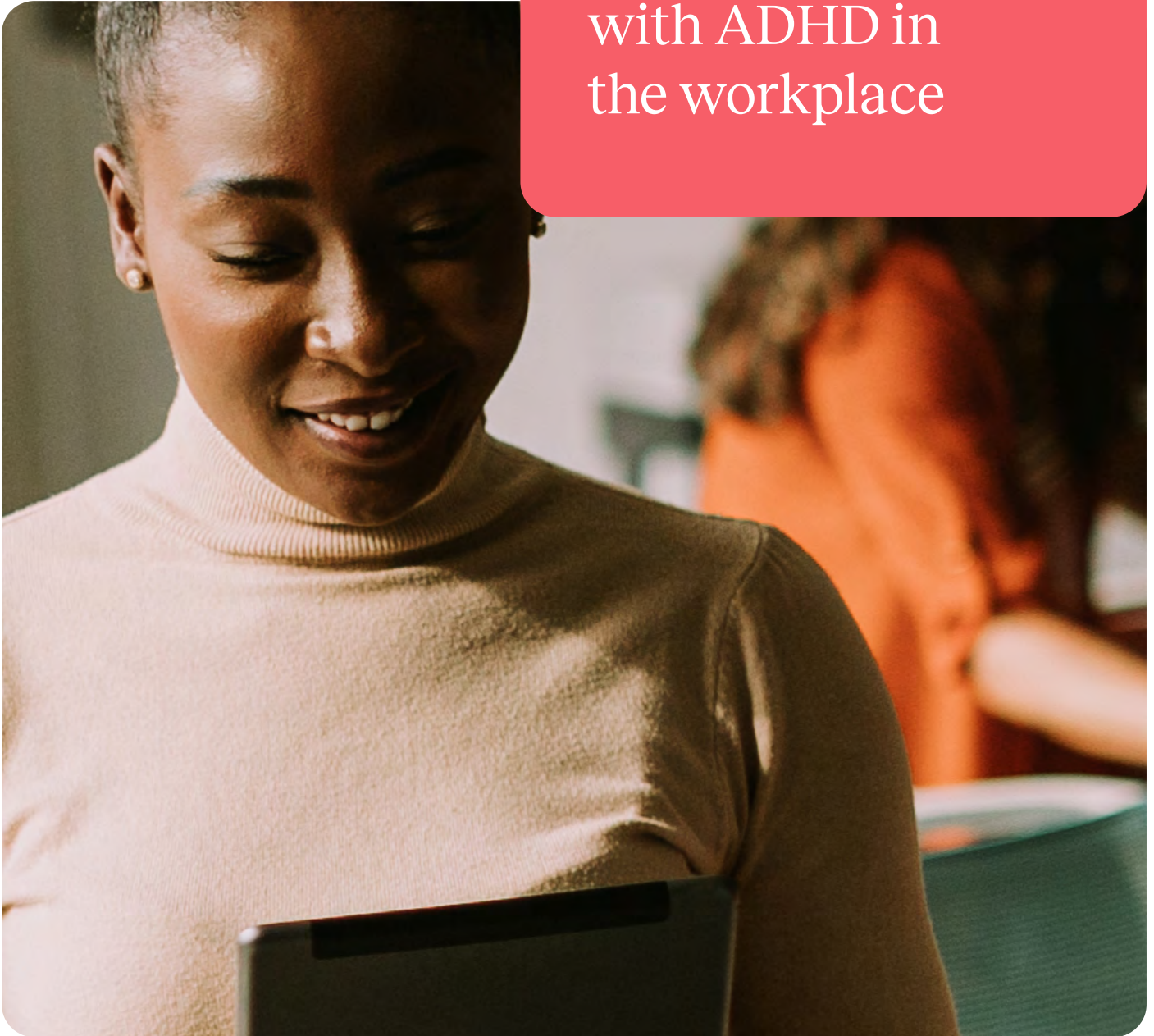


Supporting women with ADHD in the workplace



It has been hugely encouraging to see organisations increasing their efforts to understand, embrace and champion **neurodiversity in their workplace**, but greater awareness is still required, especially around areas like **ADHD**. This is certainly not a criticism of employers or managers, as ADHD is often very difficult to spot (even by those living with it), underdiagnosed (especially in women) and often mislabelled. This can lead to a culture of misunderstanding in the workplace, that negatively affects employees' mental health and wellbeing, and organisational productivity. Thankfully, a workplace with a greater understanding of women with ADHD can **provide employees with the structure to improve their wellbeing** and **unlock the significant benefits** that neurodiversity can bring to an organisation.

When ADHD in women is misunderstood

Women with ADHD can represent a significant resource for their employers, but sadly **their amazing 'superpowers' often go unnoticed**. The more challenging aspects of this condition have gained more awareness, partly due to a lack of understanding and perhaps also due to negativity bias - we generally seem to notice the negative more than the positive. This is why some of the **ADHD symptoms in women** often noticed in a workplace setting include:

- Difficulty sustaining attention
- Disorganisation
- Poor planning, prioritisation, and time management
- Procrastination
- Forgetfulness
- Difficulty understanding and poor recall of detailed instructions
- A low frustration tolerance
- Impulsiveness
- Restlessness and being easily distracted

Employers (and society at large) typically **don't have a good enough understanding of neurodiversity** to effectively deal with their female colleagues with ADHD, whose individuality and personality traits can be ignorantly dismissed or mislabelled.

ADHD Symptoms	Typical dismissive reactions
Emotional dysregulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 'What's her problem? She's having one of her mood swings again.'• 'Which Laura is going to turn up today, the mopey one, the happy one or the angry one?'
Inattentiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 'She's creative but a bit lazy and chaotic'• 'She'd forget her head if it wasn't screwed on'• 'She's not the sharpest, I have to explain everything to her 3 times'
Hyperactivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 'You can't get a word in with her, she never shuts up!'• 'It annoys me so much when she won't stop tapping her foot'

Anyone can experience extreme feelings of hurt, inadequacy and guilt when missing deadlines and receiving negative feedback. Women with ADHD are no exception, and this can be **exacerbated by traditional gender roles and expectations** e.g. having high standards for organisation and multitasking. Women with ADHD tend to develop an **extremely harsh inner critic** that manifests as negative, mistaken beliefs such as *'I am stupid', 'I am lazy' or 'why can't I do the same simple stuff that everyone else can'*.

It is no coincidence that women with ADHD are more likely to experience depression, anxiety, and eating disorders. Shockingly, research suggests that **23.5%** of women with ADHD have attempted suicide (compared to 3.3% of women without ADHD).



A path toward positivity, productivity and self acceptance

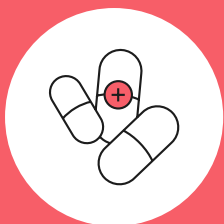
While ADHD can lead to feelings of inadequacy, especially among women, effective management of ADHD is achievable through a combination of treatments and strategies both inside and outside the workplace.

Core pillars of an effective ADHD management strategy include:



Self-compassion

Given the strong 'inner critic' that ADHD brings, being kind to yourself is particularly difficult if you're a woman with ADHD. While ADHD is officially a disability, there is nothing wrong with you, and there are a range of treatments and coping strategies available to help you become a more confident, resilient and productive person.



Medication

There are several stimulant and non-stimulant medications for ADHD. When prescribed and taken correctly, these can significantly improve symptoms of inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity to enhance focus, concentration, and performance. Additionally, ADHD medications can improve emotional regulation, social interactions, and overall quality of life.



Non-drug treatments

Behavioural therapy techniques like cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) can help women to develop effective coping strategies and improve organisational skills; lifestyle modifications such as regular exercise, a balanced diet, and enough sleep can also positively impact ADHD symptoms.

The advantages of ADHD in the workplace

While ADHD can be very taxing on women's health and wellbeing, it often brings unique skills that can help women to excel in the workplace, when managed correctly by their employers.

Creativity:

Women with ADHD can often make **connections between seemingly unrelated ideas**, which can lead to innovative approaches. ADHD minds are often skilled at finding creative solutions to complex problems, which can be particularly valuable in roles that require innovation and strategic thinking. This ability to approach problems from different angles **can lead to breakthroughs** that more conventional thinking might miss. 'Barbie' Director Greta Gerwig, musician Solange Knowles, and legendary gymnast Simone Biles are great examples of women with ADHD that have channelled their creativity to spectacular effect.

Energy:

When engaged in tasks they find interesting, women with ADHD can exhibit **high levels of energy, enthusiasm, and motivation**, often going above and beyond to complete projects. This can also be highly effective at inspiring and motivating team members.

Hyperfocus:

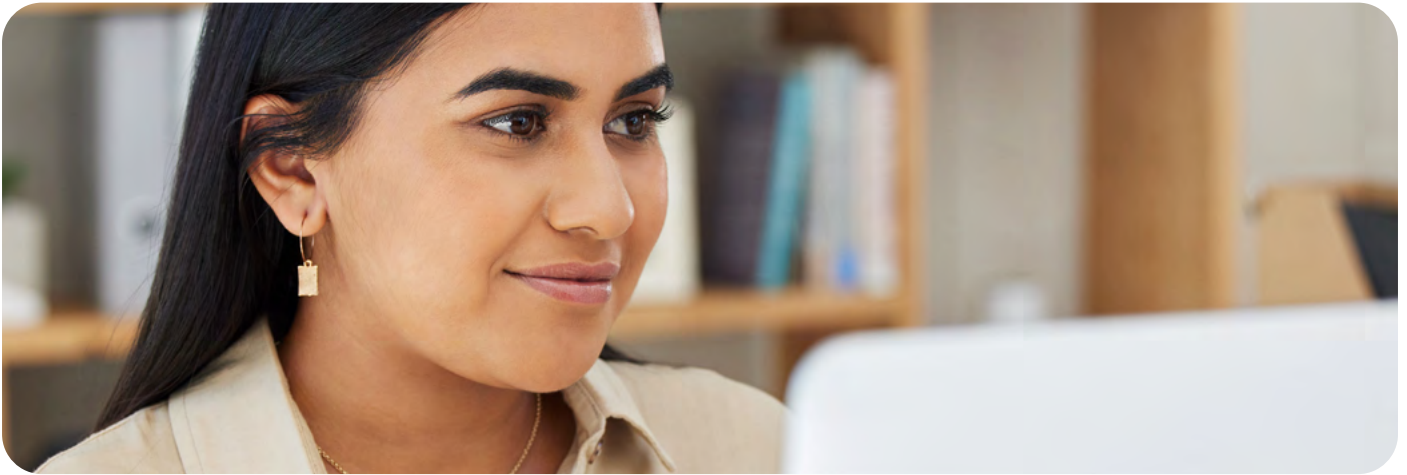
When mentally stimulated, women with ADHD can plug into a **'flow state'** to tune out distractions and tune into the task at hand with an intense focus, allowing them to accomplish impressive tasks very quickly. The fast-paced thought processes of women with ADHD can also make them **well-suited to handle crises or high-pressure situations** where quick decision-making is crucial.

Resilience:

The challenges of living with ADHD can foster **resilience, resourcefulness, and a unique perspective on problem-solving**. Many people with ADHD have developed resilience and problem-solving skills to cope with their symptoms, which can translate into excellent self-awareness, strong perseverance, and the ability to overcome workplace challenges.

Strong Interpersonal skills:

Many women with ADHD are **highly empathetic and intuitive**, which can enhance their ability to connect with colleagues and clients on a deeper level.



How employers can unlock the superpower of ADHD:

To facilitate women with ADHD and unlock the benefits that they bring to the workplace, employers should implement policies to establish a culture of understanding, inclusion and celebration of neurodiversity.

To achieve this, employers should implement the following strategies:

- i. Workplace accommodations:** Allow for flexible start and end times to accommodate peak productivity periods. To minimise distractions, facilitate opportunities for remote work, quiet areas or private offices, and provide noise cancelling headphones.
- ii. Task management support:** Provide clear, concise, and written instructions for tasks, and schedule regular check-ins to help prioritise tasks and provide guidance. Digital tools like Trello, Asana, or Slack are great to organise tasks and deadlines to improve time management.
- iii. Training and development:** Educate all employees about ADHD to foster greater understanding and reduce stigma. Offer training programs to enhance time management, organisation, and focus. Implement policies that promote diversity and inclusion in the workplace and recognise the contributions of neurodiverse employees.
- iv. Health and wellness programmes:** Provide access to counselling services and mental health support, and offer workshops on stress management, mindfulness, and relaxation techniques.
- v. Feedback and Communication** – Be mindful of the harsh inner critic that comes with ADHD, and give regular, constructive feedback in a positive manner. Encourage open communication to discuss challenges and accommodations needed.

Women with ADHD must show themselves self-compassion, and should be embraced by their employers, who can avail of the hidden superpowers that ADHD can bring. With the right mix of treatments and coping strategies, women can **effectively manage their ADHD** to become more resilient, productive and confident, inside and outside of work.

Contact [HealthHero](#) today for more support and advice.
