

**Dr. Bennett** Good morning, Alex. Thanks for coming in. How are you feeling about today's session?

**Alex** I'm okay, I think. A bit nervous, but mostly curious. I've read a lot about ADHD and really relate to some of the symptoms, so I'm wondering if that might be what's going on with me.

**Dr. Bennett** It's totally normal to feel nervous. I'm glad you're here. Our goal today is to understand your experiences a bit better, so let's take it one step at a time. ADHD can show up in different ways, so let's dig into what's been happening for you. Does that sound good?

**Alex** Yeah, that sounds good.

**Dr. Bennett** Great. Let's start with a bit of background. Can you tell me about when you first started noticing these symptoms? Was it something recent, or do you feel like it's been a part of your life for a long time?

**Alex** I feel like it's been there since childhood, honestly. I remember being distracted a lot in school and always getting in trouble for talking too much. My teachers would call me "spirited," and my parents were told I was smart but wasn't living up to my potential.

**Dr. Bennett** That's a common experience for people with ADHD. Sometimes it gets overlooked in childhood, especially if the person is doing okay academically. How about in high school or college? Did you notice the same kinds of challenges?

**Alex** Definitely. High school was tough. I would start assignments but never finish them on time, or I'd forget to turn them in even when I did finish. College was worse because I didn't have my parents around to remind me of deadlines. I'd pull all-nighters and still only barely scrape by.

**Dr. Bennett** It sounds like you've struggled with organization and deadlines. Those are some classic signs of ADHD. Can you tell me more about what things are like for you now, in your day-to-day life?

**Alex** It's like I'm constantly juggling too many things. At work, I'll start on one task, get distracted, and then realize an hour later that I haven't finished anything. My email is always full of unread messages. And even simple things, like paying bills on time, feel overwhelming. I lose track of time and often end up doing things last minute.

**Dr. Bennett** I hear you. It's common for people with ADHD to struggle with what we call "executive functioning"—the part of the brain that helps with organizing, planning, and prioritizing. What you're describing fits with that. How about at home? Are there specific tasks or routines that feel challenging?

**Alex** Oh, definitely. Chores are hard for me. I'll start cleaning, get sidetracked by something else, and then forget what I was doing in the first place. My apartment is always a bit of a mess, and it stresses me out, but I feel too overwhelmed to even know where to start. My partner is really organized, and I can tell it frustrates them that I can't keep up.

**Dr. Bennett** Relationships can be challenging when there's a mismatch in organizational styles. ADHD can impact how we relate to people because it's hard to follow through on things or remember important details. How has your partner been handling it?

**Alex** They're pretty understanding, but I can tell they get frustrated sometimes. I'll forget to do things they've asked, and then I feel guilty because I know it makes them feel unappreciated. I really do want to help out, but I just...forget.

**Dr. Bennett** That's tough, and it's understandable. Let's talk a bit about your focus and energy levels. Are there times when you feel like you can focus better, or does it seem difficult most of the time?

**Alex** It depends. If I'm really interested in something, I can focus on it for hours. I'll get so absorbed that I lose track of time. But if it's something I find boring or repetitive, my mind drifts almost instantly. Even with things I care about, though, it can feel like my energy just crashes after a while.

**Dr. Bennett** What you're describing is called "hyperfocus," where someone with ADHD can become intensely absorbed in a task. It's one of the more unique characteristics of ADHD and can be both a strength and a challenge. For example, it can be great for creative projects, but it can also lead to burnout if you're not able to pull yourself out of that state.

**Alex** Yeah, that sounds about right. I can get totally lost in something creative, but when it's over, I'm exhausted.

**Dr. Bennett** Have you tried any strategies or tools to manage these symptoms?

**Alex** I've tried a few. I use reminders on my phone, which helps with things like taking out the trash or paying bills. I've also tried using a planner, but I forget to check it half the time. I feel like I need something to keep me accountable, or I lose track of things.

**Dr. Bennett** Those are good steps, though. Reminders can be helpful, and it's normal to need a bit of trial and error to find the right system. We can also discuss other strategies, like breaking tasks down into smaller steps or finding ways to reward yourself for finishing things. But before we dive into management strategies, let's talk a bit about treatment. Have you ever tried medication for ADHD?

**Alex** No, I haven't. I'm a bit wary of medication, to be honest. I'm not sure how I'd feel about taking it daily or if there are any long-term effects.

**Dr. Bennett** That's understandable. Medication is one option, but it's certainly not the only one. Some people find it very helpful, especially with focus and impulsivity, but it's a personal choice. If you're interested, I can explain the different types of medication, how they work, and potential side effects.

**Alex** I think I'd like to hear about it, just to understand my options.

**Dr. Bennett** Of course. For ADHD, we typically use stimulant medications, like methylphenidate or amphetamines, or non-stimulants, like atomoxetine. Stimulants can help increase dopamine in the brain, which can improve focus and impulse control. They work relatively quickly, so you can usually tell within a few days if they're effective for you. Non-stimulants are a bit slower to take effect but can be a good option for people who don't want to use stimulants.

**Alex** And are there any risks with stimulants? I've heard they can be addictive.

**Dr. Bennett** That's a common concern. Stimulants do have the potential for dependency if they're not used as prescribed, but when used correctly and monitored by a doctor, they're generally safe. It's also important to monitor for side effects, like changes in appetite or sleep. Some people find that stimulants work well for them, while others prefer non-stimulants or behavioral therapy alone.

**Alex** I see. I might consider it if my symptoms don't improve with other strategies. What else would you recommend?

**Dr. Bennett** Behavioral strategies can make a big difference. For example, we could work on building a daily routine to make things more predictable. Setting up consistent times for work, meals, and relaxation can help with organization and time management. Another technique is setting up visual cues or reminders in your environment. Have you heard of things like habit stacking or using timers?

**Alex** No, I haven't. What's habit stacking?

**Dr. Bennett** Habit stacking is about attaching a new habit to an existing one. For instance, if you want to remember to take out the trash, you could tie that to a habit you already have, like brewing your morning coffee. It helps the new habit feel automatic because it's linked to something familiar. Timers can be great, too, for focusing on tasks in short bursts—often called the Pomodoro Technique. You work for 25 minutes and then take a five-minute break. It's very ADHD-friendly because it's manageable and prevents you from getting too lost in one task.

**Alex** I like that idea, especially the timer thing. I often lose track of time, so setting up intervals could really help.

**Dr. Bennett** It's a simple but powerful tool, and it can be adapted. Some people do 15 minutes, others do an hour—whatever feels right. Also, self-compassion is important. It's easy to get frustrated when things feel disorganized, but ADHD can affect our self-esteem. Remember, this isn't a character flaw; it's a way your brain processes things. Working with it, rather than against it, can go a long way.

**Alex** I appreciate that. I do beat myself up sometimes. I see people who can stay organized effortlessly, and I just feel like I'm always playing catch-up.

**Dr. Bennett** That's really common. Comparison can be tough, especially when you don't see what's happening behind the scenes for other people. And everyone has different strengths. ADHD also comes with unique positives—creativity, high energy, and resilience, to name a few.

**Alex** That's true. I guess I do have moments when I'm really passionate about something. I just wish I could channel that energy more effectively.

**Dr. Bennett** We can definitely work on that together. ADHD is about managing challenges, but it's also about leveraging those strengths. Over time, you'll find ways to use that passion and energy in productive ways. If you're open to it, we could meet regularly to set goals, discuss your progress, and adjust strategies as needed.

**Alex** I'd like that. Just knowing there's support makes me feel less overwhelmed.

**Dr. Bennett** I'm glad to hear that. Let's start by focusing on a few small changes—maybe experimenting with habit stacking and the Pomodoro timer. And we can revisit the medication discussion whenever you feel ready. Does that sound like a good plan?

**Alex** Yes, it does. Thank you, Dr. Bennett. I'm feeling hopeful.

**Dr. Bennett** That's great to hear, Alex. You're not alone in this, and we'll work together to find what suits you best. I'll see you next time, and feel free to reach out if you have any questions before then.

**Alex** Thank you. See you next time.