

LIVING WITH ADD

WHEN YOU'RE NOT THE ONE WHO HAS IT...

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www.addfamilycoaching.com mimi@addfamilycoaching.com (206) 579-8274

Welcome

By Mimi Handlin, MSW

WELCOME to the first newsletter for people whose husbands, wives, girlfriends or boyfriends have attention deficit disorder. As one who has spent many years married to a man with ADHD, I know that non-ADD partners deserve special support. We can feel lonely in our journey because most people know so little about adult ADD. Extended family and friends probably only see our partner's wonderful traits - of which there are many. They see their humor, warmth, intelligence, generosity, creativity . . . They don't see the over-the-limit credit cards, unfinished projects all over the house, broken promises, chronic anger, inattention to us, or forgotten commitments. Because we share a life, we are profoundly affected by our partner's day-to-day struggles.

I (and the readers who contribute) have written this newsletter for you. It offers positive support through tips to improve your relationship, ideas to help you take care of yourself, and, last but not least, jokes to make you laugh.

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Contribute

Please [email](mailto:mimi@addfamilycoaching.com) me if you'd like to help others by contributing to "My Ideas." Can you think of some traits in your significant other that drive you nuts or make life stressful? (Try to keep it to less than ten pages!) (Just kidding.) What have you done that has made a positive difference between the two of you? Or what has helped you improve *your* well-being within the relationship? In your email, please specify if you would like to use your name or Anonymous. I ask for the right to condense it if absolutely necessary. Your contribution is sure to help because non-ADD partners need all the ideas they can get! Thank you.

Relationship Tip of the Month

By Mimi Handlin, MSW

"It's very common for people with ADD to say, 'Sure, I'll do that,' and not follow through."

If you ask your significant other to do something, don't assume he or she has heard you and it will get done. Your expectation is unrealistic if you think all that's needed is a quick verbal request. It's very common for people with ADD to say, "Sure, I'll do that," and not follow through. Maybe their minds were drifting or distracted by something in the environment and their response was automatic. Maybe they did hear you at the time but forgot soon after. Poor working or short term memory is a symptom of ADHD. To reduce the chance of you being disappointed or angry, see if the following helps. (And if you already know all this, just consider it a reminder. In the midst of life's demands, we tend to drift away from what we know.)

1. Wait until your partner is not involved in something else (T.V, computer, etc.) or tell them you need a few minutes of their attention to ask them something.
2. At a time when you're both relaxed, ask if your partner would be willing to try paraphrasing. Paraphrasing means that the listener repeats back what the speaker said in the listener's own words. It reduces the possibility of your mate misunderstanding or not hearing you. Then put it to work. Later, when you make your request, you might say, "Would you mind telling me back what I'm asking you just so I know you heard me?" Since you've already discussed it, hopefully he/she won't get defensive or think you're being condescending. Because it really helps!
3. Ask them to commit to doing what you want at a specific time. Otherwise, it will just float into the universe.
4. Figure out together what kind of reminders they need to get it done. Do they need to write it in their planner? Put a sticky note on the steering wheel? Write in on their hand? Set their watch or phone to remind them? Even simple things may require cues.
5. Express your appreciation when they follow-through. This may seem silly since you probably do so much without any acknowledgment, but try to remember that they have a brain difference. What is easy for you isn't for them. It really will create good feelings.

Thoughts on Self-Care

By Mimi Handlin, MSW

As a working, single parent of three, my life is pretty busy. Like many women, I have the tendency to pay attention to everyone's happiness but mine. (Isn't there any chocolate left for me?!) Although it was wonderful having all my kids home this holiday season, it felt a little exhausting. For some reason, even the parties felt more draining than fun . . . until the last one.

I was in a room surrounded by people I didn't really know. They were talking about work, health care, taxes and doctors. I was tired, bored, and restless and didn't really want to be there – but I felt like I couldn't leave. My partner was involved in an animated discussion about medical insurance. In another room, were four or five teenagers, playing cards, laughing and joking around. They sounded so happy. So I excused myself, walked into their room, and asked if I could play. It was the best time I'd had in years. We played UNO, a lively game of charades,

ate brownies, and I laughed until tears were rolling down my face and I got the hiccups.

That night I realized how important it is to lighten up every once in a while. Laughter releases endorphins, which are powerful pain killers, it strengthens the immune system to fight off infection and disease, and it's a great stress reliever. Dr. William Fry, a psychiatrist and Emeritus Associate Clinical Professor in Psychiatry at Stanford University, believes that eventually researchers will have scientific evidence that mirthful laughter favorably impacts every system in the human body. So whenever you can, find some time to watch funny movies, read a funny book, and try to see the humor in things. With all the responsibilities and stress in your life, you *deserve* to be happy too!

My Ideas

By Sher in Germany

To cope with living with an ADD husband, I do five things that are effective and one that definitely isn't.

EFFECTIVE:

1. I pray a lot after our disagreements, or about my own distress about him. I try to let his problems be God's problems, instead of mine, while making our commitment to each other my priority.
2. I also force myself to praise him and thank him when he does anything positive. (Even though he rarely does that for me.)
3. I focus on what makes me happy and go for it outside the marriage. (Except for sex.) Some of my outlets are study/work, friendships with EYE CONTACT, spending time with easy going people, seeing sentimental movies, hugging the cat or my daughter for tenderness, and taking hot baths every other day for relaxation.
4. I always try to tell him how I feel when he hurts me, being careful to get his full attention which is almost always impossible but *can* happen IF I find a time he is awake and will put down his various hobbies like model making, playing guitar, and fixing things in the house.

5. Last, I try to remember all the things I love about him (his intelligence, childlike enthusiasm for learning, love of adventure, warm, caring generosity towards others in need, soft sensitive side) when he embarrasses me with blurting out stupid jokes in the middle of a conversation about something else or seems a million miles away when I'm trying to tell him something important to me.

NOT EFFECTIVE:

1. Snapping at him or saying things that put him down – especially in front of other people. In moments of severe frustration or hurt, it's very hard to control sometimes, but I've gotten better at it.

Thank you Sher.

Classic Jokes of the Month

These jokes have nothing to do with ADD, but they can make you laugh. And that's worth a lot!

This guy asks his doctor, "Will I be able to play the piano after my operation?" And the doctor says, "Sure." And the guy says, "Funny, I couldn't play it before." Henny Youngman

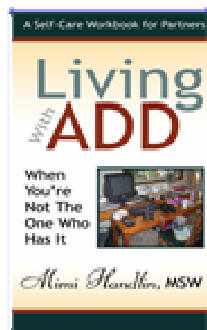
Last week I saw my psychiatrist. I told him, "Doc, I keep thinking I'm a dog." He told me to get off his couch. Rodney Dangerfield

You know you're getting old when you stoop to tie your shoelaces and wonder what else you could do while you're down there. George Burns

Telephone Coaching and Support Groups Forming Now

Are you at your wit's end because of a relationship with someone who has ADD? Are your partner's symptoms causing you pain, confusion, or anger? Don't feel alone anymore. Reach out for information, coping tips, and encouragement. Please visit www.addfamilycoaching.com. There is an article you may find helpful. I also offer hourly coaching for non-ADD partners and am forming support groups now.

Buy the Book



LIVING WITH ADD WHEN YOU'RE NOT THE ONE WHO HAS IT: A SELF CARE WORKBOOK FOR PARTNERS

Please [email](mailto:alison@addfamilycoaching.com) me if you have any suggestions or ideas for this newsletter. And feel free to pass it on to any other struggling partners you know!