

Tools for Managing Adult ADHD:

10 Strategies for Simple Living

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Featuring Tips from the upcoming book “Tools for Managing Adult ADHD” published by APA

Book Overview

- ❖ Published by the APA; Fall 2011
- ❖ Co-authored with Frances Prevatt, Ph.D. of Florida State University
- ❖ Based on our published research in the field of ADHD; Dr. Levrini's 8 years of experience as therapist and coach; Dr. Prevatt's 30 years in academia and professional settings
- ❖ Put into practice at Psych Ed Coaches (Sterling, Fairfax, Alexandria, DC) www.psychedcoaches.com and FSU's Adult Learning Evaluation Center (ALEC)

Overview, Cont.

- “User-friendly” self-help manuscript
- 5-15 minute segments, with visual aids where to START and STOP
- Categories Include:
 - **Quiz Yourself – Does this sound like you?:** ‘Yes’ or ‘no’ questions at the beginning of each chapter that will allow you to gauge if that chapter is for you
 - **What the Experts Say:** A short, non-technical interpretation of the latest research in support of each strategy
 - **Can You Relate to This?:** Case examples of adults with ADHD
 - **Help Yourself!:** Fill-in exercises to help you apply what you have read
 - **Try It!:** More detailed exercises or ideas to do on your own at home
 - **Getting Back on Track:** Detailed explanations for how to overcome ADHD related difficulties
 - **Chapter Summaries:** Bulleted lists of the most important ideas, found at the end of each chapter

Contents

- Strategy/Chapter 1: Better Understand your ADHD diagnosis
- Strategy/Chapter 2: Get Organized
- Strategy/Chapter 3: Improve Time Management
- Strategy/Chapter 4: Set Goals (Using Rewards and Consequences)
- Strategy/Chapter 5: Develop Learning and Study Strategies
- Strategy/Chapter 6: Improve Social Relationships
- Strategy/Chapter 7: Gain Satisfaction with Employment
- Strategy/Chapter 8: Understand Comorbid Disorders and How to Overcome them
- Strategy/Chapter 9: Explore Non-medication based treatment options
- Strategy/Chapter 10: Make the most of Medication

Strategy 1: Better Understand your ADHD Diagnosis

- ADHD has become highly sensationalized over the years, with the media, internet, and your next door neighbor all offering different opinions and “facts” about this complex disorder.
- A crucial part of the therapeutic process for adults with ADHD is gaining insight and understanding about their disorder – helps to overcome misperceptions and insecurities.



Strategy 1: Better Understand your ADHD Diagnosis

In order to better understand your diagnosis, embrace following ideas:

1. Get an accurate diagnosis
2. How to define your ADHD diagnosis
3. How ADHD Manifests – Identifying your “Scenario”
4. It has nothing to do with willpower
5. It has nothing to do with intelligence
6. So what is ADHD? The hard proof

Strategy 2: Get Organized

Quiz Yourself – Does this sound like you?

- Are you constantly losing or misplacing everyday items such as your keys, cell phone, ipod, or wallet?
- Do you forget what color your desktop or kitchen table are because they are constantly covered in clutter?
- Is your briefcase or backpack full of crumpled bits of paper, candy wrappers, and possibly those lost keys?
- Do you insist something was never given to you only to find it weeks or months later?
- Do your closets look “like a bomb went off”?
- Do you start to organize your home only to become overwhelmed and/or distracted?

Strategy 2: Get Organized

- Three Steps to Organization:
 - Before (see supplemental exercise)
 - During
 - After (maintenance)
- It's progress - not perfection.
- Goal should be to *create and maintain a system that you can manage with relative ease to simplify your space.*
- The more planning and preparation you do, the less time and stress the task will take.

“Before” getting organized CHECKLIST

- ❑ Relinquish your fears. Write them all down. For each one, write a corresponding “challenge thought”. Take the perspective of what you might tell a friend who expressed such a concern.
- ❑ Think in terms of improving the organization of your space, not perfecting it. Keep a note with the phrase “*progress not perfection*” taped to the wall as you work.
- ❑ Resist the urge to try to organize everything at once. It has been there this long; what is the harm in it being there a bit longer? Use a planner and a timer to keep to small chunks of time.
- ❑ Create a list of the areas you would like to organize and then number them from the most important to least important areas. Complete one project at a time.
- ❑ Decide on how you will organize each space before diving in.
- ❑ Figure out what motivates you to organize your space. If organization in and of itself is not motivating to you (which it most likely is not) create another incentive. Maybe you will sell old items for money. Maybe you are creating a fun area for your kids to play, or you just want to see the look on your boss’ face. Review Chapter 4 on setting goals using rewards and consequences for more ideas about motivational strategies

“During” Organization

1. Keep, Throw, or Donate
2. Divide and Conquer
3. Photographs
4. Pick a Spot
5. In Sight, In Mind



“After” Organization

Ideas to help you to stay organized:

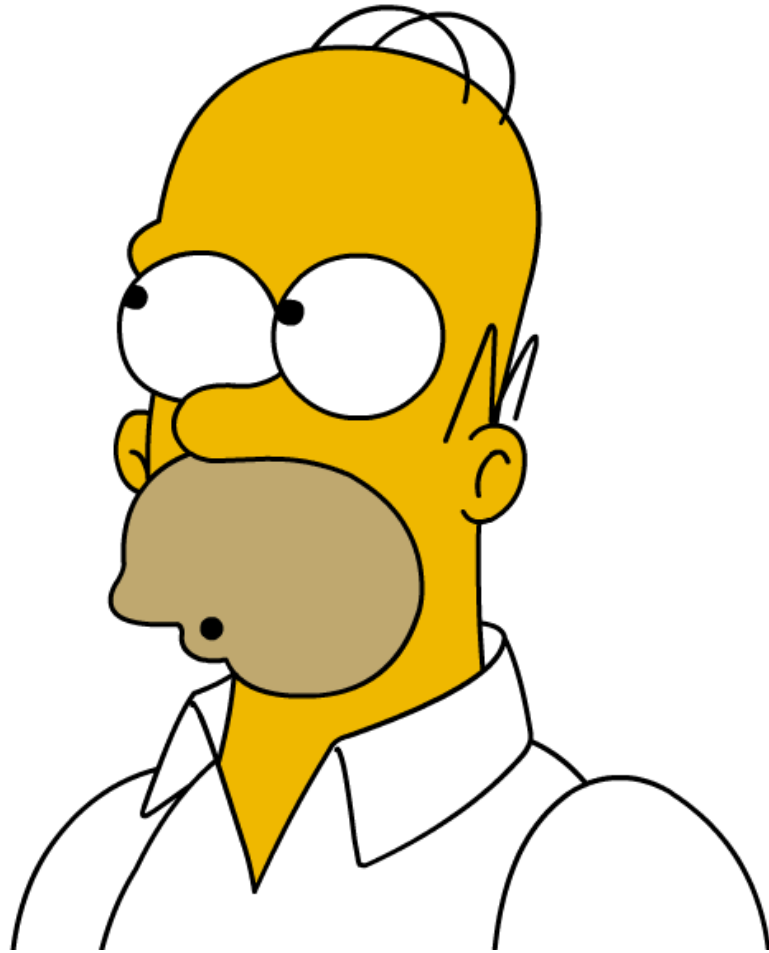
- Do a quick clean up at the end of each day. Take 10 – 15 minutes to do a sweep of your home or office.
- For more time consuming organizational tasks such as sorting mail and bills, or filing papers, schedule a set day and time each week to complete the task. Make it a rule. For example, “Every Thursday night before dinner I do laundry”.
- For each new item you bring into your home, get rid of one item.
- Follow the “Handle It Once” rule for sorting mail or papers. When it is time to do your weekly sorting, do not create more piles to go through later.
- Keep small containers in several rooms of your house or one in your office that you can use to collect items that are out of place. Then (immediately) take a second walk around putting the items back where they belong.

Strategy 3: Improve Time Management

Quiz Yourself – Does this sound like you?

- Do you put off tasks until an unwanted consequence has you scrambling to get it done, leaving you stressed and regretful?
- Are loved ones often upset with you because you commit to doing something and then find you are “too busy” to follow through?
- Do you create daily to-do lists with several items and only manage to cross one or two off at the end of the day?
- Does your boss or colleague have to hassle you to get work turned in on time?
- Do you find yourself putting off items that should be taken care of immediately such as paying bills to do something unimportant like rearrange your sock drawer?
- Does it feel like everyone around you is getting three times as much done as you in the same amount of time?

Procrastination “Types”



1. Homer Simpson – The Ineffective Prioritizer
2. Silly ‘Ol Bear – The Forgetful Type
3. Dug the Dog – The Easily Distracted
4. Hi Ho! – The Big Picture Type
5. ABD – The Perfectionist



Quarter-hour Planner

Visual of time in small segments; invites you to break down large tasks into smaller pieces and help you to see where in your busy day a task may take place. (See supplemental exercise).

(Some) Typical Weekly Duties

- At work (8 hours)
- Driving to work (45 minutes)
- Driving home from work (45 minutes)
- Sleep (7 hours)
- Shower and get ready for work (brush teeth, style hair, put on makeup, get dressed)
- (1.5 hours)
- Prepare and eat breakfast (30 minutes)
- Prepare lunch to bring to work (15 minutes)
- Have lunch (1 hour)
- Make dinner (30 minutes)
- Eat dinner (30 minutes)
- Get children up and off to school (45 minutes)
- Help children with homework (30 minutes)
- Take an evening walk (30 minutes)
- Take medication (15 minutes)
- Fold laundry (30 minutes)
- Vacuum the house (1 hour)
- Clean the bathrooms (30 minutes)
- Feed the pets breakfast (15 minutes)
- Feed the pets dinner (15 minutes)
- Water the plants (15 minutes)
- Get and go through the mail (15 minutes)
- Take out the trash (15 minutes)
- Pay bills (30 minutes)
- Fill the car with gas (30 minutes)

How to Prioritize

When deciding what tasks should come 1st, 2nd, and 3rd on your list, think of the consequences of not completing each task and whether or not there is a specific “due date” associated with each task. Use numbers, letters, or even colored star stickers to designate around 5 levels of priority then create a legend to keep with your planner.

For example,

- A. Task is “due” in one week or less, or my boss expects me to complete asap. If not complete, I could lose my job.*
- B. Task is “due” in two weeks or less, or a team member has expressed that he would like to see results soon. If not completed, my co-workers will be angry.*
- C. Task is “due” in three weeks or more, or it is something that I would like to get off my plate. If not completed, I will be disappointed.*
- D. Task has no pending “due date” and is something that would be nice to have done at some point. If not completed, it’s okay.*

Strategy 4: Set Goals (Using Rewards and Consequences)

Quiz Yourself - Does This Sound Like You?

- Do you have abstract ideas of what you would like to accomplish such as, “I would like to be better organized”?
- Are you the antithesis of the old Nike slogan, “just do it!”?
- Do you alternate between going full force toward a goal (i.e. crash dieting and losing several pounds in one week) and undoing everything you set in motion (i.e. devouring a large pizza in one sitting)?
- Is your home littered with old to-do lists or notes meant to inspire you but that ended up serving as coasters?
- Do you get down on yourself because everyone else seems to be reaching their goals except for you?

Self-Regulation

- In his book, *ADHD and the Nature of Self-Control*, Dr. Barkley argues that the fundamental deficit in individuals with ADHD is one of self-control, and that problems with attention are a secondary characteristic of the disorder.
- As a result, people with ADHD struggle with goal directed behavior even as adults.
- Treatment should focus on helping you to apply the knowledge you already have at the appropriate times, as well as teaching new coping skills.

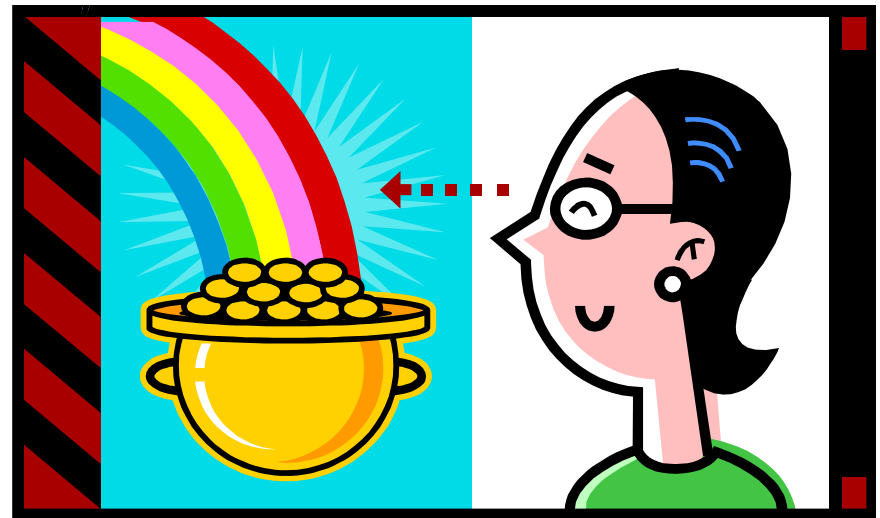
Getting Back on Track

- 1) Create long term goals (step 1)
- 2) Break them down into smaller weekly objectives (step 2)
- 3) Rewards and consequences (step 3) is essential to the goal reaching process
- 4) Metacognition (step 4) can help you better control future behavior

The 3 “Golden Rules”

We’ve created three rules for what makes an effective **Long Term Goal**. The three golden rules are:

1. Make it measurable
2. Make it process based
3. Keep it time sensitive



Sample LTG's

Without Using the 3GR's

- I want to be better organized
- I want to manage my time better
- I want to be less distracted
- I want to be a better spouse/friend/parent

Using the 3GR's

- I want to create and maintain a system of organization for my home office over the next three months
- I want to utilize an agenda to record my schedule on a weekly basis, then follow through with that schedule for the next eight weeks
- I want to research and attempt one new skill per week to help increase my ability to focus, for the next five weeks
- I want to dedicate one hour per evening to bond with my spouse/help my friend/play with my kids for the next two months

Rewards & Consequences

Factors to Consider:

- Be complimentary
- The sooner the better
- Get creative
- Try both and then use what works
- This isn't a bribe

Metacognition = “Thinking about thinking”

- First, review the previous weeks' goals and whether or not they were met.
 - If goals were not met think about why you were unable to meet them, and whether or not consequences were carried out.
 - If goals were not met, and consequences were not carried out, think about why this occurred and what needs to be changed so that it will not happen again.
 - If goals were met think about why you were able to do this, and whether or not rewards were carried out.
 - If goals were met, and rewards were carried out, think about why this occurred and what needs to happen so that you can continue to be successful.
 - If goals were met but rewards were not carried out, think about why this occurred and what needs to be changed so that you can carry through on rewards.
- After thinking about the previous weeks' goals, decide on the following week's goals, as well as the rewards and consequences for meeting or not meeting each goal. (See supplemental exercises).

Strategy 5: Develop Learning & Study Strategies

Quiz Yourself - Does this sound like you?

- Are the notes you take in class or meetings not very helpful to you later?
- Do you have a hard time figuring out what to include in your notes?
- Do you read something, and then quickly forget it?
- Can you read a chapter several times without it really sinking in?
- Do you study for tests or prepare for presentations, but then go blank when it's time to recall the information?
- Do you feel overwhelmed when you start to study or complete an assignment and don't know where to start?
- Do you feel you spend way more time than others studying or preparing or none at all because you have given up?

Top 5 Study Strategies

This study was done by Patricia Kaminski and her colleagues at the University of North Texas. Rather than asking students with ADHD about their problems, they asked them what helped them to succeed. See if the top five strategies surprise you.

1. Working longer and harder than other students.
2. Using some type of social support (getting help from parents, friends, roommates, professors).
3. Being organized, managing their time, and using good study skills.
4. Exercise helped students have the energy to get things done.
5. Keeping a positive mental attitude was important.

The single best predictor of doing well in college classes was whether the student went online the week before class and opened the syllabus.

(See supplemental exercises)

The Modified Cornell Method of Notetaking

- **Get Organized:**
 - Make sure you have a good system for keeping your notes. You might prefer one notebook for every subject, or loose-leaf paper inside a three-ring binder.
 - On each page of your paper, draw a vertical line. You should have twice as much space on one side as on the other.
- **During Class/Meetings:**
 - Take your notes on the larger section. Don't write full sentences. Key words and phrases are better. Try to learn some symbols or abbreviations.
- **Review:**
 - Do this directly after your class or meeting if possible. If not, do it soon, while your short term memory is still working. Fill in any gaps in your notes. Underline or jot down anything you might need to ask the instructor or a colleague to clarify.
 - On the right hand side of the paper, write study questions based on your notes.
- **Study:**
 - When you're ready to study, cover the notes side of your paper. Read your questions and answer them. Do this out loud if possible. It helps the transfer to long term memory.
- **Reflect:**
 - Try to make the material meaningful. Think to yourself: "What's the significance of these facts? What principle are they based on? How can I apply them? How do they fit in with what I already know? What's beyond them? Can I relate them to my own life? This also helps make the transition to long term memory.

Modified Cornell Method, Cont.

NOTES

- Popular system = Cornell method
- Organize – draw line
- Class – use shorthand
- Review – fill in, write questions. Short term memory (ask teacher how long short term memory lasts)
- Study – cover one side
- Weekly = 10 minutes old notes

QUESTIONS

- *What's the name of a popular note-taking system?*
- *How many minutes should you spend reviewing prior notes each week?*

Writing a Paper or Report

1. Write a tentative name for your report
2. Write several bullet points describing your paper
3. Outline what you are going to write about
4. Do your research
5. Organize notes as you go
6. Review your outline and notes
7. Write your paper
8. Review

The Effect of Parental Divorce on Children

1. Statistics
 - A. Number of divorces
 - B. Number of kids affected
2. Effects on kids
 - A. Self esteem
 - B. Depression
 - C. Poor school performance
 - D. Other
3. Factors that make a difference
 - A. Gender
 - B. Age
 - C. Parent Conflict
4. Counseling
5. Positive Aspects of Divorce

References

Strategy 6: Improve Social Relationships

Quiz Yourself - Does this sound like you?

- Do you blurt out things that you later regret?
- Do you tend to interrupt others when having a conversation?
- Do others complain that you don't listen, or that you forget what they've told you?
- Does your spouse or roommate complain that your space is always a mess?
- Do you forget anniversaries and birthdays, or you remember but can't quite seem to get a card or gift in time?
- Do others complain because you are never on time for dates or planned activities?
- Do you frequently lose your temper over something minor?
- Are you accused of being self-centered, even though you personally don't think this is true of you?

Paying Attention

Step 1: Identify and gather evidence about the issue –beware of *positive illusory bias*
(see supplemental worksheet for exercise)

Step 2: Commit to Change

Step 3: Make a Listening Plan

Step 4: Evaluate and Modify

Strategy 7:

Find Satisfaction with Employment

Quiz Yourself - Does this sound like you?

- Do you often fall behind or easily lose track of what you are supposed to be doing at work?
- Does it take you longer than your coworkers to get the same thing done?
- Is it difficult to get along well with your supervisor?
- Are you unhappy in your current field but unsure of what job you would like better?
- Do you often have a difficult time prioritizing your job duties?
- Do you find it hard to concentrate on your work?
- Is it hard to pay attention consistently in meetings or during presentations?
- Are you often late for work or meetings?

Workplace Tips

- Consider your job match — is it in line with your strengths and weaknesses
- Use strategies to become more effective on the job.
 - Make a list of common distractions and how to avoid them
- Educate yourself (and your coworkers/boss) about workplace accommodations



Strategy 8: Understand Comorbid Disorders and how to Overcome them

- Comorbid = Coexisting
- Between 65% and 89% of all patients with ADHD will suffer from one or more psychiatric disorders. More than 45% of adults with ADHD will have two or more comorbid psychiatric disorders.
- Most common comorbid disorders are Anxiety and Depression
- The wrong diagnosis can lead to the wrong medication, leave symptoms untreated, or make symptoms worse.

Are you suffering from Anxiety?

Category A

- Have you had, on more than one occasion, four or more of the following symptoms all at once: pounding heart, sweating, trembling, shortness of breath, feeling like you are choking, chest discomfort, nausea, dizziness or feeling faint, fear of losing control, fear of dying, numbness or tingling, chills or hot flashes?
- If you have had the group of symptoms above, do you worry a lot about a having this happen again?

Category B

- Do you worry about social situations with people you don't know because you think you might embarrass yourself?
- Do you avoid social situations with people you don't know?
- Do social situations with people you don't know make you anxious?

Category C

- Do you get anxious when you are taking a test or being evaluated?
- Do you get anxious just studying for a class or preparing for an evaluation?

Category D

- Do you worry consistently about a number of things, such as work or school or life in general?
- Do you find it difficult to control your worry?
- When you worry, does it include three or more of the following: restlessness, fatigue, difficulty concentrating, irritability, muscle tension, sleep problems?

Ways to Reduce Stress



- Practice a healthy lifestyle
- Reduce stress inducing activities (see supplemental worksheet for exercise)
- Practice *Progressive Muscle Relaxation*
- Improve relationships
- Take breaks
- **Procrastinate, Ignore, Delegate or give less than 100%!**

Are you suffering from Depression?

Category A

- Do you often have problems with your appetite; either you overeat or you don't feel like eating at all?
- Do you often have problems sleeping; either you can't sleep, or you want to sleep all the time?
- Are you often tired or have no energy?
- Do you have low self-esteem?
- Do you find it hard to make decisions?
- Do you feel hopeless?
- Do you feel sad or empty?
- Do you have little interest in doing things?
- Do you feel worthless or guilty?

Category B

- Do you think about dying a lot or think about suicide?

Ways to Combat Depression

- Develop a “Blues Busters” list (see supplemental worksheet)
- Follow the suggestions for a healthy lifestyle and reducing stress.
- Reach out to others by taking a class, joining a club, joining an online chat group, or renewing your contact with relatives
- Keep a journal of positive affirmations. Each day, write down something you are thankful for or something positive about yourself or your life.
- Volunteer.
- Make a plan for something you want to do. Having something to look forward to helps in two ways. One, the actually planning is enjoyable and keeps you busy. Two, the anticipation of the event can be exciting.
- Change your attitude for just one day.

Strategy 9: Explore Non-Medication Based Treatment Options

- 20–50% of adults with ADHD are considered “nonresponders” to medication.
- Current popular non-medication based treatment interventions for adults with ADHD:
 - ❖ Counseling/therapy
 - ❖ Exercise and Nutrition
 - ❖ ADHD Coaching
 - ❖ Accommodations
 - ❖ Multi-modal Treatment

ADHD Counseling

- **Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT):**
 - Focuses on changing maladaptive patterns of thinking and the underlying beliefs that guide such thoughts
 - By learning to change these distorted thoughts this can then lead to changes in behavior.
- **Mindfulness Meditation Training:**
 - Relaxation, although often induced during the training, is not the sole goal of the activity; rather, the main activity is a cognitive and intention-based process characterized by self-regulation and attention to the present moment with an open and accepting orientation towards one's experiences
 - 3 basic steps: 1) bringing attention to an “attentional anchor” such as breathing; 2) noting that distraction occurs and letting go of the distraction; and, 3) refocusing back to the “attentional anchor”.

ADHD Coaching

- Dr. Levrini's own multiple case study in 2008 was some of the first scientific research to show positive results for ADHD coaching. Since then, several additional studies have revealed that coaching has potential to be a very effective treatment.
- Involves helping you deal with ADHD-related difficulties such as procrastination, lack of concentration, ineffective self-regulation, poor planning, anxiety, social incompetence, or time management.
- Useful strategies include organizational skills, time-management, and specific study skills.
- Involves setting concrete, realistic goals and can extend to many facets of your life.

Seeking Help

- See the supplemental worksheet to find out what type of treatment may be best for you.
- Start with referrals – ask friends, colleagues, etc. for recommendations
- Helpful websites: www.chadd.org,
www.psychologytoday.com, www.psychedcoaches.com
- Other sources: University counseling centers, doctors, teachers, school psychologists
- Take quiz in TFMAA to see where your fear level lies

Strategy 10:

Make the most of Medication

- Types of ADHD Medication
 - Stimulants
 - Short-acting, intermediate acting, long acting
 - Antidepressants
 - Less common drugs:
 - Provigil (normally used for sleep disorders), Risperdal (normally used for schizophrenia or bipolar disorder), Intuniv (normally used for high blood pressure), and Tegretol (normally used to control seizures)
- The only ADHD drugs approved by the FDA for adults (as of June, 2010)
 - Vyvanse (a stimulant)
 - Adderall XR (a stimulant)
 - Strattera (an anti-depressant)
 - Just because an ADHD drug hasn't been approved by the FDA for adults doesn't mean that you can't take it. A physician can legally prescribe a drug *off-label*.

Thank You!

- Visit **Psych Ed Coaches** at:
 - www.psychedcoaches.com
 - Fairfax, Sterling, Alexandria, and DC
 - 571-289-9729
- For further reading, please read my upcoming book, “**Tools for Managing Adult ADHD**”, published by the American Psychological Association (APA).
- To find out more information on when this book will be available, please **SIGN UP** or email Dr. Levrini at:
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