

# WHAT IS IT LIKE TO BE AN AUDHD'ER? (CO-OCCURRING AUTISM)

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## AUTISTIC + ADHD'ER = AUDHD'ER

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50 to 70% of Autistic individuals also present with co-occurring Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) (Hours, Recasens & Baleyte, 2022)

2/3 of children with ADHD have at least one co-occurring condition. Autism is one of the most common. Clinically elevated levels of autism symptoms have been noted in 18% to 67% of children with ADHD (May et al. 2016; Green et al. 2016)

Both ADHD and Autism are largely genetic, leading parents who are Autistic, ADHD or AuDHD to have children with either ADHD, Autism or both.

However, most research, training, practice and supporting organisations do not take into account those with dual diagnosis even though more than half of their clients may be AuDHD'ers

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WHY? - Until the DSM-5 in 2013 you could not diagnose people with both Autism and ADHD. We still have not caught up!

Autism measures such as the ADOS-2 were not designed or validated for combination brains and the differences in presentation

Its like having an ADHD Ferrari brain with extra Big Brakes.

## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

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- Difficult to find clinicians who have expertise in BOTH ADHD and Autism, particularly for adults
  - AuDHD'ers may be late diagnosed due to one condition masking the other, eg: hyperactive/impulsive ADHD masking interalised Autism and vice versa
  - When either co-occurring ADHD or Autism is not recognised and supported the quality of life and outcomes drop.
  - Many medical practitioners do not want to train in and work with Autism due to stigma and there is no 'cure/treatment' like there is for ADHD but competency in both is critical
  - Few resources specifically for AuDHD'ers and the unique experience of having a combo brain (The Neurodivergent Woman Podcast S3E1)
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- Many AuDHD'ers have both the strengths and difficulties of **both** their ADHD and Autism
- Their Autistic traits may help compensate for their ADHD traits eg: rigidity vs impulsivity and vice versa
- It can also be difficult to have a brain with conflicting needs such as :
- Sensory Seeking and also Sensory Sensitivities/Avoidance
- Need for constant stimulation and being easily burned out
- Seeking novelty and new ideas but also finding change difficult
- Needing routine but finding routine impossible to start/maintain
- Seeing detail and the big picture
- Having Special Interests and ADHD Hyperfixations

