

Managing Adult ADD/ADHD Through Structuring

Getting Control of Your ADD

Structure is a set of external controls that one sets up to compensate for unreliable internal controls. Most people with ADD cannot depend on their internal controls to keep things organized and keep themselves on task. A reliable system of external controls is essential. It can be a creative and personal structure. When it is in place it is calming, confidence building, and helps performance.

Structuring involves the following 5 components:

1. Organizing

Improved organization leads to improved control and effectiveness. Organization applies to your environment (home, office, belongings, workspace, etc.) and using tools such as a schedule, lists, filing system, calendar, bulletin board, etc.

2. Patterning

Patterning refers to the development of routines and habits so that important tasks and obligations are carried out without forgetting. You can plan certain regular appointments or tasks into the pattern of your week so that you do them automatically. List all your regular tasks, obligations, and appointments and plug them into a regular time slot. Soon it will become a habit, and you won't forget.

3. Goals

Having clear, specific goals and reflecting on them regularly gives you direction and helps you to stay on the right track and motivated, increasing your effectiveness and productivity. List your goals, reflect on them regularly, and evaluate your progress periodically. Make sure you are on course and make adjustments when needed. "If you aim at nothing, you'll hit it every time."

4. Planning

Yearly, monthly, weekly, and daily planning helps you figure out the steps to take toward your goals and what to do next. Both long-range and short-range planning is important. Applying means-end thinking to your goals will aid you in effectiveness in accomplishing them. Having a clear, specific, step-by-step plan creates the structure you need.

5. Coaching

A "coach" can help you think things through, prepare for obligations, develop plans and strategies, and will provide encouragement and accountability. Daily or weekly "check-in's" are very helpful for many. Find someone who can serve as your "coach."

How to Increase Structure

Many tools and methods are valuable in helping you to develop increased structure in your life. Here are some examples:

- Lists—such as daily, weekly, monthly “to do” lists
- A weekly/daily schedule
- A calendar
- A basic filing system
- Writing down important items
- Prioritizing tasks and things to do
- Breaking down large projects into small chunks or steps
- Reflect on your goals regularly and track you progress
- Scan your calendar or schedule daily and revise as necessary
- Post reminder notes in a visible location such as a bulletin board, mirror, refrigerator, etc.
- Organize you workspace
- Roladexes, bulletin boards, “in-out” boxes, a computer system, alarm watches, etc., etc.

Structuring Tips:

- Get help with getting and staying organized.
- Take 15 minutes of beginning of each day for planning the day.
- Plan your day and follow your plan.
- Break large tasks into chunks. Establish a time-schedule for each.
- Keep your schedule with you and refer to it. When you take on a new task, put it in the schedule.
- Don't be overly “reactive.” Don't abandon plans and priorities easily when other things come up.
- Categorize tasks as A-B-C priority.
- Give yourself deadlines.

- Build rewards in for yourself.
- Write things down that you think of so it won't distract you.
- Do it now. Have an “automatic attack attitude.” Don't allow procrastination.

Developing compensatory strategies for ADD/ADHD is essential for successfully managing it and seeing greater success. A good place to begin is with increasing structure in your life.

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