

10 Focusing Strategies for the ADD Community



What is ADD? ADD stands for “*Attention Deficit Disorder*,” but I don’t think these individuals have a “deficit,” but they do have a “difference” in the way they think and do things. It’s a challenge for ADD individuals who have the classic symptoms of inattention, impulsivity, distractibility, overfocusing and hyperactivity, to name just a few. They have a neurological, chemical difference in their brain that makes them think, respond, and process information differently than most people.

If you think ADD individuals have a “deficit,” think of the successful people like Cher, Robin Williams, Bill Clinton, Winston Churchill, Mozart, Beethoven, as having ADD themselves. Thomas Edison, was ADD as well as dyslexic, and he created electricity. Now don’t you think we should be very thankful to him, because we wouldn’t have anything that we see in our sight today without the electricity to produce items we have. So now do you think ADD individuals having “deficit” or a “difference” in their chemical makeup?

Though the traditional methods don’t always work for these individuals, it’s the unconventional methods that work and make them so successful, yet at the same time, they’re smart, funny, ready to do anything at a moment’s notice, that has made our society so great.

It’s so hard for the ADD individual to concentrate on tasks some times, because every time something is touched or in their view, they think of something else to do. So some other auditory reminder like saying things out loud like, “Focus, focus, focus”—may be helpful in getting refocused on the task and/or project.

Having an organized environment for the ADD individual is certainly recommended in keeping control of their daily activities. Everyone says “*time management*,” but I like to call it “*activities management*.” What we actually do is manage our “activities” within the “time” we have every day. Does that make sense?

So here are 10 simple focusing strategies for the ADD population:

1. **A common characteristic of an ADD person is that he/she likes new things to keep them interested**, so it’s difficult to stay on task for very long—sometimes it ranges from 15-60 minutes at a time. A simple strategy of using a timer to start and stop can help insure completion of the task and/or project started.
2. **Offering the client a reward for staying on task** could be taking a short break and doing something else for 10-15 minutes, for example. It’s important

that a reward is set up that the client wants and sometimes never finds the time to do.

3. **Using your internal clock** (like the feeling someone knows when something should take a certain amount of time to do), is not an effective way to keep track of time. Using a clock to do something within an allotted period of time that has an auditory sound from a timer or a cell phone, for instance, is a way for the mind to be interrupted, so the individual can stop, look at their calendar, and/or “to do” list to do something else. It’s a challenge for the ADD to calculate how long something takes and/or will take their time to do. Planning is important to keep on task and learning not to over schedule one’s day.
4. **Approach a project by breaking it down into little pieces.** So ask yourself: *How do you eat an elephant?* Answer: *One bite at a time.* If you can visualize this question and answer it each time when tackling a task and/or project, you will be able to manage your daily activities better so you can feel good at the end of each day.
5. **To control your daily activities as well as managing your time, it’s important to say “no.”** Reward yourself each time to saying “no” to everyone’s request if it will keep you from doing what *you* need to get done. Always acknowledge that person who asked you by saying, *“I appreciate your vote of confidence, but I just can’t work it into my schedule at this time. Sorry.”*
6. **Remind the client that complex organizing projects shouldn’t be set up when he/she is not at their best.** Setting up for success is the best. By working on a project that requires deep concentration, should be done during the time of day when the highest level of energy is felt.
7. **Staying healthy** is very important to the ADD individual. Exercising helps relieve the stress for both physical and mental issues that is caused by daily activities and interruptions. Exercising and good nutrition frees up the mind to take a much needed rest I call a *“brain break,”*TM so a person can *refocus, regroup and rejuvenate.*TM
8. **Sometimes letting calls go into voicemail** will help insure concentration on the project at hand. By setting 2 times a day to return calls, will help put a *system* in place of creating a habit that can be a win-win situation for everyone.
9. **Keeping a notepad on a night stand**, in your pocket, purse, etc., is extremely useful when ideas pop into one’s head. It clears the mental clutter out, so you can focus on the task at hand that needs to get done by a certain timeline.

10. **Studies have been conducted that chewing gum can help one focus.** I like to play with clear, Silly Putty that have sparkles that smells really good when I'm in meetings.

Helping clients understand their focus limitations and how to work within their abilities, will help prevent them from getting caught up in the cycle of the *never-finish-anything* syndrome. "*Making it fun until it's done*" is my strategy in helping my ADD clients feel good about themselves by keeping them inspired that they can accomplish anything if they have the right tools and the right attitude. Remember, "*If you can't find it in 30 seconds, it's in the wrong place.*"