© 2026 Flourishing Women LLC. This material may not be reproduced or distributed without written permission.

Workplace Misattunement

A Noticing Tool for ADHD Women

Purpose

This handout is meant to help you notice where work places strain on your nervous system. It is not a checklist of things to correct or improve about yourself.

What Is Workplace Misattunement?

Many ADHD women find work harder than expected even when they are capable, thoughtful, and committed.

This is often not about effort, motivation, or skill. It happens when workplace expectations do not match how an ADHD nervous system processes information, energy, and demand.

Misattunement occurs when workplaces are built around narrow assumptions about focus, communication, emotional expression, and productivity.

© 2026 Flourishing Women LLC. This material may not be reproduced or distributed without written permission.

Executive Function Misattunement

You may notice that you:

- Need time to think before starting tasks
- Work in bursts rather than at a steady pace
- Hyperfocus to produce high-quality work
- Hold the whole picture in mind rather than only the next step

This is often interpreted as disorganization or overthinking.

What is often happening instead:

- Your brain needs clarity before action feels possible
- Extra preparation developed to prevent misunderstanding

This is a learned protection shaped by past consequences, not a flaw.

Sensory Misattunement

You may notice that:

- Noise, lighting, or movement drain your energy
- Interruptions make it difficult to restart tasks
- You feel tired before the work itself begins

This is often dismissed as personal preference.

What is often happening instead:

- Sensory input directly affects regulation and focus
- Significant energy is spent staying regulated enough to work

Needing quiet, predictability, or flexibility reflects a support need.

© 2026 Flourishing Women LLC. This material may not be reproduced or distributed without written permission.

Emotional Misattunement

You may notice:

- Strong emotional responses under pressure
- Increased stress when expectations are unclear
- Heightened sensitivity to feedback when already overloaded

This is often labeled as being overly emotional.

What is often happening instead:

- Your nervous system is operating close to capacity
- Emotional responses signal overload rather than weakness

Communication Misattunement

You may notice that you:

- Think out loud to organize your thoughts
- Provide context to reduce the risk of misunderstanding
- Need time before responding thoughtfully

This is often misread as talking too much or being inefficient.

What is often happening instead:

- Language helps your brain structure information
- Overexplaining developed because misunderstanding carried consequences

---

Social Misattunement

You may notice that:

- Social interaction at work requires significant effort
- Group settings increase sensory or cognitive load
- Declining events is related to capacity rather than interest

This is often misinterpreted as disengagement.

What is often happening instead:

- Masking already consumes energy
- Social demands can push the nervous system toward exhaustion

© 2026 Flourishing Women LLC. This material may not be reproduced or distributed without written permission.

Reflection (Optional)

You do not need to answer all of these.

Where does work place the most strain on your nervous system?

_____

_____

What do you spend the most energy compensating for?

_____

_____

What feels unsustainable over time?

_____

_____