

How to Thrive with Adult ADD / ADHD

by

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Class 8: ADD at Work

How are you *Really* Evaluated at Work

Anyone who has worked in an organization quickly learns that performing the responsibilities of your job is only part of the equation, when it comes to how well you're regarded at work. Another important factor is how well your boss and other influential people perceive you.

In this course, we'll discuss the **underlying aspects of work** that contribute to your success or failure in an organization.

ADD Traits and Performance Appraisals

People with ADD can be particularly affected by an organization's performance evaluation system in two ways:

1. They may not notice or pay attention to the "unspoken" rules of behavior that govern others' assumptions and perceptions, within the organization's culture.
2. They are more likely to have traits that negatively impact both the cost of their work, and how others perceive them on the job.

"Perception is Reality"

When you're being evaluated for a raise, promotion, bonus, or simply to keep your job, the only reality that counts is the way those doing the evaluating perceive you. Their perception is based on a combination of factors, including:

- The actual work you do
- The perceived value of the work you do
- The cost or downside of your work
- Your habits or tendencies that impact people's opinion of you
- The assumptions others have about you
- How well you fit into the organization's culture

Corporate Culture

Every organization has a culture, an unspoken way of being, speaking and behaving. The culture is simply “the way things are done around here.” It is most often unconscious and unspoken, simply taken for granted. The culture is what contributes to the feeling you get in an organization. You are more likely to feel comfortable in an organizational culture where your own personality is a good fit. Since it is human nature for people to hire others who are most like themselves, many organizational cultures are outgrowths of their founders' personalities and values.

“Office Politics”

Office politics simply refers to the acceptance of the reality of all of the above factors. Politics exist in all organizations, large and small. The extent to which an organization is seen as “political” is influenced by the degree of importance that is placed on all of the factors other than the work itself. This varies according to the culture of the organization, departments within the organization, and the personal assumptions of your boss.

Performance Evaluations

Some organizations create a formula to formally acknowledge the role of factors other than the work itself in evaluating an employee's performance.

For example, a large management consulting firm has specific guidelines that consultants are expected to follow in allocating hours towards self-improvement/training, community contribution, sales team contribution and recruitment. The assumption in the corporate culture is that spending time on these activities makes each consultant a better leader, and therefore, a more valuable contributor to the company. No matter how stellar consultants

are in their job ratings, if they do not put perform the assigned hours in these other activities, they cannot be given an “Outstanding” rating in the firm, and will not be promoted.

Other ways that organizations formalize their evaluations have to do with “Competencies,” the knowledge, skills and personal attributes that are required to perform a job at the highest level. Personal attributes are very much subject to interpretation, based on assumptions that people have about you.

“Unprofessional” and “poor attitude” are phrases that often show up in negative performance appraisals. These terms are not true personal attributes; rather, they are assumptions that a boss forms about an employee, based on their own interpretation of what they see, hear or experience. For example, an employee can be judged to have a “bad attitude” for being chronically late, or be considered “unprofessional” for habitually turning in paperwork with careless errors and misspellings.

Improving in your organization (besides doing well at the work itself) requires first gaining self-awareness of ways in which you may be “high-maintenance,” and then improving the organization’s perception of you by learning to manage others’ expectations.

Are You Considered “High-Maintenance?”

Defining High-Maintenance

High-maintenance is a term that operates on the concept that the costs of maintaining a particular employee are disproportionately high, compared to the value that the employee brings. Costs can be measured in terms of money, but in organizations, costs are more often a factor of time and morale. High-maintenance employees require a lot of extra time spent on them by their boss, teammates and Human Resources departments. If someone is a super-star performer in their organization, they may be able to get away with high-maintenance habits and behavior. But if the time required is cumbersome enough, people will start to question the real bottom-line worth of the individual who requires it.

How ADD Traits Can Make You High-Maintenance

There are many ADD traits that can contribute to someone gaining a high-maintenance reputation on the job.

Here are just a few examples:

- **Lateness** – Chronic lateness in arriving at work, turning in work products after the deadline, and being the last to show up for meetings causes consternation on the part of the boss, morale problems with co-workers, and time wasted waiting for you to show up. This is annoying to others.
- **Poor Follow-Through** – When your boss is unable to feel confident that you will get work done, with all loose ends tied up, he or she cannot delegate effectively. Your poor follow-through may force your boss into a micro-managing style that makes both of you uncomfortable.
- **Disorganization** – Disorganization for ADDers can show up in physical disorganization of space and information, and in a lack of organized habits.
 - You may have an embarrassingly messy work area, or are unable to lay your hands on information when it is needed, causing others to wait for you to locate it. When you appear disorganized, it keeps others from feeling assured that you are providing a quality output.
 - Organized habits include using a calendar to reliably record appointments, commitments and deadlines; and keeping track of directions and steps involved in your projects. Asking people the same thing numerous times because you didn't write down or save the information is high-maintenance behavior.
- **Poor Attention to Detail** – Misspellings or typos in written reports reflect badly on your boss and organization. The boss then has to waste time proof-reading your reports instead of being able to count on you to do it.
- **Over-promising / Under-delivering** – By committing to everything without really analyzing whether it is possible, you can be counted on to not deliver. This requires others to second-guess your decisions and judgment.
- **Inability to Prioritize** – Without prioritizing your time, you will be unable to complete anything at a high-quality level. You'll appear to be always busy, without accomplishing anything of importance. Hopelessly long TO-DO lists render your daily commitments meaningless. This lowers your credibility.

- **Overwhelm / Paralysis** - When you're feeling paralyzed, the world may fall to pieces around you, while you appear to not be reacting. Others will lose confidence in your ability to assess and handle the situation.
- **Missing Social Cues** – If you don't pay attention to the little nuances of communication and behavior in your organization's culture, you could be speaking and behaving inappropriately. This may reflect badly on your boss or team, or could create difficult personally awkward situations which others have to rectify.
- **Impulsivity** – Reacting to every new stimulus can quickly pull you off track, leading to poor decisions, lack of project completion and the need for your boss to periodically check up on what you're doing.
- **Need for Constant Stimulation** – The ADD need for stimulation and variety may mean an inability to focus on some of the mundane tasks required in just about any job.
 - Routine paperwork or maintenance may not be fun, but it's still your responsibility. When you avoid the boring aspects of your job, it requires others to keep after you, or pick up the slack. Avoiding the less exciting aspects of work makes you appear to not be a poor team-member.
 - If you seek social stimulation from co-workers, your chatting may be pulling other employees away from their work, thus creating a morale issue.
 - Internet-related activities can provide a quick stimulation, but too often lead to hyper-focus. Many ADDers become so addicted to web-surfing, chat rooms, or online games that they waste work hours and create resentment by co-workers.

General Solutions for Eliminating High-Maintenance Behavior

ADDers usually require customized strategies that are tailored to their particular traits and tendencies in order to successfully change habits. However, there are some basic strategies to consider as a start.

Observe yourself at work through others' eyes

Imagine if you had *yourself* as an employee.

Pretend you had no insight at all into this employee's attitude, motivation, or desire to do well. You could only base your assessment on what you see, hear and experience, within the context of the organization's needs and goals.

How would you like to have an employee on your team who usually showed up late, had to be constantly reminded to stay on track, needed to be told directions several times, forgot to come to meetings, turned in reports full of careless errors, avoided getting paperwork done and created morale issues on the team by seeming to "get away with" poor work habits.

Start with the most obvious solutions

What would you say to coach this employee if you knew nothing about ADD? You'd probably make the most obvious suggestions.

- Lateness – "Leave earlier / leave more time"
- Gets off track – "Use a reminder to keep you on track"
- Forgets project directions – "Write them down"
- Forgets meetings and appointments – "Put them in your calendar"
- Reports are full of typos and careless errors – "Proof read, run it through spell-check, get someone else to proof-read it"
- Avoids mundane tasks – "Make them less boring or find a way to get them done"

As someone with ADD, you know the solutions aren't really that simple. But start with the obvious solution and really ask yourself what – *exactly* – is keeping you from using that strategy. Really think about it and answer literally and truthfully. Then, with each roadblock you encounter, ask yourself the most obvious solution for you to overcome it. This can lead you to creating strategies that will make you more effective at work.

Break down your roadblocks and work backwards

You can arrive at your best strategies by considering what's stopping you, and working backwards. Eventually, you'll run out of roadblocks! That's where you start.

Example 1:

Problem: You are late for work every morning.

Solution: The most obvious suggestion would be to **leave your home earlier.**

- What's stopping you? (This will vary from person to person.) Suppose you answered that you got distracted in the morning.
- What would keep you from losing yourself in distraction? A timer, pre-set to go off at periodic intervals.
- What's stopping you from getting the timer? You keep forgetting.
- What will remind you to get the timer? A Post-It note on your home computer.
- What will remind you to put the note on your home computer? A phone message you'll leave for yourself.

Breaking down your thinking in this way, step by step, will lead you to a solution that would work for you.

Example 2:

Problem: You forget the steps involved in doing a project, and have to ask your boss several times.

Solution: It's most obvious to **write down the steps** as your boss gives them to you.

- What's stopping you? You don't have paper with you when the boss tells you about the project.
- Why don't you have paper with you? Either you didn't want to interrupt the boss to say you'd need to write it down, and you thought you'd remember it this time.
- Why didn't you want to tell the boss of your need to write things down? You thought he'd think less of you and would be impatient. (NOTE: This is a dangerous assumption! Instead, your boss would probably think *better* of you for practicing a common-sense, organized habit.)

Notice the ways your assumptions lead you astray.

Example 3:

Problem: You procrastinate on doing your expense reports, and are months behind on them.

Solution: The obvious solution is to **do them**.

- What's stopping you? You can't get yourself to do them.
- Why won't you do them? It overwhelms you to think of what a huge boring task it would be.
- What would make it less overwhelming? Do just one at a time.
- What's stopping you from doing just one every night? It's so boring.
- What would make it less boring? Doing them to music or TV.
- What stopped you from doing it to a TV show last night, as you planned? A friend called and distracted you, and then you forgot.
- What would stop the distraction of a friend calling? Don't answer the phone during the time you commit to do the expense report.

Make appointments with yourself to get things done, put the commitment in your calendar, and give the commitment the same priority that you would give to someone else.

Use tools and strategies for managing ADD traits

There are a few tools and strategies that can be used in multiple ways to make any ADDer more effective.

Useful Tools

Timer - An ideal timer for ADDers is one that is easy to use, can be set in advance to go off many times a day, has options of ringing and silent vibrating, and can be worn on your person wherever you are. I recommend the "Invisible Clock" for \$39. You can read about it on my website at http://www.thrivewithadd.com/products/useful_resources109.

Time Sense Exercise - Developing a time sense is a critical success factor in managing appointments and deadlines, prioritizing tasks, and staying out of overwhelm.

Calendar - Many ADDers somehow think they're going to remember every deadline and appointment, despite a lifetime of evidence to the contrary. Using a calendar to make appointments and write down commitments is a critical habit for career success. It doesn't

matter if you use a paper or electronic calendar system. But it's risky to have more than one calendar. If you use both a PDA and a PC to maintain your calendar, then sync daily.

Helpful Strategies for anyone with ADD / ADHD

Break down tasks into small steps

All tasks and projects should be broken down into small steps before beginning. It's best to get these down in writing. That way, you can really see the steps involved, plot them on your calendar, and check them off when they're completed. It's hard to stay overwhelmed by large projects when you break them down into their smallest parts.

Make daily commitments to yourself that you can keep

Long TO-DO lists that never get done will only serve to keep you feeling out of control. Instead, make a habit of grounding yourself daily by committing to doing only three-to-five actions that will move you forward on priority projects. It usually helps to lock in time on your calendar in which you will do these steps. If necessary, stay off of email and don't answer the phone during the specific blocks of time that you're working on them these steps.

Set aside time each day or week for maintenance activity

Keep on track with mundane activities such as filing, expense reports, equipment maintenance, status reports, or invoicing by setting a regular time in your daily calendar to do a little at a time. Use a timer to cue yourself on the daily start and stop time for these activities.

Delegate some tasks to others

If you're finding that a mundane task is taking up a disproportionate amount of your time and energy, and actually is keeping you from doing the more important parts of your job, consider ways to get someone else to do it. You might barter time or trade favors with a co-worker, or even hire someone by the hour. There may be someone in your office who would like to earn extra money in off-hours, or someone else that you know who could come in on weekends to help. Tasks that can be good candidates for outside delegation are filing, organizing, de-cluttering, and proof-reading. Consider interns for low-cost labor: they're motivated to get relevant work on their resume!

Examples:

- A commodities broker hires an assistant to coordinate documentation.
- A real-estate broker hires a data entry person to enter administrative information into her home office computer to create a mailing list.
- A home remodeling contractor hires a college student with handyman skills for the simpler parts of a renovation job.
- A consultant hires a secretary at the firm to spend an extra half-hour after work proof-reading her correspondence.

Now that you've seen some effective tools and strategies, ask yourself: What's getting in the way of using these solutions right away? Then take the necessary actions to act on them!

Managing Others' Expectations

People who are considered leadership material, good team members, and reliable employees are not necessarily those who are the most skilled at their jobs. They almost always ARE skilled in managing the expectations of others. By mastering the art of expectation-management, you simply are taking steps to make sure that your boss and organization experience no unpleasant surprises coming from you or your areas of responsibility.

Proactive Communication

An important way of ensuring no surprises is to consistently take steps to keep necessary people in the loop regarding the status of your projects. This may mean periodic updates, immediate emails or voicemails about changes in delivery date or price, or check-ins with your boss when you have to make an unexpected decision.

To be considered a proactive communicator, it's necessary that YOU take the first step in informing others – not waiting until they ask you!

Avoid Avoidance

ADDers often have a tendency to procrastinate or avoid volunteering news that might cause discomfort and confrontation.

Don't wait until the due date or deadline to let someone know that your part of the project will not be ready in time. Giving a "heads up" as soon as you realize there will be a delay will win you points. In fact, this is so important that if you do it consistently, you'll gain a positive reputation for being honest and proactive, even when you have trouble meeting your deadlines.

It also helps to be proactive in letting your boss know about anything that will affect your work. This can mean anything from the severe illness of a family member that may require you taking sudden time off, to letting the boss know that you are dyslexic and are functionally unable to do proof-reading.

Delaying communication to key people about difficult or awkward situations will create unpleasant surprises and could reflect badly on you.

***Example:** Alexis's mother was very ill in another state and was due for serious surgery the next week. Alexis was afraid to mention this to her boss, and instead, called in sick the day of the surgery from the out-of-state hospital. Plans that had been in the works for weeks that required Alexis's presence had to be cancelled. If Alexis had been upfront about her need to be absent, substitute arrangements could be made instead of inconveniencing a lot of people.*

***Example:** Fred was dyslexic, but was afraid to let his new boss know this. As a corporate trainer, Fred had to create training manuals and write on flip charts. He had gained a reputation of low credibility and carelessness for himself and the training department because of his many spelling, grammar and typing errors. If he had simply let his boss know that someone else would need to proofread his work, she would not have had to hear embarrassing remarks about Frank's "unprofessionalism" from others in the company.*

Communicate for Understanding and Clarity

There is enormous potential for misunderstandings in communication between people of differing styles of thinking and communicating. In particular, those who are big-picture intuitive

thinkers (most people with ADD) and those who think in more detailed, sequential and logical ways can reach different conclusions from hearing the same message.

Make sure your listener is keeping up with you - ADDers make leaps of intuition in their minds, and may neglect to “walk” their listeners through a more sequential process that would clarify how they reached their conclusions or ideas. This leads non-intuitive thinkers to conclude that the ADDer’s thinking is disorganized. If you’re the one doing the speaking, it would help to ensure that the listener is following your line of thought correctly. Ask the listener if he/she is following you, or if you could explain it better.

Be careful not to operate on assumptions - Because we may not tend to think as analytically, we don’t realize all the assumptions that could be made from a simple statement. If you’re giving directions, make sure you’ve thought through all the inferences that could be made. If you’re listening to directions, paraphrase or probe for clarity about what you’ve just heard to make sure you understand what the speaker meant to convey.

Example:

Boss: *From now on, we have to make sure the Jackson Company is kept apprised of everything that might affect their delivery date.*

Employee (probing for clarity): *Should we let them know, for example, if the production manager is sick one day? In that case, we wouldn’t know right away if the date would be affected or not.*

Boss: *Well, not down to that level of detail. Let’s keep it to factors that we know will affect them.*

Pay attention to details when communicating - We often gloss over details, and can leave out important bits of information when communicating. This shows up both in speaking and in writing. You might ask a detail-oriented person to read over any important information correspondence if you have a tendency to miss things.

TIP: Put written correspondence through your own test of “What would I want to know if I were the reader?”

The Danger of Assumptions

There's a common expression that the word "ASSUME," when divided into two parts, makes an "ASS" of "U" (you) and "ME."

Where Assumptions Come From

We see the world through the lens of our own eyes. That is, we assume things about situations and other people based on what we believe to be "normal," as a result of our own style and experience.

***Example:** Jay's cubicle was on the corridor to his boss's office. The boss walked by Jay's cubicle many times a day, yet never stopped to say hello or to chat. Jay assumed that the boss doesn't like him, which became a source of troubled rumination for him. One day, to his surprise, the department head commented how highly Jay's boss had spoken of Jay's work. Jay was then forced to examine his assumption more analytically. He realized that his boss was a quiet person who rarely made small talk, and didn't seem to stop and say hello to anyone if the conversation wasn't related to work. The boss was an introvert, and was simply acting consistently with the introvert style. This behavior had nothing to do with the boss's feelings towards Jay.*

The assumptions you make say more about you than about the other person!

ADD and Assumptions

One danger of having a mind that creatively leaps into tangents and follows new trains of thought is that we are prone to make a lot of assumptions based on very spotty evidence. Assumptions are not necessarily true. Because they're usually not done on a conscious level, we operate on our assumptions as if they are true. This can cause problems and misunderstandings in organizations.

Attribution Theory – People attribute motives to others' behavior when that behavior doesn't make sense to them. So, if your boss and co-workers decide that your lateness, errors and poor memory are a result of indifference, poor attitude and insensitivity, they are making an assumption about you. Without knowing anything to the contrary, they will treat you as if their assumptions were true – and rate you accordingly.

Example: *Melissa had a poor memory for things that she heard, if they didn't relate directly to something important to her at the time. In a meeting, she heard that a new procedure was being implemented in her department for submitting information. She forgot this, and submitted her information the old way. Her boss assumed that she wasn't paying attention. This wasn't true; in fact, Melissa had even taken notes on the new procedure in the meeting. But her ADD brain didn't "retrieve" this information when the time came to submit procedures a week after the meeting.*

Solution: *Melissa could tell her boss that she'd always had a problem with retrieving information from memory, to assure him that she had been paying attention. Or, she could determine for the future how to put reminders of new information in a place that she'd see it when it mattered. For instance, if she knew she had to pull up a certain address to submit information, she could "flag" that address with a reminder about the new procedure.*

How Your Own Assumptions Hurt You: Focusing on the Wrong Things

The very nature of ADD means that we pay attention selectively. That is, when we're interested in something, we pay attention and remember it. When we're not very interested, or feel neutral, we're likely to not notice, or forget, even when the information is important.

Confusing Your Interest with Importance - It's all too easy to assume that the aspects of your work environment or job that you noticed and remembered are the most important. Meanwhile, it's easy to neglect to focus on what's really important to your organization or customers. You can combat this tendency by proactively checking with your boss periodically to make sure you're focusing on the right things.

Sacrificing Timeliness in Pursuit of Perfection - People who have perfectionist tendencies are likely to feel that they are doing things "right," and that anything less than perfect is "wrong." In focusing on the quality of your work being perfect, you may be spending too much time on aspects of the job that don't warrant it in the eyes of your organization. Even worse, you may miss deadlines or cause bottlenecks if your part of the process is taking too long while you obsess over perfection.

Signs that your perfectionist tendencies might be getting in your way are when others at work suggest that you really don't need to take so long on details, or when you know that you spend

much longer actually working on reports or production than your peers. A timer set to go off at 15 or 30-minute intervals can be helpful to break into your perfectionist hyper-focus.

Not Paying Attention to How you Relate to Others - Everyone has a different personal behavior style. Common ways people differ in their orientation are being:

- Task-oriented or People-oriented
- Assertive or Non-Assertive
- Big-picture or Detail-minded
- Introverted or Extroverted
- Preferring quick decisions, or thorough exploration

If you behave strongly as if you assume that your style was the RIGHT way, and not notice if you're rubbing people of a different style the wrong way, you may find yourself at odds with your co-workers. They may not say anything to your face (especially if they're non-assertive!), but will instead complain to your boss.

Behavioral styles have to do with personality, and there is no style that is particularly ADD. But ADDers may be less likely to pay attention to style differences, and therefore, don't modify their approach accordingly. People who rise to leadership in organizations are those who can practice flexibility and modify their personal style to fit the situation.

- An excellent book on personal style in the workplace is: [Personal Style & Effective Performance](#) by Merrill and Reid.

Should You Mention ADD at Work

Requesting Accommodations

Before mentioning your ADD at work, especially in relation to difficulties you're having, carefully consider the environment, culture, and individual that you'd be mentioning it to. Although the law requires certain accommodations to be made for you, demanding such accommodations may not be in your long-term best interests. When it comes to your career, asking for special treatment may win you the battle but at the risk of losing the war.

Stereotypes and Attitudes

Although Adult ADD has gained a lot of attention in the media, the great majority of people still do not understand it. Or they may think they understand it, but only in the light of stereotypes or individuals that they know who are really struggling. So labeling yourself could be the cause of even more negative assumptions about you. There are many people who believe that ADD automatically means difficulty in school, hyperactivity, disorganized thinking, irresponsibility and inability to function in an organization.

“John is ADD; pass it on!” - Like the childhood game of telephone, if you tell one person one thing, it will be distorted and exaggerated with each new telling. Unless you are completely open and candid about your ADD in a way that is not ashamed, but simply matter-of-fact about both positive and negative qualities, you may have people believing all kinds of distorted rumors about what ADD means to your work performance. This misinformation could hurt you down the line if it affects your reputation in your industry as you look for other jobs.

Alternatives for Communicating Your Needs

Instead of labeling yourself ADD, you might state to your boss how you work best. Or, simply present your difficulties as a lifelong challenge, without the label. Try to avoid presenting your traits as a problem without suggesting a solution.

Examples:

Negative Presentation of Problem	Positive Suggestion with Solution
<i>I can't work if I have to hear others' conversations.</i>	<i>I find it difficult to focus when I can hear others' conversation. <u>I'd work best if I could wear headsets to keep out distracting noise.</u></i>
<i>I'm just not able to get anywhere on time.</i>	<i>I am working on improving my poor time sense to make sure I get places on time. <u>I'd appreciate feedback if you think I'm cutting it too close.</u></i>
<i>I shouldn't be doing this kind of work; I'm bad with details.</i>	<i>It's hard to maintain my focus on details for large blocks of time without making errors. <u>I'd do better if I can schedule my detail work into short periods over a longer period of time.</u></i>

Good and Bad Environments for Career and Job

Career Choice

If you're in the stage of evaluating career choices, find out what's involved in the typical day-to-day job that you'd be doing. You may have only a vague idea of what the actual activities entail in a particular career. In many careers, if you don't do well at the entry-level position, you won't rise to a higher level in an organization. For example, you might think you'd enjoy a career in Human Resources because you like to work with people. But most entry-level HR jobs involve lots of administration detail that may not be your strong suit.

ADD-Friendly Careers

There are many industries and careers where those with typical ADD traits do well. These are areas where there is variety, excitement, challenge and room to practice your passion.

Examples of areas where certain ADD traits would serve you well are:

- Entertainment Industry: TV production, acting / performing – deadlines, excitement, creativity
- Medical Emergency work: doctors, nurses, EMT – excitement and high stakes
- Police work and Firefighting – excitement and risk
- Military - combat excitement; career military provides structure; frequent moves
- Advertising – tight deadlines and creativity
- Sales – excitement of sales “wins” and competition
- Trial Law – excitement of being “on-stage” during trial; competition of winning
- Teaching / training – being in front of classroom, providing high value
- Public speaking / facilitation – unpredictable audience interaction
- Consulting – frequent travel, client changes, competition, deadlines
- Arts – creativity, ability to hyper-focus on your talent, positive excitement of finding/pleasing audience
- Technology; problem-solving, program design – intellectual challenge, creativity
- Journalism – deadlines and creativity

Most of the above careers involve a regular amount of excitement or adrenaline-rush because of unpredictability, risk, and the positive pressure of deadlines. But if you tend to shut down under pressure, a career with constant deadlines would be terrible for you!

The stereotype that ADDers should avoid detail work isn't true if the work is in an area where you excel. There are successful ADD accountants, insurance brokers, administrators, researchers and proof-readers.

The key to doing well in an organization lies in how *your* traits and personality fit in with the job requirements and environment.

Toxic Environments for You

No matter how you may be willing to “pay your dues” to rise in a particular career, there are certain kinds of job situations that are likely to end in failure. Here are some red flags to watch out for.

Boring Job – You will lose focus if your job requires a great deal of time spent on tasks that bore you. Without focus, you're likely to make careless errors.

Micromanaging or Critical Boss – You'll probably do best when you have some degree of leeway in designing the way you do your work. A critical, perfectionist boss constantly looking over your shoulder is likely to shut you down.

Culture Clash – If you feel terribly uncomfortable in the organization culture where you work, it will be hard for you to relax enough to get into a positive flow with your work. Although it's not necessary for you to be a perfect fit in your culture, you should avoid environments where you feel like you're in a straight-jacket.

When interviewing for a job, listen to your intuition and your gut. But keep in mind that you can't always judge an entire organization culture by how you feel in one department or with one interviewer.

You can potentially succeed in any career and organization where you are able to practice what you enjoy and do well. Just learn to work effectively with the ADD traits that interfere with smooth work in an organization. Coaching can help!

PRACTICE

These suggested assignments are optional.

Do you have habits that make you high-maintenance at work? If so, list them.

- Take one habit or trait on your list and ask yourself “WHY” you don’t do the most obvious solution to break the habit.
- Working backwards to break down your roadblocks, continue to ask yourself why until you reach the real answer of what’s stopping you. This should help you reach your solution. *Use the examples on pages 6-8 as a model.*

What kinds of communications are you avoiding at work?

- Write out the pros and cons of continuing to avoid this proactive communication.
- If it makes sense to communicate, create an Intentional Strategy for when and how you’ll communicate your message.
- Update your Intention Log as to whether or not you followed through, or what got in your way.

What assumptions are you operating under, regarding other people’s thoughts and motivations?

- Considering one individual about whom you have a specific assumption, ask yourself:
 1. What is your proof or evidence concerning the assumption?
 2. How can you determine if your assumption is correct?
- If it is *not* correct, how will you operate differently with that person?