



Career Coaching for ADHD

Turn your Challenges into Opportunities



THE TOP 4 CHALLENGES ADULTS WITH ADHD FACE IN THE WORKPLACE TODAY

Margo Love

“ADHD...it’s a beautiful thing”

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Having and keeping a job in today's workplace environment can be challenging, particularly for those of us with Attention Deficits. Some individuals may find difficulty maintaining focus and attention in relationship to tasks that they find routine and boring, while others may find it challenging to manage their projects from beginning to completion. How extensively ADHD may affect job performance, or even career outlook, depends on the symptoms and whether or not there is a treatment plan in place designed to address the major symptoms.

According to several sources, there are about 8 million adults in the United States with ADHD, and only about 1 million are receiving treatment. ADD/ ADHD (I will refer to both as ADHD from here on) affects all aspects of one's life; self-esteem, social interactions, relationships, and job performance.

Before I was diagnosed with ADHD, my self-esteem was very low; I struggled with controlling my impulsive behavior, usually interrupting conversations and speaking out of turn, and controlling feelings of hyperactivity when I really needed to focus. These challenges created feelings of despair and failure since the primary function of my job involved having conversations with my customers and focusing on what they are telling me. The times that I did not do such a good job at controlling these challenges; I would begin the negative self talk to myself, asking myself "why can't I be like everyone else"? I actually began to convince myself that any success that I had achieved in my career was pure luck and certainly not related to my skill. I was not at all optimistic about my future and I felt trapped in my career, primarily because this was what I knew how to do and that I was good at most of it.

Even though I felt that I was good at what I did for a living, I did not realize the extent of my difficulties with performing some required job functions, and the problems that stemmed from it.

On one job that I held before my diagnosis, even though I performed very well with my sales, it seemed that I was always being reprimanded about being late with my administrative duties. It actually got to the point that I was fired for late paperwork! How humiliating! Being fired for something that I procrastinated about on a daily basis only served to destroy my job and destroyed my self esteem for many years to come.

After this very humiliating period in my life, I went on to another job, hoping to do better with my administrative responsibilities. During that time, I was blessed with 2 wonderful children that were later both diagnosed with ADHD in their early elementary school years. Shortly after their diagnosis, I learned that I too have ADHD. My reactions after my diagnosis were first shock, then insecurity about what this all means, (I did not know that adults can have ADHD) and then a feeling of relief that there is actually a reason that I struggled in many areas of my life. My job at that time involved interacting with Psychiatrists which allowed me to learn a great deal about ADHD. I was also able to have a great boss that noticed my challenges and gave me options and a plan that I could follow, making those tasks much more manageable. With a structured plan to accommodate for my challenges, I was able to become more successful in my career and my life. I never told anyone at any of my jobs that I have ADHD, not even the one that I worked for that happened to be one of the largest manufacturers of medication for ADHD. I realized that there were a lot of negative perceptions about ADHD, even with a company selling the medications for treating ADHD. It stems from a lack of understanding.

Often times, as a result of the challenges that affect the lives of adults with ADHD, many take jobs that are not best suited to their needs. Being aware of the challenges and gifts of ADHD can provide the opportunity to have a more suitable career choice. Taking responsibility for my challenges and embracing my diagnosis allowed me to discover my life's purpose in my career.

Here is where I will discuss the top 4 challenges adults with ADHD face in the workplace today, and 7 simple steps that you can begin using now to improve workplace performance to have a more rewarding career.

THE 4 TOP CHALLENGES ADULTS WITH ADHD FACE IN THE WORKPLACE TODAY

CHALLENGE #1: Lack of Focus / Distractibility

Attention, or difficulty maintaining it, is a challenge that is seen in most individuals with ADD/ADHD, to varying degrees. Inattention or lack of focus challenges performance in our careers and workplace duties in so many ways. Have you ever been in a meeting or listened to someone giving you instructions and all of a sudden, you realize that you remember very little of what you heard? Most adults and children alike with attention difficulties that I have spoken say that, they do listen but only manage to remember the very last thing said. Others may think that you are not listening to them, but the fact is, your working memory and mental processing of information is much more difficult, so even though you try to listen you just do not remember.

CHALLENGE #2: Organization / Planning / Prioritizing

As adults with ADHD, we often have to plan, prioritize and organize for work and in our personal lives and it is referred to as "Executive Function". The National Center for Learning Disabilities gives the definition of executive function as:

"A set of mental processes that helps connect past experience with present action. People use it to perform activities such as planning, organizing, strategizing, paying attention to and remembering details, and managing time and space".

If you have you experience difficulty with any of these activities, it is important that you be able to put a system(s) in place to help accommodate for these types of challenges. Some individuals with attention difficulties find these functions more manageable or as I have often found, are able to manage these types of functions for others but have difficulty doing so for themselves. It is essential that these challenges are identified and understood in order to achieve success of required tasks for one's life and career.

CHALLENGE #3: Time Management

Time management for individuals with ADHD, no matter what age, is often a daunting and overwhelming challenge. Here again, executive function is responsible for this challenge. Have you ever promised yourself that you would absolutely be on time or early to a meeting, this time, and inevitably something happens and yes once again, you are late. Even if it is only a few minutes, being late can cause a snowball effect of feeling unprepared and rushed for a good part of that day.

Let's say that you are due to an important meeting, you wake up early to make certain that you arrive early and prepared. As you begin getting ready, you notice the time and see that you are doing great, you are actually ahead of time and you feel good about that. Here is where Murphy (you know, Murphy's Law) moves in. You see something that you forgot to do or that just caught your attention, that has absolutely nothing to do with you getting prepared to leave; and you do it—because it just caught your attention. Now you are running late and you begin to rush. Between getting in the car and going back into the house at least 2-3 times because you forgot something, you are really rushed now. You get to your meeting, a little late and...you discovered that you forgot something very important that is required for the meeting, now you are late and unprepared, which leaves a bad impression on your superiors.

Does this sound like something that has happened before, maybe more often than you want to think about? This scenario actually is quite common with adults with ADHD, with children as well however, when we grow up, we do not have a parent or teacher that keeps us relatively on time. Attention to time management helps to decrease stress and makes a major difference on productivity in the workplace and other aspects of life.

CHALLENGE #4: Lack of Impulse Control

Having difficulty controlling internal impulses, as in doing things on the spur of the moment, are actions that most of adults with ADHD can relate to. I recall having this challenge as a child where I just thought that I was not that unusual, just something due to my immaturity. It continued into adulthood, a bit more noticeable and embarrassing at times to say the least. I found myself speaking before thinking or interrupting conversations before I realizing it. Challenges such as these are particularly frustrating when we do not control those impulses when become adults. Acting before thinking can affect emotions and self-esteem; often being viewed by others as rude, inconsiderate and emotionally distant, which is many times far from the truth.

Impulsive actions in the workplace, such as making an important decision without thinking of the consequences, interrupting conversations, or even jumping from job to job without cause, actions that are often viewed by many employers, as undesirable qualities in an employee. Learning to control these impulses is extremely important in all aspects of life. What has worked for me has been

- Being more focused on what is being said in a conversation and taking time (a couple of seconds) before speaking.
- Being present in the conversation, taking notes if necessary.

- Taking time to review all options before making important decisions.
- Repeating back what the person said to me to make certain that I understand what is being said.

If you can identify with the challenges that I have outlined above, read on and prepare to start my 7 step process that has helped me and others that I have worked with to uncover the gifts of ADHD by turning challenges such as these into opportunities, today!

7 SIMPLE STEPS TO BEGIN USING NOW TO TURN YOUR CHALLENGES INTO OPPORTUNITIES

Based on my personal experience, and working with others, I have discovered 7 key steps to take toward a more rewarding career, either with the one that you have now, or more fulfilling career that you can work toward having in the near future.

Follow all 7 for they are each important:

STEP # 1: IDENTIFY YOUR CHALLENGES.

It is important as the first step to identify your primary challenges; those that you feel are the reason(s) preventing you from success in your life and your career. For example, if you are primarily inattentive, you may suffer with distractibility - not being able to focus on a task thru to completion. You may find yourself daydreaming, particularly when you are in the middle of an activity that requires your attention. If you are primarily hyperactive, you may have some distraction from inattention but may be restless, may speak out of turn or make decisions hastily. A combination of both examples is called the combined type of ADHD and can have a combination of the two above examples in varying degrees.

By becoming clear about your challenges, including defining ways to accommodate for them, you have the power to turn those challenges into opportunities and strengths for your career and your life.

STEP # 2: TAKE STOCK OF YOUR WORKDAY ACTIVITIES.

- What are your daily activities?
- What part(s) of the day are you most productive?
- What is your work environment? Do you work indoors, do you have a team that you work with or do you work alone?
- What are the job functions that seem to cause the most stress or difficulties?

Make a list of your primary work functions and including as those listed above, you will then be able to assess how you can best work with those challenges associated with your workday activities.

Schedule functions for the times of the day that you are most alert and productive. Delegate mundane or boring tasks whenever you can or schedule those activities for a time when you are doing similar functions. If you are making phone calls, mix in some of the 'boring' calls that you have to make. Schedule time routinely for a few of the boring tasks, maybe once a day, reward yourself with something fun as a reward for completing that (those) boring tasks. Make it fun, a game if you will, your job can become much more rewarding.

STEP # 3: IS YOUR WORK ENVIRONMENT ADHD FRIENDLY?

The main question to ask yourself here is, if your work place is one where you can thrive, not just survive; one where you enjoy good relationships with your boss and the co-workers that you most often interact with?

The workplace environment is extremely important for emotional wellbeing and self esteem. This is particularly true as it relates to the adult with attention difficulties. When I look back on my career, I have had some great bosses and some not so great bosses. I have had some great co-workers that supported me through my many challenges with ADHD and, I have suffered and my job has suffered at the hands of some co-workers that were extremely difficult to work with. When you are not happy with your job or work environment, it often causes stress and greater possibility of burn-out, of making more mistakes, and low self-esteem; all of which can negatively affect your career.

Many adults with ADHD tend to take jobs that are not well matched to them. When considering what job may be best for you, it is important to find a job that satisfies your interests, works with your strengths, skills and abilities and has the a environment that is best for encouraging growth and productivity. A job / career can occupy and influence a major portion of your life and time, so it is important to find work that is satisfying and supportive.

STEP # 4: DON'T RIDE THE ROLLERCOASTER!

Let's face – if you have ADHD, it is ok, and the more that you learn about ADHD and how it affects you, the more you will be able to embrace the positive qualities and gifts of your ADHD in your career and in your life. I consider my having ADHD as a gift! Certainly, I have struggles with various activities however, I know what my challenges are and I have learned understand that I cannot do everything. I make sure to know my limitations. Having ADHD can often times feel like you are living on a rollercoaster of emotions resulting from being overwhelmed by our inefficient multitasking and our never ending 'to do' lists. Be encouraged, there are many positive attributes with having ADHD

More and more adults are recognizing that they may have ADHD and are seeking answers by professionals most trained to recognize a correct diagnosis, Psychiatrists and Psychologists are most skilled at making a correct diagnosis. There are still many adults in the workplace that have not been diagnosed / treated for their attention difficulties or are unaware of what their challenges result from. Once you are able to understand your challenges and understand the options available, you will more than likely be able to create opportunities from those challenges. It helps to receive the proper treatment from a knowledgeable physician allowing you the chance to minimize the feelings of life on a rollercoaster.

STEP # 5: UTILIZE YOUR RESOURCES.

Understanding is powerful! Find the resources that will support you, whether that is in the form of a coach, therapist, a support group, or reaching out for spiritual or religious help. I recommend taking advantage of any resources available to you in understanding how you can better work with challenges that you may have. It is also important to recognize that there are gifts in having ADHD, and the more that you learn about adult ADHD and how it affects you, the more you will learn to embrace your gifts, gifts that can be used in your life and career. For more information about resources on adult ADHD/ADD, please visit my resources page on my website:

www.careercoachingforadhd.com.

STEP # 6: EMBRACE YOUR NEW AWARENESS.

If you struggle with ADD/ADHD, you are certainly not alone. As I stated in the beginning of this report, there are an estimated 8 million adults living in the United States with ADHD. There are also many famous people from athletes to entrepreneurs that are reported to have ADHD, and have very successful careers. I will refrain from naming any individuals since I do not have confirmation that it is ADHD in particular but some like Ty Pennington are very open about sharing their attention difficulties, even being a paid spokes person for a leading form of ADHD treatment. If you would like more information on famous people with ADHD, I caution you to be mindful as to what information is confirmed, and what is not, out of respect for ADHD and as well as for the celebrities written about. Celebrities or not, ADHD is real, once you are able to accept the diagnosis of ADHD, and begin to embrace your new awareness, the true gifts that ADHD gives us will become obvious to you.

Once you go through the steps above and learn to acknowledge your challenges, learn what your options are, seek change to work with those challenges, you will most likely be able to be the best in your career, and your life. Embrace it, even celebrate it -- it can become your greatest asset!, Really!

STEP # 7: SHARE YOUR SUCCESS!

Once you have matched your natural strengths to your job, and have mastered your ADHD at work, you will want to share your successes with others you know, and perhaps reach out to those with similar challenges. You, and they, may want to join the Career Coaching for ADHD community – see details below!

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

Visit www.careercoachingforadhd.com today to see our latest classes, events, products, and coaching services, and contact me at margo@careercoachingforadhd.com for your 15-minute initial consultation to evaluate your situation. The consultation will allow us determine if or how we can help you. Visit today and register to receive our periodic newsletter.

Remember... embrace your awareness, embrace your gifts, turn your challenges into opportunities.

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