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ECCY7010

ADHD and ASD: Neurodiversity, Mental Health and Additional
Learning Needs

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AI Acknowledgement

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AI Acknowledgement:

I acknowledge the use of Grammarly (<https://www.grammarly.com/>) on multiple occasions throughout the assignment to check my work using the prompts:

1. Check the text for readability, grammar, and syntax.

I acknowledge the use of Microsoft Copilot (<https://copilot.microsoft.com/>) on multiple dates throughout the assignment, using prompts such as:

1. Find and summarise academic journal articles dated within the past 10 years regarding ADHD and Executive functioning/ ADHD and impacts on sleep.

I acknowledge the use of CapCut (<https://capcut.com/>) on multiple dates throughout the assignment to generate images, using prompts such as:

1. Create Pixar style image of a brain, with arms and legs.
2. Create Pixar style image of a spanner, with arms and legs.
3. Create Pixar style image of a brain acting like a 'control centre'.

I acknowledge the use of Canva (<https://www.canva.com/templates>) on multiple dates throughout the assignment to turn the images generated in CapCut, into videos.

I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated text as my own work. I confirm I have copies of my drafts, notes and other resources I used before, and after the use of AI tools which I may be asked to provide as evidence.

Section 1: Video Script

The Affects of ADHD on a Young Person Like Yourself

Hello, I'm Brain Buddy and I'm here to explain to you what ADHD is and the impacts it can have on a young person like yourself.

So, firstly, what is ADHD?

ADHD is short for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. But that is a lot of big words, so, in simple terms it means your brain works in a way that is full of energy, ideas, curiosity and movement (Wolraich *et al.*, 2019).

None of these things mean anything is wrong, it just means your brain works differently (Faraone *et al.*, 2024).

Sometimes your ADHD can feel fun and exciting, and sometimes it can feel a bit overwhelming... a bit too much (Park *et al.*, 2026). And that's ok.

Your brain has a little control centre that helps you plan, remember and stay calm. In children with ADHD that control centre works differently, it's still amazing, just a bit busier (Silverstein *et al.*, 2019).

You have lots of thoughts at once, with an imagination that feels big and exciting (Bozhilova *et al.*, 2018). You may feel like you drift into daydreams (Silverstein *et al.*, 2019).

ADHD can make it trickier for your brain to organise things like your school bag, remember instructions or stop and think before acting (Silverstein *et al.*, 2019; Kofler *et al.*, 2020a).

That's not because you're not trying, it's because your brain works in a busy, fast way and sometimes the 'planning part' needs extra help (Silverstein *et al.*, 2019; Kofler *et al.*, 2020a).

These busy brain experiences are known as inattention.

You may also feel like your body needs to move... all of the time (Wolraich *et al.*, 2019). You might feel super restless and fidgety and struggle to sit still (Wolraich *et al.*, 2019).

On the outside, people might notice that you like to move around a lot when you're thinking (Hoy *et al.*, 2025), talk with lots of energy or react very strong to feelings (Astensvald, Frick and Isaksson, 2025).

These busy body experiences are called hyperactivity.

And Your feelings might feel bigger or louder than other peoples (Wang *et al.*, 2025).

This is because your feelings can switch on really fast, and it might take a little longer for them to switch off again (Shaw, Stringaris and Leibenluft, 2018).

This isn't your fault, this is because the part of your brain that helps calm emotions needs extra time to settle (Shaw, Stringaris and Leibenluft, 2018).

People who study ADHD found that children with ADHD often feel emotions more strongly because the calming part of the brain takes longer to catch up (Lugo-Candelas *et al.*, 2017).

This means excitement, frustration and sadness can all feel extra powerful (Wang *et al.*, 2025).

Others may notice that you switch tasks quickly (Pranjic *et al.*, 2025), get excited easily or you may look like you aren't taking much notice of what is going on (Lugo-Candelas *et al.*, 2017).

These busy reaction experiences are known as impulsivity.

All of this may make some tasks feel harder, but it also gives you curiosity, energy and lots of creativity (Farone *et al.*, 2024).

Now, there is something really important we need to talk about, something that can make all of these ADHD experiences feel bigger or smaller depending on how much you get.

And that is sleep.

For many children with ADHD, sleep can be super difficult. Your brain might still be busy at night, full of thoughts, ideas, and feelings (Becker *et al.*, 2019; Martins *et al.*, 2019).

Lots of children with ADHD find it hard to switch off at night because their brain's sleep switch is a little slower (Martins *et al.*, 2019).

Scientists have found that ADHD brains stay active for longer at night, almost like they are stuck in daytime mode. This can make falling asleep and staying asleep more difficult (Malhi *et al.*, 2025).

You might try your hardest to close your eyes, but your mind keeps chatting away. It keeps thinking, imagining or sometimes worrying, even when your body is tired (Aghaei Bajestan, Rasouli, and Sørensen, 2026)

And when sleep is tricky, it can have a big impact on how your brain and body feel the next day (Kennedy, 2023).

So, let's explore why sleep matters so much.

But before we go any further, I want to hear from you.

On the count of 3, I want you to shout out your ideas for why you think sleep is important.

1,2,3... GO!

Brilliant!

Sleep is like plugging your brain in to charge overnight, just like you would with a games controller. When you sleep, your brain fills back up with energy that it needs for a brand-new day.

It helps your feelings become steadier, helps your body feel stronger and it gets your mind ready for an exciting day of learning and playing tomorrow (Felix and Candeias, 2025).

But when you don't get enough sleep, your brain doesn't get the full charge it needs, and everything can feel a little harder (Saletin *et al.*, 2025).

Sleep helps your brain tidy up memories, focus on tasks, solve problems and manage emotions. When you sleep, your brain sorts through everything you learned that day, almost like putting your thoughts into the right folders (Felix and Candeias, 2025).

Sleep also strengthens the part of your brain that helps you pay attention and remember things (Riggins and Spencer, 2020).

Without enough of it, your brain's thinking tools don't work smoothly, and things like remembering instructions, paying attention or problem-solving can feel much harder (Saletin *et al.*, 2025).

And that's because a tired body has to work harder, almost like trying to play a game with a controller that has a low battery. It can be really difficult and frustrating. And when your brain is tired, your actions might jump out before your thoughts catch up (Kennedy *et al.*, 2023; Saletin *et al.*, 2025).

It's like your brain's pause button doesn't work as well when you haven't slept enough. When your brain is tired, it's also harder for it to slow your actions. This means you might act before thinking or maybe interrupt more, not because you're being naughty, but because your brain is running low on energy (Saletin *et al.*, 2025; Kennedy *et al.*, 2023; Felix and Candeias 2025).

You might notice that you, feel heavy and slow, are a little more clumsy and low on energy, or you might feel super restless and fidgety and struggle to sit still (Kennedy *et al.*, 2023; Felix and Candeias, 2025; Saletin *et al.*, 2025).

Your body does its fixing and growing during sleep. Without enough rest, it doesn't get the chance to recharge and feel strong (O'Connor *et al.*, 2026).

When you're asleep your brain also has important jobs to do, like sorting memories and calming emotions (Felix and Candeias, 2025).

So, when sleep is short, your brain doesn't finish all its jobs, so the next day it has to work overtime, which can change how you think and feel (Kennedy *et al.*, 2025).

You might notice that you have foggy thinking, like your thoughts moving through a thick cloud or instructions take longer to make sense (Saletin *et al.*, 2025).

You might find that waiting your turn feels harder and finishing tasks tiring before you've even started (Kennedy, 2025).

When you're tired little things might feel more annoying or upsetting because your brain hasn't had time to rest and reset. Your feelings can grow quicker too, almost like your feelings bucket fills up faster. This can make it easier to overreact or get upset and feel overwhelmed by things that wouldn't normally bother you. And that's why tiny problems can suddenly feel like huge ones, your brain hasn't had the

chance to calm down and recharge overnight (Marano and Mazza, 2026; Yang, Xie and Wang, 2022).

Lights, sounds and smells may feel more overwhelming. When your brain is tired, your senses can turn up to maximum volume. Noises feel louder, lights seem brighter, and busy places feel more confusing. Without enough sleep, your brain struggles to filter all this out, so everything around you can feel too much (Bellemare *et al.*, 2025).

For children with ADHD, this tiredness can make ADHD traits feel much bigger (Kennedy, 2023; Saletin *et al.*, 2025; Felix and Candeias, 2025).

Remember, a tired brain is like trying to colour in a picture with crayons that keep snapping. You can do it, but it takes more effort.

You now know what ADHD feels like, how it affects your sleep, and what happens when your brain doesn't get the rest it needs.

So, I'm now going to hand over to Spanny.

Hi there, I'm Spanny! and I'm going to tell you about some interventions you; your caregiver and teacher can use to help fine tune your day. Things that make sleep easier and help your brain recharge, to hopefully make your days feel better.

Firstly, let's start with you and movement breaks. Remember the feelings bucket you heard about? Your feelings are like water in a bucket. When you sleep well, your bucket is big and empties slowly. When you're tired, your bucket is smaller and already half full when you wake up (Sevincok *et al.*, 2026).

Movement breaks help put out some of the water, so it doesn't spill over.

So, what can you do? It's important for you to notice when your bucket is filling up.

This may be when your body starts to feel a little more wriggly or the small things suddenly start feeling big (Sho *et al.*, 2026).

This is when you use your movement break.

To do this, find a safe space and start doing big star jumps, maybe shake your arms really silly or put your hands on a wall and push, just like doing a press up but you

are using the wall, instead of the floor. These big movements help your muscles wake up and your feelings calm down (Song *et al.*, 2024; Shenning *et al.*, 2026).

How will this help me, I hear you ask?

Well movement breaks send calming messages to the brain, helping your feelings settle and give your body a chance to rest (Song *et al.*, 2024; Dai, Shen and Guan, 2026; Shenning *et al.*, 2026). It will give you a tool to use without the need for an adult to step in, helping you feel more in control (Pontifex *et al.*, 2023).

Next, we will look at what your caregiver can do to help support you. They can best help you by providing you with a calm and predictable bedtime routine.

A bedtime routine is like using a remote control to change your brain from daytime mode to sleep mode (Hatch *et al.*, 2019; Mindell *et al.*, 2026). Without this switch, your brain keep running, like a game that doesn't pause.

Your caregiver can do this by making sure they keep bedtime the same time every day. Using dim lights and nighttime voices.

Maybe try doing some calming activities like reading or listening to gentle music and make sure you aren't using screens like as phone or tablet, too close to bedtime.

Screens before bedtime can make it harder for your brain to slow down, because the bright light tricks your brain into thinking it's still daytime, which makes falling asleep much more difficult (Carter *et al.*, 2023).

It's also important that they don't rush you, and everything feel calm and slow, this is because when your caregiver is nice and calm, it will help you feel calmer too (Hatch *et al.*, 2019).

A predictable routine tells the brain it's time to slow down, because doing the same calm things every night helps your body recognise that sleep is coming soon. When your brain gets these familiar bedtime signals, it starts to settle, your thoughts slow down and your body feels more ready for rest. It helps you fall asleep faster, stay asleep longer and wake up with a brain that feels calmer and ready for the new day (Liu *et al.*, 2024).

Lastly, school interventions. ADHD brains, especially tired ones, can find it hard to start tasks and stay focused. Sometimes your brain knows what it needs to do, but

can't quite get itself moving (Kofler *et al.*, 2018b). It's like your brain is standing at the bottom of a big hill, unsure how to make the first step up. A visual timetable helps by showing your brain the path to the clearly, step by step.

What is a visual timetable?

A visual timetable is like a map of your day. It shows you, what is happening, when it is happening and what happens next. Instead of trying to remember everything, you can see it (Thomas and Karuppali, 2022; Selman and Dilworth-Bart, 2024).

Now, I know you're thinking how can this help me with my ADHD?

Well, that's because ADHD brains work best when things are predictable and clear. When you know what's coming, your brain feels calmer (Thomas and Karuppali, 2022; Selman and Dilworth-Bart, 2024).

A visual timetable makes your day feel more organised and helps you understand what to expect.

Shows any changes that may be happening and helps your brain switch between activities more easily (Thomas and Karuppali, 2022; Selman and Dilworth-Bart, 2024).

It's like having a friendly guide pointing to each step on that big hill, so you never have to worry about getting lost.

In class, your teacher might use, pictures showing each lesson or a now, next and then board. This helps your brain prepare for change instead of being scared or surprised by it (Selman and Dilworth-Bart, 2024).

This helps you start tasks easier because when you can see what's happening, your brain doesn't have to guess. It doesn't have to hold lots of information at once and it doesn't have to worry about what's coming next (Thomas and Karuppali, 2022; Selman and Dilworth-Bart, 2024).

Your brain can focus on just one thing at a time. This makes starting tasks feel easier, just like taking that small step, instead of climbing the big hill all at once (Kofler *et al.*, 2018b).

And for you, it takes away the guess work. You aren't sat in class thinking what's happening, instead you can look at your visual timetable and see.

The visual timetable will help your day feel more predictable and clearer, exactly what an ADHD brain needs to feel safe and ready to learn (Selman and Dilworth-Bart, 2024).

It's now time to welcome back Brain Buddy.

Hello, Brain Buddy.

Hi, Spanny! That was awesome!

You've learnt a lot today about ADHD and how Important good sleep is. And what we can do when sleep feels a little bit tricky.

Your brain is brilliant and with a good night's sleep and the right tools, you can help it feel safe and ready to work hard and have fun every day.

We are nearly done now, but before you leave, we would like you to meet Thomas. Thomas is a young boy with ADHD, and he would like to tell you how ADHD feels for him and all the brilliant things his unique brain can do.

ADHD doesn't just bring challenges; it also provides you with ways of seeing the world that make it special and Thomas is here to remind you of that.

But now, it's time for us to head off.

So, it's goodbye from me,

And goodbye from me as well.

Goodbye everyone!

Script for 'Thomas':

Hi, so if you ever want to know what it's like inside my head, basically imagine a computer that has 50 different internet tabs open all at once, and half of them are playing really loud music.

That's pretty much my brain.

I have ADHD. And honestly, it doesn't mean I don't pay attention. It's actually the exact opposite. I pay attention to absolutely everything, all at once.

Like, I'll be trying to listen to the teacher, but then I hear a bird outside, and then I notice the clock is ticking loudly, and then I remember a random YouTube video, and then I realise I lost my pencil again.

It's just... A lot.

When the classroom gets really loud, it feels like all those sounds are bouncing around inside my head like a pinball machine.

The hardest part is when people get annoyed at me for it. Like, when my legs feel like they will not keep still, no matter how hard I try. That actually sometimes makes it worse, when I try to keep them still, because then I think of that and everything else goes over my head. Or when I accidentally blurt out an answer to a question, before the teacher has even finished asking it.

I promise I'm not trying to be disruptive or rude. My brain just moves way faster than my mouth can keep up with. Sometimes I wish I had a pause button, just so I could slow down and catch up with everyone else.

But I don't know, it's definitely not all bad. Like, when I find something, I'm genuinely interested in, like really interested in; like, gaming, or building ships or planes with Lego, I get this thing called hyperfocus. It's like a superpower where everything else around me disappears. I can sit there for hours and create something absolutely awesome because I'm totally locked in.

Plus, because my brain doesn't think in a straight line, I notice stuff other people completely miss. I connect random things and come up with the funniest, most creative ideas that nobody else thinks of. I also have tons of energy to share, I'm great at solving weird problems, and I feel things really deeply. So, if a friend is having a bad day, I'm usually one of the first people to notice.

So yeah, my brain is kind of supercharged. It does take a lot of patience, but I wouldn't really change it. It's just who I am really.

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