

A. Scripts for Starting the Conversation

The hardest part of talking about ADHD is usually finding the words. You know something needs to be said, but you are afraid of getting it wrong — of sounding like you are diagnosing, criticizing, or making it about yourself.

These scripts are not perfect sentences to memorize. They are starting points — language you can adapt to your own voice, your own relationship, and your own situation. The goal is not to say the right thing. The goal is to open a door that has been closed, and to do it with enough honesty and kindness that the other person feels safe walking through it.

Each script includes a tip for how and when to use it. Read the one that fits your situation. Practice it if you need to. Then take a breath and say it.

1. When You've Just Started Learning About ADHD

Partner to Partner

“I’ve been reading about ADHD and executive function, and honestly, a lot of it sounds like what we’ve been dealing with. I’m not trying to diagnose you or label anything. I just want to understand what’s actually going on so we can stop fighting about it and start working on it together. Would you be open to looking at some of this with me?”

Tip: *Bring something specific to share with you, a short article, a chapter from this booklet, or an infographic. It gives the conversation a starting point that isn’t just your opinion.*

2. When You're Exhausted and Need to Be Honest

Partner to Partner

“I need to tell you something, and I’m going to try to say it without blame. I’m exhausted. I feel like I’m carrying most of the planning and follow-through in our house, and I know that’s not what either of us wants. I’ve been learning that ADHD can make those things genuinely harder, not because you don’t care, but because your brain handles them differently. I don’t want to be your manager. I want to be your partner. Can we figure out a different way to do this?”

Tip: *Choose a calm moment for this one, not the middle of an argument. If emotions are already high, save it for later and say so: “I want to talk about this when we’re both in a better place.”*

3. When You Notice Someone Struggling

Friend to Friend

“Hey, I want to say something and I hope it comes out right. I’ve noticed you’ve been really hard on yourself lately, calling yourself lazy or saying you can’t get it together. I learned recently that a lot of those patterns can be connected to ADHD, and it’s not about effort or character at all. I’m not saying I know what’s going on with you, but if any of that resonates, it might be worth looking into. No pressure. I just care about you and wanted to put it on your radar.”

Tip: *Don’t push for a response. Sometimes the most powerful thing you can do is plant a seed and let the person come back to it in their own time.*

4. When You Wish You’d Known Sooner

Parent to Adult Child

“There’s something I’ve been wanting to talk to you about, and I want you to know it comes from a place of love, not criticism. I’ve been learning about ADHD and executive function, and I’m realizing that a lot of what you struggled with growing up might have been

connected to how your brain is wired, not to a lack of trying. I wish I had known that then. I didn't, and I said some things I regret. Would you be open to exploring this together? I want to support you now in a way I couldn't before."

Tip: *Be prepared for emotions, yours and theirs. This conversation may bring up old pain. That's okay. Naming it honestly is the first step toward healing it.*

5. When Your Parent Might Have ADHD

Adult Child to Parent

"Mom/Dad, I've been learning a lot about ADHD lately, and some of it reminds me of things I've watched you struggle with for as long as I can remember. The forgetfulness, the piles, the way you start a hundred projects and finish three. I don't think any of that is laziness. I think your brain might just work differently than people expected it to. I'm not trying to fix you. I just wonder if understanding it better might take some weight off your shoulders. Would you be willing to talk about it?"

Tip: *Older adults often resist the idea of ADHD because "that wasn't a thing when I was growing up." Lead with compassion, not correction. The goal is relief, not a label.*

6. When You See Yourself in Their Struggle

Coworker to Coworker

"I don't want to overstep, but I've noticed you putting in a ton of effort and still feeling like you're falling behind. I went through something really similar a couple of years ago, and it turned out to be ADHD. Getting assessed completely changed how I work. I'm not saying that's what's going on with you, but if any of this sounds familiar, I'm happy to share what helped me. No judgment at all. Just one person who's been there."

Tip: *Keep it brief and private. A hallway or coffee shop works better than a conference room. And always offer, never insist.*

7. After a Diagnosis

Spouse to Spouse

“Now that we have a name for what’s been happening, I want to be honest about where I am. Part of me is relieved because it finally makes sense. Part of me is grieving all the fights and hurt that maybe didn’t have to happen. And part of me is scared that nothing will actually change. I don’t need you to fix everything overnight. I need us to build some simple systems together and actually use them. I’m in this with you. But I need to see movement, even small movement, so I can keep believing we’re heading somewhere better.”

Tip: *A diagnosis is a beginning, not a finish line. Agree on one small concrete change to try this week, not ten. Progress over perfection.*

8. When You’re Worried About a Family Member

To a Loved One

“I’ve been thinking about you a lot, and I want to share something. I’ve been reading about how ADHD shows up in adults, and it’s not what I thought it was. It’s not just being hyper or distracted. It’s about how the brain manages time, emotions, planning, and follow-through. Some of what I’ve read reminds me of things you’ve described — the overwhelm, the difficulty finishing things, the way small setbacks feel enormous. I’m not saying I know what’s going on. But I think talking to a professional who understands this stuff could be really valuable. You deserve to feel less stuck. Would you be open to it?”

Tip: Offer to help with the next step. “I found a few providers who specialize in adult ADHD. Want me to send you their info?” removes a barrier that ADHD itself makes hard to cross.

9. When Someone Jokes About Having ADHD

To Anyone

“You joke about being “so ADHD” a lot, and honestly, I used to laugh it off too. But I’ve learned that for a lot of people, it’s a real condition that affects every part of their life, relationships, work, self-esteem, everything. I’m not trying to make it heavy. I just wonder if there’s more going on behind the jokes than you let on. If there is, there are people who can actually help. And if you ever want to talk about it seriously, I’m here.”

Tip: Sometimes humor is a test balloon. The person may be checking whether it’s safe to be honest. Your response tells them whether it is.

10. Starting a Group Conversation

To a Team, Family, or Church Group

“I want to share something with the group. I’ve been reading a booklet called ADHD in Real Life, and it’s changed how I think about some of the patterns I see around me at home, at work, and in our community. ADHD is not what most of us think it is. It’s not laziness, it’s not a lack of caring, and it doesn’t go away when you grow up. It’s a brain-based difference in how people manage attention, time, emotions, and follow-through. I’d love for us to read this together and talk about what it means for how we support each other. Not to point fingers at anyone, but to build something better as a group. Are you in?”