



YOUR KINDLE NOTES FOR:

## Your Life Can Be Better: using strategies for Adult ADD/ADHD

by Douglas A. Puryear MD

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### 76 Highlights

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 10

Our lack of focus is our primary problem and the source of many of our difficulties, like procrastination, trouble setting priorities, trouble dealing with time, trouble finishing projects, perfectionism, and the inevitable demoralization.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 13

Summary: We have trouble with focusing. Sometimes we hyperfocus. Four things will turn on our focus center: 1. personal interest 2. novelty 3. challenge 4. immediate and heavy deadline

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 22

Summary: When I finally learned I had ADD, a lot of things suddenly made sense. I could understand many of the difficulties I'd had all my life, and also many of the habits I had developed which, it turns out, were strategies to cope with my ADD.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 25

I cannot have more than five things on my to-do list. I call this "The Power of Five." If I have more than five things there, what happens? I start to feel overwhelmed and confused.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 27

Three to-do cards I keep three to-do cards in my pocket: red, orange, and yellow. The red is the five things, priority. On the orange card I put the other to-do things that have any priority or urgency, that I need to get to reasonably soon.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 33

Small steps is a major coping strategy for dealing with ADD. It has many uses; it helps deal with inertia, procrastination, distractions and with getting things finished.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 35

Break tasks into small steps. Limit the to-do list to five things. Focus on one at a time. You never have more than that one thing that you need to do at any given moment.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 35

This is a three part principle: 1. Don't let things pile up. If they pile up, they become overwhelming and harder to do. Stay on top of them. 2. Break tasks into small parts. 3. If somehow you still get behind (and like me, you probably will), then break the task into manageable small steps. If I've let the poop pile up, so to speak, I might clean the one half of the yard today and the other half tomorrow.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 38

Instead, I do the list of three, which is kind of related to that and does work for me. This is a schedule made from the to-do list, of the next three things I'm going to do. It includes the one I'm doing right now.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 39

My friend, Tom, has a similar tool, a list of one. He calls it the "What's next?" tool. When he starts a project, and while he's doing it, he asks, "What's next?" Then when he finishes the project, he knows what to do next. He's not going to wander off into a timewaster, get captured by a distraction, or become bogged down in indecision; he already knows "what's next".

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 51

Habits avoid decisions. Just for example: I don't have to decide every morning whether or not I am going to brush my teeth. I just do it. And I don't have to decide where to put my keys.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 55

Once we recognize and identify something as a problem, we can make a strategy. Life can get simpler and simpler.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 59

We tend to think things are just the way they are. Once recognized as A Problem, problems can be solved.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 61

If my short term goals don't seem to lead towards my long term goals, or if what I am doing now doesn't fit in with my goals, then I need to rethink. I keep the yellow pad with my long term goals on it on my desk and review it occasionally.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 64

If we have ADD, we tend to set unrealistic goals. We especially do this regarding time, thinking we can get more done in a day than is possible, but we set unrealistic goals in other ways too.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 64

It's useful to set goals, but the trick is to set small goals, low goals, goals that I can actually reach. When I do reach one, that's positive reinforcement, like crossing something off the to-do list is.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 65

Summary: Knowing our goals helps us be organized, and we need to ask ourselves if the things we're doing are leading us towards our goals. One way to help with our tendency to inertia is to thoughtfully set reasonable goals and to pay attention to them. Breaking things into small steps is one form of setting achievable goals. Reaching a goal gives positive reinforcement; it helps us to avoid demoralization and to keep going. Reachable realistic goals. Small steps. Do you see how they work together?

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 71

Summary: There are innumerable traps available for ADDers. We can learn to recognize and avoid the traps that we most often fall into. Projects can be useful or can be dead end traps, serving no purpose. Breaks can be a useful tool or a trap. I can easily find ways to just waste time. So I need to stay aware of what I'm doing, and whatever I'm doing, I try to ask: "Is this really the best use of this time?" and "Why am I doing this? What is the goal or purpose?"

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 81

Flags alert us to something, usually to danger. We can learn what our red flags are and to recognize them when they pop-up.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 94

What turns our focus center on? Personal interest. Novelty. Challenge. Heavy immediate deadline.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 116

I just can't judge time well. If I have a day or a weekend off, I get excited about all the things I'm going to get done, some fun things and some "catch up." So I make a list. But then I need to put some of the things in parentheses or just cross some of them off, because I'm never going to get all that done.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 120

Choices There are twenty-four hours in a day: my day, your day, every day. Some people get by on less sleep than others, but basically we each have the same twenty four hours. And we can only cram so much into twenty-four hours. We folks with ADD tend to try to do too much.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 121

We find so many things interesting and it's hard to accept that we can't do them all. It's hard to let go of something.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 121

Every choice made involves giving up some other options, and we have trouble doing that. We want it all. And that is part of our problem with time.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 121

Summary: With ADD, we can have many kinds of problems regarding time: wasting it, misjudging it, losing track of it, and being temporally disoriented. We tend to be interested in many things, and it's hard to accept that we have to make choices. Then we feel short of time. So we need strategies. These can involve various ways of using calendars and an appointment book, time assays, and attention to priorities. That's next.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 123

I try to make good use of time. When I'm driving I can do exercises or study a topic on a CD, or in my head I can review Spanish or recite Psalms.

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Prioritizing requires evaluating both how important something is - "What is the payoff or the penalty?" - and how urgent it is - "Is there a deadline after which it's too late?" One guideline in setting priorities is "Do the hard part first." That tells us where to start.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 128

Habits Making habits is a basic part of our principle for coping with ADD: identify a problem, make a strategy, make it a rule, make it a habit. We often have to break bad habits, too. That's harder. But doable.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 130

Our life is simpler if we're using habits rather than having to make a lot of decisions.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 131

B) If you are habitually saying an undesirable thing, catch yourself and don't say it. Substitute saying something else.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 133

Pray for help and strength to change.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 136

2. to-do list This is essential to me, too. If I try to keep all the things I need to do in my head, it will make me feel overwhelmed and give me a headache.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 140

Feeling overloaded or overwhelmed seems like a basic part of life with ADD. It leads to procrastination, paralysis, and demoralization.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 153

I use self-talk and slogans. I say, “Just put one foot in front of the other.” And “Just show up and do your job.”

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 155

Summary: Some days it’s a moral triumph just to get through the day. Just put one foot in front of the other. Just plug away.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 161

Anyway, Richard was very happy that his doctor said he didn’t have ADD. His wife was not so happy. Shortly after that, a close friend told Richard, “You have ADD,” and gave him a book to read, *Delivered From Distraction*,

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Most of us ADDers have trouble meeting deadlines unless they are immediate with severe consequences, the kind that will turn on our focus center.

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But sometimes, we can go ahead and get started. So then another problem with my creativity is because of my difficulty with priorities. Not all of my great ideas are worth the time and trouble it would take to implement them. They are novel, new ideas, and that turns my focus center on.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 185

There is controversy among the experts about stimulation and ADD. One group says that we’re over stimulated, with too much coming at us for us to handle; our system is overloaded. They say we need to have a quiet simple place to study or work, with no distractions. The other group of experts says not so, that we need stimulation.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 193

I slowly learned that he'd had many jobs, few of which had lasted very long. I learned that his parents helped support him financially much of the time and were pretty fed up with him. They gave him a lot of good advice, a lot of constructive criticisms and a lot of just plain criticisms.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 194

I encouraged Mr. C to look into jobs that would play into his strengths, especially his strong outdoors skills, but that never worked out. Gradually it became clear what was happening at work. The field where he had experience wasn't necessarily a good field for him but he could always find a job.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 195

Each time Mr. C lost a job he became depressed and stopped functioning. He would need more help from his parents, who he'd been trying to avoid. This exposed him to more advice and criticism, which was more demoralizing. But eventually he would pick himself up and find another job. The cycle would begin again.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 196

When life is not going well, we find ways to escape. In computer games the consequences of failing are minimal and we can control and master things. We can boost our self-esteem while avoiding real life. The boost is temporary though.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 198

Summary: We need to find an occupation that works for us, where our weaknesses aren't important and which has both structure and variety. Demoralization can drag us under, but we can capitalize on our strengths and pull ourselves out of the morass. Success enhances our self-esteem, which helps us to function better, which enhances our self-esteem, and so on. This is the reverse of the vicious cycle.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 199

Shame You can sense the shame that lay underneath a lot of Mr. C's problems. This shame fed his discouragement and demoralization and they fed the shame, in a vicious cycle. The sense of shame fed his sneakiness and his evasions, and motivated his hiding the truth from himself as well as from others. Shame is not technically a part of ADD itself, but usually comes along with it. It is an almost inevitable consequence of having ADD, as we build up experience after experience of failing and as we repetitively frustrate those around us who then give us negative reactions.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 204

Summary: ADD starts building up a sense of shame in us from early childhood on. How bad our shame is depends a lot on how our parents and others reacted toward us around the ADD problems and on what

experiences we happened to run into. The shame is an anchor holding us back, a major saboteur of our efforts, and it makes us miserable. Shame can be helped with therapy and with strategies that help us function better.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 205

How our personality is formed The beginning A child with ADD, or especially ADHD, is a challenge and often a frustration for parents and other adults. And those adults' views of us and their reactions to us help shape our personalities and the way we see ourselves.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 206

False self If we are being strongly affected by our parents' needs rather than their being tuned into our needs, we develop a false self. We try to become what they need us to be.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 208

Adolescence If things haven't been too bad, and we aren't too damaged, if we haven't totally lost our true self or been overwhelmed by shame, we get a second chance in adolescence. To some degree our personalities can be dismantled and put back together in new and different ways. We can reduce the power of our parents' influence. We can examine their values and viewpoints, and chose what to keep and what to reject.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 209

Adulthood As an adult, therapy offers us still another chance. Again, we don't generally make drastic changes in our basic personality; if we're an introvert we're not likely to become an extrovert. However, we can heal some old wounds. We can reduce the shame. We can drop old ways of coping that are not being effective for us, learn new ways of coping and overcome the emotional barriers that could keep us from using these new ways. We can further develop our real selves. We can gain understanding of how we operate, think, and feel, and how we came to be that way.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 209

Nobody ever had perfect parents, and our parents had parents too.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 211

Take care of yourself An important principle is that you need to take care of yourself first or you won't be able to help anyone else.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 212

Escape Ms. J would have a stressful day at work and go home feeling exhausted, worn out and overwhelmed.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 215

ADD causes us to mess up and sets us up to feel discouraged, which makes it harder to get things done, which discourages us more. Underlying all of this is a deep abiding sense of shame.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 216

Cognitive therapy One type of psychotherapy, cognitive therapy, states that there are three fundamental thinking errors, which are said to be the basis of many of our problems: 1. “Unless everybody likes me, I’m no good.” 2. “Things should be the way I want them to be.” 3. “Life should not be hard.” You can see how each of these errors in thinking could feed self pity.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 217

Sometimes a patient will criticize themselves, “I’m just feeling sorry for myself.” I usually jump in and question this idea. Self-pity is underrated and gets a bad rap. It is a form of self-compassion, which many of us are lacking.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 217

We need to have compassion and tolerance for others; often we have to learn to have compassion and tolerance for ourselves before we can feel it for others.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 218

We need to have compassion for ourselves. We need to acknowledge the limitations and problems that ADD gives us

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 232

Every night I note briefly the positive events of the day, the non-routine things I’m grateful for. This is an anti-depressant technique and I find it useful spiritually.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 247

Finding our direction If we have ADD, we often have trouble finding a direction in life.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 249

Summary: Capitalize on your strengths. Don’t spend much effort trying to improve your weaknesses: learn to work around them, using strategies. Try to find the right job, one with variety within structure.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 257

Summary: Some jobs fit us perfectly and some types of jobs are disasters for people with ADD. They can almost destroy us. We need variety within structure. We need to avoid work requiring precision, concentration, repetition, and neatness. When possible, we need to delegate the things we are not good at. Know Thyself.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 280

Summary: Learning disabilities are not a basic part of ADD, but many of us with ADD have one or more learning disabilities and often poor coordination also, probably all due to some mis-wired brain circuits.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 286

Reading I love to read. I read fast; I can't wait to see what's coming next. I don't remember anything I've read. If I'm reading solely for pleasure this is OK. But if I want to retain something - to be able to discuss, or because I want to learn something - then I need to slow down. Every page or so I need to stop and ask myself, "Now what did I just read?"

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 287

I've been learning to play the guitar for many many years. I've vastly improved, but I'm still not good at it. The books and the print outs from the internet course are just sitting on the coffee table

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 289

Our ADD problems will make studying and learning more difficult for us, but there are strategies that help. We can get our focus center turned on.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 306

Summary: We tend to avoid things; paying attention to what we're avoiding will at least give us the chance to use strategies to get going, and the small steps is useful again.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 327

Summary: Brain freeze is related to anxiety, which is certainly increased by ADD. If you're caught in brain freeze, the best thing to do is to take a break, because if you don't, you're not going anywhere. You may be able to become aware of your perception about the situation and to question the validity of it or to counter the negative self-talk.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 363

Structure I do best with structure in my life. What does that mean? It's not just a schedule, although a schedule is certainly structure. Structure means that my days have a shape. I don't get up in the morning at some indefinite

time and wonder “What should I do now?” or “What will I do today?” I don’t wander aimlessly through the day, wondering, “OK, what do I do now?” Structure gives me anchor points that help me stay oriented in time.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 371

Mindfulness and awareness can help with ADD: “What am I doing right now? How does this foster my long term goals? Am I doing what I intended to be doing or need to be doing right now? Is this the best use of my time right now?”

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 374

Anchors Anchors are cues in our daily life that remind us to do something that we want to do routinely, so that we’re not relying on our memory to get it done.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 375

Anchors support my spiritual life: I made stirring my coffee the anchor for remembering Jesus; every time I go to the bathroom, that’s my anchor for saying the prayer of St. Francis.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 378

Mnemonics Mnemonics are a powerful memory aid that I like a lot. It helps if the mnemonic has something catchy or clever in it to make it easier to remember. I use YALPA and LEQBLF, which happen to also be acronyms.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 383

Moderation is not a word that’s really in our vocabulary. We procrastinate and avoid, so we tend to not do anything. However, once we’re into something, we tend to overdo it.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 417

I’m not suggesting at all that ADD is caused by poor parenting or by childhood experiences. It is largely genetic and has to do with brain wiring. But the reason many of us need therapy is to deal with the effects of having ADD: the shame, poor self image, and other issues. These effects usually begin in our childhood and then receive a lot of reinforcement through the rest of our lives. These effects need to be addressed and healed.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 418

Appendix 8 List of lists I like making lists and I find the lists and the making of them very helpful. I have discussed a lot of lists, so here’s a summary: 1. to-do - the list of five things that are top priority now, on the red card, always with me. I won’t necessarily get all five things done today. 2. the orange and yellow cards - for the things to do next (orange) and things that aren’t so important or urgent (yellow). Always with me. 3. “the evolving working envelope list” - on my desk. Things I need to get to today or tomorrow. Includes the five top

things, but I may not work right down that list; I likely will be doing other things too. 4. the Big List - the list of things I would like to do today or this week or this month. I can pull things off here to put onto the other lists. On my desk on a yellow legal pad. I may check it once a week or once a month. 5. the Really Big Far Off list - things I will probably eventually get to. This summer? Next year? Clean the garage, organize my file cabinets, buy new rug for the office. On a yellow legal pad. I may check this every three months or so. 6. the list of three - in my head. What I'm doing right now and what comes next. 7. the "list" of one - I try to focus only on what I'm doing right now and not be thinking of all the other lists and other tasks; that's part of the reason for making lists in the first place. Appendix 9 Follow up 1.

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