

Abigail's 15 ADHD Tips

1. The Basics: Six Tips in One

1. Make a space for everything so there is a clear place for everything.
2. Use a “shadow buddy” when needed (someone to keep you company and on task.) Their presence “obligates” you to get something done.
3. Make simple task lists.
4. Have standard lists for repeated activities that you may have trouble remembering.
5. Hire or trade out things you just can't do or won't do. (example: hire someone twice a month to do your bills and filing.)
6. Use a calendar of some sort ruthlessly! (Paper, computer or cell phone – check it multiple times a day.)



2. Develop a Team



Develop a support team. Whether you're an adolescent or adult you need a team to back you up. That team includes family, friends, doctors, coaches, co-workers and whoever else you feel you need and who want you to succeed. With a team behind you, you won't wear out any one person by asking for help all the time. Also, you get the perspective of many different talented people.

But remember to give back by offering to help them in your areas of strength so that the relationships are reciprocal. And always say thank you for their support.

3. Distractibility

When I was in first grade my teacher expressed her regret because there wasn't a test for distractibility -- that was a test she was sure I would ace.



At thirty I did ace it. Well, not really, but I was diagnosed with ADHD which explained a lot. Back when I was in first grade they didn't know about ADHD.

Years later, I limit distractibility. How? I create what I think of as clean and clear space within and without. I need to eliminate distractors both in my environment and in my mind. Sound, clutter and random thoughts may make it hard to focus.

Of course, some people need a steady sound to block out distractions; they use a white sound machine or calming music.

Just learn how to create a clean and clear space in your mind and environment and you'll be all set.

4. Need a Plan Stan?

Just as a business needs a strategic plan to move forward and grow, so do you!

To start make a list of everything you want to do whether it be right now, six months from now or five years from now. Just throw all your ideas on paper. No judgments. Walk away from the list. Let it percolate.

Come back and sort the ideas into "Right now," "In the near Future," and "Way Down the Road." You now have three lists. Walk away from the lists. Let them percolate.

Come back and play. Put the ideas for each list in to the order that makes sense to you; it may be importance, time frame or some other measure. Try different ways until you find the mix that seems best to you.

Walk away. Let it percolate.

Come back and make any adjustments you feel necessary. Now you have a plan!



5. Relationship Science



Relationships can be hard when you have ADHD. Your lack of follow through not only affects you but now also your partner. Letting down your partner feels terrible inside when you have not carried out a promise to do or complete something. Your working memory problems may cause you not to remember important conversations or agreements. You didn't choose to let down your partner or not to meet them half way. It is your neurochemistry.

- What to do?
- Don't blame it on the ADHD, and let it go at that.
- Don't get defensive, you can work this out.
- Make sure you and your partner both have a good understanding of ADHD.
- Come up with a plan that focuses on your strengths, not your weaknesses.
- Have a backup plan.
- Make sure both of you keep your sense of humor intact during this process.

6. Better for YOU

Doing things faster or more efficiently isn't always "better." Doing things the way that makes you comfortable is better.

Don't get caught up in the "should" world. "I should do this that way because that is the way everyone else does it." Remember, doing things in a way that is uncomfortable for you increases the likelihood that the task won't get done at all. Finding ways that make sense to you and get the job done is what really matters. How you "should" do it really doesn't matter.



7. K.I.S.S.



If you are trying to make and keep a budget, with one of the many available programs and apps or by designing your own, remember K.I.S.S. – Keep it Simple Sweetheart!

Many programs and books with advice about money will list lots of categories to describe your expenses: medical, dining out, groceries, charity, gifts, cable, electric, mortgage or rent, clothing, health club, etc. K.I.S.S. means using fewer

categories so it is quicker and easier to update your budget. And you can have a quick visual of where your money is going whenever you look at your budget.

Combine categories. How about using personal care for health club, clothes, dry cleaning, haircuts, etc. Gifts and charity could go together, entertainment includes dining out, and tickets you buy for events, and so on. The fewer the groups the easier it will be.

8. What's That Noise?

If you are having trouble getting up in the morning or other times, you need to use an alarm clock. Put the clock across the room so you have to get up to turn it off. This is especially helpful in the morning because you have to get out of bed to turn off the noise.



If you can program which sound you use, choose the most annoying or obnoxious continuous sound you can find. You can use this method to get out of the house by setting the alarm by your door. You don't turn it off until you are ready to exit. Many of my clients use their phone alarms to remind themselves when to take their ADHD medication.

9. Do You Blur?



If you blurt out things, speak out of turn, interrupt because you are impatient or feel your thought can't wait, you are not alone. Many people with ADHD have this problem.

These actions are usually called blurting and they relate to our impulsivity, that is our inability to pause before acting.

In social settings you have many options. You can excuse yourself from the group, get something to eat or move to another group. If you are one on one, you can be mindful: take a deep breath and slowly release it while trying to clear your mind. You can try to think of a question to ask.

Thinking gives you time to tune in and get up to date in the conversation. Once you formulate a question, wait for a pause to raise the question, or if the moment has passed just let go of it. Your spurt of energy will have been released.

10. Get a VA!

Do you often pay late fees on your bills? Even when you have the money to pay on time? Have you got a ticket for not renewing your car registration on time even though you were sent a reminder and can do it online?

If any of these sound familiar, you need help. You can automate some bills and other obligations may not be regular enough or may require some scrutiny before being paid. But for some reason, you can't, don't or won't do it.

That is when a VA can help. A VA is a Virtual Assistant whom you can hire to handle these things so you can stop worrying. VA's work either independently or for a company of virtual assistants and are usually paid an hourly rate. Someone you know who is a solo practitioner might be a good source to recommend a VA. Or you can do a search online.



11. Stay in the Game

When you attend a lecture, presentation or workshop, do you worry about paying attention? Or your behavior? Here are some tips to help you.

- *Sit in the front row.* This will help you make a better connection with the speaker, as well as force you to be more attentive.
- *Take notes.* Taking notes will help you pay attention and keep you on track with what is going on.
- *Think of questions.* Listen with asking a question in mind. This will also help you stay in tune with the speaker. Wait until the speaker asks for questions before you speak, and ask yourself is my question really appropriate? Or I am just looking for a chance to speak? Do not use your time to tell a personal story or an anecdote.
- *Be creative.* You can probably think of more ways to stay in the game.



12. When In Doubt Deflect!



Having ADHD means you might have down times in your past or present. That can be hard when going home to see family and friends, especially during the holidays. What do you say when you are asked how are you doing, do you have a job yet or when are you going to have children?

The answer is deflect, deflect, deflect!

Give a brief non-committal answer and be prepared with a generalized question to ask the inquisitor to deflect their interrogation. “Great and what are your children doing?” Be prepared with a follow-up question if they don’t bite on the first question. Ask questions that begin with “what” or “how” because they usually can’t be answered by one word responses.

13. Packing List And Check Off System

Packing is often difficult for people with ADHD. It is hard to get started and hard not to take everything. On the computer, have a standard packing list of the essentials you need on any trip. Things like toothbrush and toothpaste, charger for cell phone, medications, spare glasses or contacts. Then each trip, copy the packing list to a new document add or delete what is necessary for the particular trip and print the new list. Don’t save this list just delete but save your original packing list on your computer.



Then as you pack check off to the right of the item – medication✓. When repacking to come home from your trip, check the item off on the left - ✓medication. This way you know you’re taking everything home that you brought with you. Each item should have two checks.

14. Some Things Need To Be Secret At Work



Some people still don’t “believe in” ADHD. They perceive it as an excuse for lack of willpower or laziness. This is in spite of the scientific evidence related to increased knowledge of our brains.

If you need accommodations on your job, try simply asking for them. Explain it would increase your productivity. “You know boss, all this noise is really distracting. If I could use the conference room when it is empty, I know I would get a lot more work done. What do you think?”

Evidence has shown that it is better not to disclose your ADHD to your employer or co-workers. If something ever goes wrong, it could begin to confirm a belief that you can only handle “so much.” It could also get in the way of your promotions or lateral moves.

Keep your ADHD life separate from your professional life. Remember, they can’t fire you for having ADHD, but it is very hard to prove discrimination in this area.

15. Coaching Isn't Just for Athletes!

Get a coach!

An ADHD coach can help you set goals, develop routines and plan strategies so that you can stay on top of things.



An ADHD coach can help you tackle the key issues of Executive Functioning Skills such as working memory, organizing, planning, emotional regulation, focus, initiating tasks, time management, shift/flexibility, prioritizing, goal setting and meta- cognition

I know from personal experience that coaching can help you live a better life. Coaching can help you define new goals and work to achieve those goals. Be sure the coach has training in life coaching and ADHD coaching.

Abigail Wurf, a professional certified coach, holds a master's degree from Temple University and is author of Forget Perfect: How to Succeed in Your Professional and Personal Life Even If You Have ADHD. She is a productivity and performance enhancement coach for entrepreneurs and executives in addition to working with people affected by ADHD. To contact Abigail, email her at abigail@abigailwurf.com or call her at 202-674-1025.