

BEHAVIORAL STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING ADHD AS AN ADULT

PRACTICAL TOOLS FOR IMPROVING FOCUS, ORGANIZATION, AND PRODUCTIVITY

Living with ADHD as an adult can be challenging, but small changes in daily habits can make a significant difference. Medication can be helpful for many people, but behavioral strategies are equally important for long-term success.



1 CREATE EXTERNAL STRUCTURE



- Use a planner, calendar, or scheduling app
- Keep all appointments and reminders in one place
- Set alarms for important tasks and transitions
- Use sticky notes or visual reminders where you will see them
- Establish routines for mornings, evenings, and workdays

Remember: Don't rely on memory—rely on systems.

2 BREAK TASKS INTO SMALLER STEPS



Large tasks can feel overwhelming and lead to procrastination.

Instead of:

✗ "Clean the house"

Try:

- ✓ Gather supplies
- ✓ Pick up living room
- ✓ Load dishwasher
- ✓ Vacuum one room

Ask yourself: "What's the next smallest step I can take?"

3 USE TIME MANAGEMENT TOOLS



People with ADHD often experience "time blindness," making it difficult to estimate how long tasks take.

Helpful tools include:

- Timers
- Phone alarms
- Smart watches
- Visual countdown timers

Try the Pomodoro Method:

- 1 Work for 25 minutes
- 2 Take a 5-minute break
- 3 Repeat 4 times
- 4 Take a longer break

4 REDUCE DISTRACTIONS



At Home:

- Turn off unnecessary notifications
- Keep workspaces uncluttered
- Use noise-canceling headphones
- Work in a designated area

At Work:

- Close unnecessary browser tabs
- Put your phone out of reach
- Schedule focused work periods
- Use "Do Not Disturb" settings

5 PRIORITIZE TASKS DAILY



Start each day by identifying:

- ★ One Most Important Task (MIT)
- ★ Two to three secondary priorities

Avoid creating unrealistic to-do lists.

Focus on progress, not perfection.

6 BUILD CONSISTENT ROUTINES



Routine reduces the need for constant decision-making.

Examples:

- Same wake-up time
- Consistent medication schedule
- Dedicated time for bills and paperwork
- Evening preparation for the next day

The more automatic a task becomes, the less mental energy it requires.

7 USE BODY DOUBLING



Many adults with ADHD focus better when another person is present.

Examples:

- Work alongside a coworker
- Study with a friend
- Join virtual co-working sessions
- Have someone sit with you while completing difficult tasks

The goal isn't conversation—it's accountability.

8 MANAGE EMOTIONAL OVERLOAD



ADHD can affect emotional regulation.

Helpful strategies:

- Pause before responding
- Take short movement breaks
- Practice mindfulness or deep breathing
- Use self-compassion when mistakes happen
- Identify triggers for frustration and overwhelm

9 TAKE CARE OF YOUR BRAIN



Healthy habits support ADHD symptom management.

Prioritize:

- ✓ Consistent sleep
- ✓ Regular physical activity
- ✓ Adequate hydration
- ✓ Balanced nutrition
- ✓ Limiting excessive alcohol and substance use

Even small improvements in sleep can significantly improve attention and impulse control.

10 CELEBRATE WINS



Many adults with ADHD spend years focusing on what they haven't accomplished.

Instead:

- ★ Track completed tasks
- ★ Recognize progress
- ★ Reward yourself for meeting goals
- ★ Focus on strengths such as creativity, problem-solving, resilience, and adaptability

WHEN TO SEEK ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

Consider speaking with a mental health professional if ADHD symptoms are causing significant difficulties with:



Work or school performance



Relationships



Finances



Organization and daily functioning



Anxiety, depression, or low self-esteem

Behavioral strategies, coaching, therapy, and medication can often work together to improve quality of life.

KEY TAKEAWAY



ADHD is not a lack of intelligence or motivation. It is a difference in how the brain manages attention, time, and organization. Building supportive systems and routines can help you **work with your brain—not against it.**



CARDINAL
BEHAVIORAL HEALTH
Guiding You to a Better Tomorrow



270-202-8669

www.cardinalbh.com