



YOUR KINDLE NOTES FOR:

## The Gift of Adult ADD: How to Transform Your Challenges and Build on Your Strengths

by Lara Honos-Webb

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### 188 Highlights

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 1

If you want a different future, you have to change your perception of what you actually see now.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 2

Changing the way you see yourself will change you and your life. Don't allow yourself to be distracted or derailed by what you see around you now.

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No. Again, push yourself to find ways that you can both honor your ADD and raise your standards. There is no reason you can't do both. In practice, as you stop trying to cram yourself into a mold that doesn't work for you, you'll move from simply fulfilling performance demands toward becoming a genius in your arena of interest.

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Whereas most people have a "little general" or an "inner CEO" in them that directs, controls, and organizes their lives, people with ADD are driven instead by impulses, whims, and emotions.

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Be wary of any professional who tells you to try medications in order to confirm a diagnosis of ADD. Because they are universal performance enhancers, ADD medications can "work" for many adults who don't have ADD.

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Adults with ADD have higher rates of divorce, job changes (Barkley 2000), and drug and alcohol use than the average adult population (Lamberg 2003).

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The way out of despair and shame is to find what you do well and focus on that. By building your life around strengths rather than patched-up weaknesses, you can help your greatest gifts find expression.

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ADD adults are often wildly inappropriate and irreverent. They can be the funniest, most interesting people we know. While many of us struggle with shyness, people with ADD are uninhibited, the loose cannons in the crowd.

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the gift lies in an ability to go beyond business blabber to get straight to personal connections—an ability that helped him build Kinko's into a business he then sold for 2.4 billion dollars.

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These adults with ADD had minds like da Vinci and Michelangelo, minds that synthesized information from many domains, minds that didn't limit these adults to a single profession or identity. These were people who had chosen not to follow trends, people who had chosen instead to march to the beat of their own drum, seemingly indifferent to the approval—or lack thereof—of others.

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As an adult with ADD, it's important to not only honor your whims, passions, and intuition, but also to train your capacity for attention.

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A Japanese proverb tells us, "All vision and no action is a dream, while all action and no vision is a nightmare."

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If the bulk of your time is spent staring at spreadsheets and reconciling accounts and this isn't something you're passionate about, your ADD energy is likely to be a curse.

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The buzzwords of today are inventiveness, adaptability, and creativity—the very gifts of ADD.

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Even the low tolerance for boredom that got the ADD child into trouble in school can be useful as an adult—a perpetual quest for excitement can keep an adult on the leading edge of the ever-changing digital world.

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Who You Are Is Enough For an adult with ADD, the key to success is to find the courage to be who you are. This means shaping your life to fit your impulsiveness, distractibility, high energy, and need for stimulation.

Don't change yourself to fit a world that others have created; rather, create your own world to be the perfect match for your strengths and weaknesses.

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For example, ADD people often have too many interests to fit easily into a narrow job. When you can't find a job description that fits who you are, create your own job. A theme we will return to throughout the book is that what initially appears to be a distraction will often end up being an essential component to creating your own path.

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I've seen adults go from emotional to clear and focused, from scatterbrains to controlled forces to be reckoned with.

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I have observed that, in some cases, as individuals became less eccentric and began to conform more to societal values, they gave up various passions.

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I find some of these changes disturbing. It is impressive to see a person transformed by medication, to see a person become like another—indeed a different—person. What is worrisome is that as these individuals become more like other people, they also seem to become less like themselves.

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The deeper philosophical questions that lie behind medications reach toward the very definition of what it means to be human;

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However, the argument that stimulant medications have specific effects for people with ADD is debatable, with conflicting evidence on both sides

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Where Have All the Gifts Gone? Another concern with regard to medication is that highly effective medications may derail people from following careers or callings well-suited to dreamy adults with high needs for stimulation.

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Give yourself permission to jump into any arena that is a great match for your interests, needs, and skills. If you do, your entire life will change.

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Stay where you are now, but start to bring your passions into your life in small ways. Then begin to integrate your personal style into your current work

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For many people with ADD, simply breaking free from the nine-to-five mold can provide a lot of relief—even when they continue to do the same job and work the same number of hours. A flexible working schedule can be an easy way to reduce the tedium of the “same old, same old.”

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Depression can be your body’s way of telling you that you are out of your sweet spot; this book contains many activities to help you discover where your passion meets your purpose.

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shape your world by bringing your gifts into the workplace. Start by taking seriously the primary needs of ADD:  
To be constantly stimulated To feel excitement To change your pace often To be able to innovate To create structure rather than follow others

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Why the World Needs ADD Adults

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Because the workplace often evokes memories of school, many adults with ADD bring wounded feelings to work every day.

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For one thing, knowing you could do and be more can lead to an enduring agony.

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Many ADD adults have internalized negative messages that no one actually ever said to them. They may have started saying harsh things to themselves after constantly experiencing trouble and unrelenting failure. These beliefs can cause more trouble than the ADD itself.

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One reason ADD adults often overlook details is because they are more interested in highly stimulating, big ideas.

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A constant need for stimulation makes slowing down to review work—work you're probably now very familiar with—feel like torture.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 56

You're stimulated by emotions and connection—a distant voice that is just reciting information rather than trying to connect with you makes it hard for you to focus on the words spoken.

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Be a Roving Reporter Pretend that you're an investigative journalist—imagine you'll have to go back and write a story on what the person is telling you. This will help focus your attention on details and keep your mind occupied. Like a reporter, get the information you need by asking who, what, when, where, and why. These questions will help you gather the details necessary to fully follow directions and put a plan into action.

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Repeat Words Back Challenge yourself to find key phrases or words to repeat back to the person talking.

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For example, you might choose to work for yourself rather than an employer, or you may seek greater alignment with your passions.

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Remember, too, that failure can serve to bring you into better alignment with your greatest gifts and passions.

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ADD adults are often forced by failure to find what they love.

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But he is a genius, too, in the sense that psychologist James Hillman uses the term in his “acorn theory” (Hillman 1996). Hillman writes that every single person has a gift; however, this gift may be beaten out of us by conformity and control by others. Hillman suggests that a person becomes a genius to the extent that she stays in alignment with her greatest gifts.

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One of Paul's mantras is "You don't have to be good at everything; you just have to be really good at something." This is consistent with James Hillman's acorn theory, that our whole development can be understood in terms of who we will become.

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ADD adults often read the inner experience of others moment by moment, changing the content of their conversation to reflect these perceptions.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 68

Funny in the way of many ADD adults, class clowns whose adult pursuits and interests are often highly unpredictable and may unashamedly challenge social roles and norms.

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His self-deprecating humor helps to create the charisma that almost all ADD experts recognize as common to ADD adults.

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His constant refrain is "You do not have to be good at everything like they tell you in school. You just have to be very good at one thing." These words, a comfort to any person with ADD, reflect the central theme of Paul Orfalea's life: find your passion and pursue it.

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Because adults with ADD constantly crave new experiences, maintaining a long-term relationship can be a struggle even without this burden of steady criticism.

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Expert BS Detector Another reason adults with ADD tend not to listen—or at least look like they aren't listening—is because they can see when a person isn't totally in alignment with her words.

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Indeed, it may be that the spaciness and dreaminess of ADD are due to a vivid inner world that is more than a match for the real world in intensity.

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In terms of the motivating force of future memories, Steve told me that, because these vivid images seem so very real, once he has experienced a future memory he blots out everything else.

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Even if you are not artistic in the formal sense, ADD adults bring this element of creativity to everything they do, in both their work and their relationships. Creativity has been termed a form of divergent thinking, meaning it opens up possibilities rather than nailing them down with rigid definitions (McCrae 1987).

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Write out a question you would like to find a creative answer to.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 103

We all know impulsiveness has a dark side. But how much of this dark side is actually caused by tension between the expression and repression of impulses? Impulsiveness gets a bad name because it often goes hand in hand with addictive behaviors.

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Adults with ADD are more likely to jump at the ideas that flash through their mind without fully examining possible risks.

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This brings us to another ADD symptom: impatience. Impatience is a hallmark of the ADD adult. You may be crippled by boredom, irritated by delays, totally incapable of delaying gratification.

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Fantasies can reveal directions for healing and personal development by showing you needs and wants that you may not fully admit to yourself.

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This example reveals a deeper point—fantasies have a truth of their own. We think of fantasies as by definition false. But fantasies aren't concerned with true or false, they're concerned with creation. Fantasies guide you in creating reality, not in reflecting it. ADD gives you lots of fantasies. These can distract you, but they can also give you the power to create a new world rather than repeat your past. The symptom is tied up with the gift.

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Let your mind wander, and say to yourself, “What I really need now is…”

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 106

If you get an answer that you don’t like, write it down.

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When you give expression to your artistic side, you free up energy that can feed the rest of your life. Because repressing or denying your creativity sucks up your life force, just unleashing this energy can change your life.

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He rules by his gut, not his head. He shared a powerful example of this with me: “When I read the first few lines of *The Power of Now*, I got a tingling sensation. I knew I would publish this book and it would be big. I know within seconds or minutes if I will publish something or work with someone.” Working from quick instincts rather than a laborious attention to details—a trait shared by many ADD adults—has been the cornerstone of Marc’s success.

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distinct future memory. One day, while he was still a theater student in high school, he was walking through the hall when a future memory came to him very clearly: “I have something to say. I’m going to be a writer.”

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His breakthrough solution was to write down these limiting beliefs and translate them instead into empowering beliefs.

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One line of research has shown that if you give animals a neurotransmitter, they will be less motivated to engage in actions that naturally stimulate this chemical.

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If adults with ADD need intense situations to get their fix, how would their lives change if they were medicated? Would firefighters taking chemical stimulants be less inclined to jump into the middle of a fire or other dangerous scene?

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In your journal, make a list of five interests or activities that distract your from what you are “supposed to be doing.”

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Seriously consider that your distraction may have an important role to play in your destiny. Even if it leads to nothing more than a hobby or interest, this can serve to generate energy that fuels other areas of your life. And hobbies and interests can turn your life around in unexpected ways by introducing you to people who share your interests; among these might be someone who will become a significant other or a business partner. Make a commitment to translate your distraction into a concrete action step. Take this step within one

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As an ADD adult you are, as psychologist James Hillman has put it, a “wide-open sensitive soul” (1996, 126).

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 122

No matter where you live, you can always look up and see the sky. The sky offers us immediate connection with the majesty of the natural world—and yet, few of us ever look up in wonder. As an ADD adult, the expansiveness of the sky can resonate with your free-spirited openness and spaciness.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 123

In work settings you may hear “doesn’t follow through,” “easily distracted,” or “makes sloppy mistakes.”

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Nature embraces you without offering any judgments at all. Nature accepts you as you are. While the rest of the world says “do,” nature says “be.” While the rest of the world tells you there’s something wrong with you, nature tells you that differences aren’t disorders. The delicate flower that gives off fragrance and the rock face with its immovable grandeur are different, but both are gifts.

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If you want to use this activity as a substitute for an addiction, try to make it second nature. When you get a craving, try to connect with the deeper need to let your mind wander and your body move. For example, many people smoke pot because it “frees their mind” and slows them down. Movement and time in nature will give you these same benefits. Many people also develop bad habits both to dull the pain of beating themselves up for not focusing and not being organized, and to feed the constant drive for stimulation. When you take your needs seriously, you will heal the self-hatred and begin to resolve the root causes of your addiction or bad habit

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Indeed, noted ADD experts suggest that regular walks can be as effective as medication (Hallowell and Ratey 2005). By going on a walk or a wild adventure that meets almost all of your ADD needs—for nature, stimulation, breaking rules, unfettered attention, and physical movement—you give yourself a potent brew of healing medicine.

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My husband looks at me with disbelief when I put on my hiking shoes and say I'm off to work. It is while moving in nature that I write my books and do my best thinking about how to heal clients and how to understand their lives, gifts, and problems.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 127

I see my time in nature not as a distraction or procrastination but as a fundamental ingredient of my work, healing, and personal fulfillment.

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Many people find that, as with finding the right dosage of medication, finding the right time, place, and level of activity for being in nature is important. These are all aspects that can be tweaked to great effect.

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Ocean Therapy Like many ADD adults, Damon is very creative. He invented a new form of physical and spiritual healing, called Ocean Therapy, and his business, Soul Strength Productions ([www.DrSporty.com](http://www.DrSporty.com)), honors his unique, creative brand of coaching and physical training.

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Because you tune in to other people on a deep level, you often dismiss their words outright.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 136

In many ways, adults with ADD organically do the work of psychotherapists. Psychoanalytic therapists are trained to “listen with the third ear” (Reik 1948), meaning to use their own inner experience as a guide to the unconscious of a client.

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Therapists use their inner worlds as guidance for understanding what a client is not saying.

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Theodor Reik, psychoanalyst and author of *Listening with the Third Ear* (1948), advises therapists in training to adopt an unattached, free-floating attention in order “to seize the secret messages that go from one unconscious to another” (145).

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 137

If you are talking to a person you think is smart and confident, you will focus your attention on words or traits that confirm this idea. If, on the other hand, your attention is free-floating, you will notice data a focused person would not.

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Adults with ADD are walking therapists, articulating deep and penetrating insights gleaned from the deepest recesses of another’s mind—a great gift, but one that can easily get you into trouble with those who aren’t looking for free therapy.

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It’s time to stop dismissing your gift. ADD adults may be impulsive, but their quick reads of people reveal much that others miss.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 139

However, if you are on a date, it might be better to let yourself feel compassion for a person who is acting phony out of insecurity, perhaps giving the individual a second chance to see if the phoniness was actually just the influence of first-date anxiety. And even in cases when you do decide to cut involvement with a person, you can do so with compassion.

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If you can keep your desire to connect in mind, this gift can be used to heal relationships, not just as an excuse for leaving them.

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The authors of *A General Theory of Love* (Lewis, Amini, and Lannon 2000) explain that therapists tune in to the emotions of clients by joining the client in a way that goes farther than just listening: “An attuned therapist... doesn’t just hear about an emotional life—the two of them live it. The gravitational tug of this patient’s emotional world draws him away from his own, just as it should... A therapist loosens his grip on his world and drifts, eyes open into whatever relationship the patient has in mind—even a connection so dark that it touches the worst in him... When he stays outside the other’s world, he cannot affect it... He takes up temporary residence in another’s world... Therapy becomes the ultimate inside job” (Lewis, Amini, and Lannon 2000, 178).

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Every time you have an insight about someone in your life, ask yourself the following questions: Will sharing this insight connect me more deeply with this person, or will it hurt our relationship? Will this insight empower me or disempower me if shared right now?

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 145

Ask yourself, “Can I express my insight in a way that will offer the other person information without being judgmental or hurtful?”

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Ask yourself, “Can I turn my irritation into compassion?”

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 148

What is your track record, really? It’s time for you to unpack your heavy burden of having your interpersonal intuitions discredited. Often it takes the perspective of time to figure out when you were right and when you were off base—and to figure out, too, what you were really tapping into when you were off base. In this activity you will review memories of both when your insights were denied and you were right, and when your instincts were denied and you were wrong.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 151

Sometimes ADD adults feel they know another person better than the other person knows himself. Although this may be true at some level, it doesn’t mean the other person will be motivated to connect.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 152

You are part of the rich tapestry of my soul and always will be, but I must let you go your own way now. I let you go, but I thank you for what we shared.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 153

I heal my emotional pain by taking good care of myself, identifying my needs, and taking care of them.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 158

Kim explained that intuition is a double-edged sword: “You have to use your own experience to resonate with another person, but you can’t use your story to explain the other person’s experience.”

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Real sympathy involves caring without a sense of being one up. Kim attributes her ability to avoid faux sympathy to her personal struggle with ADD.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 159

Her Own Shame After being diagnosed with ADD, Kim struggled with enormous shame. She remembers feeling helpless when she was given the diagnosis. She felt vulnerable to others' evaluations. She felt like a round peg in a square hole (a phrase I've heard ADD adults use over and over to describe the course of their life). She also felt acutely ashamed of going to get help, of talking openly about her symptoms and her level of functioning.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 159

Enrico Jones pushed Kim to explore how she actually arrived at her intuitive interventions. Kim became convinced that her intuition was the result of her unconscious expertise and patterns that she recognized but could not yet articulate. This understanding not only helped Kim to reflect deeply on her work, it encouraged her to try to consciously translate her intuition into specific patterns applied in new contexts.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 162

Your tendency to fidget constantly, wishing you could be set free from the constraints to sit still, may be an exuberance to express your energy and high spirits.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 162

To find the gift in your hyperactivity, you must first accept your desire for physical movement and stimulation as a need rather than a symptom.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 162

When you give yourself permission to translate your hyperactivity into enthusiasm, you unleash the power to get your life on track and make dreams come true. It's time to get in touch with your wild child and let her out.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 162

Hyperactivity is more than just moving and talking at fast speeds. Hyperactivity also includes an intense internal drive. The constant physical movements of hyperactivity correlate to being pushed and pulled by inner urgings, instincts, and promptings. In addition to high energy, hyperactivity is the quickness between an impulse and behavior.

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The problem with this is that if a person has original and dazzling contributions to make, she will act and think in ways that others would deem abnormal and reckless.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 163

You may fail more often, but in doing so gain valuable skills, contacts, and experiences.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 164

If you have learned to trust your gut instincts, recklessness can be a daring expression of self-trust—it can be a sign that you give yourself permission to be the authority on your own life.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 164

If you are to become who you are capable of being, you may have to let go of who you have been.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 165

Even if the only data you gather is from the process of failing, you will still have learned something others have not.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 165

When you channel your reckless impulsivity to serve your higher goals, it can be a force for making your dreams come true.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 167

Because there is no central organizing force behind the exuberance, your activity will often be scattered. You may be driven to finish a work project one moment, only to be distracted the next by the urge to phone a loved one—a call you never get to because as you pick up the phone you realize you're eager to get some recreation in. You're always on the move, changing directions moment by moment.

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Whereas non-ADD adults can ignore their desires in order to get through a never-ending to-do list, ADD adults are vehemently connected to their desires. Almost every impulse that flits across their awareness seeks expression in the real world.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 167

These desires fuel your hyperactivity; they propel you with great energy to make them real.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 168

You probably often act in ways that are not in your best interest. You may fidget and try too hard to be entertaining when courting a romantic interest.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 169

This simple act of clarifying your most pressing dreams will help you honor your integrity and fulfill your greatest potential.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 169

Sometimes an ADD adult's hyperactivity is driven by what I call a "class-clown complex."

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The problem is, if you have gotten used to the laughs, you may have come to need them. Perhaps the laughs absorb your hyperactivity in some way, dispersing your frenetic energy. Or the attention may be stimulation you crave. This applies to any form of attention. Getting attention from others may drive you to act so as to continue to receive this attention.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 170

A need to always be performing can paradoxically both make you the life of the party and give you an imposter complex because it leaves you so depleted inside.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 170

Trying too hard may be a holdover from your school days, when such antics were applauded. It can also be a holdover from efforts to compensate for not fitting in at school. If this is true for you, it's time to take a developmental leap: let yourself take a break.

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more likely to be true for women with ADD who have learned to tame their hyperactivity, but it can also be true for men. If your hyperactivity was punished or rejected when you were a child, you may have developed strategies for denying it. Usually vestiges of it will still remain, however. One woman described a continuous need to fidget with the cap of her pen, often flicking it across the room. She acknowledged that she would like to be much more physically active throughout her day but didn't have the chance. Another woman—who experienced depression as well as ADD—described having a job that required her to sit still most of the day as torture. The toll the denial of her need for physical activity took was depression.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 172

The problem with denying your physical restlessness is that it can lead to depression or feelings of exhaustion. When energy can't find an outlet, it just shuts down—like the crash of a computer—leaving a person feeling empty and depressed. Although an ADD adult with depression usually doesn't feel like doing anything, the cure is sometimes as simple as finding a physical outlet for the suppressed energy. If you struggle with depression or behaviors that involve fidgeting, try to find more ways to express your energy. This could be a simple as planning regular walks around your office or listening to music and letting yourself move to it.

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Another way to express your hyperactivity is to be more physically active while doing your regular activities.

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One of the most disruptive symptoms of ADD is a time distortion. ADD people are always in high drive, while other people seem to move, talk, and think glacially slowly. This can lead to a constant sense of restlessness in adults with ADD.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 174

Your restlessness may be a warning that there are better ways to spend your time. Your restlessness may indicate that you are living a false life. Your restlessness may be saying, “Move on!” or “Keep moving!” In order to understand its deeper meaning, you will have to contain and listen to your impatience.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 177

With the success of his GNC store, Hagen branched out into real estate, tanning salons, and other businesses. When people ask Hagen how he became so successful, he tells them, “I’m not any smarter than anyone else. I’m just not afraid to make decisions and put them into action.”

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 177

He realized that his greatest gift is his ability to generate great ideas. He is currently working to turn this ability into a career. “I can sell my ideas to other people and let them manage all the business.” Hagen is evolving toward a life that capitalizes on his greatest strengths.

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discussed in Captain Ohlrich’s profile in chapter 5, adrenaline is an organic neurotransmitter that functions much like the stimulant medication prescribed to ADD adults to help them focus.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 178

“By looking over the edge, they get scared and have to think what they would do if something happened.” The idea is that facing problems head-on forces us to begin problem solving.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 180

For him there are no regrets, “only lessons learned and stories to tell.”

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 181

Often, the uncontrolled emotional outbursts of an ADD adult are actually signs of an intense emotional sensitivity. This sensitivity is the ADD quality that can get you into the most trouble. Perhaps you told your supervisor off. Perhaps you fired an employee without realizing the legal tangles it would get you into. Learning to stay connected to your emotional gifts without acting explosively can turn around a life of frequent job changes and failed relationships.

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The very same emotional intensity that makes it so easy for you to connect with others can also lead to destructive outbursts when conflicts arise.

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You may feel that if you don't express your deepest feelings—or even just the ones closest to the surface—then you are not being completely authentic. ADD adults are warriors for authenticity. They demand it from themselves and from others. This is a great gift,

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And indeed, they do often reflect reality; however, expressing these emotions may not be in your best interest. If you can catch your emotions in their earliest stage and translate them into information to guide your behavior rather than hijack it, you will then be able to reap the full benefits of this gift.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 182

Translate Irritation into Information Chances are, your irritation is giving you important information that you need to take action on. However, if you launch into accusations rather than measured inquiries, your effectiveness will be compromised. Instead, every time you feel your irritation begin to rise, ask yourself, “What guidance does this feeling offer me?”

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 183

The sticking point for a lot of ADD adults is that they think the fact that they are right justifies any means of addressing the problem. When an ADD adult gets called to the carpet for over-the-top behavior, he is likely to back up his behavior by insisting that he is right. The problem is, he has let emotions rather than the information guide his behavior.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 183

When an emotion dominates your attention, set aside thirty seconds to go deeper into it. Breathe into the feeling. See if you can imagine your breath touching the feeling. As you breathe into the feeling, imagine it becoming more intense.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 183

Feelings are like a waves: they get more intense, they crest, and then they get smaller and go away.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 184

Try to translate the emotion into a form of guidance. For example, if you are angry, you may need to communicate your boundaries or needs more clearly. If you are sad, you may need to find support for your grief. If you are afraid, you may need to determine if what you are afraid of is a likely or unlikely possibility.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 184

If you find yourself stuck in an emotion, continue to process it either by talking it through with another person or journaling about it.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 184

The Thirty-Second Rule on the Fly

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 185

If you don't practice flexible thinking, you may find that expressing your short-term authenticity interferes with the expression of your long-term authenticity. For example, if you can't make a living because you keep losing jobs over your emotional expressiveness, you won't be able to honor a core desire to translate your emotional expressiveness to bring about healing or creativity.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 186

Focusing Feels Like Cutting Myself Off Many ADD adults report that when they focus, it actually feels like they're cutting a part of themselves off—their emotional sensitivity.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 187

[Impulses are] what make life interesting—not knowing what's going to happen in the next instant, living life like it's one big giant impulse, like it's just a feeling, nothing more than that. Sometimes it's fun to not even inhibit yourself and just go with things and see where they take you

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 188

For example, emotional sensitivity often cries out for creative expression. By expressing your experiences creatively, you can offer healing to others, revealing to them deep layers of their inner landscape that they do not have ready access to.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 188

[Artists] can be seen as venturing into psychological experiences at the very border of human comprehension, and attempting, through artistic expression, to bring order to them,

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 188

When you are emotionally sensitive, you find it difficult to repress or suppress your inner responses to the world. The more sensitive you are, the more you crave to channel your experiences into some form of creative expression.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 188

Indeed, emotional sensitivity may be the root cause of creativity. In studying creative genius, English professor John Briggs discovered that “it is good to tune into feelings before they get abstracted into a thought. People who can do this are able to directly tune into data of far greater complexity. Such sensitivity fosters creativity and the ability to see things in new ways” (2000, 56).

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 189

Your creativity will not only enrich your life and that of others, it will also be powerfully healing for you. Many psychological symptoms can be traced to a dammed-up creative expression. When you don't bring forth the art that is within you, the creative force can turn ugly. Addictions can sometimes be attempts to repress emotional sensitivity; the very act of unleashing this sensitivity can mitigate the need for the dulling effects of drugs, alcohol, shopping, sex, pornography, compulsive busyness, and so on.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 189

How to Avoid an Entirely False Life Using your emotional sensitivity to create—whether that creation is a painting, a song, a short story, or something else—can enable you to get a handle on it. And by expressing your inner world, you can liberate others.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 190

This may be the most formidable gift of ADD adults. You may fail miserably in following directions, in paying close attention to details, and finding any semblance of organization, but you are often irresistibly drawn to spend your time doing what enlivens you, even to your own exasperation.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 190

Your needs are signposts to your destiny; your ability to have a tantrum may be important for keeping you on the path of this destiny.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 190

Research reveals that even just getting in touch with a need can alleviate depression, even when that need isn't met (Rice and Greenberg 1984).

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 191

If you don't identify your needs, you can't consciously work toward meeting them.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 191

Ignoring your agenda can lead to a life of "quiet desperation"—or, more often, a life of such loud desperation that a cocktail of prescription medications or a raging addiction is required to soothe it.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 191

It may help you to remember the difference between trouble and symptoms. Trouble is what you get when others are upset by your devotion to your own agenda. Symptoms are what you get when you ignore your agenda.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 192

Much of my work with ADD adults is about helping them trust their own agenda.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 193

Thus, honoring her own agenda proved to be healing not only for her, but for her family, too.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 193

If you trust your agenda, life will usually go much easier than if you ignore it. If you don't leave a job that is harming you, events will often conspire to force you out of it. If you don't honor your need for rest and rejuvenation, events will often conspire to give you time off.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 194

Activity: Translate Insults into Insights Because of your intense sensitivity, even constructive criticism from others can cut like an insult. You may also have to deal with actual, mean-spirited insults. You can gain from insults and criticism by mining them for valuable insights, either into how you are perceived by others or how you really are.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 195

Stephanie has channeled her ADD into a successful career as a psychologist, coach, and author. I interviewed her over the phone and in a series of e-mails in the summer of 2007. Stephanie is the author of *10 Simple Solutions to Adult ADD: How to Overcome Chronic Distraction and Accomplish Your Goals* (2006)

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 195

Stephanie believes that, as an ADD adult, finding your signature strength is key to your success. Embracing your signature strength will not only help you find personal fulfillment, it will also provide an outlet for your passionate intensity. She tells her many ADD clients that by channeling their passion, they can change the world.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 195

While there is much debate in the field on whether medications inhibit or facilitate creativity, Stephanie finds that medication is necessary for her to reach her full potential. Because Adderall allows her to focus more on her writing, it gives her a great outlet for her energy and passion. “I can sit now, and write an entire chapter in one sitting.” In addition, the medication also helps both her driving and her ability to focus on conversations; she often recommends that clients consider medication in their treatment approach.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 196

During our interview, Stephanie spontaneously connected her emotional sensitivity to each of the other four gifts I have outlined: intuition, creativity, exuberance, and ecological consciousness.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 197

Stephanie also spoke about another gift of ADD: a connection to nature. She told me her emotional sensitivity compels her to take action; she feels connected to her community, the universe, and other living things.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 198

Some of the practices she uses to help her stay balanced in her own core include deep breathing, eating well, exercising regularly, and getting out in nature every day. She believes, as do many ADD experts, that exercise and being in nature can change how her brain functions.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 199

For every ADD adult sailing through life on her charisma, there is one caught in a downward spiral of sensation seeking, one impulse feeding on another. For every great leader, there is a gang member using his leadership gifts to enlist others in a life of crime.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 199

Your drive and energy may have brought you great success but made it almost impossible to slow down and savor a single moment. The gifts ADD confers do not eliminate the many challenges and failures that will be faced by an individual in a culture that does not value differences. Even with success, you may always feel like the proverbial round peg in a square hole.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 200

The promise of getting a diagnosis is that suddenly what may have seemed like a personal failing has a name.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 200

The label illuminates at the very same time that it incapacitates. And the label can easily become a permission slip for problem behavior; for example, for kids to stop working or for husbands to cheat on their wives because “my ADD made me do it.”

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 201

[myself] ... I don't think success is out of my reach—or prosperity and happiness

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 201

ADHD says it's going to be a lot more difficult for [me]. [It says,] “There's something wrong with you; you're wrong in thinking that there's an equality ... You're somewhat behind; you're underdeveloped, retarded in some aspects.” Coupled with the experiences I've had, it's almost a survival instinct now to avoid things that could put [me] in a harmful environment.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 203

This disconnect between the education system and business is bigger than ever ... It's the kids with ADD who can lead the way here. If they were encouraged and nurtured to explore and expand their ADD traits like creativity, impulsiveness, and drive rather than “fit in” with an out-of-date curriculum, then companies that thrive on innovation would be queuing up to employ them...

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 203

The promise for ADD adults is that the world is changing in ways that will not only accommodate these differences but will actually create a high demand for them. If you can learn some basic skills for focusing your energy, paying attention to details, and listening to others, you can go far. The promise inherent in ADD will be amplified to the extent that you can name and therefore look for its gifts.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 204

For me, ADD is about evaporating into the people, the places, the music, and the rhythm of where I am. I can't hear what you're saying because my attention has dissolved, carried on the waves of absorption in feelings, reactions, opinions, loves, delights, frustrations, irritations—all links forging my relationship with others.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 205

I think certain careers are a great match for the ADD mind, and being a psychotherapist is one of those.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 205

Sigmund Freud (1963) wrote that the best approach for a therapist to contact the unconscious is to adopt a stance of free-floating attention. I argue that this stance is precisely how an ADD person operates on a daily basis. While in my daily life the hyperactivity dominates, when I work with a client I slow down and allow the free-floating attention to dominate.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 206

So an ADD person goes through the world saying that the emperor is not wearing any clothes and constantly being told that the emperor is indeed wearing clothes. As a result of this devaluation of the perceptions that are at the heart of his gift, the person's self-esteem may suffer.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 206

What Not to Do in Therapy My struggles with ADD brought me to therapy, which mysteriously became a stepping-stone not only to healing but to a lifelong purpose and career choice.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 206

The way out of despair and punishing shame is to find the things you do well and focus on those.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 207

By planning a life that builds on your strengths rather than patching up your weaknesses, you can find that place where your greatest gifts find expression in meeting the needs of the world.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 215

It was at this juncture that Vishnu came to see me. As he tells it, through our work together he came to "a strong realization that the way my brain is wired is both the source of many good things in my life and the source of the conflicts and appetites that have haunted me throughout my life."

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 215

The realization that his was a hardware problem, not a software problem, relieved much of the anguish and self-loathing that had plagued him.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 216

After working through his self-doubt and self-loathing—by exploring new ways to understand his brain's structure and inner workings—Vishnu is now able to control his emotions and impulsivity. As a result, he can focus his energy in a directed and powerful way.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 217

Vishnu didn't need to hit bottom, he needed to see his own light.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 218

Indeed, it may well be that it is only our society's insistence on focused clarity, achievement, organization, and rigid schedules that leads us to consider this attention deficit a disorder.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 218

During my interviews, I was struck by the intense life force of each person I profiled. Whereas others are more composed and put together, these people all had an exuberance that could hardly be contained, making the rest of the world grayer in comparison.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 219

Spending time outside your ADD zone will cause physical, mental, and emotional depletion. Many ADD adults struggle with depression. Sometimes this is a result of internalizing a punitive stance toward what looks like lazy, sloppy behavior. Often it is due to the depletion of trying too hard to fit in.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 219

It may help to remember what is at stake: Your gifts are not just for you. The world needs your gifts. Your family, your friends, your community, and your world need you to stop beating yourself up, playing small, and feeling guilty about what you cannot do.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 219

Listening to Depression: How Understanding Your Pain Can Heal Your Life. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications, 2006.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 219

When Self-Help Hurts: Letting Go of Seeking by Finding Yourself

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