



Communicating Effectively with Adults with ADHD

Especially When Discussing Sensitive or Emotional Topics

Communication with adults who have ADHD works best when it is clear, kind, calm and collaborative. With a little patience and structure, even difficult conversations can become opportunities for understanding and connection.

Before You Begin:

Choose the right time and place - Find a calm, low-stimulation environment. Avoid starting serious conversations when either person is tired, distracted, or emotional.

Ask, "Is now a good time to talk about something important?"

Set the scene together - Let the person know what you'd like to discuss ahead of time so they can prepare mentally and emotionally.

Example: "I'd like to talk about how we've been handling finances lately - could we chat later this afternoon?"

During the Conversation:

Be clear and specific - Use simple, direct language. Avoid hints or long explanations. Break big topics into smaller, manageable points.

Stay calm and grounded - Keep your tone even and non-judgmental. If emotions rise, suggest taking a short break instead of pushing through.

Use "I" statements - Focus on how you feel rather than placing blame.

Example: "I feel stressed when bills pile up and I'd love to find a system that works for both of us," instead of "You never remember to pay the bills."

Allow time to process - The person may need a few moments, or even hours, to gather their thoughts or regulate emotions. It's okay to pause and return to the topic later.

Helpful Strategies

- Write things down or use visual aids to help keep track of key points.
- Stay on one topic at a time to prevent overwhelm.
- Work together on solutions by asking, “What would make this easier for you?”



When Things Get Heated



- Take breaks when needed - agree on a signal such as, “Let’s pause for ten minutes.”
- Avoid ultimatums, criticism, or emotional flooding.
- Offer reassurance: “We’re on the same team. Let’s come back to this when we’ve both had time to think.”

Understanding ADHD and Emotions

Adults with ADHD often experience emotions more intensely and may find it difficult to regulate them.

This isn’t a lack of effort or care - it’s a difference in how the brain processes emotion and attention.

Approaching conversations with empathy, clarity and structure can make communication smoother and more productive for everyone.



Further Resources:

- ADHDadultUK - www.adhdadult.uk
- ADDitude Magazine – www.additudemag.com
- ADHD UK – www.adhduk.co.uk

