

Strategies to Support Hyperactivity and Impulsivity

People with or without a diagnosis of ADHD benefit from the following strategies. These strategies remain the same after a diagnosis.

Strategies for managing hyperactivity

- **Exercise:** A positive and effective way to reduce hyperactivity. Exercise can relieve stress, boost your mood, and calm your mind, helping work off excess energy and aggression that can get in the way of feeling stable. Choose something **vigorous** and **fun** that you can stick with, like a team sport or working out with a friend. Increase stress relief by **exercising outdoors**. Many people benefit from sunshine, fresh air, and natural surroundings.
- Try relaxing forms of exercise, such as mindful walking, yoga, or tai chi. In addition to relieving stress, they can teach you to better control your attention and impulses.
- **Mindfulness:** As well as reducing stress, regular mindful meditation can help you to better resist distractions, lower impulsivity, improve your focus, and provide more control over your emotions. As hyperactivity symptoms can make meditation a challenge for some adults, starting slowly can help
- **Meditate** for short periods and gradually increase your meditation time as you become more comfortable with the process - and are better able to maintain focus. The key is to then draw on these mindfulness techniques during your daily life to keep you on track. Experiment with free or inexpensive smartphone apps or online guided meditations. You may wish to try active meditation such as walking and spotting
- **The '5-4-3-2-1' technique:** Purposefully take in the details of your surroundings and use each of your senses. Strive to notice small details that your mind would ordinarily tune out.
 - **What are 5 things you can see?** Look for small details (e.g., a pattern on the ceiling, a light reflection)
 - **What are 4 things you can feel?** Notice (e.g., the sensation of clothing on your body)
 - **What are 3 things you can hear?** Pay special attention to sounds (e.g., distant traffic, blowing wind)
 - **What are 2 things you can smell?** Try to notice smells in the air around you (e.g., freshly mowed grass)
 - **What is 1 thing you can taste?** Try eating something slowly and notice (e.g., texture, flavour, and/or temperature)
- **Self-talk:** Talk to yourself – “slow down”, “take a breath”.
- **Self-compassion:** Sometimes you will have lapses and act impulsively. This can be a strength. Try to be kinder to yourself about these and try not to worry what others might say. Some positives of impulsivity include spontaneity, enthusiasm, the way you just get on with things, ease of starting conversations, creativity, a motivating force, honest communication, and quick decision making

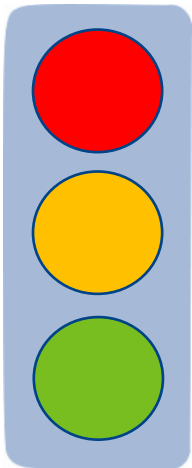
Managing impulsivity with the 'Stop and Think' strategy

Where there is a problem, the first step is noticing what you do. If you can't think of anything, get someone to point your impulsive behaviours out to you, to help you identify your specific problem(s).

1. **Stop!** Say this to yourself. If necessary, remove yourself from the situation.
2. **Think!** Use self-talk: "stay calm, think before you act", "let's get this right". Write your main points before you speak.
3. **Question yourself.** "Do I really need it?", "How will I feel if I say that?"
4. **Problem solving.** Brainstorm alternative solutions.
5. **Imagine consequences and select the best option.**
6. **Act.** Act out the best plan.
7. **Reflect.** Did this work out better? Congratulate yourself on your choice or consider what you could do better.

Managing emotions with the 'Traffic Light' strategy

Some people with hyperactive/impulsive ADHD also experience emotional dysregulation (e.g., variable and unpredictable moods / 'mood swings'). This strategy can be used to support emotional regulation and self-control. It takes practice, but healthy management of emotions contributes to our well-being and our relationships with others.



When you are in the **red zone**, emotions are 'out of control'. You may be in an extremely heightened state of alertness and have very intense feelings that you are not in full control of (e.g., anger, rage, panic, fear).

When you are in the **amber zone**, you should 'proceed with caution'. You may be in a heightened state of alertness but still have control over your thoughts, feelings, and reactions (e.g., stress, frustration, anxiety).

When you are in the **green zone**, you are 'good to go': Emotions are appropriate for the situation, and show control (e.g., calm, content). They are also appropriate feelings for social interactions, learning, and working.

Try to work out what you do and say when you are in each of the zones. You might need someone to help you. When you are able to acknowledge what 'zone' you are in, you can then use strategies to move to the green zone. Some examples are: deep breathing, relaxation, taking a break, distractions, talking to someone, sensory tools, and exercise.

We realise that this might be hard, and you may have tried these strategies before. You may need support from others to implement these strategies. We recommend that you identify a suitable person (e.g., friend, family member, partner) to help you. Work with them to select some of the strategies you wish to try and ask them to assist you. You can form healthy habits and routines together. Remember to take things slowly, just one step at a time. After diagnosis, we offer a one-off strategy session with an Assistant Psychologist as well as a 6-week psychoeducation and support group with the psychology team in which we explore these ideas. See the separate information sheet about opting in for post-diagnostic support.

