The Adult ADHD Tool Kit: Coping Inside and Out

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Speaker honoraria (Pennsylvania Psychological Association, American Psychological Association, Michael Gold’s Conference, National Institute for Children and Families [Czech Republic], Psychotherapy Networker Conference)

Book royalties (Routledge, American Psychological Association)

Honoraria as reviewer of book proposals (Routledge, American Psychological Association)

Honoraria for chapter contributions to edited books

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Faculty, CME Institute of Physicians Postgraduate Press (Funded in part by Shire grant)

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  – to reduce the number of handout pages, or...
  – because colleagues have asked that they not be reproduced, or....
  – ongoing additions and modifications.
“Where does it hurt?”

FUNCTIONAL IMPAIRMENTS

Life Outcomes: Adult ADHD

- Workplace problems
- Relationship problems
- Lower educational attainment
- Employment problems
- Lower self-esteem
- Lower social functioning
- Lower satisfaction in life domains
- Physical health issues*
- Legal issues
- Lower SES
- Psychiatric comorbidity
- Substance use disorders
- Risk for suicide (ADHD + SUD + psychiatric comorbidity)
- Disengagement


Adult ADHD: Symptoms and Impairments

What are the underlying problems that provide targets for treatment?
Barkley’s Hybrid Model of Executive Functions

- Behavioral Inhibition
  - Non-Verbal Working Memory
    - The capacity to hold events in mind so as to use them to control a response
  - Verbal Working Memory
    - Ability to self-regulate and induce motivation, drive and arousal states in support of goal-directed behavior
  - Self-Regulation of Affect, Motivation & Arousal
    - Capacity to dismantle (analyze) and reassemble (synthesize) behavioral sequences
  - Re-Construction


Executive Function Deficit Model

- The Brain’s Executive Functions
  - Activation
    - Enabling thought to work
  - Focus
    - Controlling attention, shifting focus
  - Effort
    - Engaging resources, sustaining effort
  - Emotions
    - Managing emotions, using emotional information
  - Memory
    - Storing and retrieving information
  - Action
    - Executing and monitoring action


Evaluating Dopamine Reward Pathway in ADHD

Volkow N, et al, JAMA, 2009

The regions of interest for the midbrain are obtained in several planes, and the shadow is projected to the axial image shown in the figure, which explains why the third ventricle is covered by the region. The x coordinate maps the left-right position; the y coordinate, the anterior-posterior position; and the z coordinate, the superior-inferior position.
6/2/2015

A, Regions showed significantly lower dopamine D2/D3 receptor availability in participants with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) than in controls (obtained from [11C]raclopride images). B, Regions showed significantly lower dopamine transporter availability in the participants with ADHD than in controls (obtained from [11C]cocaine images). Significance corresponds to P < 0.001 voxel. The yellow regions identify the areas in the brain for which the measures differed between controls and participants with ADHD. The location of the region that differed was similar for the dopamine D2/D3 receptor and for the dopamine transporter and included the locations of the left ventral striatum (including accumbens and ventral caudate), left midbrain, and left hypothalamus. The z coordinate maps the superior-inferior position.

Evaluating Dopamine Reward Pathway in ADHD

Volkow N, et al., JAMA, 2009

"How is the CBT model adapted to adult ADHD?"

CBT MODEL FOR ADULT ADHD

Psychosocial Treatment: Peer-reviewed studies


• * indicates peer-reviewed study.
Psychosocial Treatment: Peer-reviewed studies (2)


CBT for Adult ADHD

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

Consider alternatives / gain skills
- HOW can I change? (Execute-Experience)

Gain novel experiences / face challenges
- WHEN do I change? (Engagement-Endurance)

PENN CBT-ADHD Model


**PROCRASTINATION**
CBT FOR ADULT ADHD

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**Procrastination:**

*"The quintessential self-regulatory failure"*

“(T)o procrastinate is to voluntarily delay an intended course of action despite expecting to be worse off for the delay.” (p. 66)


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**Facets of Procrastination**

- Low conscientiousness*
- Self-regulatory failure*
- Distractibility*
- Organization*
- Achievement motivation
- Intention-action gap*
- Impulsiveness (more than anxiety)*
- Low self-efficacy (fear of failure)*
- Less perfectionism*
- Prone to boredom*
- Aversive task*
- Reward delay*
- Decreases with age

Forms of ADHD Procrastination

• Repeatedly deferring a priority task. (now/not now)

• Losing track of a priority task due to poor time management, disorganization, forgetfulness, etc. (scattered, panic)

• Lack of recognition of importance of task, consequences, time/effort required, rely on last minute, etc. (underwhelmed, passive)

Summary of CBT for Adult ADHD: Intervention Categories

• Cognitive modification

• Behavioral modification and coping skills

• Acceptance, mindfulness, persistence

• Implementation strategies

Summary of CBT for Adult ADHD (2)

• Strategies + TACTICS (implementation)

• Engagement > disengagement ("action precedes motivation")

• Take Away reminders (behavioral prescriptions)

• Make treatment "STICKY" (portable, actionable)
Cognitive Interventions

- Main cognitive error - procrastination = Magnification/Minimization
  - Magnify – discomfort, inability, futility, time on task
  - Minimize – tolerate, efficacy, value, process-outcome
  - Change the negative-to-positive ratio

- Other cognitive errors - procrastination =
  - Overgeneralization
  - Comparative thinking
  - Emotional reasoning

Cognitive Interventions (2)

- "DEFENSE ATTORNEY" metaphor
  - Procrastination based on one-sided review of evidence ("PROSECUTING ATTORNEY")
  - What argument would your "DEFENSE ATTORNEY" make on your behalf?
  - Challenge the evidence, prolongation to counteract impulsivity
  - Not power of positive thinking, but adaptive thinking
  - Inhibition (stop escape), managing discomfort, behavioral priming
Cognitive Interventions (3)

- Change the negative-to-positive expectation ratio
- Task expectancy, reprocess
- “Swing votes”
- Perspective taking, Scaling
- Increase self-efficacy, engagement (“lower the bar”)
- Enhance personal value of task (salience)

Cognitive Interventions (4)

- Expand image of possible (adaptive) futures, “adjacent possible”
- Focus on actions that will change probabilities of possible outcomes
- Some concerns based on past “make perfect sense”...
- ... but what can be done differently NOW?

Maladaptive Thoughts + Adult ADHD

- Recent findings on the association of distorted thoughts and impairments common to adult ADHD
- Associated w/ MDD, depr sxs, cog avoidance\(^1\)
- Present in cases of ADHD w/o depression\(^2\)
- Associated w/ hi emotions, hi escape-avoid coping\(^3\)

\(^1\)Krouse et al. (2013). Cognitive Therapy & Research, 37, 1220-1232.
\(^2\)Mitchell et al. (2013). Cognitive Therapy & Research, 37, 851-859.
\(^3\)Torrente et al. (2014). Journal of Attention Disorders, 18, 412-424.
Adult ADHD and the Relationship between Self-Reported Frequency of Cognitive Distortions, Anxiety, and Depression

Strohmeier, Rosenfield, DiTomasso, & Ramsay (2013). Poster Session, CHADD

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Chart review N = 44 adults with ADHD (30 met inclusion criteria)

Measures = BADDIS, CAARS, ICD, BDI-II, BAI, BHS

Direct and positive correlation between CAARS-Inattention and Cognitive Distortions (r = .360, p = .033*) / No association of ADHD and mood/anxiety

PERFECTIONISM primary cognitive theme

Strohmeier, Rosenfield, DiTomasso, & Ramsay (2015). Poster session. APSARD.

“What are your rules for the world?”

INTERVENTIONS:
SCHEMA/CORE BELIEFS
Schema/Core beliefs

- Rules for how the world works ("Lens" through which see world)
- Attempts to categorize experience in order to navigate the world
- Beliefs can be adaptive or maladaptive
- One belief may work well in one setting, but not another
- Associated with developmental/learning experiences and EMOTION
- Automatic thought = weed; Core belief = root of the weed

Common Maladaptive Schema In Adult ADHD

**Helplessness**

1. Self-Mistrust
   "I cannot rely on myself."
2. Failure
   "I have not met expectations."
3. Incompetence / Dependence
   "I cannot handle life."
4. Worthless / Inadequacy / Defectiveness / Shame
   "I'm basically a bad/useless person."
5. Unlovability
   "No one will ever want me."

Behavioral responses (self-defeating)

- Avoidance – Not facing things
- Procrastination – Maladaptive delay
- Deflection – Doing other things, instead
- Running out the clock – Disengaged
- Pseudo-efficiency – Busy but not productive
Changing Schema

- Downward Arrow – recognize schema

- Modify existing schema
  - Reconstruction
  - Reinterpretation
  - Camouflage

- Behavioral commitments, exposure to emotions

- Gain new experiences (gather or let go), intentionality

“What are your escape behaviors?”

INTERVENTIONS:
BEHAVIORAL MODIFICATION

Behavioral Interventions

- Break down task into component steps (functional analysis)
  - Identify “old” behavioral script, escape behaviors
  - Develop “new” script for task

- Define specific starting point
  - Smallest point of engagement (“Zeno’s Paradox”)
  - Move from “off task” to “on task”

- Behavior > emotion (Procrastination not necessarily on “fun” tasks)
  - Make the task manual, start time + end time
  - “What do you have to do?” “How would you program a robot?”
Behavioral Interventions (2)

- Time Management involves:
  - Tracking the flow of time
  - Tracking behavior across time
  - Managing effort
  - Managing energy

- Break down tasks
  - Starting point for engagement / re-engagement
  - Prioritize
  - Choreograph
  - Progressive exposure

“What are you feeling? What is it like being in your skin right now?”

**INTERVENTIONS:**
**ACCEPTANCE, MINDFULNESS, PERSISTENCE**

Acceptance, Mindfulness, Persistence

- “Acceptance” of discomfort/emotion to maintain “commitment” to a valued task. (i.e., Do not have to be “in the mood”)

- “Mindful” recognition of ADHD symptoms, emotional discomfort without escape reaction

- State/acknowledge what you are feeling

- Feel discomfort AND persist on task

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Acceptance, Mindfulness, Persistence (2)

- Recognize emotional reaction
- Identifying, labeling the emotion reduces reactivity
  
- Do not use emotional reaction as sole or primary reason to leave a task
- Acknowledge feeling AND persist in moment / on task

Acceptance, Mindfulness, Persistence (3)

- Catch yourself having "strayed" (mentally and/or behaviorally)
- Take a moment to reorient, breath, and acknowledge the situation and feelings
- Make and informed decision of where you want to direct yourself, your energy, and your attention
- You can find a way to do “enough”
Implementation Intention Strategies

“Self-regulation by IMPLEMENTATION INTENTIONS entails delegating action control to pre-specified critical environmental cues. In other words, by planning out in advance when, where, and how a goal is to be transformed into action, implementation intentions disencumber executive functions. As a result, deficits in executive functioning should no longer be apparent in the quality of task performance.” (p. 263, 2008)


Implementation Strategies

- Identify task goal but focus on implementation plan
  - Goal = Do homework
  - Implementation plan = Sit at desk with assignment

- Identify “tipping points” for:
  - Starting a task
  - Handling distractions while working on a task
  - Re-engaging in a task after a break or interruptions

- Implementation plan = “IF X, THEN I WILL DO Y.”

Implementation Strategies (2)

- “Knowing yourself as you do, what will help you get started?”
  - “IF I can sit at my desk, THEN I can do my first math problem.”

- “What could disrupt the plan once you have started?”
  - “IF I think of something else I must do, THEN I will write it down for later.”

- Ideal is task goal + implementation plan
**Additional observations**

- Engagement vs disengagement
- Investing discomfort
- “Touch” the task
- You don’t have to be “in the mood”
- “Once I get started…”
- Expectation of difficulty > positive feeling of doing things
- Generate “enough” motivation

**Make treatment “sticky”**

**Reminders**
- Written behavioral “prescriptions” or “take aways,” reminders
- Coping cognitions
- Reframe time
- Invest 10 seconds discomfort
- Task, time, or location based

**Metaphors**
- “Swing votes”
- Woody Allen, 9-1-1
- “It doesn’t have to be fun to be fun”
- You do not have to be “in the mood”
- Defense Attorney

“I know what I need to do – I just don’t do it. So what is your approach going to do for me that I can’t get anywhere else or from another book?”

**TURNING INTENTIONS INTO ACTIONS**
### 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 mgmt.
- Environmental Eng.
- Prob mgmt./Dec. making
- College, Work
- Relationships
- Health, well-being
- Technology

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**“I know what I need to do. I just don’t do it.”**

**CBT for Adult ADHD in Action:**

**The Adult ADHD Tool Kit**

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**“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”

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.”
Comprehensive To Do List (2)

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 a 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 a 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.

Daily Planner (2)

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 had $24...?”
- 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”
- Google maps: satellite v. street level
- Recommended daily allowance

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.
Using Your Planner (3)

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 top drawer of 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)

• Placeholders

• Get started: Jack Lalanne (“Almost every day…”)
GETTING STARTED

Putting the plan in motion OR “Once I get started...”

Getting Started

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

• Getting “engaged” (“Once I Get Started...”)

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

• Seinfeld – “You know how to take the reservation...”

• Zeno’s paradoxes (leaving a room)

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.

Implementation Plan (2)

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.
Additional observations

- Magnification – Minimization distortion
- Overgeneralization, Comparative thinking
- Tolerating discomfort
- "Swing votes"

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
- Pairing tasks with enjoyable stimuli
- The emotion of “UGH” (or “Taming Your Inner ‘UGH’”)
- “I knew I was procrastinating as I still did it.”
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?
New Behavior Script

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.?
Managing Energy (2)

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?

Rewards (2)

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?
EMOTIONS AND ADHD

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
- Method acting

- Change the negative:positive ratio of expectations
- Does your self-talk have a "tone of voice"?
- Driving a new car off of the lot.

**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.

Changing A.T.’s (2)

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.

Modifying 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?
Modifying 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?
Recommit to Plan (3)

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?

Additional observations

• Defense Attorney metaphor

• Cognitive distortions
  – Pessimistic bias
  – Positive bias

• Core beliefs, sense of self (Downward arrow)

• Ability to experience

• Task = collect experiences

• Self-mistrust

Trouble avoided is a problem solved (but stay away from “Fool’s Gold”)

OUTSOURCING COPING SKILLS
Outsourcing Coping Skills

- Workarounds
- Set up systems
- Develop habits
- Move from cortical to subcortical

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?
Additional observations

• E-mails folders for different roles
• Unique credit card AND e-mail account for automatic payments
• Separate e-mail account for “store offers”
• Visible time piece
• Hiring and bartering
• Announce your plans
• Find useful tools but avoid “Fool’s Gold”

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.

Assertiveness (2)

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

Assertiveness (3)

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
• Delay tactics (impulsive compliance)
• Say “no”

Organizing and managing “stuff”

MATERIALS MANAGEMENT

Materials Management

• Handling and managing items, possessions
• Keep vs discard
• What bring into home (buy book vs. library)
• Central place for “tools of daily life”
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.

Managing Stuff (2)

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)
Additional observations

• Something is better than nothing
• Specific areas of disorganization
• Manage discomfort
• Daily mail

Managing your surroundings

ENVIRONMENTAL ENGINEERING

Environmental Engineering

• Stimulus control
• Sensitivities
• Personalization (without rationalization)
### 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.

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### Work Station (2)

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.

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### Additional observations

- Alternative work station
- Study stations for students
- Sleep station
Additional observations

- Alternative work station
- Study stations for students
- 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.

Decision-Making (2)
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
- Going back
SQ4R for Reading

- Survey text
- Questions text will answer
- Read
- Record answers (also Reflect on answers)
- Recite
- Review

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.

SQ4R Technique for Reading (2)

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.

Writing Papers (2)

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.
Additional observations

- College is a huge test of EF/RDS
- ADHD Coaching for college students
- Use resources, personalize trajectory
- SLEEP and other health issues

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.

Additional observations

• Career counseling

• ADHD Coaching

• Informal accommodations
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

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.
Sleep (2)

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

Mount Rushmore of ADHD rationalizations

- Hyper-focus
- Night person
- Multi-tasking

Dealing with Technology

- ADHD is a risk factor for over use
- Source of distraction, deficit of attention “surplus” (perseveration)
- Must develop a healthy relationship (akin to an “eating disorder”)
Turn on Device with a Plan

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."

Turn on Device with a Plan (2)

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?
Managing Technology (2)

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?”
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