The Adult ADHD Toolkit: Coping Inside and Out

Pennsylvania Psychological Association
Annual Convention
Harrisburg, PA

June 20, 2014

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At the end of the session, attendees will be able to:

• 1. prepare more specific therapy goals with their adult patients with ADHD.
• 2. recognize intervention strategies used to address procrastination, disorganization, and time management problems commonly reported by adults with ADHD.
• 3. identify at least one common distorted thoughts reported by adults with ADHD and how it may undermine coping efforts in these patients.
• 4. summarize how implementation strategies help adults with ADHD to improve follow through on the use of coping skills.
• 5. describe how to apply at least one coping skill presented during this workshop with a patient in your practice.
Schedule

• Introduction, models, empirical support

• Strategies + TACTICS

• Daily Planner, To Do Lists, Priorities, Time Mgt.

• Getting Started, Procrastination, Keeping Going

• Motivation

• Generalization to other skills, domains of life
EXECUTIVE FUNCTION / MOTIVATION DEFICIT MODEL OF ADHD
What are executive functions (EFs)?

• “(T)hose self-directed actions of the individual that are being used to self-regulate”

• EF is self-regulation across time to choose, enact, and sustain actions toward a goal usually in the context of others and often relying on social and cultural means for the maximization of one’s long-term welfare as the person defines that to be.
What are executive functions? (2)

• 3 factor model of adult ADHD =
  – (1) EF
  – (2) inattention-hyperactivity
  – (3) impulsivity)

...with EF being most consistent and discriminating factor.

What are executive functions? (3)

- EF usually emerges as a single factor ("how efficiently do you do what you set out to do"), but there are five semi-distinct domains that emerge in ratings of daily functioning:
  - Self-management to time
  - Self-organization and problem solving
  - Self-restraint (inhibition)
  - Self-motivation
  - Emotional regulation

Barkley (1997) – Executive functions and ADHD

- **Executive function** = “those self-directed actions of the individual that are being used to self-regulate” in order to change a future outcome (Barkley, 1997, p. 56)

  - Behavioral inhibition (**stop responding to environment**)
    - Inhibit the prepotent or dominant response (immediate gratification)
    - Interrupt ongoing behavior (perseveration, insensitivity to errors)
    - Interference control (distractions)
Barkley (1997) – Executive functions and ADHD

- Nonverbal working memory (*sense to self*, 0 – 3 years)

- Verbal working memory (*talk to self*, 3 – 5 years)
  - Vygotsky – privatization of language
    - 0 - 3 years = overt, public talking, “blabber”
    - 3 - 5 years = semi-overt, descriptive, speech back to self
    - 5 - 7 years = covert, thinking to self without action
    - 8 - 12 years = fully privatized, instructive, self-talk,
      **schema start to influence behavior at around 8 years old**

- Emotional regulation (*feel / motivate to self*, 5 -7 years)

- Reconstitution (*play to self*, 10 – 12 years)
ADHD as a Reward Deficiency Syndrome (RDS)
Dopamine: Motivational Deficit

- Dopamine binding lower for ADHD adults when compared with controls


- Correlation of Dopamine receptors and DAT and achievement scale of MPQ (trait motivation)
- MPQ lower among ADHD adults vs controls
- MPQ correlate with Dopamine among ADHD; MPQ inversely correlated with ADHD measures

Clinical Implications of RDS

• Motivational deficits commonly encountered
  – Trouble activating, getting started
  – Easy boredom / trouble sustaining attention
  – Sense of “being lazy” or insufficiently disciplined

• ADHD individuals do best with salient (interesting) tasks and frequent rewards

• Higher risk of developing addictive behaviors
  – Intense novelty seeking
  – Chemical dependency
  – Non-chemical addictions (eg, internet use, gaming, gambling)
CBT for Adult ADHD

Conceptualize patterns
  – **WHY** don’t I change?
    (Educate)

Consider alternatives / gain skills
  – **HOW** can I change?
    (Execute)

Gain novel experiences / face challenges
  – **WHEN** do I change?
    (Experience-Endurance)
Clinical Outcome Studies:
Psychosocial Treatments for Adult ADHD
Psychosocial Treatment Studies

• “The data on psychosocial interventions in the treatment of adults with ADHD are ENTIRELY anecdotal.” (AACAP, 1997, ADHD tx guidelines)

• “Psychosocial treatments, particularly CBT for adults with ADHD is an efficacious treatment when combined with medications.” (Ramsay, 2014)
Psychosocial Treatment: Peer-reviewed studies (N = 20)

- Wiggins et al. (1999)
- Wilens et al. (1999)
- Hesslinger et al. (2002)
- Philipsen et al. (2007)
- Stevenson et al. (2002*, 2003*)
- Safren et al. (2005*, 2010*)
- Weiss et al. (2006, 2012*)
- Solanto et al. (2008, 2010*)
- Virta et al. (2008, 2010*)
- Salakari et al. (2010)
- Bramham et al. (2009)
- Emilsson et al. (2011*)
- Hirvikoski et al. (2011*)

*year* = RCT
Coping Domains for Adult ADHD

- To Do List
- Daily Planner/Planning
- Prioritize/Choreograph
- Break down tasks
- Get started (Procrast.)
- Keep going
- “Manufacture” motivation
- Thoughts, emotions, escape behaviors
- Outsource coping
- Data management
- Materials mgt.
- Environmental Eng.
- Prob mgt./Dec. making
- College, Work
- Relationships
- Health, well-being
- Technology

Summary of CBT for Adult ADHD: Levels of Intervention

- Cognitive modification
- Behavioral modification and coping skills
- Implementation strategies
- Acceptance, mindfulness, persistence

How does CBT conceptualize ADHD?
“I know what I need to do. I just do not do it.”

CBT for Adult ADHD in Action: The Adult ADHD Tool Kit

“How will we know when this is working?”

TREATMENT GOALS
Treatment Goals

• “Start small”

• Be specific, behavioral

• The specific, behavioral goals may be a foundation for other relevant issues (e.g., questions about career path)
“What are the treatment goals?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Broad</th>
<th>Specific (behavioral markers)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I want to be organized.”</td>
<td>“I’d like to go through my mail each day and have a plan for dealing with bills.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I don’t want to procrastinate anymore.”</td>
<td>“I’d like to be able to hand in my expense reports on time rather than putting them off and being late.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I want to be on time for meetings.”</td>
<td>“I’d like to use a planner to keep track of my appointments AND I want to use reminders and coping skills to arrive on time.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I’d like to be more decisive…well, maybe…I’m not sure.”</td>
<td>“I’d like to have a system for reviewing my options AND committing to an action.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“What do you have to do?”

TO DO LIST
To Do List

• “How do you spend yourself?”

• Spend time, effort, and energy

• Externalize time and tasks

• “I shouldn’t have to do this”

• Personalize
Planning Time To Plan

1. Devote 10 minutes (600 seconds) to planning.

2. Find a place free from distractions.

3. Spend an honest 10 minutes (600 seconds) planning out your day.

4. Write down your plans in your Daily Planner.

5. Define To Do tasks using specific, behavioral terms for what you will “do.”
Comprehensive To Do List

1. Get a notebook or open a computer file that will be devoted to your Comprehensive To Do List.

2. Find a place free from distractions.

3. Write down all of your obligations, plans, errands, commitments, recreational ideas, etc. for the upcoming 1 to 6 weeks (or whatever time frame suits your needs) – this is your “dump list.”
4. Store your notebook or computer file in a place where you can retrieve it and refer to it later.

5. The Comprehensive To Do List provides you with reminders of tasks and obligations without relying on your memory. Refer to it periodically for helpful reminders of things that you can do, but this is not your Daily To Do List.
Daily To Do List

1. Find an index card, back of an envelope, or other disposable piece of paper.

2. Devote 10 minutes (600 seconds) to defining your To Do List for the day.

3. Your Daily To Do List is made up of tasks you want to do that are not part of your typical schedule but that require a special investment of time and effort to complete.

4. Limit your list to no more than 2 to 5 items. When in doubt, err on the side of fewer items rather than more – you can add more after you complete these, if you like.
Daily To Do List (2)

5. Define tasks in specific, behavioral terms or actions that you can “do.”

6. Set a realistic time frame to spend on each task.

7. Use your Daily Planner to find times in your day when you will make an “appointment” with yourself to perform each task.

8. Do each task at the scheduled time – get it off the list.
Enter Room with a Plan

1. Specify your reason for entering a room (or office, or sitting at a desk, etc.). What is your intention and why is it this intention of value to you?

2. Define the behavioral steps or the actions you will take in the room in order to start the task and act consistently with your intentions.

3. How might you get “off task”? What could interrupt your intentions? Predict a likely barrier or distraction you will encounter while working on the task.
Enter Room with a Plan (2)

4. How will you handle the interruption? Devise your strategy for dealing with this barrier/distraction using an “IF-THEN” plan. (“IF I encounter X, THEN I will handle it by doing Y”).

5. Proceed and “enter the room with a plan” to perform your intended action by following your step-by-step plan.
Additional observations

• “I’ve been busy all day but have not gotten anything done.”

• “I don’t like limits. I’ll just wing it.”

• Pseudo-efficiency

• “Ready, fire, aim” or “Getting ready to get ready”
Additional observations (2)

• “It is too overwhelming to look at everything I have to do.”

• Perfectionism
“How do you ‘spend yourself?’”

DAILY PLANNER
Daily Planner

• Externalize time and effort

• Track throughout day and across days

• “See” the future, placeholders

• “Do the experiment” (informed decision)
Daily Planner

1. Decide on paper vs. electronic planning system – if in doubt, start with paper planner.

2. Find a planner size and format that fits the scheduling demands of your life.

3. Plan to “over” use your Daily Planner. It is a place for scheduled appointments, work and school commitments, as well as personal, recreational, and self-care tasks.

4. Err on the side of “under” scheduling, leaving enough buffer time between tasks and meetings.
5. Keep your “task appointments” as specific and behavioral as possible.

6. Define start times and end times for tasks and activities, whenever possible – “lower the bar.”

7. Your Daily Planner a “tool of daily life,” along with your keys, wallet, purse, cell phone, etc.
Additional observations

• “Leave room for cream”

• “60 mph syndrome”

• “If you were a $20 bill....?”

• Schedule “down time”
“Define, prioritize, and choreograph what you do.”

TIME AND TASK MANAGEMENT
Time and Task Management

- Energy management / “recharge battery”
- Down time
- Tour de France
- “Choreography”
Review Planner

1. Review your Daily Planner at the start of your day (or night before).

2. Glance at, review, and “refresh” your Daily Planner throughout the day to give yourself reminders of upcoming tasks and plans.

3. If your situation involves frequent changes to your plans, have some set times that you can make the adjustments to your Daily Planner.

4. Record any new, future commitments in your Daily Planner as they arise.
Review Planner (2)

5. Use Daily Planner to keep track of what you have completed in addition to checking off tasks from your Daily To Do List.

6. Repeat.
Using Your Planner

1. Get your Daily Planner and take it to a reduced distraction setting.

2. Devote at least 10 minutes (600 seconds) to planning your day.

3. Review any obligations you have already recorded in your Planner.

4. Record any known commitments or obligations for that day, including meetings at work, classes, picking up and dropping off from school, etc.

5. Reserve times for self-care tasks, such as sleep, meals, exercise.
Using Your Planner (2)

6. Leave adequate buffer time between tasks for breaks, commuting, etc.

7. Make appointments for tasks from your Daily To Do List.

8. Make sure that tasks in #7 are defined in reasonable, behavioral terms.

9. Schedule “down time” and other recreational or social activities
10. Make sure the order of tasks throughout your day makes sense and is realistic.

11. Trust the plan – focus on engaging in your first task and take it one-step-at-a time.

12. Refer to your Daily Planner frequently throughout the day.
Make Tasks Behavioral

1. Look at the tasks on your Daily To Do List.

2. See if any tasks are worded in ways that seem overwhelming or are too broad. (e.g., “write paper” or “clean house”)

3. Reword the task in terms of a smaller, more specific step that seems reasonable and doable (e.g., “re-read last paragraph of paper” or “unload bowls from dishwasher”).

4. Keep doing #3 until you have defined a task as an action that you are confident that you will carry out.

5. Use this re-defined task on your Daily To Do List to get started.
Additional observations

• Apollo 13 example / sequencing

• Visible time piece!!

• Customization (without rationalization)
Putting the plan in motion OR “Once I get started...”

GETTING STARTED
Getting Started

• Procrastination (central issue) – “How do you NOT do things?”

• Navigate chasm from “not doing” to “doing”

• Getting “engaged”
Break Down Tasks

1. Identify a task you want to complete.

2. Is there a deadline for completing the task or some other time limit?

3. Break down the task into its component steps. Develop a “behavioral recipe” or a set of instructions that would allow someone else to perform this task in the time allotted.

4. What are the different steps you need to take from the starting point in order to reach the end point at which the task is complete? You can also work backwards from the end point to the starting point.

5. Make the steps specific and behavioral.
Break Down Tasks (2)

6. Use your Daily Planner to budget out the steps across the time leading up to the deadline. Make appointments to perform the different steps.

7. Define the smallest, first task you can perform to get you engaged in the task or at least “touching it” today.

8. If you are still procrastinating, break down this first step into even more specific steps until you find a first step you can do.

9. Perform this “smallest step of behavioral engagement.” You are no longer procrastinating.
Implementation Plan

1. Define the smallest, first behavioral step to get started

2. Specify how long you can spend on this task. Err on the side of less, rather than more time.

3. Make an appointment with yourself for this task. Have a start time and an end time consistent with #2.

4. Devise a plan for getting started using the “If X happens, then I will do Y” framework
5. Predict the most likely distractions or barriers that will get you off task.

6. Devise a plan for handling risks for procrastination using the “If X happens, then I will do Y” framework.
10-minute Rule

• Define the “smallest step of behavioral engagement” that will get you on-task.

• Define the briefest amount of time you think you will be able to endure this first step of the task – even if it ends up meeting your expectations for a “worst case scenario.” We recommend at least 10 minutes – an honest 600 seconds.

• The clock starts when you are in position to perform the smallest first step.

• Devote 10 minutes (600 seconds) of a good-faith effort to the task and then reassess.
Procrastination

1. Identify the specific task on which you are procrastinating.

2. Pinpoint your thoughts about doing the task. In what ways do you *MAGNIFY* the negative aspects of a task?

3. Label your feelings about the task, including sense of boredom or simply a gut feeling of “Ugh (I don’t want to do this).”

4. Now, think about and highlight why this task is of value to you and how it will feel to get it done.

5. Pinpoint the positive aspects about your ability to face the task that you may *MINIMIZE.*
Procrastination (2)

6. Think about the positive feeling you will have when you complete the task.

7. Break down the task into a small, first step you can take to get started despite how you feel.

8. Invest a few moments of discomfort and uncertainty as you take the step in #6.

9. You are no longer procrastinating.
Managing motivation, emotions, and energy.

KEEPING THE PLAN GOING WHEN THE GOING GETS ROUGH (PART 1)
Keeping the Plan Going (Part 1)

• Reframing “motivation”

• Behavioral change

• Emotional (+ energy) management
Manufacture (Enough) Motivation

1. Define a task in specific, behavioral terms to make it doable.

2. Define the smallest, first step of behavioral engagement.

3. Identify negative emotional reactions to the task that create barriers to getting started.

4. Identify the ways in which you are magnifying your negative expectations and minimizing your ability to handle the task, tolerate discomfort, and achieve positive outcomes.
Manufacture (Enough) Motivation (2)

5. Notice, label, and accept your emotions about the task. You can feel these feelings AND get started on the task.

6. Remember the simple behavioral steps that you can do to get started and that you do not have to be “in the mood” for the task.

7. Once you take that step, you are no longer procrastinating and will feel much better.
Old Behavior Script

1. What is the new behavior plan you are trying to implement?

2. When during your day is a good time to implement it?

3. As it is now, what typically happens instead of implementing the new plan? What is your “old behavioral script” that keeps you stuck?

4. List out the steps that define the “old behavioral script” to see what interferes with your new plan.

5. What do you get out of this “old behavioral script”? What about it is enjoyable or rewarding, even if it keeps you stuck?
1. Using your “old behavioral script,” develop an alternative script that will promote the implementation of your new behavior plan.

2. For each step of your “old behavioral script,” develop an alternative and realistic step that will be incompatible with the old patterns.

3. Develop a “new behavioral script” made up of the action steps consistent with following through on your new plan.
New Behavior Script (2)

4. Identify some rewards you can set up for following the new plan.

5. Use other Take Away suggestions for handling implementation issues, such as breaking down a plan into steps and defining small first steps.

Managing Energy

1. What are some important ways you can “recharge your battery” and maintain your energy throughout the day? How does the order of tasks or their “choreography” affect your energy?

2. Do you need breaks? What is a reasonable length of break? What can you do during a break? What should you not do during a break?

3. When do you eat? Do you need some sort of snack between meals? What are good food choices for you? What foods should you avoid?

4. Does physical activity and movement help you? What are your options for exercise, including brief walks, standing up from your desk, etc.?
5. How well rested are you? Do you get enough sleep at night? Is it helpful to use relaxation strategies during the day?

6. Do you have some “down time” during your day? What are some recreational activities you value? Do you have any activities you do that actually make you feel worse?
Rewards

1. What are some rewards you can give yourself for following through on your plans? What are immediate rewards you can earn for a task plan completed today? What are some longer term, bigger incentives you can use for larger tasks?

2. What are some enjoyable things that you can link with your task plans in order to increase your follow through? Is it helpful to listen to music while you exercise or do chores? Do you enjoy having tea or coffee while doing paperwork?
3. What are some of the positive experiences you notice when you follow through on your plans and get things done?

4. Conversely, what are some escape activities that might “reward” procrastination? Is there a way to transform these activities into positive rewards for task completion?
Managing Discomfort

1. Identify your emotional reactions that contribute to avoiding an immediate task.

2. Recognize your feelings, including boredom, mild anticipatory stress, or “Ugh” (“I don’t want to do this right now.”).

3. Rate your “discomfort” along a continuum. How strong is it, really? Rate it on a “0” (relaxed) to “100” (worst pain I’ve ever felt) scale.

4. Notice your emotion and how it feels – without trying to make it go away. Is it tolerable even if it is somewhat uncomfortable?
Managing Discomfort (2)

5. Focus on breathing through your feelings with a slow, steady pace.

6. Recognize that your feelings need not dictate your behaviors.

7. Consider that you can follow through with your plans AND feel a degree of discomfort.

8. Engage in and focus on the smallest behavioral step for your task.

9. Observe what happens to your feelings once you get started on the task.

10. Practice these skills when facing other situations and tasks throughout your day.
Managing attitudes, beliefs, and self-esteem.

KEEPING THE PLAN GOING WHEN THE GOING GETS ROUGH (PART 2)
Keeping the Plan Going (Part 2)

- Cognitions
- Beliefs
- Experience of engagement
Catching A.T.’s

1. Use changes in your feelings, including discomfort about a task, or the fact you are avoiding a task as signs that you are having negative automatic thoughts.

2. Think back and figure out what situation, task, or event triggered this reaction.

3. What was your thought about or interpretation? (“What thought went through my mind about it? What does this mean to me?”)

4. How does this thought influence your feelings and your behavior?

5. Are you engaging in any thinking errors? How might you look at things differently? (refer to list of Thinking Errors)
Changing A.T.’s

1. Recognize your automatic thoughts about a task that affect your follow through.

2. Reconsider these negative thoughts as though they were arguments made against you or the task by a “Prosecuting Attorney” who is presenting a case against you to a Judge and jury.

3. Now, consider how your “Defense Attorney” would object to any thinking errors, incomplete information, and exaggerations in the Prosecutor’s argument and make a case on your behalf focused on a balanced, realistic view of the situation.
4. Weigh the evidence and consider ways that you can take action using an adaptive view.

5. Use previous Take Away suggestions for getting engaged on a task.
Developing New Thoughts

1. What am I thinking about this situation? Am I using any thinking errors?

2. What is another way to think about this situation? What would my “Defense Attorney” say?

3. What is the worst possible outcome? What is the best possible outcome? What is the most likely outcome in this situation?

4. What are some specific steps I can take to influence this situation? Can I handle the situation?
Developing New Thoughts (2)

5. If a friend of mine (particularly someone with ADHD) was in this situation and had these reactions, how would I advise him or her?

6. In the grand scheme of things, is this situation as bad as I’m making it out to be? How will I look at this situation in an hour? A day? A month? A year from now?

7. What can I do to handle this situation, such that I can look back on it with a sense of satisfaction? What is a small step I can take to make this happen?
Recommit to Plan

1. What is the plan with which you are struggling?

2. What about this plan has been difficult for you? What has interfered with follow through?

3. Is this plan still worth the time and effort it requires? Have circumstances changed?

4. Make an informed decision about your commitment to the plan by weighing its risks and benefits. If it is no longer a priority, you can let it go.
Recommit to Plan (2)

5. If you still want to pursue this plan, why is it still important to you? What is its value to you?

6. How will it benefit you in the long run?

7. How would you feel if you abandoned this plan? How would it feel to keep working on it? How do you anticipate you will feel when you complete your plan?
8. Are you willing to face and tolerate the discomfort in order to take the next step?

9. What are the next steps you can take to move forward, even a little bit?

10. Are there any additional resources or assistance you need to keep going?
Trouble avoided is a problem solved (but stay away from “Fool’s Gold”)
Outsourcing Coping Skills

• Workarounds

• Set up systems

• Develop habits
Outsourcing

1. Set up automatic payment systems for recurring bills.

2. Set up automatic deposit of your paycheck

3. Use online banking.

4. Set up reminder features for recurring important dates, i.e., birthdays, anniversaries.

5. Sign up for reminder texts or e-mails from pharmacy, medical office, etc.
Outsourcing (2)

6. Consider if there are challenging tasks for which you can hire someone to perform, i.e., tax preparation, lawn care.

7. Consider if you can barter services with someone else.

8. Are there other options for outsourcing or automating tasks?
Recording, organizing, and managing info

DATA MANAGEMENT
Data Management

• Get it before you lose it

• Reinforce basics

• Widen definition of “data” and ways to “manage” in different settings

• Interpersonal
Assertiveness

1. Assertiveness is the ability to state a question, assertion, request, or suggestion.

2. Assertiveness can be communicated in a cordial, professional, collaborative way.

3. Identify the specific question, statement, request, or suggestion you want to express.

4. Do not engage in “mind reading” and do the other person’s thinking for him or her. Focus on what you want to say.
5. Make your statement in as simple and straightforward a manner as possible, what may be restating your view of the facts (e.g., “I think I ordered a vegetarian meal.”).

6. Once you have made your statement, your job is done and you have been assertive. It is now up to the other person to respond.

7. Assertiveness is a coping skill for ADHD that can be used in the following ways:

8. Request follow-up e-mail summaries after work meetings.
9. Request reasonable accommodations at work

10. Suggest and negotiate deadlines for projects

11. Asking for help, such as weekly meetings to monitor progress on a project

12. What are other ways you might use assertiveness as a coping strategy?
Additional observations

• “Get it before you lose it.” (Leonard, “Memento”)

• Record, repeat back, review, re-confirm

• Digital back-up

• Go paperless

• Work/School issues
Organizing and managing “stuff”

MATERIALS MANAGEMENT
Materials Management

• Handling and managing items, possessions

• Keep vs discard

• What bring into home
Managing Stuff

1. Have a specific location where you keep your “tools of daily life.”

2. Reduce clutter by going paperless, as much as is feasible for you.

3. Define storage spaces and tools for keeping essential paperwork and other items.

4. Go through incoming mail each day and only keep those items that are essential (e.g., bills, tax items, etc.). Store essential mail in a shoebox or other container. Schedule a few minutes each week for paying bills and taking action on these items.
5. Remember that managing “stuff” takes a small investment of time and effort each week but will pay off dividends in the long run.

6. Your organizational system need only be “good enough” to do the job.
Getting Started on Organization

• **Task-based** – Target one item to get started (e.g., Unload bowls from dishwasher)

• **Time-based** – Get as much done as you can during a specific time frame (e.g., “I will pick up and put away as many items as I can until my friend arrives.”)

• **Terrain-based** – Target one location to organize (e.g., clean off kitchen table)
Managing your surroundings

ENVIRONMENTAL ENGINEERING
Environmental Engineering

• Stimulus control

• Sensitivities

• Personalization
Work Station

1. Define a place where you can devote to doing work.

2. It is useful to define a work station in your residence as well as an outside one (e.g., library, coffee shop). One can be your primary spot and the other a back-up.

3. Make sure it has the minimal requirements you will need to do your work.

4. Be mindful of your sensitivities (e.g., lighting) or potential distractions.
5. Use stimulus control to minimize distractions in and around your work station.

6. “Going to” your work station is often the “smallest first step” to take action on a task.
Additional observations

- Alternative work station
- Sleep station
Putting skills together to manage life

PROBLEM MANAGEMENT
DECISION MAKING
Problem Management
Decision Making

• Handling real world scenarios

• Integration of multiple skills

• Managing **uncertainty** (and discomfort)
Problem Management

1. Define the problem to be managed in specific, behavioral terms.

2. Brainstorm as many options for handling the problem as you can think of – do not edit yourself.

3. Assess the pros, cons, and feasibility of each of the options.

4. Implement the best option (which may not be the easiest or most comfortable one).

5. Assess the outcome. If the problem persists and if possible, re-enter the template at Step 1.
Decision-Making

1. Define the decision to be made in specific, behavioral terms.

2. Identify the different choices or options for making the decision.

3. Weigh the pros and cons of each of the options in order to define the best option.

4. Consider if more information is needed in order to differentiate options.
5. Select the best option, make and commit to that option. ("Live into a good decision.")

6. Assess the outcome. If needed and if possible, re-enter the template at Step 1.
Additional observations

• Pocket veto

• “Live into a good decision.”

• “If you flipped a coin...”
The underappreciated effects of ADHD

MANAGING COLLEGE
Managing College

• Whether / when to go
• Where to go
• Preparing to go
• Handling it when there
SQ4R Technique for Reading

1. Survey the text, particularly section headings, bold face terms, illustrations, etc.

2. Develop questions about the topic of the text based on your survey of section headings, etc.

3. Actively read each section of the text. Make notes on the page or elsewhere.

4. Actively take notes and record information that helps you to understand the text and to formulate answers to your questions. Write them down in your own words.
5. Recite what you have read by answering the questions for that section and summarizing it in your own words.

6. Review again the headings, etc. and your answers to the questions, your notes, etc.

Writing Papers

1. Read the description of the assignment to make sure that you are clear about it, the specifications for the paper (e.g., pages, format), and the due date.

2. Break down the paper into different tasks, including any research, reading, outlining, drafts, as well as any intervening due dates, i.e., topic approval, submitting a draft, etc.

3. Using the due date for the final paper, work backwards and define times to work on the different tasks required to complete the paper.
4. When it comes time to write the paper, start with time spent thinking about and outlining your ideas, which is considered a step in “writing.” Write down ideas and points you want to make or use index cards to remember and organize your ideas. You may also organize ideas by thinking how you would present them in a Power Point presentation.

5. When actually writing the manuscript, follow your outline. The first draft involves getting ideas down even if they are incomplete or the wording and grammar are not finalized. Do not edit your writing, yet, just get down your ideas.
Writing Papers (3)

7. After getting the ideas down, you can return to the document and start to clarify the expression of your ideas. This is a different task from #5, which helps make each of the tasks distinct and manageable rather than trying to do it all at once.

8. “Lower the bar” and aim to meet the minimum requirements of the paper so that you can submit it by the due date. This is an easier target than trying to write an “A” paper.

9. Trust the plan.
The underappreciated effects of ADHD

MANAGING THE WORKPLACE
Managing the Workplace

• What to do

• How to make what you do work for you

• Using supports and skills

• Impossible to cover all types of jobs
Coping with Work

1. Consider the “goodness-of-fit” between you and the demands of your current job or a prospective new job or career.

2. Where there is a “poor fit,” determine if there are reasonable accommodations that can be made (informally or formally) that will improve your ability to manage the situation.

3. Use the skills of assertiveness and negotiation to handle tasks and deadlines at work. You are allowed to be proactive and to make requests of a supervisor and to suggestions and proposals that will improve your ability to handle your job well.
Coping with Work (2)

4. Get information down before you lose it.

5. Use your Daily Planner and Daily To Do List (and other skills) at work.
The underappreciated effects of ADHD

RELATIONSHIPS, FAMILY, AND ADULT ADHD
Relationships and Family

- Partners
- Co-parents
- Parenting
- Co-workers, friends, incidental interactions
Coping with ADHD-affected Relationships

1. Confirm diagnosis and get individual treatment for partner with ADHD.

2. Schedule regular check-in times with each other. At least 10 minutes, sitting together, face-to-face, without interruption from children, cell phones, television, etc.

3. Use check-in times to coordinate the business of daily life, as well as to arrange positive time and activities with each other.

4. Use empathy and communication skills to manage emotions during conversations and various other interactions.

5. Couples therapy with a clinician familiar with adult ADHD can be helpful.
Additional observations

• Assertiveness, negotiation ("impulsive compliance")

• External coping reminders

• Have a plan for handling predictable situations

• Emotional management skills
Additional observations (2)

• Communication skills/ “3 sentence rule”

• Express appreciation, affection, ask for help

• Define your “role” to determine your actions

• See Ramsay (in press). In A. Robin & G. Pera (Eds.).
CBT-based model for ADHD couples

1. Education & goals
2. Check in times
3. Modify thoughts
4. Communication and rekindle positive feelings
5. Collaborative problem solving
6. Expressing affection and appreciation
7. Completing treatment

TAKE AWAY – Communication

1. Disarming
2. Thought empathy
3. Feeling empathy
4. Inquiry
5. Summarizing

The underappreciated effects of ADHD

HEALTH AND WELL BEING
Health and Well Being

• Under appreciated domain of functioning

• Important for college students, women’s health, chronic conditions, etc.

• Not “treatment” for ADHD but it does improve foundational well being for better coping
Sleep

1. Treat sleep as a priority task.

2. Define the time at which you must awake in the morning.

3. Work backwards using the number of hours of sleep you require in order to calculate the time at which you should go to sleep. This sleep time should be entered in your Daily Planner.

4. Devise a sleep routine that promotes getting into “sleep mode.” This routine might include preparing your clothes and other items for the next day, setting aside electronics 90 minutes before getting into bed, engaging in reading or other relaxing activities, etc.
5. Adhere to standard sleep hygiene principles throughout the day, such as no caffeine after a certain time, limit alcohol use, using your bed only for sleep, avoiding exercise too late in the day, making sure the bedroom is a comfortable temperature, limit daytime naps, etc.

6. Be mindful of thinking errors about sleep. Even if you have a poor night’s sleep, you will have enough energy to function adequately the next day, even if you are not at your best.

7. Do not to watch the clock if you awake during the night.

8. If you have difficulties getting back to sleep, get out of bed for 10 minutes or so to read or sit quietly before going back to bed.
Health & Well Being

1. Adequate sleep is a priority.

2. Define a reasonable amount of activity/exercise as a priority task in your daily schedule.

3. Focus on implementing at one healthy eating habit and reducing one unhealthy eating habit.

4. Use your Daily Planner to plan and monitor your health behaviors.

5. For women, be proactive in seeking help with changes in symptoms due to menstrual cycles, pregnancy, perimenopause, or menopause.
Health & Well Being (2)

6. Practice safe sex, including using birth control devices that also provide protection from sexually transmitted diseases.

7. Practice safe driving. Take your medications as prescribed on a daily basis if you will be driving. Do not drink alcohol at all if you have ADHD and are going to drive. Do not ever text or talk on a cell phone at all while driving.

8. Monitor and take steps (including seeking treatment) to reduce unhealthy behaviors, namely substance use, including nicotine and excessive caffeine use.
Good servant, poor master

DEALING WITH TECHNOLOGY
Dealing with Technology

• ADHD is a risk factor for over use

• Source of distraction, deficit of attention “surplus” (perseveration)

• Must develop a health relationship
1. Specify your reason for using this device. What is your intention and why is it of value to you?

2. Define the behavioral steps or the actions you will take in order to stay “on task” and use the device in a way consistent with your task intentions.

3. How might you get off task? What could interrupt your intentions? Predict the distraction you might encounter using the device that could get you “off task.”
4. How will you handle the distraction? Devise a strategy for dealing with this barrier/distraction using an “IF-THEN” plan. (“IF I encounter X, THEN I will handle it by doing Y”).

5. Proceed and “turn on the device with a plan” and follow your step-by-step plan.
Managing Technology

1. Identify the technology habit that is problematic for you.

2. When is this habit particularly risky for you? First thing after you awake? Late at night? When trying to do work? When bored? Around bedtime?

3. What is your old behavioral script for this habit?

4. What is a new behavioral script that is more adaptive and realistic? What are the steps that will allow you to perform or “do” this script?

5. Why is this new behavioral script beneficial and of value for you?
6. How might you fall into your “old script” when you try to implement your new plan?

7. How will you handle it if you drift into the “old” script? Devise a strategy for dealing with this drift using the “IF X happens, THEN I will do Y” framework.

8. Give your new plan a try.
The long range plan

UNDOING THE EFFECTS OF ADHD
Committing to “Undoing” ADHD

• Long view of coping with ADHD
• Lifestyle change (diabetes model)
• Undoing the effects of ADHD (paying down debt)
• Define realistic expectations and sustainable steps
• “What is the alternative?”
General Coping Reminders

• “It doesn’t have to be fun to be fun.” (Mark Twight quoted in Aron Ralston [2004]) – Valued tasks, even those that are important, will not always be enjoyable. You might have to invest some discomfort to get started but doing so is rewarding and satisfying.

• “Leave room for cream.” – Just as you will leave room in your cup of coffee to add cream and sugar, leave enough buffer room between tasks in your daily schedule to get from place-to-place, take care of other things, etc.
General Coping Reminders (2)

• “Swing votes” – You do not have to be 100% motivated to perform a task, you just need to be motivated enough to get started. Similar to a vote in congress, you do not need a unanimous result, but simply enough votes to pass.

• “Choreography” – Your daily schedule involves not only fitting in everything you have to do but also the sequence in which it is performed. It is useful to pay attention to how you order your endeavors to make sure that your schedule is ordered and balanced in a way that will help you see it through.
General Coping Reminders (3)

• “Allergy/food sensitivity” – It is important to recognize your “weak spots” for procrastination and avoidance, such as technology. In particular, viewing these risks as akin to an allergy or at least to a substance like caffeine can be helpful when making decisions about tasks. For example, a cup of coffee in the morning can help you to get focused on work but that same cup right before going to bed can interfere with sleep; similarly, playing computer games is a good reward for task completion but it can be a source of distraction when trying to get started on a report for work.
“Turnaround time” (from “Into Thin Air” by Jon Krakauer) – Climbing Mount Everest is a very involved process that requires several weeks of getting acclimatized to the high altitude and being accompanied by expert mountain climbers. On the day climbers attempt to summit the mountain, there is a pre-arranged “turnaround time,” which is the time at which climbers must stop and start the descent back to camp regardless of whether they reached the top. For individuals who run late for meetings due to trying to do “one more thing,” it is useful to set a “turnaround time” for when they must drop whatever they are doing and leave.
“Boat owner’s advice” – When discussing the strategy of scheduling extra time for commuting or working on a task to counteract the tendency to underestimate the time something requires, one of our patients told us about a rubric used by boat owners. That is, “However long you think a boat repair or maintenance will require, double the number and add an increment of time.” Thus, if you think a task will take two hours, it will probably require four days; if you think it will take four days, it will probably require eight weeks, etc.
General Coping Reminders (6)

• “If you invented a medication that created this degree of change, you’d be a millionaire.” – You will not change every behavior or be 100% efficient. However, if you can change, say, 20%, then that might represent significant improvements. The more times you can employ your new coping strategies and behavioral scripts, the more familiar it becomes, the easier it is to do, and the more confidence you will have.
General Coping Reminders (7)

• “Recycle cans, not can’ts.” – It is importance to identify and acknowledge your strengths and abilities. Similarly, it is adaptive to remind yourself of your ability to take the steps necessary to engage in tasks in order to gain the positive and felt experience of getting things done. You can draw on these experiences and outlooks the next time you need help getting started on a task.
Conclusions

• ADHD has serious effects on daily life

• There are coping skills to address the manifestations of executive dysfunction

• The require ongoing implementation efforts

• They work (if they are used)
Contact me

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Personal research, psychoeducation, support

RESOURCES
Books

- More Attention, Less Deficit
- Understand Your Brain, Get More Done
- Integrative Treatment for Adult ADHD
  - Ari Tuckman

- Taking Charge of Adult ADHD
- Executive functions: What they are, what they do, how they evolved
  - Russell Barkley
Books (2)

- *The Mindfulness Prescription for Adult ADHD*
  - Lidia Zylowska

- *ADHD Grown Up*
  - Joel Young

- *Adult ADHD*

- *What does everyone else understand, that I don’t?*
  - Michele Novotni
Books (3)

• **ADD Friendly Ways to Organize Your Life**
  – Judith Kolberg & Kathleen Nadeau

• **FAST MINDS**
  – Craig Surman & Tim Bilkey

• **ADHD Coaching: A Comprehensive Guide for Coaches, Therapists and Counselors**
  – Frances Prevatt & Abigail Levrini

• **Succeeding with Adult ADHD**
  – Abigail Levrini & Frances Prevatt
CBT Manuals


• Young & Bramham (2012). *CBT for ADHD in adults & adolescents (2nd ed.).* Wiley
Adult ADHD Programs

- University of Pennsylvania
- Harvard University
- Mount Sinai School of Medicine
- New York University
- Johns Hopkins University
- Florida State University
- Greater Philadelphia Area (Ari Tuckman, Michele Novotni, Jeff Bernstein, Bill Morgan, Jeff Naser, MD, etc.)
Websites

• www.add.org (Attention Deficit Disorder Assn)

• www.chadd.org (Children + Adults with ADHD)

• www.caddra.ca (Canadian ADHD Resource Alliance)

• www.help4ADHD (National Resource Ctr for ADHD)

• www.addiss.co.uk (Nat’l ADHD Info & Support Svs)

• www.ukaan.org (UK Adult ADHD Network)
Apps and Miscellaneous

- f.lux – Adapts screen color to time of day
- Various alarms (time-left)
- Home Routines
- Take Me To My Car
- Found It
- White Noise
- FORGET
- Bento - database
- Time Since
- Touch Goal – habit tracker
- Xpense Tracker
Apps and Miscellaneous (2)

- Epic Win (pts for tasks)
- Task Timer
- iReward Chart (children)
- Evernote
- Life Balance (to do, prioritize)
- Mind Manager (visual map)
- Graphical clock
- Sleeptracker watch
- Others??????