

How to Thrive with Adult ADD / ADHD

by

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Class 4: Tools: Mind-Mapping and Rituals

BREAK IT DOWN with MIND-MAPPING

Mind-Mapping is a technique that is enormously helpful in breaking through overwhelm, getting your thinking “unstuck,” and capturing your creative thoughts on paper. It works well for writing, thinking and planning.

Why Mind-Mapping is an Important Tool for ADDers

The Trouble with Outlines

Traditional academic or business ways of writing and planning suggest that the brain should work in an orderly, logical sequence. A traditional outline would have you start at the beginning, end at the end, and create a series of steps in the middle.

This is fine as an end-product. It is easier for others to follow our rationale when they are led from one step to another. The problem for ADDers comes when we're expected to lay our initial thoughts out in this manner. Our minds just don't think that way!

ADD Traits

ADDers typically have a number of traits that can create difficulty in writing or planning things out in a sequential way. These include:

- Creative, intuitive way of thinking
- Many simultaneous thoughts and ideas

- Trouble focusing
- Paralysis when overwhelmed
- Brain-freeze under pressure
- Difficulty prioritizing and sequencing information
- Impatience and impulsivity
- Trouble getting started
- Poor memory / difficulty retrieving information on demand

Our ADD thoughts are far more likely to circle around a subject, lighting here and there on aspects of it as they pop into our minds.

For example, here's how I thought about creating a telephone class on Mind Mapping.

Example: My thoughts about a Mind-Mapping class:

"Why is mind mapping good for ADDers? I know lots of my clients have had success with it. I can think of all the different types of projects they've used it for. A graphic of a mind map would be good to have in the notes. Maybe I can put it on my website. Oh, I need to include a reference to the mind-mapping website. But why do my clients do well with it? It's more fun for them, easier to get started. They don't have to worry about what comes first. They can do it in Starbucks. It doesn't require as much intense focus. I should talk about how it works. What kind of example should I use? I ought to include P's example of how he planned his business out. Though he tended to hyper-focus on the planning; he was having too much fun with the mind map! I should talk about hyper-focus and the dangers of tangents, maybe recommend using a timer...."

As you can see, my thoughts were flying at random. Rather than try to corral them into an orderly sequence, I created a mind-map and simply recorded them on paper as they came.

What is a Mind-Map?

A mind map is a simple paper and pencil way of **capturing your thoughts and getting them down on paper**, without having to agonize over organization and prioritizing.

It's a perfect method for ADDers because it encourages your mind to roam freely on a subject, without boxing yourself into a structure that you find tedious or constricting.

Here's how it works:

As an example, let's use the process of creating a teleclass on Mind-Mapping. This example can apply to planning the class, as well as writing the notes.

Starting with a standard 8 1/2'x11' piece of blank paper, I drew a one-inch **circle in the center** and wrote the phrase 'Mind-Mapping' in the circle.

Then, with "Mind-Mapping" as the subject, I considered different **topics** of mind-mapping. I gave each one a separate line coming out from the center circle, like **spokes** in a wheel. **Each spoke was labeled** with a phrase that described it. The spokes were:

- Why Mind-Mapping is valuable for ADD
- Describe Mind Mapping
- Using it for writing
- Using it for planning
- Environment

I started by taking one spoke at a time, recording **aspects** of the topic as **small lines** coming out of the main spoke.

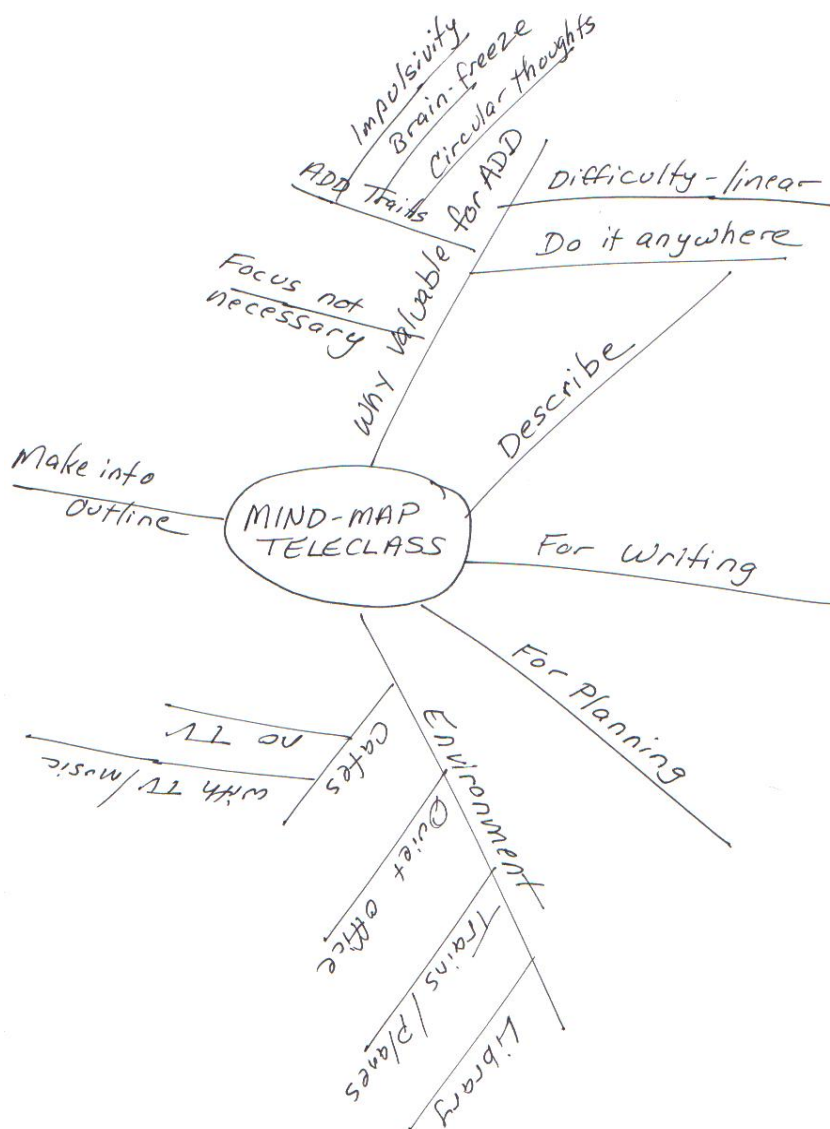
So the 'Why Valuable for ADD' spoke had lines labeled:

- Difficulty with linear outlines
- ADD traits
- Can do it anywhere
- Doesn't require perfect focus

As I added lines off of spokes, I immediately thought of **sub-points**, which I created as **smaller lines** coming off of them. For example, two of the lines off of the 'ADD Traits' spoke were

labeled 'Impulsivity' and 'Non-linear thinking.' And Non-Linear Thinking has its own small lines representing thoughts I had on that: Example of how our thinking works and Problem with forcing thoughts into conformity.

As I considered the ideas I wanted to include in the ADD Traits section , my mind leapt (in creative ADD fashion) to the idea of how important the Working Environment can be. When that happened, I simply moved to the 'Environment' spoke and listed my thoughts there as lines off the spoke: cafes, quiet office, background noise, other people present. Under 'Background Noise.' I listed smaller lines of music, TV, and conversation.



There's no way to do it wrong!

Repetition doesn't matter - It didn't matter that the idea of "conversation" could be listed either under "background noise" or "other people present." While mind-mapping, I could list it everywhere that seemed to make sense. Once I actually turned the mind-map into a final plan (or notes for the class), I would make sure I didn't repeat the same information twice.

Sequential Order doesn't matter - The order in which I put thoughts down doesn't matter either. The point is to capture your thoughts as they come, without worrying about doing it right. I don't worry about the beginning or end of the class I'm planning when I create the mind-map.

Neatness doesn't matter - You'll find your mind-maps may become glorious messes as your thoughts fly. At the point that it starts to become difficult for you to read, you might transfer a dense section to its own page, or print it out more neatly.

Writing Stage

Once I finished putting my thoughts down in the mind map, I was ready to start writing the notes that I would use for the class. Looking at the visual of the mind-map helped guide my decision of what order I would discuss the points in the class.

I began by taking any one of the spokes at random and writing about it, crossing off each topic line as I wrote to make sure she got them all. In some cases, I decided that some of sub-points didn't need to be included.

Once I had all the topics written up, I decided what order to put them in and what to include.

Only after most of the paper was written did I write an introductory paragraph and a conclusion.

Editing

Once all my thoughts were down on paper, I created graceful transitions from one topic to another. Finally, at the end, I created formatting. The class notes practically wrote themselves – and that created the format for the teleclass.

Mind-Mapping for Planning

You can use this same tool when planning, even when writing isn't needed. Remember, a **mind-map is just a tool for getting your thoughts down on paper**. That means you can use it for anything, from plotting out the steps of a project to creating a business strategy.

Here are some different ways my coaching clients have had successful break-throughs using mind-map techniques:

- Designing a client's website
- Creating a new business plan
- Planning a room addition
- Developing an action plan for job-hunting
- Plotting a discussion with child's teacher
- Writing a Personal Development Plan for the boss
- Developing a marketing plan
- Outlining a book proposal

Paper or Software

You'll do best with mind-mapping if you **use the method that feels easiest** and most natural to you. If you love working online (and won't get distracted by Internet surfing!), you'll like the **software** on www.mind-map.com.

CAUTION: *If you're under a deadline, that isn't the time to try to learn new software!*

Creating an Outline

Once you create your mind-map, you may want to turn it into a linear outline. This might be **to satisfy a reader** (such as a teacher, boss or investor). Or you may find the **intermediate stage** of outlining easier to translate your mind-map to the final paper or plan.

Example: Taking the mind-map that was created of the Mind-Map Teleclass, here is what a partial outline would look like:

Mind-Mapping Teleclass Outline

- I. Why an Important Tool
 - A. Trouble with Outlining
 - B. ADD Traits
 - 1. List of traits
 - 2. Circular thoughts
- II. What is a Mind Map
 - A. How it works
 - B. No way to do it wrong
 - 1. Repetition
 - 2. Sequential order
 - 3. Neatness

Critical Success Factors

Your Work Environment

If you really want to succeed in getting 'unstuck' in your thinking, consider where you've been most successful in writing, planning or study. You may have to think back to high school or college. Then, try to duplicate the environment where you do best. Odd as it may seem, your ADD brain may need a little bit of hubbub around you to focus best.

Where do you do your best work? Do you concentrate best in a cafeteria instead of a library? Are you restless in your isolated office? Do you get a lot done on the train to work, or in a doctor's waiting room?

Why do you work best there? Do you require silence... or can you stay focused better when there is conversation going on around you? Does background noise like the stereo, radio or TV make it easier to stay interested in your task?

Alone or in Company

Who is in the room with you when you concentrate the best on a difficult task? Is it a friend or colleague, or is it best to be surrounded by strangers who don't interact with you at all? Planning can be most productive when done with someone else; especially with someone whose skills complement your own. Sometimes a good team is when one person is more practical and the other more creative.

How about when you do your best creative work? Do you come up with the best finalized creative product when you can brainstorm ideas with a partner or group? Many writers find they are most productive with a writing partner.

Mind-Mapping with Others - When working with a partner or team, it is most useful to create a large mind-map where everyone can see it. Use a flip-chart and markers (available at any large office supply store like Staples or Office Max).

Practice with No Pressure

I've suggested mind-mapping to my clients when they've been under the gun for a deadline. But the best way to practice mind-mapping is when you're NOT under pressure. Just take a few moments and pick anything at all to create a mind-map for. Here are some random ideas to play with:

- Grocery shopping list
- Project plan
- Classified ad to sell your car
- Conducting a job hunt
- Considering different career options
- Rationale to persuade spouse to take a ski vacation

BREAK HABITS with RITUALS

Rituals are Essential for Changing ADD Habits

As ADD / ADHD adults, we usually have a number of tendencies and behaviors that cause us difficulty in our lives. These tendencies come as a result of the way our ADD brains function

when we're not paying conscious attention to monitoring exactly what we do. Although they vary from person to person, the most common negative ADD-related tendencies result in:

- Inertia getting started
- Poor follow-through
- Feelings of overwhelm or paralysis
- Disorganization and clutter
- Chronic lateness
- Difficulty planning and prioritizing
- Inability to create structure or stick to a plan
- Inability to focus on performing mundane, routine tasks
- Over-promising and under-delivering
- Forgetting to take necessary actions
- Tactless speech or inappropriate behavior

These unfortunate outcomes come about because of our habits.

What is a habit?

Habits are behaviors that we engage in habitually. They are our default behaviors. Very likely, we do them without consciously thinking about it. Sometimes, we don't even realize that we're performing a habit.

Example: Kitchen clutter - Sarah has a habit of leaving food or dishes out after she's used them rather than putting them away. This is unconscious on her part. She never consciously said to herself, *"I'm going to leave out this carton of milk so that it will rot, and let the used dinner dishes sit out so that the food gets all hard and crusty and difficult to wash."* Rather, she has an inattentive habit of forgetting to put them back right away.

Example: Lateness – Malcolm is chronically late in getting anywhere on time due leaving his previous location later he they should. ADDers have a variety of reasons for doing this, but Malcolm's reason is the common habit of trying to fit in "one more thing" before leaving. His habitual thinking is that this final activity will only take two minutes or

five minutes. As an ADDer with poor time sense, he is not in the habit of learning to observe and remember how long the activity would *really* take (a lot longer than five minutes!) He also is not in the habit of setting a reminder mechanism such as a timer to warn him when he must leave. So these behaviors – coupled with the ADD tendency to get distracted and forget to stay on track and leave on time – results in Malcolm’s being constantly late.

The good news about bad habits

Although these kinds of negative habits may sound achingly familiar, it’s really a positive thing to be able to pinpoint precisely what habitual behavior arises out of your tendencies. That’s because **habits are behavior, and behavior can change!**

ADD adults typically have a harder time than other people in changing bad habits and creating new ones. This is because we are less likely to:

1. observe ourselves and our behavior in any kind of systematic or analytical way;
2. remember to sustain attention on a new desirable behavior long enough to let it become a habit.

This is where rituals come in.

What is a ritual?

“Rituals,” as the term is being used in this course, are activities that we engage in deliberately and habitually, in order to help us accomplish a purpose. This purpose may be short or long-term. For ADDers, rituals allow us to more easily flow into another necessary activity by providing serenity, pleasure, focus, or balance. They often are created for their ability to be rewarding and motivating.

Why ADDers need rituals

Strategies of “conventional wisdom” help make most people more effective at life, but they often don’t seem to work for ADDers. This is not because the conventional strategies are wrong, but because they work against the flow of our brains.

A common example of this kind of conventional wisdom is the idea that you perform a duty *before* you get rewarded. As children, we’ve been brought up to hear, “eat your vegetables and

then you can have dessert,” or “finish your homework and *then* you can watch TV.” The promised reward is thought to be the incentive for performing the less desirable duty.

But as ADDers, if we can't get our brains into focus, we're not *able* to perform the necessary task. So the reward state is often necessary to get our brains into flow, in order to focus.

For ADD adults, rituals can provide many critical functions. The most common types of rituals for ADD coaching clients are:

- Morning ritual to start working on time
- Grounding ritual to plan the day ahead
- Mid-day rituals to perform routine maintenance tasks
- End of work-day ritual to tie up loose ends and create next day's plan
- Evening ritual to maintain order or clear clutter at home
- Before-bed ritual to prepare for leaving efficiently the next day
- Just-before-sleep ritual to reflect on success of strategies of the day

How Rituals Produce Habit Change

The carrot or the stick

Rituals work on the principle that “the carrot is better than the stick.” Imagine your ADD brain as a donkey that will work for food, but will dig in his heels and balk if he is beaten. Or consider it like a stubborn two-year-old who automatically says “no” when told what to do.

When faced with an activity that isn't interesting to us, trying to force our brains to focus simply doesn't work. Most ADDers need to somehow produce the brain chemicals that allow the neurotransmitters in our brains to shift and maintain focus more effectively.

Some of us require the pressure of a critical deadline to produce adrenaline that helps us focus. But relying on an adrenaline rush is a risky and stressful way to work. And it doesn't help maintain any kind of order or balance in a personal life.

Rituals that help our *flow* are far more productive in creating good habits.

Here's my own real-life example of how embracing a morning ritual turned my career around.

How reading the newspaper every morning helped me build my business:

Before knowing I was ADD, I left a 20+ year career in corporate management to start my own business as a consultant, trainer and executive coach. Without structure for the first time in my life, I found myself floundering, unable to overcome inertia to start my workday. Although I knew many marketing techniques to start generating business, without clients or accountability to anyone else, I couldn't get myself galvanized to do what was necessary.

I increasingly found myself sleeping late, avoiding going to my desk, and generally feeling guilty, unmotivated and unproductive.

Then, quite by accident, I read about adult ADD and recognized my own symptoms. Sure enough, I discovered to my great surprise that I was ADD. If I had never left the structure of a corporation, I may have never found out. Learning that I was ADD, I decided to get trained to coach others like myself. That's how I found out about the importance of rituals in breaking through inertia and overwhelm.

It started with my key question to myself:

“What did I really want to do when I woke up in the morning?” *What I craved doing was reading the newspaper while leisurely having coffee and a bagel in the café across the street. But I had felt too guilty about my lack of productivity to do that. Instead, mid-to-late morning, I half-heartedly sat at my desk and tried to force myself to do marketing activities.*

I learned that an important “getting started” strategy for me would be to intentionally take an hour first thing in the morning to read the newspaper, have my coffee, and flow into my workday. After I did that, I felt emotionally and mentally ready to start work. In fact, it felt so good that I had no problem waking up early in anticipation of doing my enjoyable ritual. Once I started getting clients, I began to deliberately scheduling them in the morning, and got up early enough to give myself that pleasant ritual hour.

This is how reading the newspaper, as a ritual and with full intention, helped me break through my barriers to build my business.

As ADDers, we need to flow into our day instead of forcing ourselves into it. This is especially true if you are not a “morning person,” or if beginning work feels abrupt and jarring.

Create Your Rituals Based on What You Need

ADDers have a variety of challenges that impede their effectiveness. Your ideal ritual should be designed to address your own particular challenges. Here are some examples:

Difficulty getting started due to inertia, not feeling motivated

Create a ritual around a flow activity that feels good to you.

This may be reading the newspaper, doing a crossword puzzle, listening to music or a morning talk show, checking a few specific websites, writing your blog, meditating or exercising.

Performing this ritual will get your neurotransmitters operating at best efficiency, improving your focus for the next task.

Keep the ritual confined to a finite time or specific, limited activity. Since the point of this ritual is to get you started on another activity, you don't want to pick something that will keep you hyper-focused on the ritual! Therefore, if your ritual involves reading, it should be something that has an end: a newspaper, article, or self-help book chapter rather than to continue reading a great novel that you won't want to put down. If you're watching TV, it should be confined to a specific show. Internet rituals should not involve general web surfing, but be tailored very specifically to visiting particular sites that won't have you getting lost in cyberspace.

Avoid choosing a ritual activity that you like too much. If you find a certain activity to be addictive, or one that typically sends you into hyper-focus, it defeats the purpose of the ritual. Always keep in mind that the purpose of the ritual is to help you get started on the obligatory activity to follow.

Use a timer to keep you from hyper-focusing or losing track of time. If the ritual doesn't have its own obvious cues to let you know when to finish, set a timer with a couple of transitional warnings for 10 minutes and 5 minutes before signaling you that it's time to quit. (The best timer for ADDers is the versatile "Invisible Clock." Check it out at http://www.thrivewithadd.com/products/useful_resources109 .)

Unfocused and inefficient work habits, not sure what to start doing

Create a ritual around planning and grounding your work day.

Depending on your own inclinations, this “planning” ritual may be first thing in the morning at your work site, last thing when you leave work the night before, or perhaps an evening activity at home. Your goal is to have planning out your workday become a regular habit! For your planning ritual, you’ll need to have quick access to your daily calendar, a realistic “to-do” list, and a sense of how long various work activities are likely to take*.

***PRE-STEP: Develop a time sense!** Without a realistic sense of how long things take to do, you’ll never be able to create doable to-do lists or plan a workable schedule. So, the most important first step is to develop your time sense. Continue to work on your Time Sense Exercise from Class 3.

Create an environment conducive to planning. Meeting your daily work goals depend on how well you plan your day, so setting the stage is important. ADDers’ ability to focus well is strongly influenced by factors such as environment, sound, visual cues, kinesthetic appeal, smell, sense of privacy, and sense of urgency versus relaxation. So think about the way you will most likely do best at planning out your day, in a way that you can do it ritually on a regular basis. Consider the following elements:

- **Location** – Do you think best in a totally quiet place, or in a public space such as a café, train, or waiting room? Many ADDers find they actually focus best when there is some activity going on around them, as long as they are not interrupted.
- **Food or drink** – You may do well with a particular snack or beverage as part of your ritual. If you do your planning in the morning, perhaps you’d want to do it over breakfast, or your morning coffee. When planning first thing in the morning at the office, you could incorporate the actual making of coffee, tea or espresso as part of your ritual. The aroma of brewing coffee may create a pleasant stimulation to get your mind flowing.
- **Music** – A certain kind of music may help you think better. If so, be sure to have it available and turn it on to “cue” your brain to get into planning mode.
- **Visual stimulation** – Some ADDers are very visual, and find they crave particular colors or types of pens to make notes with. Maybe there’s a certain kind of notebook that you want to have as your daily planner. If this is important to you, indulge yourself and get what you need.

Chronic lateness leaving for work in the morning due to disorganization

Create a ritual to prepare what you need the night before.

Consider all the factors that go into delaying you in the morning. These can be broken down into:

- Decisions to make
- Items to locate
- Activities to perform

As you address each of these, think about what you can do as part of a preparation ritual the night before.

- **Make decisions about clothing** – Decide what you'll wear the next day, check to see if it's clean and unwrinkled, and place it where you can easily grab it without having to look for it in the morning. If you need to prepare children to get dressed, help them to do the same with their clothing. (This is a good habit to teach kids to get into at an early age!)
- **Pack your carry-able items** – Determine what you'll need for the next day, and prepare your purse, briefcase or backpack. As part of this ritual, keep your calendar handy to check your meetings and appointments you have the next day to make sure you'll have the right paperwork with you.
- **Place typically "misplaced" items in one spot** – Do you often have to search for your keys, glasses, cell phone, or wallet before leaving the house? Create one designated spot near the door where you can habitually deposit these items – either when you come home, or as part of your nightly ritual. It can help to make a short check-list taped next to the spot to make sure you put everything there where you'll find it in the morning. This spot might be a small shelf, wall-basket, or place on a table. What matters is getting in the habit of placing your items there every night. You might also use this spot for letters to be mailed.
- **Prepare food for the next day** – If you take lunch or snacks with you, make it up the night before and put it in a bag in the refrigerator. Put the water, coffee and filter in the coffee-maker so that you'll just have to push a button to make your coffee in the morning.

Choose a time to perform this ritual habitually in an unstressed manner. Time yourself in performing these activities to determine how long they take in the evening. Try to pick a time when you'll be able to get in the habit of doing this every night. Use a timer, or perhaps a particular TV program to cue yourself that it's time to do the ritual.

Create strategically placed check-lists. You may need visual reminders to make sure you cover all the bases. If so, write out check lists that you can keep taped to the refrigerator, closet door, front door, inside your bag, or wherever you need to.

Missed appointments and deadlines due to forgetfulness and disorganization

Create a ritual to organize your calendar.

Organized people do NOT rely on memory! People who appear organized and goal-oriented are usually meticulous about recording appointments and due-dates in a calendar, and checking their calendar regularly to stay on track.

Choose one calendar that appeals to you. If you are recording appointments in more than one calendar, unless you are synchronizing them at least once a day, you're almost guaranteed to miss something. Base your calendar decision on a few key variables:

- **Electronic or paper** – You've probably learned that unless a tool appeals to you, you won't use it. PDA's (Palm Pilots) are useful for carrying a great amount of information, but if you hate electronic devices, you'd be better off with an old-fashioned paper date book or week-at-a-glance calendar.
- **Where you'll use it** – If you make appointments when you're out of the office, size and weight may be a primary consideration of your calendar. If it's too heavy or inconvenient to carry with you, you'll never have it when you need it.
- **What you'll use it for** – You're probably already accustomed to writing down work-related meetings and appointments. How about doctor's appointments, social engagements, professional meetings, due dates of projects and assignments? Microsoft Outlook is a great way to get all of your appointments and meetings in one place, complete with reminder systems, and various ways to view your schedule. It syncs up with PDA's. You'll have to remember to sync it regularly with your PDA if you want to have an updated calendar with you away from your computer. It can be useful to use Outlook when you're at your computer, but print out the weekly calendar and carry it with

you. Then you can just hand-write new entries and input them into Outlook when you're back at the computer.

Set a time when you'll put all necessary information into your calendar on a daily basis. This is where your ritual comes in. It might be every evening, perhaps on a train ride home from work. Or when you're watching the evening news on TV. The key is to create a habit of checking all sources where you may have written down date-related or reminder information, and entering it into your calendar.

- **Enter personal promises to others into the calendar:** Consider family and personal commitments as "appointments" with yourself and enter them into the calendar too. For example, if you promised your partner that you would pick up something on the way home (and you typically forget to do so), enter the reminder in the calendar.
- **Organizing Hint:** Get a small, pocket-sized notebook to jot down ideas, reminders, and thoughts that should be put into your calendar. Make a point of always having this with you in your purse, pocket or car. Eliminate the habit of writing reminders on Post-It Notes, napkins, and miscellaneous scraps of paper!

Poor focus and careless errors on mundane tasks, due to short attention span

Create a ritual to boost your focus.

Give your focusing mechanism a boost when your attention is lagging by scheduling an intentional break in your daily work activity.

Schedule mundane or tedious tasks around a break time. Become attuned to your own attention span for particular kinds of work. Schedule a ritual that will increase your focus, such as meditation or exercise. Brisk exercise of even a few minutes will boost your adrenaline to improve focus. If you work in an office building and can't take get to a gym, perhaps you could run up and down a flight of stairs.

Use a timer to remind you when to take a break. You may not be aware that your attention has drifted. A timer can alert you to pay attention to what your mind was doing. You may find that you don't remember what you've just read, or that your mind was on something else in the middle of calculating figures. Time to take a break!

Mini-rituals for everyday life

Rituals need not always have multiple steps or be complex. They can be quick solutions to frustrating situations that you encounter throughout your day.

There are a number of typical ADD challenges that we face as part of everyday life. Developing customized quick, mini-rituals to address your particular needs can incorporate better habits to overcome your challenges.

Here are a few rituals that worked for some of my ADD coaching clients. You may want to try them as they are, or tweak them to make them most effective for you.

Rituals to overcome the problem of:

- **Leaving things behind when you leave a room** – Create a quick chant to say to yourself automatically as you leave a location, to remind yourself to stop, turn around, and check where you've been sitting to see if you've left anything behind.
- **Cluttering your home or office** – Do a “quick sweep” with your eyes of each space and surface of a room you've been in before going to bed, or leaving your office. Take ten minutes to put back what you've taken out, or return items to their place. This might be performed to fast music to make it more stimulating.
- **Leaving a messy kitchen after cooking or eating** – Put on your fast music, set a timer, and play “beat the clock” to get the dishes washed before the timer goes off. Or listen to books on tape or educational tapes while washing the dishes. Or multi-task: Why not try learning the basics of conversational French by listening to language tapes 15 minutes every night while washing the dishes!
- **Over-promising to your friends and family** – If you tend to say “yes” to every request, and are then unable to follow-through, develop a ritualized response to counter-act this tendency. Instead of automatically volunteering or saying YES, use a phrase like: *“This is a busy time. I'll check my calendar and get back to you.”*

Advice from the coach...

Count on some trial and error as you develop your own perfect ritual for different challenges.

Realize that it takes time and deliberate attention for a ritual to become a habit, so don't be discouraged if you forget to perform the ritual at first. Just create a system to remind yourself to perform the ritual.

If you find that you are not performing the ritual you designed, don't automatically assume the ritual was wrong. It may simply need some simple tweaking in timing, environment, reminder system or structure to work better for you.

***Example:** Frank decided on a ritual of preparation steps the night before, in order to get out of the house more quickly in the morning. He wanted to start his ritual at 11:30 at night, since he went to bed at midnight. But after a week, he had only performed the ritual once. In thinking back to what got in the way each of the other nights, he realized that he was really too tired at 11:30 to want to do the preparation. He also had not set any reminder to begin at 11:30. So instead of abandoning the ritual, he moved the timing forward to 10:00 PM, and used the 10:00 Evening News on TV as his cue to begin his preparations.*

Creating the right rituals are the most important strategies can have for developing successful habits! Consider working with a coach who specializes in working with ADD Adults, to get your rituals right and working for you.

See Practice Suggestion on the next page.....

PRACTICE

Mind-Mapping

See how you can use mind-mapping to help break down activities into steps, to get unstuck in writing, and to plan a sensitive conversation.

- Pick any simple activity that you're familiar with that has several steps, and create a mind-map of it. .
- Consider an activity or piece of writing that you will do in the near future. Create a mind-map as you plan it out. (To make this really helpful, next to each section or action step, write the number of minutes you anticipate it taking to do.)
- Use mind-mapping to plan out a conversation that is important to you. It might be a persuasive argument with your partner, or a difficult conversation that you need to have with someone at work. Use mind-mapping to think through your main "talking points."

Rituals

Consider a particular problem habit that you'd like to change.

- Create an Intentional Ritual of behavior that will help you create a new, better habit. In designing your ritual, ask yourself the following questions:
 - Does the ritual go with your own flow?
 - Does the ritual involve your senses in a way you find pleasant?
 - Do you have a reminder system set up to help you remember to perform the ritual?
- Every day record in your Intention Log whether you performed the ritual as you intended. If not, note what got in the way, or what aspect of the ritual was not ideal.
- Based on your results, tweak the ritual to make work best for you.

Be consciously aware of what you learn about yourself and your assumptions about what will and will not work for you.