Neurodiversity + Age

Ever heard someone say, "Act your age!"?

But what if the brain develops on a different timeline?

For many neurodivergent individuals, especially those with ADHD, this expectation can be confusing or unfair. While a child's chronological age tells us how many years they've been alive, it doesn't always reflect how their executive functioning skills are developing.

Executive functions are the brain skills that help:

- regulate emotions
- control impulses
- stay organized
- shift attention
- plan and complete tasks

These often develop differently in individuals with ADHD or other Neurodivergent learning profiles.

Helpful Age Estimations

ADHD EXECUTIVE AGE

Actual Age	Executive Age	Actual Age	Executive Age
6 years	4.2 years	14 years	9.8 years
7 years	4.9 years	15 years	10.5 years
8 years	5.6 years	16 years	11.2 years
9 years	6.3 years	17 years	11.9 years
10 years	7 years	18 years	12.6 years
11 years	7.7 years	21 years	14.7years
12 years	8.4 years	30 years	21 years
13 years	9.1 years	40 years	28 years

Research suggests that executive functioning skills may develop about 25–30% later than their chronological age for those with ADHD. This means a child may have the intelligence of their age group but executive skills that are still catching up.

So when someone says "Act your age," they may be expecting skills that the brain is still developing.

Rather than saying "Act your age!" let's try focusing on each individual trying their best.

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