

Jenna D'Antona

How Factors of Different Environments Affect ADHD

00:00:00 - 00:00:30

[The video switches between clips of Jenna D'Antona with different participants as D'Antona asks their name and grade. Music quietly plays in the background. As each person is introduced, their name is written on the screen.]

Jenna D'Antona: Could you tell me your name?

Kara: I'm Kara.

Meredith: I'm Meredith.

Charlie: My name is Charlie.

Lucy: Lucy.

Ada: My name is Ada.

Ash: Ash.

Shrinidhii: My name is Shrinidhii.

Liam: I'm Liam.

D'Antona: Could you tell me what grade you're in?

Liam: I'm a freshman at college.

Ada: I'm a senior in high school.

Kara: I'm a freshman.

Lucy: I'm a freshman.

Shrinidhii: I'm a sophomore.

Charlie: I'm a freshman in college.

Meredith: I'm a freshman.

Ash: I'm a senior.

D'Antona: Okay. So I'm just basically going to ask you a few questions about, like, how you think environment can affect ADHD.

00:00:30 - 00:00:40

[The blurb “I conducted a series of interviews to determine the effects different environments have on ADHD.” appears on the screen. This transitions to a different blurb, which reads “Participants discuss their personal experiences with ADHD in certain settings.”]

00:00:40 - 00:01:32

[The first question I ask participants, “Do you believe the setting or environment you are in can affect your productivity?” appears at the bottom of the screen while I ask it to the first participant.]

D'Antona: So first off, do you believe the setting or environment that you are in can affect your productivity?

Shrinidhii: Definitely. For me, personally, I feel like if people are like walking around it keeps me more – like almost like “Oh, shit. I have to study. And then I am like sitting down.

D'Antona: Yeah.

Shrinidhii: If I'm alone, that kind of like drifts away and I'm like daydreaming and I completely forget about, like, the world I'm in.

Charlie: Definitely, I believe that, yeah.

Lucy: Yes, I do.

Liam: Yes.

Meredith: Yes.

Ada: Yes, very much so. I can't be in, like, cluttered areas, and I can't be in areas that are too, like, the wrong kind of public, I suppose.

Ash: Absolutely. It just – it's something that I've noticed like studying, like I can't study in my room, and I can't study like with my friends, and it has to be a very specific place.

Kara: I think it definitely can, especially like the noise level too.

D'Antona: Okay.

Kara: Cause easily distractible, there's loud noise, it might be tough to study.

00:01:32 - 00:02:14

[The next question appears at the bottom of the screen; "When working on homework, for example, do you think you work more productively in a setting you are very familiar with or a setting you are less familiar with?"]

D'Antona: When working on homework, for example, do you think you work more productively in a setting you are very familiar with or a setting that you are less familiar with?

Lucy: I think, in general, a setting I'm more familiar with because even if there are distractions, I know what they are and I can kind of do my best to avoid them.

Meredith: I think I work less productively when I'm, like, in my bedroom.

D'Antona: Mhm.

Meredith: Or like, in a space I kind of am lazy in, like I like to study in the library.

D'Antona: Yeah.

Meredith: Which is a familiar setting, I always go to the same floor and, like, the same little spot, but...

Liam: It's probably more familiar for assignments that I'm less...familiar with.

D'Antona: Yeah. I think I get – yeah.

Liam: Cause then I'm not distracted by other things while I'm also trying to figure something out.

D'Antona: Yeah.

Liam: But it is assignment dependent.

D'Antona: Okay.

00:02:14 - 00:02:48

Charlie: I don't know if it's familiarity, I think it's more so, like, settings in which I'm not as comfortable, cause I study in the same places, but they're places where like, I can't fall asleep.

D'Antona: Okay. Yeah.

Kara: I think I work better in a setting I'm familiar with, cause if I'm less familiar, I'll probably get distracted, so.

Shrinidhii: I think definitely something less – like I'm more familiar with, because if it's a new environment for me, I tend to like, look around things and you know, observe them a lot.

D'Antona: Might explore?

Shrinidhii: More exploring, and then I feel like that's very distracting.

00:02:48 - 00:03:23

Ada: I feel like I might work better in a completely unfamiliar area. With me, the risk of getting distracted isn't new things, it's the ability for my brain to connect things to other things, and that is less likely if I have no basis in the area.

Ash: I would say familiarity doesn't exactly affect it more than – like I think familiarity with the people there.

D'Antona: Mhm, okay.

Ash: If I study in a place too long and I start making friends with the people who are there then I'm going to start talking to them.

D'Antona: Yeah.

Ash: And so, the main thing is just like, getting distracted by people I know.

D'Antona: Mhm.

00:03:23 - 00:03:59

[The next question appears at the bottom of the screen; “What are distractions that you have personally identified when working on assignments at home or in your bedroom/dorm room?”]

D'Antona: What are distractions that you have personally identified when working on assignments at home or like, in your bedroom.

Ash: Definitely my phone.

Meredith: My phone, of course.

Lucy: I mean my phone is my biggest distraction.

Ada: The biggest risk of distraction is probably my phone, and like getting stuck in social media.

Liam: My phone. My phone. I pick up my phone, I start scrolling through something – through Instagram, through TikTok, through something, and there's no, there's – productivity just all the way down.

D'Antona: Yeah.

Meredith: I started turning it off and like putting it across the room, cause I'll – I'll get locked in but like if I get a text message, it'll completely throw me off.

00:03:59 - 00:04:57

Ash: When I'm in public I feel more pressured to like, actually get my stuff done, not that anyone's like actually looking but like, when I'm home I feel like absolutely no social pressure

so I can just sit at my phone for like three hours. And then also just other stuff in my room, like I'll start cleaning my room when I'm supposed to be doing something else.

D'Antona: Yeah.

Lucy: Anything that's messy, I'll clean it before doing my homework.

Shrinidhii: If I'm in my dorm room, I just tend to like – I usually get a lot of back pain, so I go to the bed, and if I'm in bed, and then, like, I switch on like multiple tabs at the same time and it kind of gets distracting.

Charlie: My bed. Cause it's really hard for me to study in my bed, I mean we have desks – my desk's a mess, though so I, I – that's why I never study in my dorm.

Meredith: When I'm working here, like in our dorm, people outside being loud.

Kara: If I'm with people I know, I'll just start talking to them so that's the main thing, and then if there's music playing and stuff that will be distracting as well.

00:04:57 - 00:05:18

[The next question appears at the bottom of the screen; “Have you ever had a job?” followed by, “Was your job sedentary (involved mostly sitting down) or mobile (involved frequent movement)?”, and lastly “Do you believe that your ADHD made your job significantly harder due to the circumstances of the environment that you worked in?]

D'Antona: Have you ever had a job?

Charlie: Oh, I've had many jobs.

Meredith: Yes.

Ash: Yeah.

Lucy: I have.

Liam: I have had a job.

Shrinidhii: I have, I've had multiple jobs, I worked on campus in like Hamp, as like, a chef, and then I work like multiple technical roles for internships as well.

Kara: I haven't.

D'Antona: Okay.

Kara: Besides babysitting.

D'Antona: Okay, that counts!

00:05:18 - 00:05:56

D'Antona: So your job was mobile, mostly, like it had like frequent movement. Were your jobs sedentary, which means they involved like mostly sitting down, or were they mobile which means they involved like frequent movement? Or was it a mix of both, cause you had multiple?

Charlie: I, yeah. I mean I've had a lot of jobs. Definitely I like jobs where I was more mobile.

My favorite job was definitely barista-ing, I work with kids a lot, which I also really enjoy.

Ash: I've mainly worked in like, food and bar service, so I work really well in like, fast-paced, like, environments.

Liam: Mobile work, always doing something.

D'Antona: Okay.

Liam: Yeah.

00:05:56 - 00:06:49

D'Antona: Do you believe that your ADHD made your job significantly harder due to the circumstances of the environment that you worked in?

Liam: Oh, significantly easier.

D'Antona: Okay.

Liam: Actually, yeah. Well it was very bouncy, back and forth, so the hyperactivity actually made it very easy to manage a lot of things at once.

D'Antona: Okay.

Lucy: No, I don't think so. I was working with kids, so it's like pretty easy just to focus on them and what they need.

Shrinidhii: For me, when I have my jobs, because like, obviously working as a chef is kind of boring, but having ADHD my mind is like so active, so I actually like doing my work, suddenly. Yes, I'm like roaming around, and that makes it a little more easier. I like to do it, I like the pace of it. 100% working a sedentary, like, desk job for me is really, really hard, because I get distracted on my phone like all the time. It's very hard for me to focus on, like, a one-hour project, it probably takes me like two-to-three hours to finish it.

00:06:49 - 00:07:30

Meredith: Not really, I don't think I'd do well, like, sitting down doing like office work-kind of thing, but I worked as a summer camp counselor, so I was like dealing with, like, kids and horses outdoors.

D'Antona: Oh!

Meredith: So I don't know, I was, like, on my feet all day, and I was pretty engaged, like I always had something to do and that helped.

Ash: I actually felt like in my, like, more fast-paced, like, jobs, I felt like ADHD actually helped me.

D'Antona: Mhm.

Ash: Like, I felt like I was able to just kind of adapt to situations really quickly and always have – like, shift my attention.

Charlie: Definitely, when I was lifeguarding.

Kara: Maybe, cause you have to stay focused on the kids the whole time, so I guess I could, I never thought about that.

D'Antona: Yeah.

00:07:30 - 00:08:00

[The next question appears at the bottom of the screen; “ What are distractions that you have personally identified when working in a classroom environment?”]

D'Antona: What are distractions that you have personally identified when working in a classroom environment?

Meredith: Kind of just other people. I hate it when people, like, tap their shoe, or fiddle with their pen, which is funny cause I do that, but it's not okay when other people do it, it annoys me. But like especially in exams, cause I'm already nervous.

D'Antona: Yeah.

Meredith: A little sensory overload and like, people making noise, I'm like “Stop!”

Kara: I just get distracted by everyone, what everyone's doing.

Lucy: Noises, like if someone's...like fans. Or side conversations.

D'Antona: Mhm.

00:08:00 - 00:08:33

Liam: When teachers get slow, my brain shuts off. Or like, the clock. Like actually, I'll just look at the clock.

Shrinidhii: So I feel like in a classroom environment, for me, as long as there's like – I'm a huge audio listener, so if, like, someone's like constantly distracting me and like speaking very loudly, I'll be like, unfocused. But if it's more of like, a reading or something, I like, 100% I will not pay

attention if it's like, a reading or just a visual thing, I will not pay attention to it. Also, if they don't have, like, intonations in their speech, or like – you know, like nice gestures.

D'Antona: If they're not engaging.

Shrinidhii: Engaging with you, making eye contact with you.

00:08:33 - 00:08:33

Ada: My biggest distraction is other students. When other students are very loud, and not just when they're loud, but when they're having a conversation that I find interesting. When other students are explicitly not engaged in the lesson, like when they are slacking off or just not respecting the teacher, that's highly distracting to me, cause again, it goes back to the mindset of "Oh, this is no longer a working area," so my brain doesn't see it as a working area.

Charlie: Sometimes it's noises, like, that other people are making, but things that are like keyboard typing, which, I feel bad, because I'm the person in class who's always, like, whistling, or clicking my pen, but if other people are doing it I'm like, listening really intently.

D'Antona: Yeah.

Ash: I've definitely...If there's a single noise that's more audible than other noises, that will really get to me. And then also, if people are having a conversation that's louder than the other conversations, I feel like I can't – I'll just end up listening to their conversation.

D'Antona: Yeah.

00:09:33 - 00:10:25

[The next question appears at the bottom of the screen; "What aspects of a classroom environment do you find helpful to your learning? Ex. Visual prompts and written instructions, implementing regular breaks into the class schedule, small group/paired work."]

D'Antona: What aspects of a classroom environment do you find helpful to your learning, for example, like visual prompts and, like, written instructions, implementing regular breaks into, like, the class schedule, and like small group or like paired work?

Shrinidhii: I feel like, for me personally, I've had like different kind of classes, obviously gen-eds are completely different from our normal lecture halls. I'm in engineering so in my class there are 300 people sitting with like two hour lectures, and it's just you – 100% I will not pay attention. I feel like classroom settings are really hard unless the professors are super engaging, which is not that, you know, likely, in a class of 300. So I feel like smaller class settings, with like more interactive – I've had like a gen-ed class where it's really small, and like, just like ten people, and it's group, we paired – we get paired sometimes, it's really nice to like, talk to your peers as well.

D'Antona: Yeah.

Shrinidhii: And it's also nice to like, talk with the instructor, and like, show them your opinions and everything. If it's like, a plain writing and like, listening class, I will not be doing anything.

00:10:25 - 00:11:11

Lucy: Both hearing the instruction and seeing it on the screen at the same time is really helpful to me.

D'Antona: Mhm.

Lucy: And then, I like mixing it up, so having a break, or having group time, and then going back to the other, like, lecture, but not doing the exact same thing for a really long time.

Ada: I tend to prefer independent work, but I also really like it...I guess for me, drawing on what I believe is, like, the most effective teacher for me, I think it's the principle of frequent check-ins,

and like, having, like, a sense of responsibility of like “Oh, the teacher might be coming so you should do the thing.”

Ash: For me, it’s always like when professors put everything in the same place, like all the assignments, all the reminders, et cetera.

D'Antona: It's like a central source of information.

Ash: Yeah.

D'Antona: Okay.

00:11:11 - 00:11:46

Meredith: I really like written instructions. Big fan of those.

D'Antona: Okay.

Meredith: I always forget things if they're not told to me.

D'Antona: Yeah.

Meredith: I like working in pairs, cause I feel like I tend to overanalyze my own answers. I'll be like “That's wrong,” whatever. You have someone else to bounce ideas off of.

D'Antona: Discussion?

Meredith: Yes.

Kara: I think group work is really helpful. For me, I always do worse when the lights are off, I don't know why.

D'Antona: Okay.

Kara: But I like when the lights are on, and it's bright and it's, like, engaging, I feel like.

Liam: Really any kind of activity or in-class learning will keep me focused and actually want to learn, but if it's just somebody talking at me I'm out.

00:11:46 - 00:12:31

[The next question appears at the bottom of the screen; “What aspects of a productivity environment do you find to be most suitable for you? (What is your ideal workspace or assignment setting?)”]

D'Antona: What aspects of a productivity environment do you find to be most suitable for you?

So like, what's your ideal, like, workplace or workspace?

Meredith: Ideal work environment: I'm there, I'm studying, and there are like a few other people studying around me.

D'Antona: Okay.

Meredith: But they're really, really quiet. But they look busy, so I feel like I have to be busy.

D'Antona: Okay, so like a social pressure?

Meredith: Yes.

Ash: For me, the best environment has been, like, a café, where there's a – there's like some chatter, and like, maybe some music, but none of it is too distracting, and I can't know anyone there. Where I'm sitting, too, can affect my productivity. If I'm in the middle of a room, there's like, a bunch of tables, and I'm like – it's just sitting at a table, I don't really like that, but if I'm like against a wall or like, in a booth, or something, I'm a lot more comfortable.

00:12:31 - 00:13:13

Liam: I like to sit in a place where there's a lot of people moving around. Especially when I'm working at home – on homework, because if other people are busy, it helps me be busy.

D'Antona: Okay.

Liam: And it keeps me from getting distracted.

D'Antona: Mhm.

Liam: Also, I don't want to be seen just scrolling my phone with work in front of me for a ton of time.

D'Antona: Yeah.

Liam: So there's a bit of a social, like, almost social anxiety aspect where I'm, like, forced to work.

D'Antona: Yeah.

Liam: Or if I am – choose to be at home, and – or my dorm, in a quiet place, it's – it's movie or TV show, put on while I do work.

Lucy: My perfect environment is, like, a good-sized desk and a comfortable chair, and nothing on the desk except for my homework, and absolute silence around me. I *cannot* work if there is noise.

00:13:13 - 00:13:51

Kara: Probably a room, like, by myself, but with, like, low music in the background.

D'Antona: Okay.

Kara: Probably no windows would be good, and the door closed.

Shrinidhii: So I feel like an ideal workspace for me would be, as I said, a bunch of people who were, like, also super focused on studying. So I feel like an environment which is quiet, and does not have many distractions, not many like – you know, you don't hear outside wind blowing, or like, people talking, I feel like that's very distracting for me. Like a good quiet environment with, like, people who are focused studying with, like, breaks and stuff, I feel like that's really good.

00:13:52 - 00:14:33

Charlie: Like whenever I *really* need to study, I will get on the bus, and I will be – like I will get myself at least miles away from my bedroom so that I can't get back, and I have no option but to

study, so for me it's all about, like, distance. I also like – I kind of like a cozy environment. My favorite thing to do is to take the bus to Panera and just stay there for hours.

Ada: I find that I work very well in the library, I guess it's because in my head, it's like "Oh, a library is a place of learning." And I guess, I work well when I'm surrounded by books, which would – which, like, you'd think that I'd be distracted by a desire to read them, but in my head it's just like "Oh, books equals learning, so I've got to do learning."

00:14:33 - 00:14:50

[The next question appears at the bottom of the screen; "Do you think that virtual school was largely unhelpful for your ADHD?"]

D'Antona: Do you think that virtual school was largely unhelpful for your ADHD?

Kara: Yeah.

Liam: Yes, it's completely unhelpful.

D'Antona: Yeah?

Liam: It doesn't work.

Charlie: It was so bad.

Meredith: Yes, it was awful.

Shrinidhii: Online school was really bad for me.

Ada: Yeah. I don't remember a single thing from virtual school.

00:14:50 - 00:15:17

Ash: Yes, and actually, my experience is different, cause I was actually here in 2019 for my freshman year.

D'Antona: Mhm.

Ash: And then Covid happened in 2020, and so all our classes went online, and like, most people started, like, doing really well. I just couldn't get my stuff done and I couldn't watch, like, online lectures. I just like – It was so hard for me to do anything at home.

D'Antona: Yeah.

Ash: So I did a gap year for that next year.

D'Antona: Mhm.

Ash: And then I came back when we got in person. But I just did this extra year.

D'Antona: Okay.

Ash: Because I knew I would have failed.

00:15:17 - 00:16:04

Ada: The most notable thing about virtual school to me is that I don't remember it.

Meredith: It was really, really rough for me, I could not pay attention in that kind of setting.

There were just so many distractions, and it was like sitting in front of the same thing all day, and then get up and go in between classes, and it was, you know, no social scene or whatever. I intensely disliked it and I did very poorly academically.

Shrinidhii: I was a – like a straight-A student throughout, like, my high school years, until, like, the last year – of senior year, we had everything in Covid, and I was, like, freaking out, because I didn't understand anything that was going on. I did not pay attention, also, I did not understand what they were saying.

D'Antona: Mhm.

Shrinidhii: It just felt not real enough for me to, like, pay attention, and I genuinely did not understand how other people did it, because I genuinely could not study, like, online, at all.

00:16:04 - 00:16:23

Kara: I – I was just “camera off,” not paying attention.

Liam: There's a level of immersion you need in a classroom to actually be able to focus, and – and when I'm in my dorm room, which is my space, I'm expected to learn in a classroom setting, that's – that's not going to happen.

D'Antona: Yeah.

Liam: Or especially over Covid, when I was at home, it's the same.

00:16:23 - 00:17:10

[The question “So what's the takeaway?” appears across the screen, followed by the sentence “Setting and environment undeniably play a huge part in the focus of people with ADHD.” The next sentence appears; “While there were certainly similarities between some of the participants' responses, it is important to also acknowledge the differences in their personal experiences to highlight the variance of individual learners.” The next sentence appears; “Experiential videos such as this could be circulated on YouTube and ADHD websites to promote the spread of information. Therefore, my target audience is not just people with ADHD, but also educators, employers, and the general public.” The final sentence appears across the screen; “Special thank you to the participants of the interviews!”]