

Women's AD/HD

Self-Assessment Symptom Inventory (SASI)

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The following set of self-assessment questions has been developed informally, over time, reflecting the authors' clinical experience in treating women and girls with AD/HD. Normative data has not yet been collected using this inventory, either to compare women diagnosed with AD/HD with undiagnosed women, or to compare responses of men and women diagnosed with AD/HD. Such studies, however, would both provide valuable information and lend greater validity to this inventory as a diagnostic tool.

Some of the items included in the Inventory reflect issues more typical of women with Combined Type AD/HD, while others are representative of women with Primarily Inattentive Type AD/HD. At present, the following questions are appropriate for use as a detailed, structured self-assessment of a broad range of concerns typically reported by women with AD/HD. The authors hope that this Self-Assessment Symptom Inventory will prove to be an important step in the process of exploring important gender differences in adult AD/HD and developing a consensus on more gender and age-appropriate diagnostic criteria for women.

(This scale should not be used for diagnostic purposes. Instead, results should be considered as part of a structured interview, and used in conjunction with diagnostic testing when evaluating women for possible AD/HD.)

Directions:

Mark each item below with one of the code numbers to show how much that feeling or behavior is part of your personal experience.

0 = that's not at all like me; that almost never happens to me.

1 = that's a little like me; that happens to me, but not very often.

2 = that's a lot like me; that happens to me often.

3 = that's just like me; that happens to me almost all the time.

When an item does not pertain to you, such as a parenting question for a woman without children, simply leave that item blank.

When you encounter an item about an issue you can't recall or about which you have no knowledge, use a question mark (?) to respond.

PART I: CHILDHOOD AD/HD PATTERNS

Answer this group of questions retrospectively, as you recall childhood experiences.

Inattention

- _____ 1. I daydreamed a lot in school.
- _____ 2. My mind wandered, even when I *tried* to listen to the teacher.
- _____ 3. In class, I didn't hear the teacher's instructions.
- _____ 4. I made careless mistakes on tests.
- _____ 5. I often lost or misplaced things.
- _____ 6. I got teased for being "spacey."

Hyperactivity

- _____ 1. I got in trouble for talking in class.
- _____ 2. I was a tomboy.
- _____ 3. It was hard for me to sit still in class.
- _____ 4. I felt best when I was moving around – playing sports or dancing.
- _____ 5. It was hard to fall asleep at bedtime because thoughts were bouncing around in my brain.
- _____ 6. I often doodled or fidgeted when I had to sit still.
- _____ 7. My friends called me "hyper."
- _____ 8. When sitting, I tended to "tip" my chair or jiggle my legs.

Impulsivity

- _____ 1. I interrupted others, even though I tried not to.
- _____ 2. Sometimes, when I was upset, I'd blurt out things that I didn't mean.
- _____ 3. I acted silly or "crazy" with my friends.
- _____ 4. I acted on the spur of the moment, never thinking of the trouble I'd get into.
- _____ 5. As a teenager, I sometimes drove too fast, or took other risks while driving.

Productivity

- _____ 1. In school, I didn't finish seatwork quickly as the rest of the class.
- _____ 2. The demands of high school felt overwhelming sometimes.
- _____ 3. I had to work much harder and stay up later than others to do well in school.
- _____ 4. I studied or did homework late into the night.

Problems with initiation

- _____ 1. I had trouble getting started on my homework.
- _____ 2. It was hard for me to begin working on a project unless someone was there to keep me on track.
- _____ 3. I worked better with others than when I worked alone.

Problems with follow-through/perseverance

- _____ 1. It was hard for me to complete long-term school projects.
- _____ 2. I dabbled in many hobbies or activities, but never really persevered in my efforts.
- _____ 3. Although I took different types of lessons as a child, I rarely or never practiced.

Problems with underarousal

- _____ 1. I felt sleepy when sitting in class, but felt energetic as soon as I stood up and moved.
- _____ 2. It was difficult to get up in the morning.
- _____ 3. I wasn't alert until late in the morning.
- _____ 4. I didn't seem to have as much energy as most of my friends.

Procrastination problems

- _____ 1. I was smart, but got by doing everything at the last minute.
- _____ 2. I handed in my homework late, if I did it at all.
- _____ 3. The only way I could really study for a test was to stay up very late the night before.

Low motivation/underachievement

- _____ 1. I didn't do as well in school as I felt I should have.
- _____ 2. I got by on my intelligence, and didn't really try hard in school.
- _____ 3. My parents and teachers told me I could do much better if I tried.
- _____ 4. I started each grading period with good intentions, but could never sustain them.

Organizational difficulties

- _____ 1. My room looked like a "disaster" area.
- _____ 2. My backpack/book bag/desk was messy.
- _____ 3. I had trouble being organized.
- _____ 4. I had trouble keeping track of assignments, long-term projects, and due dates.

Poor time management

- _____ 1. I arrived late for scheduled activities.
- _____ 2. I often lost track of time.
- _____ 3. I stayed up late, then had trouble getting up in the morning.

Problems with fine/gross motor control

- _____ 1. My handwriting was messy.
- _____ 2. I was physically awkward and did poorly in sports.
- _____ 3. I tended to bump into things – corners of tables, door frames, etc.

LEARNING ISSUES

Reading problems

- _____ 1. I was a slow reader.
- _____ 2. When reading, my mind wandered.
- _____ 3. Typically, after reading a textbook, I could not answer the questions at the end of the chapter.
- _____ 4. I needed to reread information to be sure that I understand it.
- _____ 5. I didn't read for pleasure.

Writing problems

- _____ 1. Writing assignments were difficult for me.
- _____ 2. I had lots of ideas, but couldn't organize them well when writing.
- _____ 3. I could explain what I knew verbally, but just couldn't get it down on paper.

Memory problems

- _____ 1. I had trouble remembering the directions for assignments.
- _____ 2. Even when I studied, I couldn't recall the information on a test.
- _____ 3. I was forgetful and absentminded.

SOCIAL/INTERPERSONAL ISSUES

Shyness, social withdrawal

- _____ 1. I felt shy and self-conscious around my classmates.
- _____ 2. Even when I had something to say, I rarely raised my hand to volunteer in class.
- _____ 3. I had only a few friends during school years.
- _____ 4. I didn't date or rarely dated in high school.

Interpersonal/verbal problems

- _____ 1. Other girls called me "mean" or "bossy."
- _____ 2. I felt different from other girls.
- _____ 3. Other girls didn't like me, but I didn't understand why.
- _____ 4. It was hard for me to keep up with the conversation of a group of girls.
- _____ 5. I fought and argued with my friends.

- _____ 6. In conversation, I'd say something dumb or couldn't think of anything to say.
_____ 7. I was very sensitive to teasing.

PSYCHOLOGICAL ISSUES

Moodiness/anxiety

- _____ 1. I felt worried and anxious.
_____ 2. I felt moody and depressed for no reason.
_____ 3. I dreaded being called on by the teacher.
_____ 4. I didn't like going to school.
_____ 5. I became very anxious before tests.
_____ 6. I was irritable as a teenager.
_____ 7. I cried easily.

Feeling criticized, misunderstood

- _____ 1. I wish my parents had understood how hard high school was for me.
_____ 2. It felt as if my parents criticized me a lot.
_____ 3. My mother and I were in conflict during my high school years.
_____ 4. I was repeatedly humiliated or criticized by teachers in the school setting.

Low self-esteem

- _____ 1. I feel a sense of shame or regret, as I look back on things I did in high school.
_____ 2. I wasn't really good at anything.
_____ 3. I didn't feel good about myself during my school years.

PROBLEMATIC BEHAVIORS

Impatience/low frustration tolerance/anger

- _____ 1. I was impatient and easily frustrated.
_____ 2. Although I controlled myself at school, I had screaming arguments at home with my family.
_____ 3. I quit a task if I encountered difficulty.
_____ 4. I lost my temper when frustrated.

Risk-taking behavior

- _____ 1. I took risks when driving an automobile.
_____ 2. I started smoking at a younger age than many of my friends.
_____ 3. I was sexually active earlier than other girls.
_____ 4. I drank and experimented with drugs in high school or earlier.
_____ 5. I abused alcohol or other substances in high school or earlier.

Oppositional/defiant behavior

- _____ 1. I got into trouble as a teenager.
_____ 2. I rebelled against my parents.
_____ 3. My parents didn't like the kids that I hung out with in high school.
_____ 4. I skipped classes in high school.
_____ 5. I fought with my parents over rules and curfew.
_____ 6. My parents didn't approve of my boyfriend in high school.
_____ 7. I was very argumentative.
_____ 8. I couldn't take "no" for an answer.

Problems with disordered eating

- _____ 1. I ate compulsively as a child or teen.
_____ 2. I developed a pattern of bulimia.
_____ 3. I became overweight after puberty.
_____ 4. I repeatedly dieted without success.
_____ 5. I binged on certain foods until I felt stuffed, even sick.

PART II. ADULT AD/HD PATTERNS

Inattention

- _____ 1. I tend to overlook details.
- _____ 2. Forms are difficult for me to complete correctly without overlooking something.
- _____ 3. It is hard for me to listen for long periods of time – in a lecture, seminar, or training class.
- _____ 4. My mind tends to wander when I'm reading or when listening to something that is not interesting.

Distractibility

- _____ 1. I am easily sidetracked, and wander from one task to the next as something catches my attention.
- _____ 2. I jump from topic to topic in conversation, forgetting what I started to say.
- _____ 3. I have difficulty concentrating when there is noise or conversation near me.
- _____ 4. It is very difficult for me to get back on track after an interruption.

Tendency to hyperfocus

- _____ 1. I tend to "hyperfocus" for long periods of time on certain activities.
- _____ 2. When engaging in certain activities, I completely lose track of time.
- _____ 3. When I'm really concentrating, I don't hear what people say to me.

Difficulty making transitions

- _____ 1. It is difficult for me to stop an activity when it is time to do something else.
- _____ 2. I can't tear myself away from an activity when I'm really engrossed.

Hyperactivity

- _____ 1. I tend to fidget or doodle.
- _____ 2. I talk so fast that others "can't get a word in."
- _____ 3. I hate to sit for long periods, and find an excuse to move around.
- _____ 4. I seem to need less sleep than other women.
- _____ 5. I have a high energy level compared to many women.
- _____ 6. My activity level makes the people around me uncomfortable.

Impulsivity

- _____ 1. I buy on impulse.
- _____ 2. I interrupt others in conversation, even when I try not to.
- _____ 3. I have impulsively jumped from one job to another.
- _____ 4. I have impulsively quit a job without considering the consequences.
- _____ 5. I tend to "blurt out" whatever I'm thinking; though I may later regret it.
- _____ 6. I have made major life decisions with little planning or forethought.

Productivity

- _____ 1. I just can't seem to juggle the number of activities and commitments that my friends seem to manage.
- _____ 2. I have felt overwhelmed by responsibilities at certain times in my life.
- _____ 3. It seems much harder for me than for others to take care of the tasks of everyday tasks.
- _____ 4. Keeping up with job demands has been difficult for me.

Problems with initiation

- _____ 1. Despite my best intentions, it is often hard for me to get started on a project.
- _____ 2. Getting started is much easier when I work with someone else.

Problems with follow-through/task completion/perseverance

- _____ 1. I tend not to finish doing laundry - it's always "in progress."
- _____ 2. I have many unfinished projects that I intend to "get around to."
- _____ 3. I pick up and drop hobbies or interests.
- _____ 4. I don't meet the long-term goals I set for myself.

Problems making decisions

- _____ 1. I have difficulty deciding what to discard and what to keep.
- _____ 2. I have difficulty making selections in large department or grocery stores.
- _____ 3. Prioritizing is difficult for me – everything seems equally important.

Difficulties in planning

- _____ 1. Meal planning is very difficult for me.
- _____ 2. I rarely plan my day and typically react to events as they occur.
- _____ 3. When doing a project, I figure it out as I go along.
- _____ 4. I have difficulty planning ahead.
- _____ 5. I rarely engage in social activities that require advance planning.

Sensitivity to over-stimulation

- _____ 1. Loud noises irritate me.
- _____ 2. I don't like to be in large crowds.
- _____ 3. Shopping centers and large "superstores" feel overwhelming to me.
- _____ 4. Fluorescent lighting tends to bother me.

Need for stimulation

- _____ 1. I am easily bored.
- _____ 2. I enjoy new projects and dislike doing routine activities.
- _____ 3. I have a wide range of interests and activities.
- _____ 4. I enjoy making changes in my life.
- _____ 5. I thrive on stimulation.

Problems with under-arousal

- _____ 1. I am not fully awake and alert until several hours after I rise in the morning.
- _____ 2. Getting up in the morning is usually difficult for me.
- _____ 3. I use sugar and/or caffeine to keep myself going during the day.
- _____ 4. If my life circumstances allowed it, I would take a daily afternoon nap.
- _____ 5. On weekends, I sleep late or nap to catch up on my sleep.

Procrastination

- _____ 1. I procrastinate and resist doing tasks that are difficult or unappealing.
- _____ 2. I put things off until the last minute.

Low motivation/ problems with self-discipline

- _____ 1. I tend to do what I like before what I "ought."
- _____ 2. I rarely stick with a goal or project that takes effort.
- _____ 3. Many things seem like "too much trouble" to me.

Organizational difficulties

- _____ 1. My home is cluttered and messy.
- _____ 2. I keep things organized at work, but my personal life is a shambles.
- _____ 3. I try to get organized, but I never seem to accomplish my goal.
- _____ 4. I have difficulty organizing my thoughts when writing.
- _____ 5. I can't seem to organize my paperwork – either at home or at work.

Poor time management

- _____ 1. I tend to run late and end up feeling frantic.
- _____ 2. I overcrowd my schedule and overcommit myself.
- _____ 3. I run late because I try to squeeze in "one last thing."
- _____ 4. I dawdle and lose track of time.
- _____ 5. I tend to underestimate how much time an activity will take.
- _____ 6.

DIFFICULTIES RELATED TO LEARNING DISABILITIES

_____yes _____no I was diagnosed with learning disabilities in school.

Reading difficulties

- _____ 1. I rarely read for pleasure.
- _____ 2. While reading, I can concentrate only if the material is very interesting to me.
- _____ 3. I have difficulty recalling information that I have read.
- _____ 4. I read slowly.
- _____ 5. I must reread text in order to fully comprehend it.

Writing difficulties

- _____ 1. Writing papers is difficult for me.
- _____ 2. I have difficulty organizing my thoughts in writing, even when I am very familiar with the subject.
- _____ 3. I am much more comfortable explaining something verbally than in writing.
- _____ 4. Difficulty with writing has caused problems for me at work.
- _____ 5. Spelling is difficult for me.
- _____ 6. Punctuation and grammar are difficult for me.

Memory problems

- _____ 1. I need to speak the moment I think of something in order not to forget my thought.
- _____ 2. I misplace personal belongings.
- _____ 3. I have difficulty recalling the names of common objects or others.
- _____ 4. I am absentminded.
- _____ 5. I have to write things down to remember them.
- _____ 6. I forget to do thing that I intend to do.
- _____ 7. I have difficulty remembering multi-step directions or multi-item lists.
- _____ 8. My recall is variable and unpredictable.

Problems with motor control

- _____ 1. I have poor handwriting.
- _____ 2. The legibility of my handwriting is variable.
- _____ 3. I tend to bump into or trip over things.
- _____ 4. I have poor motor coordination.

DIFFICULTIES IN AREAS OF ADULT RESPONSIBILITY

Parenting

- _____ 1. My parenting is inconsistent.
- _____ 2. I can't develop routines for myself, much less establish them for my child(ren).
- _____ 3. I have difficulty not losing my temper with my child(ren).

Workplace

- _____ 1. I have received unsatisfactory performance ratings at work.
- _____ 2. I have quit a job in order to avoid being fired.
- _____ 3. I have changed jobs many times, never finding the "right" job.

Life maintenance activities

- _____ 1. I don't keep up with housekeeping tasks in a regular, consistent manner.
- _____ 2. My home/office are filled with disorganized piles of papers.
- _____ 3. My wardrobe is disorganized and in disarray.
- _____ 4. I typically neglect making routine medical/dental appointments.
- _____ 5. I neglect to take care of routine automobile maintenance.
- _____ 6. Laundry is done at the last possible moment.
- _____ 7. I wait until my car is nearly out of gas before filling the tank.
- _____ 8. My life is filled with numerous, avoidable crises.

Financial management

- 1. I have difficulty managing my money.
- 2. I have large credit card debt.
- 3. I have difficulty balancing my checkbook.
- 4. I tend to file my tax forms late.
- 5. My financial record-keeping is chaotic.
- 6. Some years, I have not filed my income tax return.
- 7. I have a poor credit rating.

PSYCHOLOGICAL ISSUES

I have been diagnosed and treated for:

- Depression
- Anxiety/panic disorder
- Bipolar disorder
- Post-traumatic stress disorder
- Obsessive-compulsive disorder

Low self-esteem

- 1. I tend to hide many aspects of my life, fearing that I'll be judged negatively.
- 2. People think too highly of me, and I fear that I'll be "found out."
- 3. I have often felt "stupid" because I couldn't seem to accomplish things that others could.

Moodiness/anxiety

- 1. I have felt demoralized by my failures.
- 2. I have felt depressed for "no reason."
- 3. I am anxious and worry a lot.
- 4. I have fears and phobias.
- 5. I suffer from panic attacks.
- 6. I tend to be irritable and overreact to frustration.
- 7. My moods vary from day to day.

Obsessive/compulsive tendencies

- 1. I have strong perfectionist tendencies.
- 2. Even in unimportant tasks, I feel compelled to do a perfect, micro-detailed job.
- 3. My perfectionism keeps me from completing tasks in a timely manner.
- 4. In my efforts to do a good job, I seem to make things more complicated than they need to be.
- 5. There are periods when I've become obsessed by a particular thought or concern.

Social/interpersonal problems

- 1. My lateness and disorganization have been major points of conflict in important relationships.
- 2. I am separated and/or divorced.
- 3. I have been married more than once.
- 4. I can't seem to maintain friendships over the long term.
- 5. I tend to keep to myself.
- 6. I withdraw from other women for fear they will judge me.
- 7. I have always felt "different" from others.
- 8. Sometimes, I misread people.
- 9. I am not a good listener and interrupt or think about other things while others are talking.

Low frustration tolerance

- 1. I hate to wait.
- 2. I become very frustrated and angry in traffic.
- 3. I lose my temper if my children are noisy or argumentative.
- 4. I quit tasks out of frustration.

Feelings of underachievement

- 1. I should have done better in school.
- 2. I have not achieved up to my potential in my career.
- 3. I haven't reached the life goals I set for myself.
- 4. I feel disappointed in my achievements.

Feeling criticized/misunderstood

- 1. I am very sensitive to criticism.
- 2. I feel that I am viewed negatively.
- 3. The people close to me don't understand my struggles to manage my life.
- 4. suffered "classroom traumas and humiliations," which still haunt me and affect my life.

OTHER DIFFICULTIES

Hormonal issues

- 1. I have severe PMS symptoms, including moodiness, irritability, and low frustration tolerance.
- 2. My PMS symptoms have become over the years.
- 3. My AD/HD symptoms decreased during pregnancy.
- 4. Right before my period, my AD/HD symptoms become worse.
- 5. I did well in elementary school, but started having difficulty in middle or high school.

Sleep problems

- 1. I am a "night owl" and rarely go to sleep at a "reasonable" hour.
- 2. I have difficulty falling asleep because my mind is racing.
- 3. If I could sleep on "my" schedule, I'd sleep from 3 AM to 11 AM.

Fibromyalgia

- 1. I have been diagnosed with fibromyalgia,
- 2. I have a history of chronic muscle and/or joint pain.

Problem eating patterns

- 1. I often eat to calm myself.
- 2. I tend to overeat.
- 3. I have had an eating disorder at some time in my life.
- 4. I have abused laxatives or purged to lose weight.

Substance abuse/addiction

- 1. I have a history of substance abuse.
- 2. I have abused alcohol.
- 3. I smoke cigarettes and have been unable to quit.

Patterns of "self-medication"

- 1. I keep myself going throughout the day with coffee, tea, and colas.
- 2. I have used cigarettes to help increase my concentration.
- 3. I have regularly used marijuana, alcohol and/or food to calm myself.

Abuse/trauma

- 1. I was repeatedly humiliated or psychologically abused in the classroom as a girl.
- 2. I have been in an abusive relationship as an adult.
- 3. I have been physically, sexually, or emotionally abused.
- 4. Events that are not particularly traumatic for others trigger intense and repetitive anxiety reactions in me.
- 5. I have nightmares, flashbacks, and/or extreme anxiety as a result of traumatic event(s) in my past.