ADHD | BRIEF SCREENING & SELF-REFLECTION TOOL

Exploring Attention, Impulsivity & Executive Functioning

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IMPORTANT | THIS IS A SCREENING TOOL, NOT A DIAGNOSTIC ASSESSMENT

ADULTS | AGES 18+

This brief screening resource is adapted from the work and screening materials of **Russell A. Barkley, Ph.D.**, a clinical neuropsychologist and leading ADHD researcher.

Its purpose is to help you recognize possible ADHD-related patterns and consider whether a more thorough professional evaluation would be worthwhile.

This tool cannot determine whether you have ADHD. A positive screen does not confirm ADHD, and a negative screen does not necessarily rule it out.

The questions are intended to support curiosity, reflection, and a conversation with a qualified healthcare professional.

Estimated time: 5–10 minutes

THE STARTING POINT | COULD ADHD BE PART OF THE PICTURE?

Many adults wonder whether difficulties with attention, organization, follow-through, restlessness, or impulsivity might be related to ADHD.

You might notice that you:

- Know what needs to happen but struggle to get started.
- Become distracted or lose track of what you're doing.
- Have difficulty managing time, responsibilities, or deadlines.
- Feel restless or have trouble slowing down.
- Act or speak before fully considering the consequences.
- Experience inconsistent performance, even when you're capable of completing the task.

These experiences aren't unique to ADHD. Stress, anxiety, depression, sleep difficulties, medical conditions, and other circumstances can create similar challenges.

ADHD is a neurodevelopmental condition, meaning relevant patterns generally begin during childhood, even when they aren't recognized until adulthood.

A useful screening process considers more than whether symptoms are present. It also considers how long they've existed, where they occur, and whether they meaningfully interfere with everyday functioning.

THE SCREENING | RECOGNIZING COMMON ADHD PATTERNS

Consider your experiences over the **past six months or longer**.

For each statement, indicate whether it describes something you experience **often**, to a degree that creates more difficulty than you would typically expect for someone your age.

This is a client-friendly adaptation of the five adult screening domains in Barkley's *Screening Checklist for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder*.

	Often	Not Often
1. Organization & Time Management — I struggle to organize responsibilities, keep track of belongings, or manage time effectively.	☐	☐
2. Attention & Distraction — I have difficulty maintaining attention, particularly during tasks that require sustained effort, or I become easily distracted.	☐	☐
3. Listening & Follow-Through — I have difficulty following instructions, staying engaged when someone is speaking, or completing tasks I've started.	☐	☐
4. Restlessness & Interruptions — I frequently feel restless, have difficulty remaining still, or interrupt or talk over others.	☐	☐
5. Impulsivity — I sometimes act, respond, or make decisions before taking sufficient time to consider the consequences.	☐	☐

TOTAL RESPONSES MARKED OFTEN: _____ / 5

UNDERSTANDING YOUR RESPONSES

In Barkley's original five-item adult screening checklist, **three or more "Yes" responses suggest that pursuing a more comprehensive ADHD evaluation is reasonable.**

For this adapted version, three or more "Often" responses can be treated as a reason to discuss further evaluation with a qualified professional.

This is a referral consideration, not a diagnosis or a validated cutoff for this rewritten questionnaire. Because the wording and response options have been adapted, the original instrument's measurement properties cannot automatically be assumed to apply.

Fewer than three responses doesn't rule out ADHD, particularly if meaningful difficulties are present.

LOOK BEYOND THE SYMPTOMS

Duration, Development & Everyday Functioning

ADHD assessment involves more than identifying familiar behaviors. The following questions help provide context.

DURATION | HOW LONG HAS THIS BEEN HAPPENING?

Have these patterns been present for at least six months?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure

CHILDHOOD | WERE SIMILAR PATTERNS PRESENT EARLIER IN LIFE?

Looking back, do you remember difficulties with attention, organization, forgetfulness, restlessness, impulsivity, or follow-through during childhood, generally before age 12?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure

You may have performed well academically or developed strategies that helped compensate for these difficulties. Strong performance doesn't automatically exclude ADHD.

IMPACT | WHERE DO THESE EXPERIENCES CREATE DIFFICULTIES?

Check any areas where the patterns meaningfully interfere with your functioning.

- ☐ Work or professional responsibilities
- ☐ School or learning
- ☐ Relationships or social interactions
- ☐ Household responsibilities
- ☐ Managing money, bills, or appointments
- ☐ Driving or everyday safety
- ☐ Personal organization and daily routines
- ☐ Other: _____
- ☐ No significant interference

CONTEXT | WHERE DO THESE PATTERNS SHOW UP?

Do you notice these difficulties across more than one setting, such as work, home, school, or relationships?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure

Symptoms may vary by situation. Someone may function well during engaging activities while struggling with less stimulating responsibilities.

EXPLORE YOUR EXPERIENCE

Questions Worth Considering

Before deciding what to do next, reflect on a few questions.

WHAT FEELS MOST DIFFICULT?

Is it starting tasks, sustaining attention, managing time, controlling impulses, regulating activity, or following through?

WHAT HAS THE IMPACT BEEN?

What consequences have these patterns created for your work, relationships, responsibilities, or daily life?

WHAT HAS HELPED?

Are there situations, structures, reminders, routines, or environments where you function more effectively?

WHAT ELSE MIGHT BE CONTRIBUTING?

Have these difficulties changed alongside stress, anxiety, depression, sleep, substance use, health changes, or major life transitions?

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO UNDERSTAND BETTER?

WHAT DO MY RESULTS SUGGEST?

Deciding Whether Further Evaluation Makes Sense

CONSIDER A MORE THOROUGH ADHD EVALUATION WHEN:

- You endorse three or more of the five screening areas.
- Difficulties have persisted over time.
- Similar patterns may have been present during childhood.
- Symptoms meaningfully interfere with everyday functioning.
- Difficulties appear in multiple settings or responsibilities.

You don't need to meet every point above before seeking professional guidance.

CONSIDER ADDITIONAL EXPLORATION WHEN:

- Your screening responses are below the suggested referral threshold but you're still experiencing meaningful difficulties.
- Symptoms seem to have developed primarily during adulthood.
- You're unsure whether the challenges reflect ADHD, anxiety, depression, sleep difficulties, or another concern.
- You've developed extensive compensating strategies but still experience significant effort or consequences.

A qualified professional can help determine whether ADHD assessment, evaluation for another condition, or both would be appropriate.

WHAT DOES A COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION INVOLVE?

A thorough adult ADHD assessment generally includes:

- A detailed review of current symptoms and their functional impact.
- Exploration of childhood and developmental history.
- Consideration of symptoms across settings.
- Review of relevant medical, psychological, and sleep-related factors.
- Evaluation of other possible explanations or co-occurring conditions.
- Standardized rating scales and, when useful, information from people who know you well.

A comprehensive evaluation doesn't necessarily require extensive neuropsychological testing. The appropriate assessment depends on the clinical circumstances.

WHERE DO I BEGIN?

If you're curious about ADHD, start with what you've noticed.

- **NOTICE:** Which experiences or behaviors feel familiar?
- **REVIEW THE GAME TAPE:** When do these patterns occur, and how do they affect your functioning?
- **EXPLORE:** Have they existed over time? What other factors might contribute?
- **TAKE THE NEXT STEP:** If the patterns are persistent or disruptive, consider discussing a comprehensive ADHD evaluation with a qualified healthcare professional.

You can bring this completed screening tool to that conversation.

A FINAL THOUGHT

Understanding why we struggle with certain activities can be valuable. Sometimes those difficulties are related to ADHD. Sometimes they're connected to other experiences or circumstances.

And sometimes several factors are contributing at the same time.

The purpose of screening isn't to find a label. It's to determine whether there's something worth exploring more thoroughly.

Regardless of the outcome, recognizing your patterns can help you better understand your needs, identify useful supports, and develop strategies that work for you.

SOURCE & ADAPTATION NOTICE

This is an independently adapted educational screening resource informed by:

- Russell A. Barkley, Ph.D. — *Barkley Screening Checklist for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder*
- *Barkley's Quick-Check for Adult ADHD Diagnosis*
- Barkley & Murphy — *Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: A Clinical Workbook* (2006)
- Russell A. Barkley — ADHD fact sheets and educational materials, www.russellbarkley.org

This document is not an official Barkley screening instrument, is not endorsed or validated by Dr. Barkley, and should not be represented as a standardized diagnostic measure.

SCREENING ONLY | NOT FOR DIAGNOSTIC PURPOSES

The results should be interpreted as preliminary information to help determine whether additional professional evaluation is appropriate.