

33 Ways to Get Organized with Adult ADHD

Want a clean home? An efficient office? Get organized with adult ADHD thanks to organizing guru Judith Kolberg and her 33 top strategies for work and home.

by Judith Kolberg

Uncluttering your life is a key step toward reaching bigger, better goals. So why do so many adults with attention deficit disorder (ADD ADHD) fail to seek the help we need to get organized with adult ADHD and achieve a clean home, a clutter-free office, and a simple life?

Judith Kolberg suggests it's a matter of perfectionism: We're unable to do what it takes to get even a bit more organized because we worry that we won't become perfectly organized. And as Kolberg, author of *Conquering Chronic Disorganization*, points out, there is no such thing as perfect organization. Life is capricious, and get-it-done strategies that work well today may prove useless tomorrow.

The good news, says Kolberg, is that seemingly small changes can bring big improvements in your life - less clutter, fewer hassles, and greater tranquility.

THE BIG PICTURE

1. Set time limits for decision-making.

ADDers can spend days agonizing over decisions that others make in minutes. Speed the process by setting a time frame or a budget cap. If you're choosing a summer camp for your child, for example, set a deadline, and make the best choice you can by that date. If you're deciding which new cell phone to buy, pick a price cap and ignore more costly phones.

Always identify the most important factor to consider in making any decision, whether it's price, convenience, aesthetics, practicality, or something else. Focus solely on that factor when considering your decision.

2. Fight the tendency to over-commit.

For each new commitment you make, give up an old one. If you agree to join the school fund-raising committee, for instance, give up the neighborhood watch committee. ADDers tend to spread themselves too thin.

3. Keep your to-do lists brief.

Using big, bold letters, make a list of no more than five tasks on an index card. (List any additional items on the back of the card.) Once you have done those five things, refer to the back of the card to create a new to-do list - and discard the old one. You'll accomplish more, feel less frustrated, and manage your time better. (For a high-tech approach to to-do lists, see To-Do Lists That Really Work.)

4. Fight hyperfocus.

Set an alarm clock, kitchen timer, or computer alert - or arrange for someone reliable to call you at a specified time or times. If you tend to lose yourself on eBay for hours at a time, you need this kind of help.

5. Use a "body double."

This is a friend or family member who sits with you as you tackle mundane chores, like balancing a checkbook, filling out a job application, or reviewing financial statements. Your body double will create a productive atmosphere by sitting quietly and doing an unobtrusive task, like affixing stamps to envelopes or clipping recipes from a magazine.

6. Keep extra medication on hand.

Each time you fill a prescription, write in your planner the date on which you'll need to renew it (or set your computer to issue an alert or generate an e-mail reminder on that date). Ask your pharmacist if he can call to remind you when it's time to refill. Your "renew date" should be at least one week before the date on which you'll run out of medication.

7. Build socializing into your schedule.

That way, your desires to meet new people, have interesting conversations, and keep up with friends are taken care of automatically. Take a class, join a book club or a lecture series, or start a dinner club.

8. Join an ADD support group.

Support groups provide more than emotional support. For example, the members can get together online when it's time to tackle boring tasks, like filling out tax returns or filing: One at a time, each person leaves the computer, dedicates 15 minutes to the task at hand, then returns to instant messaging - to joke, commiserate, and congratulate one another. Find out more about online and in-person support groups at chadd.org.