6 Tips to Maximize Productivity When You Have ADHD

The condition makes it difficult to concentrate and organize, but those with ADHD can still be high performers. The key is preparation.

March 4, 2019 5 min read

Opinions expressed by *Entrepreneur* contributors are their own.

ADHD, a disorder that makes it difficult to pay attention and control impulsive behaviors, doesn't have to kill your productivity. While the condition makes it difficult to concentrate and organize, people dealing with ADHD can still be high performers at work and at school by preparing themselves.

That's good news, considering that ADHD diagnosis rates are on the rise worldwide. *The Washington Post* reported in late 2018 that the childhood ADHD rate had grown 10 percent over the previous two decades. Authors of the study couldn't determine a particular cause for the increase but pointed to possible factors like improvements in medical technology for diagnosing the condition, and the reduced stigma around acknowledging the disorder.

Regardless of the reasons ADHD has become more widespread, people who live with it must manage in a world that seems built to distract them. Thanks to smartphones and the internet, endless diversions are always a click away. So, if you worry that your ADHD affects your productivity, consider

the following tips to limit distractions in your own life and increase your focus.

Related: Those With ADHD Might Make Better Entrepreneurs. Here's Why.

1. Acknowledge that your brain is unique.

ADHD brains are different, but not all ADHD brains are alike. Remember that what works for you might not work for someone else, and vice versa. If a particular tip doesn't work for you, don't fret. Use what helps — don't try to force it.

One place to start is research from Axiom Learning, an education company founded by Harvard University alumni. Axiom, which develops tailored learning programs for students, has found individualized programs to be the most effective tactic for ADHD assistance.

Students who go through Axiom's LEAP 3.0 program have experienced seven times more academic growth than those without support, the company claims. Targeted support helps a third of participating students escape their diagnosis of ADHD after going through the program, Axiom says.

"What matters is not whether they have an actual diagnosis of ADHD but whether you understand the *reason* they are struggling with attention and focus on addressing the underlying *causes* for those struggles directly," Shahzad Bhatti, Axiom's CEO told me in an interview.

Related: The 5 Superpowers People With ADHD Can Use to Be Better Entrepreneurs

2. Move now to focus later.

Have a meeting or class coming up? If you have ADHD, you'd be wise to get your body moving ahead of time to release some of the energy that may well cause you to fidget.

In fact, those with the disorder may find power in carefully sequenced, coordinated movements: I learned why from Aisha Simon, the chief academic officer at the education company Learning Efficiency, which specializes in programs for students with learning challenges. "A prerequisite to positive short- and long-term learning outcomes is the ability to self-regulate, which is built on exercises which improve essential sensory-motor and body awareness skills," Simon explained. "Plus, cardiovascular movement by itself for 20 to 45 minutes enhances attention for up to three hours."

Related: 40 Entrepreneurs Share Their Secrets to Staying Focused

3. Externalize your organization efforts with apps.

Humans overall have trouble keeping track of dates, appointments and schedules. Add ADHD to the mix, and modern life's array of responsibilities can feel overwhelming.

ADDitude, a publication for people with ADHD, compiled a collection of apps and tools to help ADHD people stay organized. From sleep-aid apps to calendar tools, the products of automation have turned out to be a godsend for people having trouble staying on task; such rechnology allows them to stay organized for the entire day or week ahead.

4. End procrastination with the “two-minute rule.”

James Clear, author of *Atomic Habits,* wrote on Lifehack about the two-minute rule that he said has helped him overcome his tendency to procrastinate.

The rule is simple: If a task takes less than two minutes, do it right now. This prevents small tasks from piling up and creating an overwhelming to-do list. To start a big project on the other hand, identify one small component that won’t take long, then do that first action to get the concentration ball rolling.

5. Take notes by hand, not electronically.

Electronics might be convenient, but when it comes to focus and memory, pen and paper reign supreme. Researchers Pam Mueller and Daniel Oppenheimer found that students who write notes on paper learn better than students who type notes on a computer.

Keep a notebook with distinct sections for each school subject or work project. During class or meetings, take notes — no screens allowed. This might feel like an old-school method, but it works better than the alternative.

6. Master your chances to get quality sleep.

Getting a good night’s sleep correlates strongly with a host of benefits. Unfortunately, *Psychology Today* reported, people with ADHD have higher rates of insomnia, sleep deprivation and other sleep issues.

Put yourself in the best mental position for tomorrow by sleeping well tonight. Set a sleep-hygiene routine, and stick to it. Turn off screens; don’t eat for a few hours before bed. And don’t watch television or play games in bed; the point is to let your brain associate your bed with rest. If you still find yourself struggling to sleep, see a doctor to make sure there isn’t anything else getting in the way.

ADHD shouldn’t be the master of your success. By combining the ADHD help described here with proper professional care, you can overcome distractions and restlessness to be your best, most productive self at school or in the office.

https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/329259