Better Time Management with Adult ADHD

19 ways to meet deadlines and get things done

From *ADDitude*'s Experts

ADDITUDE
LIVING WELL WITH ATTENTION DEFICIT

TERMS OF USE

Copyright © 2013 by New Hope Media. All rights reserved. No part of this report may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, faxing, e-mailing, posting online, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without written permission from the Publisher.

All trademarks and brands referred to herein are the property of their respective owners. All references to *ADDitude* magazine, ADDitudeMag.com, and ADDConnect.com are trademarks of New Hope Media.

CONTACT INFORMATION

New Hope Media
1-646-366-0830
39 West 37th Street, 15th Floor
New York, NY 10018

LEGAL NOTICES

While all attempts have been made to verify information provided in this publication, neither the author nor the publisher assumes any responsibility for error, omissions, or contrary interpretations of the subject matter contained herein.

The purchaser or reader of this publication assumes responsibility for the use of these materials and information. Adherence to all applicable laws and regulations, both referral and state and local, governing professional licensing, business practices, advertising, and all other aspects of doing business in the United States or any other jurisdiction, is the sole responsibility of the purchaser or reader. The author and publisher assume no responsibility or liability whatsoever on the behalf of any purchaser or reader of these materials. Any perceived slights of specific people or organizations are unintentional.

Better Time Management with Adult ADHD

19 ways to meet deadlines and get things done

Here is your game plan for organizing and finishing projects—big and small.

By Edward Hallowell, M.D., and Sandy Maynard, M.S.

---

9 Time Management Tips from Dr. Ned Hallowell

Remember rotary telephones? I had to use one at the lakeside cottage my family rented last summer, and, boy, was it irritating. That old monster took forever to dial. OK, it took only 11 seconds (I timed it), but that seemed an eternity in today's fast-paced world. Which got me thinking about why **I found it so irritating to spend an entire 11 seconds dialing a phone number**! So what?

Without intending to, many people find they live in a rush they didn't create, or at least didn't mean to create. Sometimes busy-ness is blissful. But not if "busy" keeps you from doing what's most important to you. Here's how to overcome this common malady:

1. **Focus on what truly matters.**
   Don't spread yourself too thin, and don't get sidetracked. Remember, cell phones, personal computers, and other high-tech gadgets enable us to do more, but more is not necessarily better.

2. Create a positive emotional environment wherever you go.

Positive emotion is not a frill. It's the on/off switch for effective mental functioning. When you feel secure in your surroundings, you think better, behave better, work better, and are better able to help others. So do your best to build positive relationships. Always aim to be friendly and upbeat.

3. Don't waste time "screensucking."

What's that? It's being glued to your TV or computer screen. Screen-sucking interferes with the brain's ability to focus. Whenever possible, limit such electronic hypnosis to one hour a day.

4. Minimize distractions.

Things that distract you on a regular basis should be addressed. Keep losing your glasses? Train yourself to put them in a special place. If you're distracted by magazines strewn about your kitchen, put a basket in another room, and make sure the magazines get into it.

5. Delegate anything you're not good at.

Is paying bills each month an irritant because you never manage to send them in on time? Hand the job over to your spouse. If you're not married (or have a spouse who isn't good at it, either), put as many bills as possible on auto-pay.

Your goal is not to be independent, but to be *effectively interdependent*—that is, to share responsibilities for tasks with other people.

6. Slow down.

Periodically ask yourself why you're in such a hurry, and take the question seriously. If the answer is "because I'm late," assess your priorities and cut out unnecessary responsibilities. The time you save should be devoted solely to personal or family time.

7. Think twice about multitasking.

Research shows that doing two things at once takes about 50 percent longer than doing them sequentially. An exception to this rule: Some people with ADD focus better if they do something essentially mindless while tackling an important task—for example, listening to music or balancing on a ball while doing homework.

8. Invest your time for maximum return.

Not sure where the time goes? Create a chart, and record everything you do. Maybe the chart indicates you're spending too much time looking for lost keys or nagging your teenage daughter to clean up her room. Think of some creative ways to eliminate these (hanging a key hook near the front door or deciding that her room doesn't really need to be clean, after all).

9. Play a lot.

Imaginatively engage in what you are doing. This will use the best parts of your wonderful, creative mind. Playing is not a waste of time. It will make you more effective at whatever you're doing, whether it's carrying on a conversation or baking an apple pie.

Dr. Edward (Ned) Hallowell is a practicing psychiatrist and founder of the Hallowell Center for Cognitive and Emotional Health in Sudbury, Massachusetts. An instructor at Harvard Medical School, he is the author of 10 books, including the best-sellers, *Driven to Distraction, Delivered from Distraction*, and, most recently, *CrazyBusy*. Dr. Hallowell has ADHD himself. Visit him on the web on drhallowell.com.

10 Time-Management Techniques from Sandy Maynard

The word deadline dates back to the Civil War. At the notorious Confederate prison camp at Andersonville, Georgia, a line was drawn 17 feet inside the perimeter fence. Guards were authorized to shoot any prisoner who crossed the line.

Adults and children with attention deficit disorder (ADD ADHD) don't need a gun pointed at us to get us going on projects. But many of us do need organization help because we have a hard time with time management—especially with difficult or boring projects. This is certainly true for me. Take this article. I assured my editor that I'd have no trouble getting it done on time, and yet the more I thought about it, the harder it seemed to write. So here I am, one day before my deadline, and I'm just now starting.

I've had similar difficulties in trying to complete my master's thesis (after many years as an ADD coach, I returned to school three years ago). I learned a lot of things about deadlines and getting things done during those months. Here's my 10-point plan for meeting all of your deadlines, big and small:

1. Don't bite off more than you can chew.

Consider how much time is available in your busy schedule, and plan accordingly. If you take on a new project, you may have to cut back on other activities in order to finish it on time.

2. Post your deadlines where you will see them.

This simple action will remind you to use your time wisely. When I went for my master's degree, I highlighted the syllabus and put it on the wall over my desk. When I wrote my thesis, I created a computer screensaver that read "February 26 or Bust."

3. Break big projects into smaller parts, and assign a deadline for completing each.

We're usually given a deadline for the date by which the entire project has to be completed. To keep yourself on track, mark the date by which you should complete one-quarter of the project, one-half, and so on. Those dates will alert you to problems while there's still time to play catchup.

4. Set deadlines for others.

We ADDers dislike deadlines so much that we're often reluctant to set appropriate deadlines for others. Often, as I was working on my thesis, I'd find that I needed to ask my professors a question. To make sure I could get going on time each Saturday morning, I asked them to get back to me with answers no later than Friday afternoon. Otherwise, I would have lost momentum—or relied upon the excuse that I couldn't keep working because I was unsure about what to do next.

5. When time runs short, outsource.

Don't assume that you must do every portion of a project. In many cases, it makes sense to outsource or delegate.

6. Take frequent breaks.

Those who fail to get away from a project occasionally are likely to start avoiding it—or to just give up. Taking breaks will help you avoid burnout.

7. Start and end when you say you will.

While writing my thesis, I started at 9. A.M. and ended at 5 P.M., so I had time to socialize in the evening. Knowing I would quit at 5 kept me going. I could say to myself, "only two more hours... only one more hour," and so on. If I hadn't committed to stopping at 5, I might have thought, "I'll take a break and do something else and work on it later in the evening." This kind of thinking is dangerous for ADDers, who are easily distracted.

8. Change your inner voice.

Think of positive things you can say to yourself to stay motivated. Some of my clients write down "positive affirmations" and keep them nearby to glance at.

EXAMPLE: "I'm going to feel great when I hand this in to my boss on time." Or, "I can do this!" As I was writing my thesis, I often caught myself thinking, "Oh, well, I can just sign up for another quarter and take my time." Each time I did, I immediately changed that to "No! You will get this thesis done this quarter!"

9. Define your objectives.

When I started my thesis project, my objective was to learn as much as possible about my topic. I accomplished that, but it wasn't until my objective became finishing by the end of February that I was able to stay focused on the hard part: writing. Finishing on time is one of the most important objectives for ADDers.

10. If all else fails... hire a nanny.

It seemed an extravagance at the time, but I hired someone to watch over me when I was earning my master's degree. That's right, a nanny. I gave her strict instructions. She was to arrive at 8:00 A.M., fix breakfast for me, and make sure I was at my desk by 9 A.M. There was to be no radio, no TV, no telephone—and no e-mail. She kept me on track, and now I have an M.S. at the end of my name.

Sandy Maynard, M.S., is a pioneer in the field of coaching people with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). She was instrumental in the development of The National Attention Deficit Disorder Association's Coaching Guidelines and a founding board member for the Institute for the Advancement of AD/HD Coaching (IAAC). She is a certified Master Practitioner of Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) and uses a holistic health and wellness approach with her clients. Ms. Maynard lives in Washington, D.C., where she operates Catalytic Coaching. She lectures internationally and is a regular contributor to *ADDitude* magazine. Visit her on the web on sandymaynard.com.

Other articles of interest:

1. Yours, Mind, and Hours: Understanding Your Partner's Time Style. Is a skewed sense of time causing stress in your marriage? Ease time management tension by trying out your spouse's perception of time.

   http://www.additudemag.com/adhd/article/755.html

2. Never Be Late Again! Time management strategies to help ADHD adults be on time and organized.

   http://www.additudemag.com/adhd/article/2495.html

3. When You Need a Body Double. Difficult tasks are easier to accomplish if someone is on hand to keep you company.

   http://www.additudemag.com/adhd/article/893.html

ADHD Time Assessment Chart

Dr. Ned Hallowell developed a chart that indicates whether various tasks are really worth your time and effort. This ADHD time-management chart weighs tasks against the effort they take, the fulfillment they give, and their necessity.

Crazy Busy Time Chart

I. Activity	II. Average Hours per Day	III. Effort Factor (1 = most, 5 = least)	IV. Fulfillment Factor (1 = least, 5 = most)	V. E x F (column III x column IV)	VI. Necessity, Right-Thing-to-Do Factor (1 = least, 5 = most)	VII. Worth-It Factor (product of columns III, IV, and VI)
PERSONAL CARE						
Sleep						
Eating						
Bathroom						
Shower						
PERSONAL CARE (TOTAL HOURS)						
HOUSEHOLD						
Housework						
Food (prep and cleanup)						
Laundry						
Lawn and other outdoor work						
Purchasing goods and services (food, car maintenance, etc.)						
Professional services (doctor, haircutter, etc.)						
Caring for/helping household members						
Caring for/helping non-household members						
HOUSEHOLD (TOTAL HOURS)						

Excerpted from *CrazyBusy: Overstretched, Overbooked, and About to Snap! Strategies for Coping in a World Gone ADD.*
© 2006 by Edward M. Hallowell, M.D., Ballantine Books, a division of Random House, Inc., N.Y

Crazy Busy Time Chart

I. Activity	II. Average Hours per Day	III. Effort Factor (1 = most, 5 = least)	IV. Fulfillment Factor (1 = least, 5 = most)	V. E x F (column III x column IV)	VI. Necessity, Right-Thing-to-Do Factor (1 = least, 5 = most)	VII. Worth-It Factor (product of columns III, IV, and VI)
WORK AND WORK-RELATED ACTIVITIES						
The part of work you like best						
The part of work you like least						
The part of work that's in-between						
WORK AND WORK-RELATED ACTIVITIES (TOTAL HOURS)						
DRIVING, COMMUTING, TAXING (TOTAL HOURS)						
EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES (TOTAL HOURS)						
ORGANIZATION, CIVIC, AND RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES (VOLUNTEER, UNPAID)						
Organizational						
Civic						
Religious						
ORGANIZATION, CIVIC, AND RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES (VOLUNTEER, UNPAID) (TOTAL HOURS)						
LEISURE (TOTAL HOURS)						
SOCIALIZING						
With people you like a lot						
With people you don't much like						
With people in between						
Playing a sport						
Other exercise						
SOCIALIZING (TOTAL HOURS)						

Excerpted from *CrazyBusy: Overstretched, Overbooked, and About to Snap! Strategies for Coping in a World Gone ADD.*
© 2006 by Edward M. Hallowell, M.D., Ballantine Books, a division of Random House, Inc., N.Y

Crazy Busy Time Chart

I. Activity	II. Average Hours per Day	III. Effort Factor (1 = most, 5 = least)	IV. Fulfillment Factor (1 = least, 5 = most)	V. E x F (column III x column IV)	VI. Necessity, Right-Thing-to-Do Factor (1 = least, 5 = most)	VII. Worth-It Factor (product of columns III, IV, and VI)
ELECTRONIC TIME						
E-mail (necessary)						
E-mail (screen sucking)						
Internet (necessary)						
Internet (screen sucking)						
Television (necessary)						
Television (screen sucking)						
Telephone (landline)						
Cell Phone						
Blackberry, Treo, etc. (necessary)						
Blackberry, Treo, etc. (screen-sucking)						
ELECTRONIC TIME (TOTAL HOURS)						
INTIMATE TIME (LOVEMAKING, CUDDLING, INTIMATE CONVERSATION) (TOTAL HOURS)						
WASTED, KILLED, OR FORGOTTEN TIME (TOTAL HOURS)						
CREATIVE TIME (TOTAL HOURS)						
OTHER (DESCRIBE) (TOTAL HOURS)						

Excerpted from *CrazyBusy: Overstretched, Overbooked, and About to Snap! Strategies for Coping in a World Gone ADD.*
© 2006 by Edward M. Hallowell, M.D., Ballantine Books, a division of Random House, Inc., N.Y

TRY A FREE ISSUE!

Find comprehensive resources and advice for parents and educators affected by **ADD** and **LD**.

ORDER ONLINE

www.additudemag.com/subscribe

YOUR COMPLETE RESOURCE FOR LIVING WELL WITH **ADHD**

JOIN ADDConnect ADDITUDE'S COMMUNITY

YOU ARE NOT ALONE

JOIN ADHD SUPPORT GROUPS

ADDConnect.com/groups

REAL ANSWERS, REAL ADVICE

READ AND WRITE MEDICATION REVIEWS

ADDConnect.com/forums

LIVE BETTER EACH WEEK

GET FREE ADHD NEWSLETTERS

ADDConnect.com/site/newsletter

ADDConnect.com