

6 Top Tips to manage ADHD

For many, a diagnosis of ADHD is not made until adulthood and for a countless amount of people, they have been suffering with symptoms since childhood. Adults with ADHD can have some major symptoms that interfere significantly with daily functioning. Often, the main features of ADHD in adults includes, but is not limited to, impulsiveness, restlessness or excessively active, mood swings and difficulties with paying attention and multitasking.

The severity of these symptoms is different for everyone. Some individuals may be able to continue daily activities and excel at work, but with some difficulties, whereas others can be severely impaired. Regardless of where you may think you are on the spectrum of severity, it is important to investigate this and seek further help so a diagnosis can be made, if there is one to be made, and medication can be prescribed.

If you struggle with symptoms of ADHD, or you have just been diagnosed with ADHD, here are some 6 top tips on how to manage.

***Disclaimer:** I realise that this document may be a little wordy and difficult to retain or concentrate for some, but I have tried to summarise a lot of information into a few pages. The most important points are left in bold so just scan those if it is easier! *

1. Be organised!

A big part of the whole battle is the inability to be organised and stay organised, so most obviously the first tip is just to be organised. By making your day structured you will feel in more control and will begin to feel like you are actually completing tasks (and who does not love the feeling of ticking things off a list). There are some good ways to get organised and this is by using some simple stationary tools. Make lists for everything, from what you will be doing that day to what you will be buying at Tesco. I find that list making can be stressful, but it gets easier and becomes more routine with practice. For some, lists just do not work because you forget the paper and the task is rendered useless so if this is you, use notes on your phone and every time you remember you need to do something just type it into your notes. When you have completed your tasks, just delete the document and rest assured it will feel just as good as the feeling of scrunching paper. A quick piece of advice about lists is try not to include on your list tasks which are very quick and could be completed there and then, for example shredding letters. Try to focus and deal with what you can in the moment (added bonus is that your list will be shorter).

2. Keep on top of it!

This links to the point earlier about doing things in the moment. Avoid letting things get on top of you and deal with daily events on a daily basis. Most people receive important post every day and receive important emails everyday so deal with it every day. Set some time aside every day to open all the letters, look at emails or make that important phone call and then it will no longer be something you forget to do and by the end of it, it becomes a huge task to tackle. It also means you are less likely to get yourself into difficult situations such as having to pay double for a parking ticket because you did not respond in time. If you think that a lot of your post is not important, for example bank statements you do not need to look at because you use online banking or subscriptions from charities you have made one-off donations too, speak to the sender and tell them you would no longer like to receive the post.

3. Know your priorities!

If you suffer with impulsiveness and you often prioritise an exciting plan of going out with your friends than doing something which is extremely important then you need to work on this. Avoiding small things will eventually make them turn into big things which then can be extremely overwhelming. Knowing what your priorities are can be aided with lists and calendar use. If you want to make time to see your friends on Saturday evening, put it in the diary and plan around this. Look about what is on your list and set a deadline for these things and ultimately, the things you think need to be done sooner are your priorities. If it has become overwhelming for you, break things down and seek advice from a close friend or family and see if they can help you tackle what needs to be done. Unfortunately, with all people, there comes a time when we realise our priorities come first and we just have to say no! If you really would like to go out with your friends but there are a lot of imminent things that need to be completed, prioritise that and remember that there is always next time.

In short, do you not let your impulsivity get the best of you- this also relates to spending. One thing we can all agree on is that having a sufficient amount of money to live on and making sure your bills are paid are at the top of everyone's priority list. If you struggle month to month and are going into debt because of impulsive spending, stop it! Make a monthly budget and this can be helped by tallying up your costs from all your previous months and averaging what it is you spend on necessities. If you do a food shop every 3 days, this can be quite costly, instead do a big shop that will last all week and make meal plans. Keep a sufficient amount of money aside for leisure but decide this amount based on previous spends and do not include amounts for impulsive items. If you do not allow yourself the money or means to buy something, then you will not because you cannot. A good way to do this is when you go out just take cash and only the amount you need. Set up standing orders and direct debits with the bank for monthly payments so it no longer is your responsibility and try to arrange all payments to take place straight after pay day.

4. Manage your time well!

One difficulty that I did not mention above, but people with ADHD often struggle with, is difficulties with time-perception. If you struggle with this, you might recall thinking that your internal clock does not run at the same speed as everybody else's and you cannot gauge how long it will take to complete a task. There is no shame in admitting that a task can take you much longer than someone who does not have ADHD and instead of beating yourself up about it, try to focus on how to overcome this. Attempts to do so include setting time-limits to complete something but initially being as generous as you can with this time and using an alarm to tell yourself that time is up. This is a good idea because it means that you are on a time-crunch, you keep a look at the time and motivate yourself to complete it within that time. Another idea is just to wake up earlier and get a head start. If you want to finish work the same time as everyone else and get everything done, it might be a good idea to just get in earlier and get cracking as soon as you can. Funnily enough, in an attempt for people with ADHD to align their internal clock with others is to use an actual clock (making sure it is visible at all times), wearing a watch and becoming a 'clock-watcher'.

5. Keep focused!

The first hurdle of focusing may be overcome, however, adults with ADHD often struggle with keeping that focus and this can be specific challenge whilst at work. We do not always find every part of our job interesting, but it is important that you try and maximise the attention span you have. If you are sitting in an important meeting, ask if you can record it in case you lose focus and have a back up or try to keep focus by writing notes. You may see that your colleagues are capable of just listening to what is being said and just retain it, but this should not phase you. If you work in an office and find sitting at a desk all day boring, take out a couple of minutes a few times a day just to take a short walk around and you may feel refreshed once you go back. There has been some talk about using a stress ball when struggling to focus but I cannot comment on the effectiveness of this but in my opinion, they are relatively inexpensive and worth a try.

6. Try boosting your mood!

Mood swings are a common symptom and often present a struggle for the individual with ADHD and also those around them so it is key to try and manage this the best you can. This can be helped by making a few lifestyle changes such as adopting a healthier diet, getting enough sleep, exercising regularly and spending some time outdoors. These lifestyle changes have been shown to reduce ADHD symptoms like inattention, hyperactivity and distractibility. In addition to this, forms of meditation such as yoga, mindfulness and calming music can be very relaxing and relieve stress which can directly impact mood. Sleeping a sufficient amount can be a struggle but there are many articles and blogs available that suggest some holistic measures that help and are worth reading.

