

ADHD RESOURCE HUB

ADHD Treatment in Ontario

A guide to the three pillars of ADHD treatment: medication, ADHD-adapted therapy, and executive function coaching, and how they work together.

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- What "treatment" for ADHD really means
 - Pillar one: medication
 - Pillar two: ADHD-adapted psychotherapy
 - Pillar three: executive function coaching
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The 3 Pillars of ADHD Treatment

According to all major consensus documents and guidelines, the three pillars of treatment for childhood and adult ADHD are medication indicated for ADHD, therapy shown to be effective for ADHD youth and adults, like ADHD-adapted psychotherapy, and ADHD or executive function coaching.

What Does "Treatment" for ADHD Really Mean?

Treatment for ADHD is not about trying to fix something that's broken. It's about finally finding the operating manual to the ADHD brain.

- ✓ Allows us to address our own blind spots
- ✓ Reduces risks
- ✓ Unleashes the potential, rather than just helping someone cope

ADHD is a very treatable disorder, with more methods that yield more transformational improvement in more people than almost all other conditions in mental health.

Research demonstrates superior outcomes

A combination of medication and ADHD-adapted psychotherapy leads to superior outcomes, including improvement in sustained attention, emotional regulation, negative thoughts, and overall quality of life.

Dig A Little Deeper offers treatment across all three pillars, with trained and clinically experienced psychotherapists, an occupational therapist, parent coaches, and nurse practitioners.

Pillar One: Medication

Medications prescribed by physicians or nurse practitioners with expertise in ADHD are referred to most commonly as stimulant medications.

When it comes to identifying the reason to treat, we also know from the research that treatment is recommended because [untreated ADHD reduces life expectancy](#), and [treatment improves all-cause mortality](#).

These medicines have been used for over 50 years, are well understood, and have effectiveness rates of around 80 percent, notably higher than any other medicine in psychiatry, and more than even cardiovascular medicines, for example.

Learn more

[Learn about our medication services](#), or [learn how to track your progress](#).

Pillar Two: ADHD-Adapted Psychotherapy

ADHD-adapted psychotherapy refers to the necessary application of the knowledge of ADHD as a neurodevelopmental disorder, and its impact in therapy, throughout the therapeutic process.

For parents, about kids

"Behaviour therapy" for ADHD is often misunderstood as a therapy a child with ADHD receives to help them alter their behaviour. ADHD behaviour therapy for children with ADHD actually entails teaching the parents and other adults who interact with the child specialized ADHD behavioural management techniques.

For children with ADHD younger than six years of age, evidence is robust that [first-line intervention should be parent behaviour training](#).

The most important perspective shift for parents and partners alike is that a loved one with ADHD is not choosing to be difficult. It is their cognitive difference, the brain they were born with, that makes it difficult to remember and therefore follow rules, sit quietly, think before acting, and generally do the things that adults want them to do. As adults who interact with children with ADHD, it is up to the adult to alter the environment and provide the appropriate support the child requires to succeed.

For adults

It is critically important that the therapist knows what ADHD is, understands the brain-based functions and nature of how to work with each person's individual presentation, and is able to differentiate a symptom of ADHD from an emotional or psychological symptom.

Struggling with the consequences of a lifetime of undiagnosed ADHD often leads adults to diagnoses of anxiety or depression. In fact, what adult ADHD often looks like in the doctor's, nurse's, or therapist's office is anxiety and depression.

While these conditions can be present alongside ADHD, called comorbidities, they are more often a result of living a lifetime with undiagnosed ADHD, which can be quite demoralizing.

Adhering to [global treatment recommendations](#) means including psychosocial interventions in your ADHD treatment. ADHD-adapted therapy can be transformational because it both addresses the challenging emotions that were underpinning the anxiety and depression symptoms, and helps people build new relational skills to confidently self-advocate and strengthen their relationships.

Studies have shown ADHD-adapted cognitive behaviour therapy, dialectical behaviour therapy, and interpersonal psychotherapy to be effective forms of therapy to help support the diagnostic journey, the acceptance and understanding of the diagnosis, learning how to navigate the emotions, relationship challenges, and self-care aspects of living with ADHD, and the longer term management of unpacking and finding the gifts within an ADHD brain.

What is neurodivergent-affirming therapy?

Neurodivergent-affirming care is a form of cultural competence. Therapists who are neurodivergent-affirming have taken steps to be aware of possible biases and to gather appropriate knowledge about neurodivergent clients before working with them, to avoid doing harm.

Always ask your therapist up front what specific training they have had in treating ADHD, and what their clinical experience has taught them.

Further reading

Read more about [Neurodivergent-Affirming Clinical Practice](#) on the Dig Deeper Blog, or [learn more about ADHD therapy at DALD](#).

Pillar Three: ADHD Executive Function Coaching

ADHD coaching is different from therapy. It provides the external structure and support to change the habits associated with your unique presentation of ADHD causing problems in your life, monitor the progress you make, and create a sense of accountability and self-efficacy.

Coaching helps people improve their performance in areas they need to work on, and focus in the here and now. It helps you achieve your goals by breaking down and simplifying all the specific tasks you need to complete first, in order to reach those goals.

7 areas of focus

- 1 **Flexible thinking skills**
- 2 **Planning ahead and time management**
- 3 **Self-monitoring**
- 4 **Emotional regulation and self control**, managing impulsivity
- 5 **Working memory**, remembering information
- 6 **Attention and energy management**
- 7 **Organizational skills**

Ready to find support?

[Find an ADHD trained therapist](#) at Dig A Little Deeper.

ADHD Articles Written by Our Team of Therapists

- [EI00: Slow Down to Thrive: ADHD, Pacing, and Rethinking Productivity Culture](#)
- [DIYCalm: Embracing Mindfulness for the Neurodivergent Mind](#)
- [The Reckoning: Reflecting on a Late ADHD Diagnosis as an Adult](#)
- [Thriving Through the Seasons: Coping with Seasonal Depression and ADHD](#)
- [Dealing with ADHD-Powered Procrastination](#)
- [ADHD Essentials: 8 Therapist-Guided Tips for Thriving with Your ADHD Brain](#)



NEXT STEPS

Ready to Talk to Someone?

Dig A Little Deeper offers ADHD medication management, ADHD-adapted therapy, and executive function coaching across our Ontario locations, alongside a wide network of therapists and coaches.

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In crisis, or worried about safety? Call or text 9-8-8 for the Suicide Crisis Helpline, available across Canada, 24 hours a day.

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