

# LIVING WITH ADD

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



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## 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? You can even share a new realization or awareness. 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

*“In the Bible it says they asked Jesus how many times you should forgive, and he said 70 times 7. Well, I want you all to know that I'm keeping a chart.”*

*Hillary Rodham Clinton*

When our partners have ADHD, they often say things that hurt or anger us, break their promises, leave messes all over the house, forget anniversaries and important commitments, etc, etc. It's very easy for us to believe they are doing these things on purpose or “to us.” But hard as it is, it will help your well-being and your marriage to identify those behaviors as symptoms of ADHD – not the heart and intention of the person you love.

I'm not saying that you don't have a right to be angry at a mistreatment or annoyed at certain behaviors. But the ironic thing is that holding onto your anger or annoyance will probably hurt you the most.

Your partner, in typical ADD style, no doubt moved on to something else right away and forgot why you were upset. Why should you be left holding the bag? Here are three tips that might help you get over what is upsetting you and lead to forgiveness:

1. This is the big one: Accept the reality that you can't change someone else. You may have a valid expectation, but there is no guarantee that your spouse will live up to it.
2. Communicate. If something happened to upset you, tell your partner exactly how you feel. Get it out, but focus on the behavior or action. What they did may have been really horrible, but that's not the same as being a horrible person. Make sure that each of you has the opportunity to express your experiences around what happened. You may be surprised at each other's feelings and perceptions – especially if one of you has ADD and the other does not. Sometimes understanding why your partner acted in a certain way can help you forgive.
3. Although it would be great if we were all saints and could forgive quickly and unconditionally, most of us need something in exchange – especially if the same issues come up again and again. Figure out what you need in order to move on. And tell your partner verbally and in writing. Most people with ADD are very visual and seeing something in writing can help it sink in. This could be anything from agreeing to accept help to knowing they are trying to change hurtful behaviors to needing to see a visible improvement in some area within a certain period of time. While it's true that we can't change people, we can put our foot down about what we will and won't accept.

## Thoughts on Self-Care

By Mimi Handlin, MSW

One of my biggest challenges in life is finding balance. There is just too much to do and not enough hours in the day. Will I ever have time to spend with my women friends? I just have to get on the exercise bike today! When am I going to find the "alone time" with my daughter that I promised her? For most of us who are managing work, children, household chores, relationships, and everything else, it's a challenge to find balance. I think to be as healthy as possible; we need to include five aspects of life. These are physical, spiritual, mental, emotional and practical. The practical aspects get attended to first, because they are essential for survival. This includes work, grocery shopping, paying bills, childcare, etc. For those of you who only attend to the practical aspects, please read the next paragraph.

Most non-ADD spouses experience more than their share of stress and responsibility. Your relationship may be intense, demanding, and frustrating. Please remember to care for yourself so you can stay healthy. Pay attention to the other aspects of life and put yourself first for just a little while. Take the time to read a good novel, go for a walk when the sun is shining, pray or develop a spiritual practice, pay attention to your feelings and express them frequently. You're worth it!

## My Ideas

By John in California

livingsoma@netscape.net

My partner Mike may realize that he has ADD, but in the end it doesn't make it any easier to deal with. Perhaps I have a sense of false hope that in realizing it he will miraculously get over it. Not so. It is always a work in progress.

Tonight I told him he was in "shut down" most of the time with the exception of being at work. He agreed and said he had not realized how severe it had gotten. He apologized. I said reality is not something you ever need to apologize for. However, you always have the option of changing your behavior and perspective. I am constantly trying to move him away from apologizing because apologizing makes him wrong. It's not a matter of being wrong, accepting the situation and dealing with alternatives is the goal. As much as Mike really wants to change and find that "compromise," 47 years of learning how to avoid, how to cover, how to survive can not be relearned in a week, month or possibly even a life time.

Sometimes I need to be supportive and pick up the things that are falling apart for him (like everything). Other times I tell him the ball is in his court and he tells me he appreciates me not being his mother. I think my biggest realization, even though it's hard to come to terms with, is that the main opportunity for change and compromise in an ADD/ non ADD relationship rests with the non ADD partner.

## Classic Jokes of the Month

Last week I told my psychiatrist, "I keep thinking about suicide."

He told me from now on I have to pay in advance. – **Rodney Dangerfield**

"I want my children to have all the things I couldn't afford.

Then I want to move in with them." – **Phyllis Diller**

"When I was a boy, the Dead Sea was only sick." – **Jack Benny**

## 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](http://www.addfamilycoaching.com). There is an article you may find helpful.

Call or write to inquire about coaching for non-ADD partners and couples where one has ADD and one does not. NOW FORMING:

### **SUPPORT / ACTION / EDUCATION GROUP FOR PARTNERS OF ADULTS WITH ADD**

Group Topics (and more):

- What is AD/HD – Biochemical, Emotional, and Social Aspects
- How AD/HD Traits Affect Relationships
- ADD and Co-dependency
- What Causes Resentment and What to Do About It
- Communicating Effectively with an ADD Partner
- Sharing a Life with Fairness and Respect
- Self-Care, the Key to Peace and Well-Being

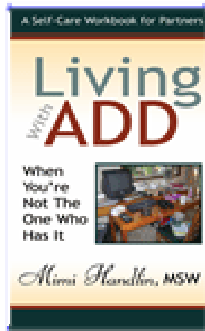
**SUPPORT** THROUGH CONNECTION – SHARING FEELINGS, IDEAS, AND EXPERIENCES WITH OTHERS WHO UNDERSTAND.

**ACTION** THROUGH WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS AND TRYING NEW STRATEGIES AND APPROACHES

**EDUCATION** THROUGH UNDERSTANDING ALL ABOUT ADHD AND THE CHALLENGES IT PRESENTS.

Please call or write for information about this safe, healing group where you can learn ways to help yourself and your relationship, express your feelings, and meet others who can relate to your experiences.

## Buy the Book



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

Please [email](#) 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!