that is realistic to get the [recommended sleep](#) for your age group
- Using a weighted blanket
- Many people with ADHD have difficulties waking up in the morning. Try using [light therapy](#) or plan something enjoyable for when you get out of bed

### Slide Notes:

- Discuss practical ways students can make changes.
- Have students set SMART goals for improving sleep hygiene.

## Slide 12: What is your SMART sleep goal?

Take a few minutes to brainstorm some practical ways to improve your sleep hygiene. Make sure goals are:

**S**pecific — Exactly how will you implement this change?

**M**easurable — How will you assess progress or know when you have reached your goal?

**A**ttainable — Is it doable, practical and realistic for you?

**R**elevant — How will it help improve your sleep hygiene?

**T**ime-bound — When will you start? When will you accomplish the goal by?

# SESSION 7: THE STUDY CYCLE — READING & NOTE-TAKING

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## Learning Outcomes:

After completing this session, participants should be able to:

- Describe the phases of the study cycle and their purpose.
- Apply active reading, note-taking, and review strategies that support attention and retention.
- Identify two most effective study strategies and how they can be implemented in a study session.



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/adhdskillsgroup/?p=78#h5p-7>

[\*\*Download Session 7 PowerPoint File \(new tab\)\*\*](#)

## Slide 4: The Ongoing Study Cycle

*Diagram of the ongoing study cycle*

## Slide Notes:

- The cycle involves ongoing study preparation. Forming good habits with previewing, attending and reviewing content regularly will support effective and efficient studying and test preparation.
- Following this study cycle will save time later because the content stays fresh, already familiar, and accessible in memory; no need to dust off the cobwebs or relearn old material.

### **PREVIEW** (*5-15 minutes*)

- Before class, skim new material and learning outcomes
- Note big ideas or questions

### **ATTEND** (*go to class, complete weekly readings*)

- Listen actively
- Take notes
- Ask questions

### **REVIEW** (*within 24 hours of class/reading*)

- Reread notes
- Fill in gaps
- Develop questions

### **STUDY** (*30-50 minutes*)

- Schedule several focused study sessions per class each week (spaced practice)
- Practice retrieval and elaboration

### **CHECK**

- Can I teach this material to someone?
- Are my study methods effective?
- Do Any concepts require more review?

## Slide 5: Before Class: Preview

**Check the instructional plan for weekly learning before you start your readings or attend lectures**

Why?

- To identify reading/listening targets by guiding attention toward key information.
- Priming activates specific parts of your brain so you will be more likely to recognize key information.
- Organization – provides an outline of the topics for note-taking

**More class prep strategies:**

- **Complete weekly readings** and recommended prep
- Skim through lecture slides
- Review previous notes

Slide Notes:

- Organization Improves memory — our brain is better at storing information if it can organize it somehow!
- Make connections – how does this relate to you, your life, examples, other topics/courses/relevant content.

## Slide 6: Instructional Plans

Use details to help you identify reading targets.

Weekly Schedule of:

- Key Concepts (what you will learn)
- Required preparations (e.g. readings)
- Test dates & assignment deadlines
- Evaluation summary (grade breakdown)

Slide Notes:

Explain the difference between:

- **Course Outline** (all learning outcomes for the course and other general details) and
- **Semester Plan** (essentially, the content of the course outline, broken down week-by-week)

Why is the Semester Plan so helpful?

- Tells you what you are meant to have learned by the end of each week
- Tells you any required/recommended readings or class prep
- If you have a test on content from weeks 9-12, you will know exactly which concepts you need to study
- Tells you when all your test/exam dates are and when your assignments are due

## Slide 7: Why Complete My Course Readings?

Readings are intended to...

- Enhances **understanding**
- Promotes **active learning**
- Enables **participation**
- Encourages **critical thinking**

Readings are intended to:

- Supplement in-class information
- Reinforce lecture material
- Provide **NEW** information

Reminder:

- Course readings are “fair game” for testing
- Reading needs to be ongoing!
  - Start at the beginning of the term and make it a regular routine so you can keep up.

Slide Notes:

- People often ask, “How do you know what’s important?” ... this is how.
  - If you see something in previewing the material and in your readings, and in the lecture, the

instructor talks about it – or gives more detail – that’s important.

- If it comes up in two places, it’s likely going to be on a test.
- Tips: Be smart about it
  - You may not always have to read everything.
  - Check the unit outcomes for the week before completing readings.
  - Preview the chapter(s) and skim for headings, diagrams, charts, etc.
  - While some content might be expanded on in the textbook, some might simply be repeated content, and you may even find sections that don’t apply to the learning outcomes of the course.
  - If the reading and the lecture cover the exact same material, and you’ve gone to the lecture, you may not need to read everything in detail.

## Slide 8: Active vs. Passive Reading

### Active Reading

- Reading with a purpose (goals/intention)
- Engaging with the text (processing/analyzing)
- Essential for developing understanding and meaning
- Better memory retention
- More efficient (less re-reading)

### Passive Reading

- Focus is on “completion” rather than engagement
- No critical thinking or active analysis
- More time spent re-reading
- Less effective

### Slide Notes:

- Passive reading has very little benefit. While active reading seems like it will take you longer because you are adding in some steps, it won’t...
  - It keeps your brain focused
  - You are less distractible
  - Spend less time re-reading

- Able to process what you are reading and make connections

## Slide 9: What happens when you read something difficult or boring?

1. Mind wanders but eyes keep going over the page (“autopilot” – reading the words but not processing the information)
2. Your brain may not realize right away that it’s not paying attention.
3. You go back and start again from where you left off
4. Repeat.

### Slide Notes:

If you are like most people, you start, everything is going well, and then your mind starts to wander...

- You then go back and start again from the last paragraph, or the top of the page.
- Wherever you lost focus, look back to find the last thing you remember reading.
- Try reminding yourself to engage with the material and concentrate on absorbing what you read.

Be prepared for this to happen again, don’t be hard on yourself.

- Remember to do your reading in chunks (ideally 15-45 min at a time)
- Take breaks as needed (try the Pomodoro method)
- Try to plan to do your readings at times you are most focused and alert (i.e., if you aren’t a morning person, don’t try to do it first thing; if you are really tired, you may need to adjust your expectations (take more breaks, shorten your reading intervals).

## Slide 10: Active Reading with SQ3R

The SQ3R strategy guides learners in **reading with purpose**.

- **Survey** – Scan the material, noting titles and keywords

- **Question** – Set the purpose by creating questions to answer (use the learning outcomes from your instructional plan)
- **Read** – Engage critically with active reading
- **Record** – put the material in your own words
- **Review / Recite** – review the material ongoingly, recite from memory (retrieval practice)

## Slide Notes:

- Reading with purpose – the SQ3R strategy. SQ3R is an active reading strategy that guides learners in reading with purpose.
  - **Survey** – Scan the material, noting titles and keywords
  - **Question** – Set the purpose by creating questions to answer (use the learning outcomes from your instructional plan)
  - **Read** – Engage critically with active reading
  - **Record** – put the material in your own words
  - **Review / Recite** – review the material ongoingly, recite from memory (retrieval practice)

## Slide 11: SQ3R—Survey before you read

**Before you read...** Scan to get an idea of the general structure and content.

### Look at...

- Titles
- Headings & Subheadings
- Pictures
- Objectives/outcomes
- Intros & Summaries
- Charts
- Vocabulary

## Slide Notes:

- Read the title and chapter objectives.
- If there is a chapter summary, read that first
  - The summary, combined with the information on the title page, can act as a movie preview, creat-

ing intrigue and providing a bit of familiarity with the concepts.

- This supports active reading and engagement, as you are priming yourself to attend to the key pieces of information.
- Skim the chapter by reading subheadings and viewing the content under those subheadings (pay attention to charts, tables, graphs, diagrams, bolded vocabulary, etc.).
  - Make connections – apply new information to what you already know.
- Also, be sure to note questions that arise during the pre-lecture prep.

## Slide 12: SQ3R—Question

### Set a purpose for your reading

- What are the **main ideas** of this chapter?
- Are there questions in the text or at the end of the chapter that I can find answers to?
- How does this **connect** to other topics from the class?
- Can I turn **headings** into practice test questions?

### Slide Notes:

- Set a purpose for your reading by developing questions about the material.
- What are the main ideas of this chapter, and what concepts do I think I will have to review?
- How can I turn headings into test questions to help me focus my reading?
- What questions are found in the text that might help me?

## Slide 13: SQ3R—Read

- Read in chunks, section by section
- Look for answers to your questions or the unit/learning outcomes
- Read in blocks of 15 – 30 minutes and take breaks or change activity
- Pay attention to graphics, charts

## Slide Notes:

- If you can't summarize it or don't really understand, go back and read it again.
- Record any questions that are still unclear, and ask during lectures
- Think of the readings as preparation for the lecture.
  - If you already know the content that will be discussed, you are primed and ready to listen for information that is repeated from the text (a good indication it could be on a test), that further explains something you read, or answers a question you had, and provides the opportunity to ask clarifying questions.

## Slide 14: SQ3R—Record

### For each section:

- Highlight/ underline key concepts
- Write down notes that answer your questions or expand on the learning outcomes
- Summarize the key points in your own words
- Make a list of key vocab and definitions

## Slide 15: During Class: Strategies for Listening & Note-Taking

### Why take notes?

- Promotes attention and focus during class
- Helps with the comprehension and retention of material
- Provides a resource for test preparation

### How do I stay engaged?

- Turn off media – Do not disturb!
- Identify distractions & think of solutions to minimize them

- Ask questions (ask yourself, ask your instructor)
- Make eye contact & participate

## Slide Notes:

When you find yourself tuning out, try some of the following strategies:

1. Turn off your cell phone to reduce distraction, or put it on silent and stash it in your bag, out of reach.
2. Distracted? Take a moment to reflect on the cause of the distraction and determine what you can do about it.
  - Interested in the laptop screen of the person in front of you, or struggling to see the material on it? Find a new seat!
  - Is your roommate making noise while you try to watch a Zoom? Noise-cancelling headphones!
  - Are personal issues flooding your thoughts during class? Keep a separate sheet of paper or notebook to jot down anything you need to remember to deal with later.
    - The more we repress worry, the more it presents itself. Validating the thought and scheduling time to address it can help you offload your mental load and regain focus quickly.
3. Remember those questions you noted before class? Make it a game to try to find the answers during class.
  - Consider it an academic scavenger hunt.
  - Ask the instructor questions to maintain your focus, clarify content, avoid misunderstandings, provide feedback, and confirm that you have been listening.
4. Try to focus by making eye contact with the instructor and participating in activities and discussions. Turn your camera on.

## Slide 16: Note-Taking: What do I write down?

### **Be selective**

- Do not record verbatim; use symbols and abbreviations
- Listen for emphasis, main ideas or details

- Listen for the answers to your questions – from readings, unit outcomes, etc.

**Listen for:**

- Reviewed concepts
- New information
- Repeated points
- Questions posed to the class
- Examples
- Summaries
- Concepts demonstrating relationships (comparisons, lists, hierarchies, cause and effect)

*Ask yourself:*

- Is this important?
- How can I summarize this?
- Can I list it?
- Make a chart or diagram?
- Can I connect it to other concepts or experiences?

Slide Notes:

- This is where the before-class work pays off. If you have done the readings or looked at the slides, you will know when the instructor is stressing something important, or when they are covering the same concepts you saw in a reading.
- Summarize using your own language. This involves an active process that will positively enhance our retention.
- There are digital tools that can be helpful, like read&write, dictation, Glean, etc.
- Record lectures or turn on transcription for Zoom calls if you write slowly (or ask the instructor to do so).
- Select a note-taking format that works best. The following slides show several formats.

## Slide 17: Note-Taking Hints

- Use point form – main ideas, not full sentences

- Use abbreviations and symbols
  - o.g. *population = pop*, *\$ = money*
  - o Create a legend to keep track of all your abbreviations and symbols
- Organize notes
  - o Date, numbered pages, headings
  - o Sort/manage notes, digital or physical (e.g. 1 binder or file/folder for each subject)
  - o Chronologically (in order taught) or thematically (grouped by concept)
  - o Use lists, diagrams, charts, etc.
- E.g. “History 102 meets 2 days a week from 10:00 am to 10:50. Room 2E04”
  - o **Hist 102** – 2 d/wk 10 – 10:50 am Rm 2E04

### Slide Notes:

- Note-taking is very personal. These notes are for you and no one else, so create notes that you can use, and that you can learn from.
- Take pictures of whiteboard – diagrams, problems, etc. (you can even extract the text using “grab image text” feature within Google Keep)
- Use symbols = ! & # x
- Use shorthand or abbreviations – pop. dept. ft hwy. neg.

## Slide 18: Format Option A—Presentation Slides

- Print them off before class or add to OneNote file
- Add to them during class
- Write down timestamps if recording
- Use symbols

### Slide Notes:

- You can select how many slides per page and leave yourself room for notes
- You can also paste this template into OneNote to combine the presentation slide format with digital note-taking.

## Slide 19: Format Option B—Outlining

*Example of formatting notes using the outlining method.*

### Slide Notes:

- You can use your weekly learning outcomes from the course instructional plan to set up your outline, or skim through the lecture slides in advance to format your outline template.
- Digital notes: reminder about organization
  - Set up folders for each course to organize notes
  - Use MS OneNote – set up a “notebook” for each class with “sections” for each week/unit, and “pages” for each lecture/concept

## Slide 20: Format Option C—Cornell Notes

*Cornell notes visual example.*

### Slide Notes:

The Cornell Method provides a systematic format for condensing and organizing notes. After writing notes in the main space, use the left-hand space to label each idea and detail with a keyword. This columnar note-taking technique provides an easy format for pulling out major concepts and ideas. It is simple, efficient and saves time and effort. It’s not the only note-taking system, but it’s a useful one.

#### **METHOD:**

1. Before class, rule your paper with a margin on the left.
2. During class, take down information on the right-hand side.
3. When the instructor moves to a new point, skip a few lines.
4. After class, complete the phrases and ideas as much as possible.
5. For every significant bit of information, write keywords in the left margin.
6. **To review**, cover your notes, leaving only the key words exposed. Say the keyword out loud, then say as much as you can of the material that is covered.
7. When you have said as much as you can, check the covered material to see if it matches what was written.

## Slide 21: Format Option D—Mind Map

*Visual example of a mind map*

### Slide Notes:

- Mind maps are great for showing connections and linking related content

## Slide 22: SQ3R—Review

- **The Curve of Forgetting** describes how we retain or lose information we take in (based on a 1-hour lecture).
- Check your memory on an ongoing basis (practice retrieval) – daily or weekly schedule, short and frequent!

### Slide Notes:

- The Forgetting Curve maps the rate at which people forget things they have just learned
- Look at where it says first learned, you can see how much you forget as a few days pass
- By day 3, you have forgotten about 40% and it keeps going down
- Research in the cognitive sciences has shown that the battle against forgetting begins as soon as you learn something
- But there are ways to counteract this. Most notably, retrieval practice.
  - If you practice retrieving information, it strengthens the connections in your long-term memory
- What research has shown is that the best time to do this isn't immediately after you learn something, but once you've started to forget it.
- The fact that you have begun to forget means your mind must work harder to retrieve it, and the struggle to remember helps strengthen the neural pathway, making the information more readily accessible in your mind.
- Ongoing review and retrieval practice
- There is compelling research showing that regular retrieval practice helps the knowledge get stored in long-term memory, where it remains reliably accessible.

- Explain the “filing cabinet analogy” – paperwork (knowledge) that just gets shoved in will be more difficult to find when needed, even if it’s in there somewhere; while paperwork (knowledge) that gets sorted and organized in colour-coded and alphabetized file-folders (the kind of organization your brain does with regular review and retrieval practice), will be much more easily and reliably accessed when needed.

## Slide 23: After Class: How do I remember?

### Review notes within 24 hrs:

- Fill in gaps or fix mistakes from memory
- Check for understanding – use your own words, explain concepts to yourself/others
- Summarize – write a brief summary in your own words
- If there is a recording, re-listen to parts that you missed or need to hear again
- Review regularly!

### Notes:

- Utilize your resources (textbook, lecture slides, teaching assistant, tutor, supplemental instruction, etc.) to fill in any gaps that remain from the lecture.
- Do not ignore information you don’t understand—it won’t go away.
- Regular review and retrieval practice (and spaced repetition)!

## Slide 24: Quality / Quantity

Determine the purpose + Read actively = Enhanced learning

### Slide Notes:

Final Considerations – to enhance your learning through completing the course readings...

- Begin by determining a **purpose** for your reading.
- Then engage in **active reading** strategies (take notes to help you stay engaged)

- Aim to read for **quality** rather than quantity.

## Slide 25: Remember...

There is no **one** right way to take notes – Consider:

- How should I take notes based on the content?
- What am I going to do with the notes? What are my preferences?

It takes **time** to develop strong learning habits

- It's okay to try different strategies until you find one that sticks.

Note-taking builds the ***foundation for studying***

- Note-taking and studying are interconnected
- Complete notes are a critical resource for studying.

## Slide Notes:

- Your approach to note-taking should be individualized and may vary depending on the content, how you plan to use your notes, and your personal preferences.
- Developing a strategy that works for you will take time; we encourage students to try a variety of strategies until they find one that supports their learning.
- It's important to remember that note-taking builds the foundation for studying and is a critical component of the learning process.
- Consider, without notes, what you will reference when studying?

# SESSION 8: ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY FOR ADHD LEARNERS

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## Learning Outcomes:

After completing this session, participants should be able to:

- Identify assistive technology tools that support focus, attention, productivity, time-management, organization and other ADHD-related learning needs.
- Select appropriate AT tools to support personal learning needs and evaluate their effectiveness in improving academic performance.



*An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/adhdskillsgroup/?p=86#h5p-8>

**[Download Session 8 PowerPoint File \(new tab\)](#)**

## Slide 4: Assistive Technology

\*If available, a guest expert on Assistive Technology would be an excellent addition this week. If not, please refer to the following OER for information on assistive technology to support student learning for content to integrate into this week's session, or direct students to access it: **[Assistive Technology: A Quick Start Guide](#)**

“This guide provides an introduction to assistive technology at Conestoga College. It was created for students in their first semester, with the goal of helping them explore and make the most of AT tools to support

their learning. Explore this collection of assistive technology tools to help you succeed in your first semester at Conestoga College.”

## Slide 5: Reading Comprehension Tools

Read&Write

- **Text-to-speech** tools to help stay focused on readings
  - Use high-quality voices in text-to-speech apps (also Immersive Reader in MS apps)
- **Rewordify**: simplifies the readability of the text without changing the meaning
- **Simplify page**: If you’re on a website with lots of ads or distracting content, click Simplify to get a clean, simple version of the webpage
- **Collect Highlights**: Highlighted text (with linked source) can be gathered and saved in a Word document or Google Doc with the click of a button.

## Slide 6: Organization & Time Management Tools

- Microsoft To Do / Planner
- Outlook Calendar / Google Calendar
  - If you like setting multiple reminders for a single event, use Google (allows up to 5 notifications per event, while Outlook only allows one)
- Use apps to have the time read out loud while you’re working to help keep track of tasks and not lose track of time. You can specify how often you want it to announce (e.g., every 15 mins)
  - SpeakTimer – Voice Alert Timer (App Store)
  - Time Timer – Visual Productivity (Google Play)
- Google Assistant / Siri to set reminders/timers that make noise as a reminder to start, finish, or change tasks

## Slide 7: Focus & Productivity Tools:

Tools to Support Focus and Manage Digital Distractions

- Pomodoro timer apps (e.g. pomofocus.io)
- Focus Sessions in Windows 11 Clock
- Stayfree, Focus Filter (website and app blockers)
- Recorded lectures: Genio is ideal, if available
- Noise-cancelling headphones
- Mask sounds with background music (lots of ADHD playlists on Spotify/YouTube)
- White noise (Noisli, Brain.fm, Coffitivity, YouTube playlists)
- Dictation
- Password keepers

## Slide 8:

### Project Management / Task Breakdown Tools

- Assignment planners
  - [Assignment Planner | University of Waterloo Library](#)
  - [Assignment Calculator: A time management tool for use with writing assignments | SFU Library](#)
  - [Assignment Planner | University of Toronto Scarborough Campus](#)
  - [Assignment Calculator | Student Learning Services](#)
  - [Assignment Planner | SASS](#)
- Goblin Tools

### Study Tools

#### Flashcards – Tools for Retrieval Practice

- [Quizlet: Study tools & learning resources for students and teachers | Quizlet](#)
- [#1 Free Quizlet Alternative with AI Study Tools | Knowt](#)
- [Anki – powerful, intelligent flashcards](#)
- [Brainscape: The Best Flashcards App | Make Flashcards Online](#)

# SESSION 9: ADHD & MENTAL HEALTH — FINDING BALANCE & MANAGING STRESS

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## Learning Outcomes:

After completing this session, participants should be able to:

- Recognize signs of stress and burnout and identify the academic and personal impacts associated.
- Identify support systems, boundaries, coping strategies and self-care activities that contribute to balance and well-being.
- Practice coping strategies to support stress management and overall well-being.
- Describe ADHD as a neurotype within a neurodiversity framework rather than a deficit-based medical model.
- Describe the intersection between ADHD, mental health, and executive functioning (i.e. emotional regulation, impulse control, flexible thinking, self-monitoring, etc.).
- Use respectful, strengths-based, and non-oppressive language when discussing ADHD and other neurodivergent identities.



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/adhdskillsgroup/?p=88#h5p-9>

**[Download Session 9 PowerPoint File \(new tab\)](#)**

*\*This session was co-facilitated with a mental health counsellor and student wellness mentor, so the content here is limited and may need to be supplemented.\**

If there is an opportunity to invite a mental health professional (e.g., counsellor, social worker), a student mental health ambassador, or mentors with lived experience (e.g., Peer Wellness Navigators at Conestoga College) to co-facilitate this session, that would be valuable, as the content for this session is limited.

## Slides 4-10: The Neurodiversity Model

A way of understanding human brains that emphasizes natural diversity rather than deficit. Neurodiversity views conditions like ADHD, autism, dyslexia, and others as part of the **normal spectrum of human variation**, just like biodiversity or cultural diversity.

### Core Principles:

#### 1. Neurological differences are natural variations of the human brain

- Neurodiversity is part of the **normal spectrum of human variation**, like biodiversity or cultural diversity.
- These differences *have always existed* within human populations.
- They come with **strengths, challenges, and unique perspectives**, rather than being inherently pathological.

#### 2. Neurodivergence is not a problem to be “cured,” but a difference to be understood

- The neurodiversity model pushes back against purely deficit- or disorder-based framing.
- It does **not** deny that people with ADHD, autism, or learning disabilities may experience real, significant challenges.
- Instead, it argues that these challenges often arise from a **mismatch** between the individual and their environment—not from a personal flaw.
- This leads to a **focus on: Support, Accessibility, Acceptance, Autonomy**—Instead of “fixing” or “normalizing” people.

#### 3. Social context plays a major role in disability

- This reflects the **social model of disability**, which says people are disabled more by barriers in society than by their specific impairments. Examples:
  - A student with ADHD isn’t inherently “disordered” because they struggle in a rigid, lecture-heavy system.
  - The *environment* (e.g., constant deadlines, limited movement, overwhelming digital stimuli)

often amplifies disability.

- This principle encourages institutions to adopt:
  - flexible learning environments
  - accessible teaching practices
  - universal design
  - supportive policies

#### 4. **Neurodivergent people have the right to self-determination**

- A key part of the neurodiversity framework is **respecting lived experience**. This includes:
  - the right to define one’s identity (e.g., “autistic person” vs. “person with autism”)
  - the right to participate in decisions about support, treatment, and education
  - the right to accommodations without stigma
  - the right to be involved in research or programming that affects them

#### 5. **Strengths and challenges coexist**

- Neurodiversity highlights that individuals often have **distinct strengths**, such as:
  - creativity
  - hyperfocus
  - unconventional problem-solving
  - attention to detail
  - pattern recognition
  - resilience
  - empathy or justice-oriented thinking
- The model encourages recognizing *both* strengths and support needs without minimizing either.

#### 6. **Inclusivity benefits *everyone***

- In most cases, environments that support neurodivergent learners often make things better for all students (principle of Universal Design for Learning). Examples:
  - clear expectations
  - flexible deadlines
  - multiple ways to show learning
  - sensory-friendly environments
  - accessible digital materials
- These help neurodivergent students *and* reduce stress for everyone else.

## 7. Celebrating diversity fosters community and belonging

- The neurodiversity model encourages:
  - reducing stigma
  - promoting understanding
  - creating spaces where students don't feel they have to mask or hide how they function
  - recognizing that difference is a source of innovation, creativity, and variety in human society
- Belonging is itself a protective factor for mental health and academic success.

## Slide 11: Avoiding Burnout

- **Finding balance can be an added challenge for those with ADHD**
  - Finding time for basic self-care (e.g. eating well, exercising, doing laundry, etc.) can be difficult when trying to juggle school, work, and other commitments.
  - Keeping up with important responsibilities, like paying bills, can also feel overwhelming.
- Next week is Student Success Week, so start thinking about how you can **prioritize self-care** and find some balance during the break.

## Slide 12: Why Prioritize Self-Care?

*Individuals with ADHD must be mindful of their predisposition to mental illness.*

- **More than 3/4** of adults with ADHD also experience **mental illnesses**, most commonly depression, anxiety and bipolar disorder.
  - **50%** of adults with ADHD also have an **anxiety disorder**

### Slide Notes:

- Individuals with ADHD are at an increased risk of experiencing mental illness, and slowing down to look after ourselves doesn't tend to be a strength of the ADHD brain.
- We need to consciously remind ourselves of our need to find balance and look after ourselves proactively, as we are prone to struggle with our mental health.

- More than **3/4** of adults with ADHD also experience mental illnesses, most commonly depression, anxiety and bipolar disorder.
  - 50% of adults with ADHD also have an anxiety disorder (Gair et al, 2020, Katzman et al., 2017).
- A Canadian study found that **1 in 7** adults with ADHD **attempted suicide** compared to **1 in 37** adults without ADHD (Fuller-Thompson et al., 2020).
  - It also found that **1 in 4 women** with ADHD has attempted suicide
- 32% of students with ADHD do not graduate high school (Breslau, 2011)

## Slide 13: How do you practice self-care?

How do you make time?

### Slide Notes:

- Discuss practical ways to work self-care into everyday life, and how to develop better routines
- Brainstorm ideas for easy, healthy self-care
- Brainstorm quick, productive self-care activities that can be done during brief study breaks
- Open discussion to students (e.g. what kinds of things get in the way of you practicing self-care, how can you make adjustments to allow for more self-care, etc.)
- Encourage students to set SMART goals to improve/increase their regular self-care

# SESSION 10: METACOGNITION

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## Learning Outcomes:

After completing this session, participants should be able to:

- Define metacognition and how reflective practice can contribute to improved academic performance.
- Use self-awareness and reflective questioning to assess effort, performance, and strategy effectiveness, and to inform intentional decision making.
- Use the What-If-Calculator to evaluate grade potential based on academic progress.



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/adhdskillsgroup/?p=104#h5p-10>

[\*\*Download Session 10 PowerPoint File \(new tab\)\*\*](#)

## Slides 4-5: What is Metacognition?

According to MIT, “Metacognition is the process by which learners use knowledge of the task at hand, knowledge of learning strategies, and knowledge of themselves to plan their learning, monitor their progress towards a learning goal, and then evaluate the outcome.”

Essentially, metacognition is looking in at your brain and wondering what’s going on inside.

## Slide 6: Thinking About One's Thinking

- Encompasses our awareness and control of our cognitive processes.
  - **Knowledge of cognition** includes knowledge of oneself as a learner, of learning strategies, and of when and why to use a given strategy.
  - **Regulation of cognition** includes the ability to plan, monitor, regulate and evaluate your learning process.
- It involves understanding and assessing how we learn, remember, and solve problems so that we can manage and improve our own learning and problem-solving strategies.

### Slide Notes:

- Essentially, metacognition is looking in at your brain, wondering what's going on inside.

## Slide 7: Intentionally thinking about how you think and learn

- Metacognitive skills are the **ultimate in transferable skills** – they can be used in any subject, career or workplace.
- Well-developed metacognitive thinking skills are **associated with improved learning**.

### Slide Notes:

- Consider How You Think & Learn

## Slide 8: Reflect...

Ask yourself:

- What influences my learning?

- How do I like to learn?
- What may inhibit my learning?
- What should I consider about the content?
- What helps me learn new things?
- What strategies and skills can be implemented to learn this?
- Why and when should I employ these strategies?
- Etc.

## Slide Notes:

Knowledge of cognition can be further broken down into three components:

- **Declarative knowledge** – which is knowing about how we learn, what influences learning, and what we know about our own strengths and abilities. (about)
- **Procedural knowledge** – is knowing how to learn – the procedures involved in learning, what strategies may be used. (how)
- **Conditional knowledge** – why and when would I use these strategies? We want to align our strategies and tools with our strengths and abilities, how to learn, and the learning task. (when and why)

For example, you would approach learning content in an ethics class very differently than content from a math class.

## Slide 9: Model of Strategic Learning

*Graphic detailing the interaction between factors associated with the Model of Strategic Learning.*

## Slide Notes:

- The Model of Strategic Learning identifies four key factors that influence effective learning: skill, will, self-regulation, and the academic environment. These factors interact to either support or hinder student success.
- It emphasizes the learner's active role in their learning process and the importance of adapting strategies to achieve desired outcomes.
- Individual differences among learners could be considered a 5th factor (e.g. personal life circumstances, neurodivergence, mental health, etc.)
- Analyze the graphic and discuss.

(Van Blerkom, 2012)

## Slide 10: Setting & Achieving Goals

**We are more likely to procrastinate when goals are vague or abstract** than when they are concrete and clearly defined. Use SMART goals:

1. **Specific:** Goals should be specific and significant to you
2. **Measurable:** There needs to be objective criteria to evaluate progress
3. **Achievable:** Goals must be attainable, realistic and practical
4. **Relevant:** goals should align with your intended outcome
5. **Time-bound:** the goal must have a clear and reasonable deadline

*Self-Regulation:* identifying the challenge and deciding what to do for your learning

- Planning
- Monitoring
- Evaluating
- Repeat

### Slide Notes:

Optional activity: Have students write a SMART goal (and share if they are open to it)

## Slide 11: Assessing Your Progress

1. **Planning** (before) – Ask yourself:
  - What is the goal of this assignment?
  - Do I have what I need to work on this task?
  - What strategies can I use to help me?
  - What is my first step? Second step?
1. **Monitoring** (during) – Ask yourself:

- Am I on track with my plan? Are my strategies working?
- Am I making progress? Do I need to make any adjustments?
- Where can I find the information I need?
- Where do I need help? Who will I ask for assistance?

1. **Evaluating** (after) – Ask yourself:

- What did I do well?
- What was most challenging?
- What could I do differently next time?
- Self-Reflection: consider the process as well as the outcome

## Slide Notes:

- You may have heard the idea that post-secondary learners are expected to manage their own learning. In practice, this means students are responsible for planning their work, setting goals, organizing their time, tracking their progress, and evaluating how well their strategies are working.
- Developing strong self-regulation can boost both learning and academic performance. It involves understanding how you learn, choosing strategies that match the task, applying those strategies effectively, and checking in with yourself along the way. When students notice a gap between where they are and where they want to be, self-regulation helps them adjust by breaking goals into smaller steps, deciding what to tackle first, and setting realistic timelines.
  - When working to improve your metacognition, the goal is to **observe your abilities and strengthen your strategies** to accomplish various tasks and projects. You can then **develop, find, and allocate resources to optimize performance**.
  - By **assessing goals and outcomes**, you're better equipped to **shift efforts and strategies**.

## Slide 12: The Metacognitive Cycle

*Graphic depicting the metacognitive cycle.*

## Slide Notes:

- **Focus on learning strategies** that activate prior knowledge, introduce new knowledge and skills, model their application, and provide ample opportunity for independent practice and reflection.

- Use **rubrics! Set individual learning goals** that are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely.
- (Ambrose et al., 2010)

## Slide 13: Root Cause Analysis

- To get to the bottom of **what happened** (or didn't happen)
- Think of a specific situation in which that happened. Was there a **pattern**?
- “**Why Chain**” – Ask why again and again until you get to something that you can change with manageable, concrete steps.

### Slide Notes:

- Figure out what the actual problem is – it may not be obvious
- You want to be really specific for this – take actual examples
- And then you keep asking why that thing happened until you get to a place where there is a real thing you can fix or change.

## Slide 14: Root Cause Analysis—Why Chain

### Rules:

- Be as specific as possible.
- Try to think of actual examples and what happened at those times.
- No excuses (“it wasn't my fault because...”) – there is always something you could have done differently.
- Keep going until you find a problem you can solve.

### Example:

- I turned in a few assignments late.
  - Why?
    - I mixed up some deadlines and forgot a few.

- Why?
  - o I started putting deadlines in a calendar and didn't finish and/or double-check what I had.
    - Why?
      - I started one day between classes, and then ran out of time and forgot to do it again.

## Slide Notes:

- Optional Activity: Have students reflect and try thinking through their own root-cause analysis, or ask for common examples to work through as a group.

## Slide 15: My Learning Plan

Use this plan to support you in applying reflective techniques to assess your learning and identify strategies for improvement.

- Planning: What does planning look like?
- Monitoring: What are my early signs of trouble?
- Evaluating:
  - What went well last semester?
  - What went wrong?
  - Why?
  - What to do differently for next semester?

## Slide Notes:

- Optional Activity: Have students reflect and answer these questions for themselves

# Slide 16: Reflect & Plan

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<u>Your Concerns/Challenges</u>	<u>Strategies/Tools to Use and/or Supports/Services Available</u>
-	-
-	-
-	-

---

Slide Notes:

Optional Activity: Have students reflect and complete the table, then discuss.

# SESSION 11: EXAM PREP—STUDY SKILLS & TEST TAKING

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## Learning Outcomes:

After completing this session, participants should be able to:

- Analyze exam requirements and course learning outcomes to identify what content to prioritize when studying.
- Develop and implement a realistic, flexible study plan that incorporates effective time management, prioritization, and task breakdown strategies.
- Identify cognitive, emotional, and environmental factors (including distraction, sleep, and anxiety) that impact studying and test performance.
- Apply evidence-based study strategies to improve retention and academic performance.
- Select appropriate academic, assistive technology, and wellness supports to enhance learning, self-regulation, and exam readiness.



*An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/adhdskillsgroup/?p=108#h5p-11>

**[Download Session 11 PowerPoint File \(new tab\)](#)**

## Slide 4: In Preparation...

Find out what to expect:

- **Where** is the test?
  - Is it in person? (regular classroom? test centre? alternate location?)
  - Is it online? (eConestoga? Is Respondus LockDown Browser required? Do you have a reliable internet connection?)
- **When** will it be? Confirm the correct date, start and end times.
- **Test format** (multiple choice, short answer, essay, label diagrams, open book, etc.)
- **What content** will be evaluated? (which learning outcomes/units/weeks do I need to know?)
- **What materials** are allowed? (e.g. formula sheet, memory aid, calculator, textbook, etc.)
- **Predict** – try to predict test questions.
  - **Ask peers** what they think will be tested.
  - **Look for clues** from your instructor – pay attention to concepts emphasized in class, readings, assignments, etc.
  - **Talk to your professor** if you aren't sure.

## Slide 5: What Do I Study?

*Use the following tools to help you figure out WHAT to study:*

- **Instructional Plan / Course Outline** – review learning outcomes
- **Course Shell** – Some instructors will provide exam prep review materials
- **Lectures** – review notes, slide decks, recordings, etc.
- **Textbook** – review any notes you took
  - Chapter summaries
  - Review questions
  - Bolded vocabulary (or glossary)
  - Tables, charts, diagrams
- Review past tests/quizzes, and/or assignments

## Slide 6: Where Do I Start?

### Traffic Light Method

- Red: need to relearn (spend the most time)
- Yellow: to review (spend a good amount of time)
- Green: know well (requires less time)

### Slide Notes:

1. Start by making a list of the topics
2. Then rate each one using the stoplight method.
3. Plan to spend more time reviewing the “red” topics, whereas the green topics may only need a brief review.

## Slide 7: Schedule Your Time

- Schedule blocks of time to study specific content
- Start with the higher-priority topics
- Spread it out, take breaks.
- Set reminders!

### Slide Notes:

- Start at your exam date
- Work backward to schedule blocks of time to study specific content
- Start with the higher-priority topics
- Spread it out, take breaks.
- Set reminders!

## Slide 8: Use Your Time Mindfully

*Organization and time management are all about:*

- **Planning** – thinking ahead, using helpful tools
- **Prioritizing** – Figuring out what is important
- **Scheduling** – work effectively
- **Flexibility** – Managing expectations and being realistic

### Slide Notes:

- We all have massive to-do lists and a million things to do, but just because we have a lot to do doesn't mean we are accomplishing what we want or making progress on important goals.
- This is why it's important to take stock of how we are using our time
- \*The goals you set during the first 3 weeks of a semester affect your performance for the rest of the term (Van Blekrom, 2012).

## Slide 9: How Do I Study?

- What study strategies do *you* use?
- Did anyone ever *teach* you how to study?

### Slide Notes:

- Many students use the method of re-reading course materials or “going over” notes as their main study strategy.
- Research shows that this is one of the least effective strategies for learning and retaining concepts, which may surprise you.
- It is important to note that none of these strategies is “wrong” or “bad.” Still, if your only study strategies are from the “low efficacy” category, perhaps it is time to consider adding higher-efficacy strategies to your practice.
- On the next slides, we are going to highlight the top two most effective study strategies that you can employ.

## Slide 10: Study Strategies (review)

### 1. **High** Efficacy Strategies:

- **Retrieval Practice/Practice Testing** – Practicing bringing information to mind or quizzing yourself.
- **Distributed Practice/Spaced Repetition** – Spacing out studying over time (e.g., 1 hr per day for 5 days prior to exam) rather than “cramming” for several hours the night before.

### 2. **Moderate** Efficacy Strategies:

- **Self-Explanation** – Involves explaining a concept to yourself and relating it to information you already know.
- **Elaborative Interrogation** – Generating an explanation for why a concept or fact is true.
- **Interleaved Practice** – Switching between concepts or topics during a study session.

### 3. **Low** Efficacy Strategies:

- **Imagery** – Creating mental images of text that is read or heard.
- **Keyword Mnemonic** – Using a keyword and mental imagery to associate concepts.
- **Re-reading** – Re-studying material again after an initial reading.
- **Highlighting** – Identifying potentially important information while reading.
- **Summarization** – Writing a summary of information you have learned.

## Slide Notes:

- This table outlines various study strategies, organized by level of efficacy.

## Slide 11: Top Strategies (review)

### Most Effective:

- Retrieval Practice (a.k.a. self-testing, memory recall without notes)

- Spaced Repetition (a.k.a. distributed practice, the opposite of cramming)

### Maintaining Focus: Tools & Strategies

- Interleaving
- Pomodoro Technique
- Body Doubling
- Productivity apps, app/site blockers
- Assistive Tech

### Slide Notes:

- Review these top strategies
- Ask students to brainstorm ways to apply each strategy
- Discuss personal experiences using these and other strategies
- Remind students to consider: Learning & the Brain. We talked about the importance of retrieval practice and Repetition when studying to help strengthen synapses (or connections between neurons in the brain).
  - **Emotions** – content linked to strong emotions stands out in our memory.
    - The **emotional response to an experience** (content that evokes strong emotions will be more likely to be stored in memory).
  - **Organization** – making *connections* to other content or experiences helps us organize our memories for better recall.
  - **Motivation**
    - **contributes to resilience and perseverance;** motivated students are hard-working and goal-oriented, leading to higher achievement.
    - *Motivated learners take responsibility and initiative, show curiosity and a willingness to try, put forth genuine effort, and take pride in their work.*
  - **Environment** – sensory input (sights, sounds, smells) from the environment could have positive or negative effects on learning/memory formation (attention/focus).
    - In some cases, these environmental factors can help strengthen memories (you remember what was going on or where you were when you learned something), or they can pose a distraction, inhibiting/interrupting your focus/learning/memory formation.
  - **Attention/focus** – managing distractions and choosing optimal study times (when most alert/energetic).
- \*\*SEE “Session 5: Midterm Prep & Study Strategies” for review

## Slide 12: Studying =

- STUDYING = (prepping study materials) + (reviewing) + (self-testing)

### Slide Notes:

- Organize your notes, review content, and quiz yourself

## Slide 13: Study Session (1 hr) Example

- Set a specific goal (1-2 min) – Decide what you want to accomplish
- Focused study (30-50 min) – Use study strategies (retrieval practice, e.g. flashcards, etc.)
- Reward yourself (10-15 min) – Take a break
- Review (5 min) – second look, summarize, ask: do you need to come back to it?

## Slide 14: Wrap Up—How to Study

1. First review
2. Practice test / self-check
3. Make a study plan
4. Prep/organize study materials
5. Retrieval practice
6. Retrieval practice again (repeat 5-6 as necessary, with time in between study sessions)
7. Final test

## Slide 15: Before the Test

- Set yourself up for success:
  - Get enough sleep in the days leading up to your test (at least 7 hours)
  - Eat nutritiously (eat a healthy snack/meal before your test)
- Plan ahead:
  - Plan to arrive early! Avoid rushing by giving yourself plenty of time for travel, to find your test location and to get settled.
- Be prepared:
  - Have all necessary supplies (e.g. pencils, eraser, highlighters, calculator, memory aid, etc.)
- Avoid distractions:
  - Pick a spot that will be least distracting (e.g. front of the room, away from windows/doors), put your devices on silent, consider wearing earplugs, etc.

### Slide Notes:

- **Set yourself up for success:**
- Get enough sleep – During sleep, our brain is busy **processing and consolidating** our experiences, thoughts, feelings and learnings, so sleeping actually makes you *more likely to remember things*.
- **\*\*Only about 3% of people are able to perform at their best on 6 hours of sleep.**
- +Brain Food

## Slide 16: Getting Started

- **Flip through** to survey the entire test before you answer any questions to get an overview (test length, question formats, point value of each section, etc.)
- **Decide where to begin** and how to pace yourself throughout the test.
  - Tip: Start with a question that you know to gain confidence and relieve anxiety
  - Plan on spending more time on the higher-point questions/sections
- **Read all directions and questions carefully.**
  - Ask questions if you don't understand or need clarification.
  - Highlight or underline any keywords to avoid making mistakes, and re-read as needed.
- **“Brain dump”** – Write down any information you don't want to forget in the margin.
- Remember to pace yourself, keep an eye on the clock and leave some time to review your answers.

## Slide Notes:

- **Pace yourself!**
- Leave time to **review** your answers at the end of the test.
- Make sure you have completed the test sections with the **highest value**.
- Check that you have answered **every question** (don't leave any blank!).
- Don't worry about people finishing before you – **take the whole time**.

## Slide 17: Answering Multiple-Choice Questions

### Basic Steps for All MCQs:

1. **Cover up the answers**
2. **Read** and process the stem of the question (don't look at answer options yet)
3. **Underline or highlight keywords** – Pay careful attention to keywords in the question.
4. **Try to restate it in your own words**. What is it asking?
5. **Predict a possible answer** *before* looking at the options.
6. **Read over the options**.
7. **Eliminate** any options containing wrong answers – mark up your page to keep track (if you can).
8. **Guess**, if you don't know.
9. **Go with your gut** – *don't change your response* (unless new info confirms/reminds you of the correct answer)

## Slide Notes:

- MCQs require **fine distinctions between correct and nearly-correct statements**, which involve critical thinking
- Work at **understanding the material, not just memorizing**. The wording of the question will be different from the way you originally learned the material.
- **Practice** your test-taking skills by answering review questions, taking practice tests and analyzing your mistakes.

### Basic Steps for MCQs:

1. **Cover up the alternatives.** Use a ruler or blank piece of paper to cover the answers to avoid reading the entire question too quickly.
  - This will help avoid:
    - Misreading the question;
    - being overwhelmed by too much information, and
    - confusing the incorrect alternatives with your knowledge base and ability to recall (options may look familiar).
2. Read the *stem* or initial statement carefully to understand what is being asked.
3. **Re-read and process the stem of the question.** Underline or highlight key content words, and identify limiting words (such as always, not, except, only, and never).
4. Look for the **central idea** of each question – can you **restate** the question in your own words?
  - **Pay attention to the format of the question.** Note combination answers such as “a) and d),” “all of the above,” or “none of the above,” or “select all that apply”.
    - If you know two of three options seem correct, “all of the above” is a strong possibility.
5. **Predict a possible answer.** Can you answer the question without reading any of the alternatives? Write down a couple of things that you remember about the topic.
6. **Process each of the alternatives.** Read each of the alternatives for meaning, not just to recognize familiar terms or phrases. See if anything matches what you recalled from memory.
  - 3 common pitfalls of alternatives include:
    1. *Familiar phrases from the course* – These may be true in themselves, but do not correctly answer the question.
    2. *A fact from your general knowledge* – Instructors may include this as one of the alternatives.
  - *Jargon* – Watch for sophisticated terms that may sound tempting and impressive, but which could actually be made up for the exam.
7. **Eliminate options.** Use the process of elimination to determine the correct response.
  - In multiple-answer formats, if you include an option, it can’t be “none of the above”. Likewise, if you can exclude an option, then it can’t be “all of the above”. Cross these off immediately.
  - *Hint:* Statements that begin with *always, never, none, except, most, or least*—are likely NOT the correct answer.

8. **Guess.** When all else fails, and there is no penalty for incorrect responses, guess!
9. **Do not change your answers.** Once you have answered a question, leave it alone, unless you see information in other questions that tells you that you answered incorrectly, and you are absolutely certain your first response is incorrect.
  - Research shows you are more likely to change a correct answer to an incorrect answer.

## Slide 18: Answering Scenario-Based Questions

1. **Read the scenario carefully** – highlight or underline keywords, re-read if necessary.
2. **Identify the issues** – what is the situation? What is the problem? What actions were taken?
3. **Link theory to practice** – what should you do in that situation?
4. **Plan your answer** – use an outline, organize your thoughts.

**Make connections** – use information given, provide examples, apply vocabulary and concepts learned in class, link to experience, etc.)

- **Write your answer** – write legibly on every other line, have an introduction, a middle, and a conclusion.
  - **Avoid** words like “it” and “they” – use terms instead (e.g., the DNA); be specific.
- **Edit and proofread** – check that you have answered the question fully.

### Slide Notes:

- **If all else fails, guess!** Any answer is better than no answer at all. You may earn partial marks.

### Step 1: Read the question and gather information.

- **Read** the question and any information provided.
- **Notice** directional words (e.g., analyze, compare, etc.). See the back of this handout for the meaning of these key words.
- **Make connections** with information given (in question, concepts learned in class, experience, etc.)
- **Mark up** your question paper by highlighting or underlining key points in the question and/or provided information; make additional notes directly on the question paper (i.e., in the margins).

**Step 2: Develop a plan and outline.**

- **Plan your response** (taking time to plan will save you time in the long run) – Using loose paper, set up an outline (ex: T chart, mind map, flow chart)
- **Plan a point-form answer** – Try to apply concepts and vocabulary from the course/ program
- **Give specific examples.**
- **Draw** diagrams, if appropriate (i.e., illustrate)

**Step 3: Follow your outline & write your answer.**

- Write in **complete sentences**.
- **Avoid** words like “it”, “they” – use terms instead (e.g: the DNA); be specific.
- Answer the question, be **concise** and do not add extra information, give examples if appropriate.
- **Alter** – add or change – your plan as needed. You may think of something else as you are writing, and it may be necessary to re-read the information provided.
- Write in a **standard format** (ex: for essays – include an introduction, body paragraphs, and a conclusion).
- Write as **legibly** as you can, **double-spaced** (writing on every other line) – makes it easier to edit.

**Step 4: Proofread your response**

- **Read** your response.
- **Edit** spelling and grammar.
- **Check** to see that you have answered the question.
- If you run short of time, write down the main ideas and keywords in point form.

## Slide 19: Learning & The Brain

*Consider other factors that impact our ability to learn and retain information.*

- **Emotions** – content linked to strong emotions stands out in our memory.
- **Organization** – making connections to other content or experiences helps us organize our memories for better recall.
- **Motivation** – contributes to resilience and perseverance; motivated students are hard-working and goal-oriented, leading to higher achievement.

- **Environment** – sensory input (sights, sounds, smells) from the environment could have positive or negative effects on learning/memory formation.
- **Attention/focus** – managing distractions and choosing optimal study times.

## Slide Notes:

- We talked about the importance of retrieval practice and Repetition when studying to help strengthen the synapses (or connections between neurons in the brain)...
- But there are other factors that impact our ability to retain the information we learn or create a memory.
- For example,
  - **Emotions** – content linked to strong emotions stands out in our memory.
    - The **emotional response to an experience** (content that evokes strong emotions will be more likely to be stored in memory).
  - **Organization** – making *connections* to other content or experiences helps us organize our memories for better recall.
  - **Motivation**
    - **contributes to resilience and perseverance**; motivated students are hard-working and goal-oriented, leading to higher achievement.
    - *Motivated learners take responsibility and initiative, show curiosity and a willingness to try, put forth genuine effort, and take pride in their work.*
  - **Environment** – sensory input (sights, sounds, smells) from the environment could have positive or negative effects on learning/memory formation (attention/focus).
    - In some cases, these environmental factors can help strengthen memories (you remember what was going on or where you were when you learned something), or they can pose a distraction, inhibiting/interrupting your focus/learning/memory formation.
  - **Attention/focus** – managing distractions and choosing optimal study times (when most alert/energetic).
- REMINDER ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF SLEEP!! Review “Session 6: ADHD & Sleep”, if necessary.
- *The activity of millions of neurons across many different regions of your brain must be linked to produce a coherent memory that **interweaves emotions, sights, sounds, smells, event sequences, and other stored experiences.***
- (Fields, 2020)

## Slide 20: Test Anxiety

- **Meet with a Counsellor!**
  - Most colleges and universities have free counselling available for students.
- Use the [CHECKLIST OF COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS \(arfamiliesfirst.com\)](http://arfamiliesfirst.com) to learn how to challenge your negative thoughts!
- Watch this 3-minute video about test anxiety and how to manage it: [Test Anxiety \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

# SESSION 12: FIGHT PROCRASTINATION & GET STUFF DONE!

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*An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/adhdskillsgroup/?p=110#h5p-12>

**[Download Session 12 PowerPoint File \(new tab\)](#)**

## Group Body-Doubling Work Period!

Use this time to be productive:

- Work on your assignments
- Prep or study for final exams
- Request a 1:1 breakout room consultation for, e.g.:
  - Support with creating a study plan
  - Help with breaking down a big project
- Discuss strategies with your peers

## Slide Notes:

- There is no planned content for this week.
- This is an opportunity to try body-doubling and use the hour reserved for the group to accomplish something productive.
- Have students use the chat to communicate so everyone can focus quietly.
  - Create a breakout room for 1:1 support (e.g. 10-min consultations if there is high demand) or small group discussion and peer support.

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## Program Tools

[Initial Student Survey Questions](#)

[Final Student Survey Questions](#)

## Student Resources – Templates

[Semester Plan – 5 Course Template](#)

[Semester Plan – 6 Course Template](#)

[Semester Plan – 7 Course Template \(legal\)](#)

[Task Breakdown Template](#)

[Creating A Study Plan Template](#)

[Weekly Planner Template](#)

## Other Resources

[ADHD and Mental Health – CADDAC \(Canadian ADHD Resource Alliance\), Centre for ADHD Awareness, Canada](#)

- A Canadian evidence-based report from CADDAC, summarizing the relationship between ADHD and mental health, including common co-occurring conditions, risks, barriers to care, and recommendations.

[ADHD Resource Guide – The ADHDe Project, University of Windsor](#)

- A comprehensive ADHD resource guide for Canadians, including educational and community-based supports.

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