

Coping with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

Helpful Tips for Adults

If you have ADHD, it can be hard to sit still, pay attention or control impulsive behavior. ADHD can cause problems in many areas of your life. But you can learn ways to control your symptoms. Below are some ideas for coping with the most common ADHD problems.

Memory, focus and managing time

Be mindful of time.

- Use a watch, phone, timer or other device that keeps correct time. Be sure you can see and hear it at all times.
- Set more than one alarm to remind you how much time you have left for a task.
- Give yourself more time than you think you need.
- For important appointments or deadlines, set reminder alarms hours or days ahead of time.

Use a day planner.

- A day planner can help you manage time and remember responsibilities.
- Learning to use a planner is just like learning to use any tool. Practice makes perfect.

Use lists.

- Lists and notes can help you keep track of regular tasks, projects, deadlines and appointments.
- If you decide to use a daily planner, keep all lists and notes inside of it. Use color codes for tasks so you know which ones are the most important.

Learn to say no and set boundaries.

- Do not take on too many projects or social plans.
- Overbooking yourself can be overwhelming and can lead to missed commitments.

Repeat out loud instructions you have been given.

- This will help you remember, as well as let others correct you if needed.

Organization

Create space.

- Ask yourself what you need on a daily basis. Then, find storage bins or closets for things you don't need every day.
- Have specific areas for things like keys, bills and other items that are easy to misplace.
- Throw away or donate things you don't need.

Deal with it now.

- You can avoid forgetfulness and clutter by doing things right away, not some time in the future.
- This includes filing papers, cleaning up messes, opening and responding to mail and returning phone calls.

Set up a filing system.

- Use dividers or separate file folders for different types of documents, such as medical records, receipts and pay stubs.
- Label and color-code your files so that you can quickly find what you need.

Break larger tasks into small, manageable pieces.

- Write down the steps needed to finish the task. Follow each step in order until the task is done.
- If needed, take small, timed breaks and return to finish the task.

Organize your work space.

- Use lists or planners to organize your day.
- Remove clutter from your desk.
- Label any storage bins.
- Reduce distraction as much as possible. Ideas include sitting facing the wall, closing your door or using a white noise machine.

Sitting still

Move around as needed.

- Don't fight the urge to move around. If you need to fidget or stand up for a period of time to help you pay attention, then do so. But take care that you're not interrupting others.
- You may also find it helpful to squeeze a stress ball.

Be active in a useful way.

- Exercise can burn off extra energy, relieve stress, boost your mood and calm your mind.
- Meditation, yoga or tai chi can help you better control your attention and impulses.

Stay healthy.

- Get enough sleep.
- Avoid caffeine late in the day.
- Exercise.
- Create a relaxing bedtime routine.
- Stick to a schedule or daily routine.
- Eat small meals throughout the day.
- Avoid sugar, eat fewer carbohydrates and eat more protein.

Close relationships

Talk to your loved ones about ADHD.

- There are many resources to help your loved one understand ADHD. See the Resources section on the next page.

Divide daily tasks based on each person's strengths.

- For example, if you have trouble with organization, you may not want to do financial planning tasks.

If you have trouble with focus, develop a sign that others in your life can use as a gentle reminder to pay attention.

- The sign should be small but meaningful to you and the other person.

Improve communication.

- Use a dry erase board in a common area to help the whole family stay in touch better.
- Keep regular to-do lists and compare scheduled activities every day.
- Writing notes to each other is also very helpful.

Be an active listener.

- Try not to interrupt.
- If you find your mind wandering when others are talking, mentally repeat their words so you can follow the conversation.
- Ask questions and ask people to repeat what they said if needed.
- Pay close attention to body language.

Organize your thoughts.

- If you need to have a serious conversation, write a list of the points you would like to make or the important ideas you want to talk about. This can help you stay focused and remember what you need to say.

Think before speaking.

- It can be hard to control your impulses when you feel strongly about something.
- Before saying whatever pops into your head, stop to ask yourself “Will this be helpful?” or “Will this help me get what I want?”

Take charge of your life.

- Work to accept that some things are harder for you.
- Make a plan to address these troubles and seek the support you need.

Resources

Online

- ADD Warehouse. <http://www.addwarehouse.com>
- ADHD and You. “Tips for Adults with ADHD.” <http://www.adhdandyou.com/adhd-patient/adhd-tips-young-adult/>
- Attention Deficit Disorder Association. <http://www.add.org>
- Attention Deficit Disorder Resources. <http://www.addresources.org>
- Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD). <http://www.chadd.org/>
- Judith Kolberg. “33 Ways to Get Organized with Adult ADHD.” <http://www.additudemag.com/adhd/article/729.html>
- National Resource Center on ADHD. <http://www.help4adhd.org/>
- Brunilda Nazario. “Daily Living Tips for Adult ADHD.” http://www.medicinenet.com/living_tips_adult_adhd_pictures_slideshow/article.htm
- Robert Segal and Melinda Smith. “Help for Adult ADD / ADHD.” http://www.helpguide.org/mental/adhd_add_adult_strategies.htm
- You can also find many apps for your phone that can help you with common ADHD struggles.

Books

- Russell A. Barkley. *ADHD in Adults*. (2008).
- Russell A. Barkley. *Taking Charge of Adult ADHD*. (2010).
- Edward Hallowell and John Ratey. *Delivered from Distraction*. (2006).
- Edward Hallowell and John Ratey. *Driven to Distraction*. (2011).
- Kathleen Nadeau. *ADD in the Workplace*. (1997).
- Kathleen Nadeau. *ADD-Friendly Ways to Organize Your Life*. (2002).
- Melissa C. Orlov. *The ADHD Effect on Marriage: Understand and Rebuild Your Relationship in Six Steps*. (2010).

Support groups

- **ADHD Adult Support Group**
Dunwoody Institute
818 Dunwoody Blvd., Minneapolis
7:00 to 8:30 p.m., last Thursday of each month (except December).
Contact/RSVP: chaddtc@chadd.net
- **ADHD Adult Support Group**
LDA Minnesota
6100 Golden Valley Road, Golden Valley
Thursday 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. or 7:00 to 9:30 p.m.
Contact/RSVP: Steven Peer. 952-582-6000 or KL@ldaminnesota.org
- **ADHD Adult Support Group for Spouses/Partners of adults with ADHD**
LDA Minnesota
6100 Golden Valley Road, Golden Valley
Tuesday 12:00 to 2:00 p.m.
Contact/RSVP: Steven Peer. 952-582-6000 or KL@ldaminnesota.org



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