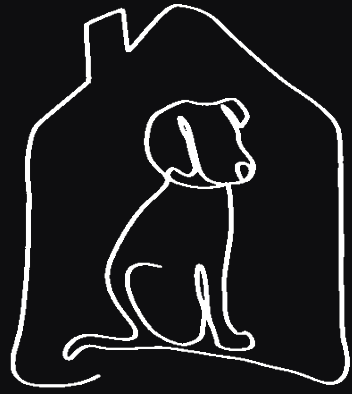




Even the DOG has ADHD

01 / GUIDE ONE

First Steps After Diagnosis.

You've got the letter. Now what? A calm, practical starting sequence.

There is no single right way to feel right now. Relief, grief, disbelief, energy, stillness, tears, a strange lightness. These can all arrive in the same hour, and none of them is the wrong response. This guide is a short, steady sequence for the days and weeks after a diagnosis. Small moves, in an order that helps.



STEP 01

Let the news settle.

A diagnosis is information, not an identity swap. You are the same person you were yesterday, only now you have a clearer map for understanding yourself. Give the news a few days of room before you make big decisions or announce anything.

It is common to move through several feelings in quick succession. Some people feel relief that finally makes sense of decades. Others feel grief for the years they spent pushing against something they could not name. Both are reasonable. Neither needs fixing.

STEP 02

Keep the letter safe and readable.

Your diagnostic report is a working document, not a souvenir. You may need it for shared care, Access to Work, reasonable adjustments at work, or future referrals.

WHAT TO DO WITH IT TODAY

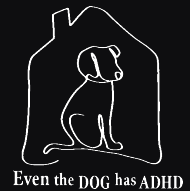
- 01 Photograph or scan every page and store it somewhere you can find it in a hurry.
- 02 Save the file with a clear name and the date, not 'scan_001'.
- 03 Ask the clinician's office for a plain-English summary if the report is heavy on clinical language.
- 04 Keep a note of who assessed you, when, and the clinic's contact details.

STEP 03

Decide what to share, and with whom.

You do not owe anyone your diagnosis, and you do not have to tell everyone at once. Telling people is not a single decision. It is a series of small ones, made when you are ready.

A useful question: who would knowing help? Start with the people who are most likely to respond with warmth. You can rehearse a short version, a sentence or two, so you are not figuring it out in the moment.



STEP 04

Medication, on your own terms.

Medication is one tool among many, not a requirement and not a measure of how seriously you take your diagnosis. In the UK, ADHD medication is started and adjusted under specialist supervision, often through a process called titration. If you choose to explore it, ask your prescriber what to expect, how adjustments are made, and what the review schedule looks like.

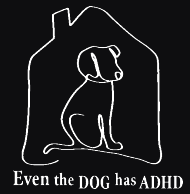
If your medication comes through a private clinic and you want your NHS GP to continue prescribing it, you will usually need a shared care agreement. Not all GPs accept these, so it helps to ask early and keep the conversation open and on record.

STEP 05

Make peace with the grief.

Many late-diagnosed adults describe a kind of mourning, for the support they did not get, for the energy spent masking, for a younger self who was trying hard and being misunderstood. That grief is real and it is allowed to take up space.

Reframing helps: a diagnosis does not erase your past, but it can change the story you tell about it. You were not lazy, broken or careless. You were working with a brain no one had explained to you. That is a gentler, more accurate reading of your life so far.



STEP 06

Begin building your own operating manual.

The most useful thing you can do now is start noticing what actually works for your brain, and being honest about what does not. Generic advice and standard planners tend to fail because they rely on the exact functions that are hardest for many neurodivergent people. Your manual will be specific to you.

START A SIMPLE NOTES FILE

Times of day when focus comes easiest, and when it does not.

Tasks I lose hours to, and tasks that pull me in completely.

Environments that help me think, and ones that drain me.

Small adjustments I have already tried that made a difference.

Questions I want to ask my clinician, coach or GP next time.

A last word

You are not starting from scratch.

A diagnosis does not leave you alone with a search bar. It is the start of a better map, one you now get to draw on your own terms.

YOUR NEXT STEP

Keep going at the Even The Dog Has ADHD media centre.

Sources & further reading

NHS: ADHD in adults <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/attention-deficit-hyperactivity-disorder-adhd/>

NICE guideline NG87: ADHD (treatment & care) <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng87>

ADHD UK: shared care & medication <https://adhd.uk.co.uk/>

National Autistic Society: what is autism <https://www.autism.org.uk/>