

# Helpful Hints for Stay-at-Home Humans

Being a stay-at-home human is a full-time job whether you (or your child) have AD/HD or not. Staying at home with a child who has AD/HD only means that you're probably working harder than the parent next door. But if you have AD/HD yourself, it's likely that much of your time is spent spinning your wheels.

## Put On Your Own Mask First

Since AD/HD is a genetic disorder, one or both of the parents may also have it. Women with AD/HD are often overlooked or misdiagnosed because they're quiet rather than rambunctious. If you can remember acting just like your AD/HD son or daughter when you were their age, or if you have AD/HD-type symptoms of your own (such as being excessively disorganized and forgetful), then you may benefit from a consultation with a doctor who understands AD/HD in women. It's much easier to manage everybody else's lives when you have your own AD/HD under control. It's just like the airlines say: "Put on your own mask first, then help your child."

## Manage Your Time to Manage Your Life

Poor time management is a common problem for people with AD/HD. To help, purchase a large calendar with plenty of room to write, and use it to remind yourself and your family of important dates and regularly scheduled activities.

**Get a month-at-a-glance calendar** so you can see what's coming up and how many days are left before it happens. A calendar drawn on a dry-erase board also works well for this purpose. Lesson plan books or teacher calendars are also helpful for planning your life one week at a time.

Don't use a "One-Day-At-A-Time" type calendar with tear-off pages. If you have AD/HD, you'll probably forget to tear off the pages anyway. Then you'll be looking at a calendar with the wrong date on it and wondering why this month seems to be dragging on forever.

**Recruit other family members to share time management responsibilities.** Your child's busy schedule can be used to teach the importance of keeping track of dates and schedules. Teens need to learn that they are responsible for remembering practices, appointments or events that they are expected to attend. (Of course, you'll want to be sure that you remember too, just in case they forget.) By working together, you've doubled your chances of getting there on time.

## Clean and Simple

The AD/HD adult's home usually is cluttered for two main reasons. Some people with AD/HD are clutterblind, which is a lot like being colorblind except nobody ever tripped over a mismatched pair of socks.

**Cure clutterblindness** by pacing the room and stopping at the first thing that shouldn't be there. If you can take 5 or 6 steps before coming to an object, then you're OK. Your home may be cluttered, but it isn't a safety hazard.

If you have to stop after only 1 or 2 steps, then you have a serious case of clutter infestation. Pick up the offending object and either put it away or toss it out. Then go back to where you started and start over. You might try doing this along several different paths through the room just to make sure you get everything.

Be ruthless in deciding what to toss. If you have to ask yourself if you should keep something, just throw it away.

## Divide and Conquer

There's no rule that says you have to clean 15 years worth of debris in one afternoon. Divide the task into smaller, easier-to-manage sections or set a reasonable time limit (say, fifteen minutes or half an hour). Set a timer and **stop working** when that time is up. Return to the task tomorrow.

**Be nice to yourself.** Being messy isn't the worst thing in the world. Take comfort in the words of Albert Einstein: "If a cluttered desk is the sign of a cluttered mind, of what, then, is an empty desk a sign?" ■

## ADDitude Recommends

*Journeys Through ADDulthood* by Sari Solden. Solden's book is packed with lessons on discovering a new sense of identity and meaning while living with AD/HD. \$24 (hardcover) at walkerbooks.com or 1-800-289-2553