The 7 Types of ADHD

ADHD doesn't look the same in every brain. This framework — popularized by psychiatrist Dr. Daniel Amen based on brain-imaging research — breaks ADHD into seven distinct presentations, each with its own signs and its own best support strategy.

Classic ADHD

Inattentive, hyperactive, impulsive, disorganized, restless, easily bored.

Support: Build in movement breaks, use checklists and visual schedules, and break work into short timed chunks.

Inattentive ADD

Not hyperactive — instead sluggish, easily distracted, daydreamy, slow to start tasks.

Support: Use quiet 1:1 check-ins, gentle re-direction, visual reminders, and low-stimulation work spaces.

Over-Focused ADD

Gets "stuck," trouble shifting attention, rigid thinking, worries, argues, holds grudges.

Support: Give advance warning before transitions, offer structured choices, and gently interrupt perfectionistic loops.

Temporal Lobe ADD

Memory and word-finding trouble, mood swings, irritability, sensitivity to noise or light.

Support: Reduce sensory triggers, offer memory aids (visual steps, recorded instructions), and keep routines calm and predictable.

Limbic ADD

Low energy, low mood, negative self-talk, sleep changes, low motivation.

Support: Lead with encouragement and specific praise, connect tasks to personal interests, and watch for signs of discouragement.

Ring of Fire ADD

Extreme sensitivity to sensory input, oppositional, unpredictable mood swings, rigid then explosive.

Support: Lower sensory load, keep routines highly predictable, and provide a calm-down space before things escalate.

Anxious ADD

Anxious, freezes under pressure (tests, presentations), fixates on worst-case outcomes, avoids risk.

Support: Lower time pressure, allow practice runs, and offer predictable, low-stakes ways to demonstrate learning.

Quick-Reference Support Guide

How to use this page: You don't need a diagnosis to use these strategies — most are good practice for any learner. Pick one or two supports per type rather than trying everything at once, and adjust based on what actually helps the individual in front of you.

Type	Watch for	Try this first
Classic	Still body, hands quiet, eyes on speaker	eyes on speaker Fidgeting, rocking, moving, humming
Inattentive	Neurotypical regulation styles	Neurodivergent regulation styles
Over-Focused	Stillness = listening	Movement = not listening
Temporal Lobe	Visible calm, but not always internal focus	always internal focus Self-regulation that frees up attention to focus
Limbic	Can't rely on posture alone	Ask them to recite or paraphrase what was said
Ring of Fire	Sudden outbursts, sensory overload	Calm-down space + predictable routine
Anxious	Freezing, avoidance, perfectionism	Practice run + reduced time pressure

Three supports that help almost every type

1. **Predictability** — a visible schedule lowers anxiety and resistance across every type.
2. **Choice** — even small choices (order of tasks, where to sit, which pen) rebuild a sense of control.
3. **Short feedback loops** — frequent, specific check-ins keep motivation from collapsing mid-task.