

ADHD

Neurodevelopmental regulation pattern affecting attention, motivation, time perception, and energy allocation. Focus is driven by interest, relevance, and urgency — not willpower.

"Attention follows meaning, not pressure."

ADHD

NEURODEVELOPMENTAL

STRENGTHS

Rapid ideation · hyperfocus · creative problem-solving · adaptability in fast-changing contexts · high resilience in dynamic environments

CHALLENGES

Regulating attention in low-interest tasks · initiating without urgency · accurate time estimation · consistent pacing · executive fatigue

STRESS SIGNALS

Chronic overwhelm despite effort · missed deadlines paired with guilt · oscillation between overdrive and shutdown · negative self-narratives

KEY FEATURE

Time blindness: time is experienced as 'now' or 'not now.' Interest-based attention: focus follows salience, not intention.

WHAT IT IS NOT

Laziness · lack of intelligence · motivation deficit · poor character · inconsistency by choice

ADD

Inattentive attention-regulation pattern with internal distractibility and reduced activation. Part of the ADHD spectrum — descriptively useful for predominantly inattentive presentations.

"Silence does not mean absence of thought."

ADD

NEURODEVELOPMENTAL

STRENGTHS

Deep reflective thinking · strong internal imagination · nuanced conceptual insight · sustained focus in calm environments

CHALLENGES

Task initiation without external structure · maintaining alertness under low stimulation · slow activation despite clear intent

STRESS SIGNALS

Mental fog or heaviness · prolonged procrastination · self-criticism for 'not getting going' · cumulative fatigue without visible output

KEY FEATURE

Internal distractibility: attention shifts inward invisibly. Slowed initiation loop: knowing what to do does not reliably trigger starting.

WHAT IT IS NOT

Laziness · lack of motivation · intellectual passivity · emotional detachment · indifference

Autism (ASD)

Neurodevelopmental processing style with differences in sensory processing, social-communication interpretation, and pattern recognition. Friction arises from environmental mismatch, not lack of capacity.

"Clarity is not rigidity — it is how understanding is built."

Autism (ASD)

NEURODEVELOPMENTAL

STRENGTHS

Systems and pattern thinking · precision · deep focus and persistence · principled reasoning · honesty · strong memory for structured information

CHALLENGES

Sensory overload · ambiguity in implicit social rules · effortful context-switching · cumulative fatigue from masking

STRESS SIGNALS

Sensory overwhelm leading to shutdown · increased rigidity under pressure · delayed verbal response under stress

KEY FEATURE

Monotropic focus: attention concentrates deeply on few interests.
Predictive processing preference: uncertainty significantly increases regulatory demand.

WHAT IT IS NOT

Lack of empathy · emotional coldness · intellectual limitation · communication deficit by intent

AuDHD

Co-occurrence of autistic and ADHD traits — not a simple addition, but an interaction pattern creating internal contradictions and heightened cognitive load.

"When two systems coexist, balance is not static — it is continuously negotiated."

AuDHD

NEURODEVELOPMENTAL

STRENGTHS

Creative synthesis · pattern recognition + ideation speed · hyperfocus with depth · strong ethical reasoning

CHALLENGES

Internal regulation conflicts · unstable energy rhythms · sensory overload paired with novelty-seeking · cumulative fatigue

STRESS SIGNALS

Rapid burnout after high-intensity phases · shutdown after overcommitment · self-criticism for perceived inconsistency

KEY FEATURE

Dual regulation conflict: autistic need for predictability and ADHD-driven novelty pull in opposite directions simultaneously.

WHAT IT IS NOT

Indecisiveness · emotional instability by choice · failure of self-discipline · 'too complex to support'

APD

Auditory Processing Disorder: difficulty decoding and sequencing spoken information, despite normal hearing ability. The challenge is in interpretation, not detection.

"Hearing sound is not the same as processing meaning."

APD

PROCESSING

STRENGTHS

Strong visual reasoning · pattern recognition via non-auditory channels · high accuracy with written or visual instructions

CHALLENGES

Processing speech in noise · following rapid verbal instructions · auditory working memory load · listening fatigue

STRESS SIGNALS

Listening fatigue and headaches · withdrawal in group discussions · misinterpretation of spoken instructions

KEY FEATURE

Figure-ground difficulty: reduced ability to separate a target voice from background noise in group settings.

WHAT IT IS NOT

Hearing loss · lack of intelligence · inattentiveness by choice · language deficit

PROCESSING

NVLD

Nonverbal Learning Difference: strong verbal abilities alongside difficulty interpreting nonverbal, spatial, and contextual information.

"When cues are implicit, effort increases."

NVLD

PROCESSING

STRENGTHS

Verbal reasoning · rich vocabulary · strong factual memory · analytical thinking · preference for explicit rules

CHALLENGES

Visual-spatial processing · interpreting implicit social cues · navigating novel environments · unstated rules

STRESS SIGNALS

Social confusion followed by delayed insight · fatigue after unstructured interactions · misread as 'awkward'

KEY FEATURE

Verbal-nonverbal asymmetry: verbal comprehension often significantly stronger than visual-spatial or social-inferential processing.

WHAT IT IS NOT

Low intelligence · lack of empathy · unwillingness to adapt · poor verbal ability

Dyslexia

Language-processing difference affecting decoding of written symbols — not comprehension, intelligence, or reasoning. A different pathway, not a deficit.

"Understanding can be deep even when decoding is effortful."

Dyslexia

PROCESSING

STRENGTHS

Big-picture reasoning · narrative thinking · verbal explanation · creative association · conceptual insight

CHALLENGES

Accurate and fluent reading · spelling consistency · speed-based text tasks · working memory during decoding

STRESS SIGNALS

Cognitive fatigue after reading · avoidance of written tasks · anxiety around spelling · misread as carelessness

KEY FEATURE

Reduced automation: decoding never becomes fully automatic, so attention is continuously consumed by mechanics rather than content.

WHAT IT IS NOT

Low intelligence · lack of comprehension · poor verbal ability · insufficient education

Dyspraxia / DCD

Motor-planning and sequencing difference: tasks others perform intuitively require conscious planning and increased effort, even when understanding is clear.

"Effort does not equal inefficiency."

Dyspraxia / DCD

PROCESSING

STRENGTHS

Strategic thinking · creative problem-solving · perseverance · careful planning · empathy for effort

CHALLENGES

Motor coordination · sequencing multi-step actions · pace consistency · translating intention into smooth action

STRESS SIGNALS

Physical and cognitive exhaustion · slowed execution under pressure · misread as inefficiency

KEY FEATURE

Motor planning load: movements require conscious sequencing rather than automatic execution, increasing cognitive demand.

WHAT IT IS NOT

Low intelligence · laziness · lack of planning · carelessness · unwillingness to participate

Dyscalculia

Numerical-processing difference affecting how quantities and mathematical relationships are perceived — not general reasoning or intelligence.

"Numbers require translation before they can guide decisions."

Dyscalculia

PROCESSING

STRENGTHS

Conceptual reasoning · pattern recognition beyond numbers · verbal explanation · strategic and narrative thinking

CHALLENGES

Mental arithmetic · quantity estimation · time and magnitude judgment · working memory during calculations

STRESS SIGNALS

Anxiety around math tasks · avoidance of numerical decisions · mental fatigue · misread as carelessness

KEY FEATURE

Reduced number sense: difficulty intuitively grasping quantities and magnitudes. Often extends to time estimation.

WHAT IT IS NOT

Low intelligence · poor logical reasoning · lack of effort · resistance to quantitative work

Tourette / Tics

Neurodevelopmental regulation pattern with involuntary motor and/or vocal tics. The core feature is altered motor inhibition — not intentional behavior.

"Control has a cost — release restores balance."

Tourette / Tics

REGULATION

STRENGTHS

Cognitive intensity · persistence · rapid response under pressure · authenticity · resilience

CHALLENGES

Suppression fatigue · social stigma · involuntary output · increased cognitive load from self-monitoring

STRESS SIGNALS

Exhaustion after prolonged suppression · rebound tics in safe environments · anxiety around visibility

KEY FEATURE

Inhibitory control cost: suppressing tics requires significant cognitive effort, causing rebound activation when released.

WHAT IT IS NOT

Voluntary behavior · attention-seeking · lack of self-control · behavioral choice · disrespect

TRAIT

HSP

Highly Sensitive Person: neurobiological processing pattern marked by deep sensory and emotional processing and strong environmental responsiveness.

"Depth is not slowness — it is precision under load."

HSP

TRAIT

STRENGTHS

Depth of insight · nuanced perception
· emotional intelligence · ethical
sensitivity · relational attunement

CHALLENGES

Overstimulation · emotional saturation
· prolonged recovery time · decision
fatigue

STRESS SIGNALS

Sensory shutdown · emotional
flooding · irritability under constant
interruption · misread as fragility

KEY FEATURE

Emotional permeability: emotions of
others are registered quickly and
intensely — supporting empathy while
increasing overload risk.

WHAT IT IS NOT

Emotional weakness · low resilience · indecisiveness · introversion by default · a
disorder

TRAIT

Giftedness

Neurocognitive profile of exceptionally fast, deep, and complex information processing — often with asynchronous development across cognitive, emotional, and social domains.

"Depth requires space to remain sustainable."

Giftedness

TRAIT

STRENGTHS

Rapid learning · abstract and systems thinking · integrative insight · intellectual curiosity · creative synthesis

CHALLENGES

Boredom in low-complexity environments · overload from depth · impatience with inefficiency · existential strain

STRESS SIGNALS

Chronic boredom + restlessness · cynicism in misaligned roles · overcommitment then withdrawal

KEY FEATURE

Asynchronous development: cognitive processing outpaces emotional regulation or environmental fit, creating internal tension.

WHAT IT IS NOT

Emotional immaturity · elitism · uniform high performance · immunity to burnout

TRAUMA

PTSD

Nervous-system regulation pattern shaped by past overwhelming threat — the brain remains organized around danger detection even when the threat has passed.

"The system learned survival before it learned safety."

PTSD

TRAUMA

STRENGTHS

Rapid threat detection · situational awareness · pattern recognition under pressure · moral clarity · decisive action in crises

CHALLENGES

Hypervigilance · impaired safety perception · intrusive memory activation · emotional numbing or flooding

STRESS SIGNALS

Cognitive shutdown or dissociation · emotional flooding · avoidance of unpredictable settings · misread as overreactive

KEY FEATURE

Memory fragmentation: traumatic memories may re-activate as present-moment experiences rather than past events.

WHAT IT IS NOT

Weakness · lack of professionalism · emotional instability by choice · character flaw · permanent incapacity

TRAUMA

C-PTSD

Complex PTSD: regulation pattern from prolonged, repeated threat — reshaping self-concept, emotional regulation, attachment expectations, and meaning-making.

"Adaptation kept the system alive — safety lets it reorganize."

C-PTSD

TRAUMA

STRENGTHS

Deep relational insight · contextual sensitivity · ethical awareness · resilience through endurance · high responsibility attunement

CHALLENGES

Chronic hypervigilance or shutdown · shame-based self-evaluation · attachment insecurity · identity diffusion

STRESS SIGNALS

Emotional flooding or numbing · collapse after sustained responsibility · misread as people-pleasing

KEY FEATURE

Shame-mediated self-concept: chronic threat becomes internalized as 'something is wrong with me,' shaping cognition.

WHAT IT IS NOT

Personality disorder · emotional immaturity · manipulation · lack of resilience · character flaw

REGULATION

OCD

Regulation pattern organized around threat prevention, certainty-seeking, and error avoidance. The driver is intolerance of unresolved risk — not preference for order.

"The problem is not care — it is the cost of certainty."

OCD

REGULATION

STRENGTHS

High conscientiousness · precision · responsibility awareness · risk detection · ethical vigilance

CHALLENGES

Unrelenting doubt · cognitive rigidity under threat · time-consuming rituals · intolerance of uncertainty

STRESS SIGNALS

Escalating checking or rumination · cognitive fatigue · avoidance of responsibility-heavy tasks

KEY FEATURE

Certainty-seeking loop: compulsions temporarily reduce anxiety, reinforcing the cycle without resolving underlying doubt.

WHAT IT IS NOT

Personality trait · preference for cleanliness · simple perfectionism · controllable by willpower

Bipolar Spectrum

Neurobiological pattern of state-dependent shifts in energy, mood, cognition, and motivation. Core feature is fluctuating activation capacity, not mood alone.

"Capacity changes with state — wisdom lies in pacing, not suppression."

Bipolar Spectrum

REGULATION

STRENGTHS

High creative output in elevated states
· rapid ideation · emotional intensity ·
visionary thinking · strong drive

CHALLENGES

Instability of energy and focus ·
impaired judgment during elevation ·
cognitive slowing during depression

STRESS SIGNALS

Overcommitment during activation
then collapse · shame cycles ·
misread as unreliable

KEY FEATURE

State-dependent cognition: reasoning
speed, confidence, and risk
assessment vary markedly by phase.

WHAT IT IS NOT

Personality flaw · simple moodiness · lack of discipline · constant instability

Anxiety Disorders

Neuroregulatory pattern of persistent threat anticipation and intolerance of uncertainty. Core issue is anticipatory load — not fearfulness or lack of capability.

"Uncertainty, not danger, is the true load."

Anxiety Disorders

REGULATION

STRENGTHS

Risk foresight · preparedness · conscientiousness · sensitivity to downstream consequences

CHALLENGES

Chronic arousal · rumination · attentional narrowing · decision paralysis under ambiguity

STRESS SIGNALS

Mental fatigue without clear cause · slowed decisions · sleep disruption from mental replay

KEY FEATURE

Anticipatory bias: cognition overweights possible negative outcomes. Uncertainty itself — not danger — is the load.

WHAT IT IS NOT

Weakness · lack of confidence · poor stress tolerance by choice · 'just worrying too much'

Depression

Neurovegetative depression: reduced activation, initiation, and reward access driven by altered neurochemical regulation. Core issue is energy availability, not sadness or willpower.

"The barrier is access, not ability."

Depression

REGULATION

STRENGTHS

Thoughtful pacing · depth of reflection
· realism in risk appraisal · reliability in
low-arousal contexts

CHALLENGES

Initiation friction · slowed processing ·
anhedonia · fatigue unrelieved by rest

STRESS SIGNALS

Missed starts rather than missed skill ·
fatigue after minimal demands ·
shame from perceived 'laziness'

KEY FEATURE

Initiation gating: starting tasks
requires disproportionate effort
despite clarity and skill. Reward signal
is attenuated.

WHAT IT IS NOT

Sadness by default · lack of discipline · poor attitude · solved by pressure · character
flaw

ACQUIRED

Epilepsy

Neurological condition with atypical neural excitability — producing state-dependent changes in attention, memory, processing speed, and fatigue beyond seizures.

"Stability is an active process, not a passive state."

Epilepsy

ACQUIRED

STRENGTHS

Heightened self-monitoring · precision under structure · resilience · strong routine awareness

CHALLENGES

Cognitive variability · post-ictal fatigue or fog · memory disruption · medication side effects

STRESS SIGNALS

Mental fog after exertion · fatigue disproportionate to workload · withdrawal to preserve stability

KEY FEATURE

Excitability thresholds: neural systems have lower tolerance for overload — sleep, stress, and stimulation are critical regulators.

WHAT IT IS NOT

Constant seizure state · cognitive deficit by default · lack of competence · controllable by willpower

ACQUIRED

Long COVID / Lyme

Persistent neuroinflammation and autonomic dysregulation — defining feature is post-exertional symptom exacerbation, not fixed impairment. Capacity varies day to day.

"Capacity collapses when limits are ignored."

Long COVID / Lyme

ACQUIRED

STRENGTHS

High bodily awareness · careful pacing · strategic prioritization · empathy for invisible strain

CHALLENGES

Brain fog · post-exertional crashes · memory lapses · sensory intolerance · unstable energy envelope

STRESS SIGNALS

Crashes after 'good days' · loss of words mid-task · sensory overload · misread as laziness

KEY FEATURE

Post-exertional neurocognitive decline: effort triggers delayed worsening of cognition, attention, and language.

WHAT IT IS NOT

Burnout · depression · lack of motivation · psychosomatic · solved by pushing harder

ACQUIRED

ME/CFS

Complex condition defined by post-exertional malaise (PEM): disproportionate delayed worsening after minimal effort. A neuroenergetic dysfunction — not motivation or mood.

| *"Exertion costs tomorrow."*

ME/CFS

ACQUIRED

STRENGTHS

Precise self-monitoring · disciplined pacing · strategic prioritization · high signal detection of early overload

CHALLENGES

Severe fatigue unrelieved by rest · brain fog · orthostatic intolerance · narrow energy envelope

STRESS SIGNALS

Crashes after 'good days' · word-finding failures · dizziness on standing · misread as avoidance

KEY FEATURE

Neuroenergetic constraint: markedly reduced capacity for sustained output, independent of will.

WHAT IT IS NOT

Burnout · depression · deconditioning · solved by pushing · motivation problem

ACQUIRED

TBI / Concussion

Acquired disruption of brain function from external force — effects are invisible, fluctuating, and context-dependent, even in mild forms.

"Capacity changes — competence remains."

TBI / Concussion

ACQUIRED

STRENGTHS

Heightened self-monitoring · strategic pacing · precision through simplification · resilience

CHALLENGES

Reduced processing speed · cognitive fatigue · sensory sensitivity · emotional lability · difficulty multitasking

STRESS SIGNALS

Headache or fog after meetings · irritability with noise or screens · emotional volatility when overloaded

KEY FEATURE

Reduced cognitive reserve: mental effort draws from a smaller energy buffer, leading to faster fatigue under load.

WHAT IT IS NOT

Loss of intelligence · lack of motivation · purely psychological · always visible on imaging

ACQUIRED

Parkinson's

Neurodegenerative condition involving dopaminergic disruption — affecting movement, initiation, timing, and cognition.

"Slowness is not loss — it is a different rhythm."

Parkinson's

ACQUIRED

STRENGTHS

Precision · deliberateness · procedural reliability · emotional depth · persistence

CHALLENGES

Bradyphrenia (slowed thinking) · initiation difficulty · cognitive fatigue · motor-cognitive interference

STRESS SIGNALS

Freezing under pressure · mental exhaustion after meetings · difficulty with rapid turn-taking

KEY FEATURE

Initiation friction: knowing what to do but struggling to start. Cognition fluctuates with medication timing.

WHAT IT IS NOT

Intellectual decline by default · lack of effort · emotional flatness · purely a motor condition

ACQUIRED

Alzheimer / MCI

Progressive changes in memory integration, orientation, and executive sequencing. Early stages often preserve insight, values, and relational sensitivity.

"Memory fades before meaning does."

Alzheimer / MCI

ACQUIRED

STRENGTHS

Emotional memory · relational presence · pattern familiarity · value continuity · long-term identity

CHALLENGES

Short-term memory loss · disorientation · language retrieval difficulty · executive sequencing breakdown

STRESS SIGNALS

Repeating questions · reliance on routines · distress in novel environments · misread as 'gone already'

KEY FEATURE

Encoding impairment: difficulty storing new information, not losing all memory. Executive erosion precedes personality.

WHAT IT IS NOT

Loss of personhood · absence of feeling · immediate total decline · lack of dignity

DEVELOPMENTAL

Intellectual Disability

Neurodevelopmental differences in cognitive capacity and adaptive functioning — defined by need for scaffolding, not inability.

"Capability emerges when the system meets the learner."

Intellectual Disability

DEVELOPMENTAL

STRENGTHS

Concrete reasoning · reliability in structured contexts · practical skill mastery · relational warmth · persistence

CHALLENGES

Slower information processing · difficulty with abstraction · reduced transfer across contexts · vulnerability to overload

STRESS SIGNALS

Confusion with implicit instructions · compliance masking · misunderstanding · anxiety around evaluation

KEY FEATURE

Context specificity: skills learned in one setting may not automatically generalize without explicit bridging.

WHAT IT IS NOT

Lack of worth · absence of intelligence · inability to learn · childishness · fixed potential

Mixed Neurodivergence

Co-occurrence of two or more neurocognitive profiles — traits amplify, buffer, or contradict each other, creating unique regulation patterns.

"Complexity is not conflict — it is layered capacity."

Mixed Neurodivergence

NEURODEVELOPMENTAL

STRENGTHS

Cognitive flexibility · cross-domain insight · adaptive problem-solving · perspective shifting · creative synthesis

CHALLENGES

Internal contradiction · uneven energy distribution · masking complexity · increased cognitive load

STRESS SIGNALS

Identity confusion · burnout from contradictory demands · difficulty explaining needs · misread as inconsistent

KEY FEATURE

Trait interaction effects: profiles compensate for or intensify each other. Functioning varies by environment fit, not ability.

WHAT IT IS NOT

Indecision · exaggeration · diagnostic confusion · instability by character · lack of self-knowledge