

ADHD	Autism	ADHD+Autism Combination
Core characteristics		
<p>At the core of ADHD is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Executive dysfunction, being less self-regulated, not being able to flip the mental switch to put your brain in “productivity mode”</li> <li>• Working memory issues</li> <li>• An interest-and-stimulation-based nervous system</li> </ul> <p>All other ADHD traits stem from these core characteristics.</p>	<p>Autism has core characteristics in all different areas, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication /social interaction</li> <li>• Sensory processing</li> <li>• Need for routine and predictability</li> <li>• Systemizing</li> <li>• Bottom-up processing</li> <li>• Being hypersensitive /hyperresponsive or hyposensitive to stimuli, changes in plans and environment, etc. (info from @zombielink on TikTok)</li> </ul> <p>As far as we know right now, there is no one core trait that all other autistic traits stem from.</p>	
Constantly seeking...		
Excitement, novelty, and stimulation	Comfort, control, predictability, and respite in a world that is confusing, overwhelming, and distressing for autistic people	
Social and communication differences		
<p><b>May have social and communication differences caused by other ADHD traits</b>, such as interrupting people, impulsively doing embarrassing things, forgetting to text people back, and having trouble understanding and remembering directions for</p>	<p><b>Core social and communication differences that exist on their own</b>, such as being uncomfortable with eye contact, monotone voice, not noticing when people are being sarcastic or joking, not “reading in between the lines,” being socially oblivious, appearing</p>	

<p>games because of working memory issues.</p> <p>May miss social cues because your attention was elsewhere, but ADHD does <i>not</i> cause people to have trouble interpreting/ understanding social cues</p> <p><b>Allistic ADHDers intuitively understand what they're expected to do in social situations</b>, even if they might forget to do these things or make impulsive mistakes.</p> <p><b>Unlike autism, ADHD social struggles do not stem from a lack of intuitive understanding of social situations.</b>  <a href="http://yourlittleprofessor.com/asperger-syndrome-and-attention-deficit-disorder/">(yourlittleprofessor.com/asperger-syndrome-and-attention-deficit-disorder/)</a></p>	<p>withdrawn or shy, echolalia, having a very literal and direct communication style, expressing emotions and empathy differently, being non-verbal or having non-verbal episodes, using an unusually large vocabulary, being analytical about social situations, having trouble using and interpreting non-verbal communication, using body language/facial expressions that don't match what's expected for what you're saying/feeling, and preferring parallel play or info-dumping about special interests over other types of social interaction.</p> <p><b>Autistic people often do not understand social rules, like:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How they're expected to act in certain social situations</li> <li>• How to interpret other people's words, actions, intentions, and emotions</li> </ul> <p><a href="http://yourlittleprofessor.com/asperger-syndrome-and-attention-deficit-disorder/">(yourlittleprofessor.com/asperger-syndrome-and-attention-deficit-disorder/)</a></p>	
<p>Interrupting conversations a lot because . . .</p>		
<p>You lack impulse control or because you feel like you'll forget what you're going to say if you don't blurt it out right away</p>	<p>You have trouble with getting the timing right and knowing when it's your turn to speak because you miss social cues</p>	
<p>Suppressing vs. Masking</p>		
<p><b>Suppressing</b> behaviors that are natural to you (such as fidgeting)</p>	<p><b>Masking</b>—The "mask" is a social persona/personality that autistic people construct</p>	

<p>Hiding your ADHD struggles from parents, teachers, etc.</p> <p>With ADHDers, this really is more of suppressing and hiding, whereas autistic masking is about performing a whole personality made up of behaviors that are UNnatural to you, while also suppressing behaviors like stimming.</p> <p><b>TLDR:</b> ADHD → suppressing/hiding ADHD behaviors in order to fit in/assimilate into neurotypical society</p>	<p>and put on after analyzing social situations in order to blend in with allistic (non-autistic) society, be accepted, make friends, please people, etc./assimilate into allistic society</p> <p>Masking involves forcing yourself to imitate/perform behaviors that are not natural for you (such as eye contact). Masking can feel like playing a character or being in “customer service mode” all the time. — go back to podcast</p> <p><b>TLDR:</b> Autistic masking = performing social behaviors that aren’t natural/instinctual to you in order to fit in/assimilate into allistic society</p>	
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Routines and schedules

<p><b>Quickly getting bored with routines, having trouble sticking to schedules, and preferring to try new things</b></p> <p>May find routines/schedules helpful for dealing with executive dysfunction and getting things done, but that doesn’t come naturally and routines aren’t necessary for keeping your emotional state stable</p>	<p><b>Preferring repetition and routine</b></p> <p>Extremely thrown off or <b>upset by sudden changes</b> in plans and routines, such as having to take a different route to work because of construction or having to eat lunch in a different place than usual</p> <p>Needing prior knowledge of all the details of plans you’re going to be involved in and becoming distressed if those plans change or are interrupted</p> <p>Needing to be able to envision and mentally prepare for activities before doing them</p>	<p>Can look like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Needing structure and routine but struggling with providing it for yourself</li> <li>• Loving routines but finding it really hard to stick to them, then feeling really anxious about the lack of routine</li> <li>• Needing predictability and control (may be a “control freak”) but not necessarily repetition</li> <li>• “Making spontaneous plans and becoming very upset if there are any changes in those plans.” - @autistic.qualia</li> </ul>
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	<p>May also have other <b>very specific, repetitive, sometimes OCD-like habits/rituals</b>, such as lining up toys, needing to organize things in a certain way, or needing to bring a specific comfort item in order to leave the house</p>	
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Spontaneity vs. Planning		
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<p>Impulsive, spontaneous, less self-regulated than neurotypicals</p> <p>Jumping into new ideas, projects, hobbies, etc. all the time and then often abandoning them for the next new thing</p> <p>May “go with the flow” a lot</p>	<p>Reserved, thoughtful/premeditative, inhibition, can’t just let things go</p> <p>More difficulty with starting things than with continuing with them</p> <p>Not “going with the flow”</p> <p>“Fearful tension/panic for what is new/uncontrolled leading to avoidance is often seen in children with ASD.” (from “Differentiating Between ADHD and ASD in Childhood: Some Directions for Practitioners.”)</p>	<p>Reserved, thoughtful, AND impulsive</p> <p>Could be impulsive about <i>what</i> you do (such as impulsively starting a new project) but thoughtful and cautious about <i>how</i> you do it</p> <p>Example: “Impulsively making large purchases for a new hyperfixation hobby but doing many hours of research comparing products beforehand.” - @autistic.qualia</p>
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Hyperactivity		
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<p><b>May involve hyperactivity, restlessness, and/or impatience</b> (there’s primarily hyperactive type ADHD, primarily inattentive type ADHD, and combined type)</p> <p>May (or may not) have trouble sitting still and doing quiet activities</p> <p>This can also include <b>mental hyperactivity</b>, where your thoughts are whizzing and bouncing all over the place,</p>	<p><b>No hyperactivity</b> (although stimming could be mistaken for hyperactivity)</p>	
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sometimes called “racecar brain.” This can feel overwhelming.		
Noticing details		
Missing details and making careless mistakes	<p>Close attention to details and patterns</p> <p>“Generally, children with ASD are very focused on details and often do not miss details. In activities, an insistence on sameness and repetition is commonly seen, leading to fewer sloppy errors. Often, children with ASD are considered as too precise, in sharp contrast to children with ADHD.”</p> <p>(from “Differentiating Between ADHD and ASD in Childhood: Some Directions for Practitioners.”)</p>	<p>Being extremely detail-oriented with some things while missing/forgetting entire activities with other things</p> <p>Having no idea how to answer the question “Are you detail-oriented or focused on the big picture?”</p> <p>“Noticing details that matter to you with extreme acuity but making careless mistakes on things that are less important.” - @autistic.qualia</p>
Seeming like you’re not listening because...		
<p>You spaced out, forgot what they said, or weren’t paying attention</p> <p>(<a href="https://spectrumnews.org/features/deep-dive/decoding-overlap-autism-adhd/">spectrumnews.org/features/deep-dive/decoding-overlap-autism-adhd/</a>)</p>	<p>You’re not making eye contact and/or you’re missing social cues</p> <p>(<a href="https://spectrumnews.org/features/deep-dive/decoding-overlap-autism-adhd/">spectrumnews.org/features/deep-dive/decoding-overlap-autism-adhd/</a>)</p>	
Multitasking		
<p>Multitasking can be helpful because you get bored easily (but sometimes you go to the opposite extreme and hyperfocus)</p>	<p>May find it very hard to multitask, preferring instead to dive deeply into an activity that interests you</p>	
Motivation and focus		
<p>Motivated and focused by <b>stimulation, sensory input, excitement, novelty, and interest</b></p> <p>Knows why other people</p>	<p>Motivated and focused by <b>caring about the activity/goal itself and by “intrinsic interest and knowledge, and by engagement and flow”</b></p>	

<p>think things are important but isn't motivated by that</p> <p>Example of need for stimulation/sensory input: I often need both visual and auditory input at once in order to stay focused, so if I look away from the screen while watching a video, I will space out and miss what the person was saying in the video.</p> <p>Your interest and attention jump all over the place. You want to do everything at once.</p>	<p>(<a href="https://forbes.com/sites/quora/2017/07/20/research-shows-that-people-with-autism-have-a-stronger-aptitude-for-focusing-on-tasks/?sh=218e064f2e82">forbes.com/sites/quora/2017/07/20/research-shows-that-people-with-autism-have-a-stronger-aptitude-for-focusing-on-tasks/?sh=218e064f2e82</a>)</p> <p>Autistics need to understand <i>why</i> it's important to do something before they can be motivated to do it (and "Because I said so," or "Because everyone else is" aren't valid answers for them)</p>	
<p>Different from neurotypicals, who are mainly motivated by level of priority and rewards and consequences</p>		
<p style="text-align: center;">Distraction</p>		
<p>Distracted because your attention tends to jump over to the most exciting/stimulating thing, regardless of what you're supposed to be focused on.</p> <p>You also have a low tolerance for boredom and can't just tell yourself what to focus on and "push through".</p>	<p>Distracted because of sensory issues with your environment, overthinking, and/or being thrown off by or over-focused on tiny details</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Hyperfixation vs. Special Interest</p>		
<p><b>Hyperfixation:</b> a topic or activity that you are really interested in for anywhere from a week to a couple of months and often hyperfocus on during that time</p>	<p><b>Special Interest:</b> a subject that you are interested in and feel very attached to over a long period of time. Engaging with it is very comforting for you. You might spend a lot of time talking about your SI, center many parts of your life around your SI, and/or get really upset when you can't engage with your SI.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Medications</p>		

Can usually be effectively treated (but <i>not</i> cured) with medication (although ADHD meds will only help you focus; they won't help with other executive functions)	Medications can be used to treat comorbid conditions but there is no standard medication-based treatment for autism itself. ADHD medications won't work for "treating" autism.	
Small talk		
Bored by small talk	Not understanding the point of small talk, wondering if you're doing it right, and/or just avoiding small talk all together	
Fidgeting vs. Stimming		
ADHDers fidget: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To help them focus</li> <li>• To release energy</li> <li>• When they're craving stimulation or feeling restless or bored</li> </ul>	Autistic people stim when excited or distressed in order to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regulate their emotions</li> <li>• Communicate/express their emotions</li> <li>• Balance out sensory input</li> </ul>	
Feeling lost when given a new task and not sure of what's expected of you <i>because...</i>		
You struggle with processing instructions, get overwhelmed, and forget what to do	You're not sure about people's implied/unspoken expectations of you and you don't make assumptions about this. You want all the details presented clearly.	
Organization		
Struggling with organization, feeling scattered	Systemizing, finding comfort in organizing	

ADHD advice that probably won't work for most autistic people:

- "Look for a job in a fast-paced, exciting, active environment where you can work on new challenges every day, such as an emergency room, busy newsroom, or as a firefighter."
- "Multitask to keep your brain engaged."
- "Switch tasks often to accommodate for your short attention span."

- “ADHD kids need lots of recess time to run around, play with other kids, and let out their energy.”
- “Use timers and alarm clocks to keep you on track.” (This may trigger auditory sensitivity, although timers can still be useful to autistic ADHDers once the alarm sounds have been adjusted.)

Autistic people “lack what doctors call ‘social reciprocity’ or Theory of Mind. Theory of Mind is ‘the capacity to understand that other people have thoughts, feelings, motivations and desires that are different from our own.’ Conversely, children with ADD have a Theory of Mind and understand other people’s motives and expectations. They make appropriate eye contact and understand social cues, body language, and hidden agendas in social interactions. . . . Both face social challenges like making friends, but for different reasons. The child with Attention Deficit Disorder knows what to do but forgets to do it. [Autistic people] do not know what to do. They do not understand that relationships are two-sided. When an autistic child talks on and on about his particular interest, he simply does not understand that he is showing disinterest in his friend’s side of the conversation. On the other hand, the child with ADD may know he is dominating the conversation, but cannot control his impulses.” (from “Asperger Syndrome and Attention Deficit Disorder.” by YourLittleProfessor.com)

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Other sources I used:

- “Differentiating Between ADHD and ASD in Childhood: Some Directions for Practitioners.” by Nanda Rommelse, Janne Visser, and Catharina Hartman, published by European Child & Adolescent Psychiatry in 2018  
[link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007%2Fs00787-018-1165-5.pdf](https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007%2Fs00787-018-1165-5.pdf)
- The AuTeach (@AuTeachOfficial) podcast episode featuring Dr. Lesley Cook (@Lesley\_Psyd)
- Videos by Aspergers From The Inside on YouTube
- “Asperger Syndrome and Attention Deficit Disorder.” by YourLittleProfessor.com  
[yourlittleprofessor.com/asperger-syndrome-and-attention-deficit-disorder/](https://yourlittleprofessor.com/asperger-syndrome-and-attention-deficit-disorder/) (somewhat outdated and uses “aspergers”, but still sums up the info well)
- “Research Shows That People With Autism Have A Stronger Aptitude For Focusing On Tasks.” by Forbes.com  
[forbes.com/sites/quora/2017/07/20/research-shows-that-people-with-autism-have-a-stronger-aptitude-for-focusing-on-tasks/?sh=218e064f2e82](https://forbes.com/sites/quora/2017/07/20/research-shows-that-people-with-autism-have-a-stronger-aptitude-for-focusing-on-tasks/?sh=218e064f2e82)
- “Autism and Managing Multi-Tasking and Memory.” by Mary Baily on HuffPost.com  
[huffpost.com/entry/autism-and-managing-multi-tasking-and-memory\\_b\\_58b6ea21e4b0e5fdf6197946](https://huffpost.com/entry/autism-and-managing-multi-tasking-and-memory_b_58b6ea21e4b0e5fdf6197946)



- “Decoding the overlap between autism and ADHD.” by Ricki Rusting on SpectrumNews.org  
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