

How AD/HD Affects Learning



Although individuals with Attention Deficit/Hyperactive Disorder (AD/HD) vary greatly in how the condition impacts their life, students with AD/HD generally share common issues when it comes to learning in college. Contrary to social myths, individuals with AD/HD may be as intelligent and hardworking as everyone else; however, struggles with focus, organization, concentration and completion of tasks may impair the student's ability **to show** their cognitive ability.



Daily Calendar

"For every minute spent organizing, an hour is earned." Benjamin Franklin

Organization and planning are **crucial** to arriving to class on time, completing assignments by due dates and effective studying; all of which count for a large percentage of the grade, and are important to learning course content.

Successful people use schedules and 'to-do' lists to complete projects on time. Most new students need help in this area as well. Such tools are of **vital importance** for students with AD/HD.

- Daily & weekly schedules provide structure for keeping on track.
- Your schedule should be **very specific** and should include
 - class times and locations,
 - preview/review/homework times,
 - weekly study time, commute times,
 - club/social times,
 - meal times and relaxing/enjoyment times.



Ask your counselor for a worksheet to help you get started managing your time.



- Assignment should be **clearly defined with timeframes and deadlines set** for different stages of completion. Smart phones are an excellent tool to help with this as reminders can be set to alert the student to keep on task.

Precise note taking – crucial to academic achievement - can be difficult for students with AD/HD. Finding a notetaking system that helps to format and organize notes can be helpful. Also consider accommodations like note-takers and recording devices.

- Cornell Notetaking System is a structured notetaking system that helps students create organized notes
- **Use different colored highlighters** when reading and be selective about the material to highlight.
 - Taking notes while reading will help with the selection process – most students will *not* choose to rewrite the entire chapter.



THINK OF COLLEGE AS A FULL TIME JOB! If you can, devote 8-9 hours per week day to school. That should provide enough time for class and study time – depending on how many classes are taken per day.

The general rule is; for every one hour spent in class the student should spend 2 hours studying.

- ❖ At work you get breaks. Breaks for students with AD/HD are especially important. Take short breaks while studying but **REMEMBER** to set an alarm to remind you to get back to studying after the 10-20 minute break is over.
- ❖ Learn to prioritize and **DONT** procrastinate! **Procrastination is the AD/HD student's worst enemy.**
- ❖ Practice **Forming a Tunnel** (see reverse)
- ❖ Practice **Centering Yourself with Silence** (see reverse)
- ❖ Practice the concept of **Be Here NOW** (see reverse)

Find a few study methods that work best and use them frequently.

****Remember**, the study method that works for an English or Psychology class probably won't work for a Math or Science class.

Figuring out what works for you will help you to learn more efficiently and study smarter.

EAT FROGS! "Eating a frog" is an idiom which means to start each study session with the least appetizing, most difficult, most dreaded subject or assignment you have to complete. After that you are free to move on to the subject that's more interesting or easiest to you. Eat the frog so that you can move on to yummy stuff!

TUNNEL VISION

- While at home or someplace outside of school, practice tunnel vision by focusing in on one thing but have people move around you, tell someone to call/text you, turn the TV on and practice without having to look at them - just let them "be out there" as you focus on what is being taught
- When having a conversation with someone, practice keeping your attention on that person (you might want to tell them ahead of time so they don't feel weird)... look at her face, and note what is being said. Let the rest of the world just be "out there."

Recall this practice when in the classroom or when studying. Remember how successful you were, how accomplished you felt and say to yourself – "Let them be out there."

BE HERE NOW!

This is related to forming a tunnel. Some students still struggle with putting distractions "out there" but due to a stronger internal locus of control, find success with this simple but effective strategy.

- This strategy trains your brain as you practice managing your distractions.
- When you notice your mind wandering, simply say to yourself "Be here now" and gently bring your attention back to where it needs to be.
- Again, practice this when you are not studying first

GET CENTERED

Center yourself with silence...clear your mind of distractions that can disrupt productivity. There are a few things you can control when you sit down to study;

- Get a dedicated place to study in and silence your phone (not even vibrate should be on), and turn it face down.
- Put up a sign if you live with people who tend to interrupt you.
- Stick to a routine that accommodates your energy levels.
- Focus by creating a tunnel between yourself and your desk/book/notes.
- Plan an incentive for completing the tasks you have planned. Call a friend, take a walk, plan a treat.
- Change the subject you are studying every 1-2 hours. Alternate reading with problem solving, writing assignments...if you have a LOT of reading, take notes and ask yourself questions as you read – make your study time ACTIVE to help with memory.
- Take regular scheduled breaks – SCHEDULED breaks should not involve turning on the tv or social media or phone.
- Finally, give yourself a reward when you've completed your study session.

Reading Suggestions:

Learning Outside The Lines by Jonathan Moony (Written by two Ivy League students with AD/HD & LD)

Fidget to Focus – Outwit Your Boredom: Sensory Strategies for Living with ADD by Sarah D. Wright (AD/HD coach)

<http://www.studygs.net/classr.htm>

Your DSPS team is here to help you overcome the hurdles and challenges of learning with AD/HD. We can also help you to turn your differences into strengths.

