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Psychiatry and Addictions Case Conference

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COGNITIVE-BEHAVIORAL STRATEGIES FOR ADHD: PART TWO

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SPEAKER DISCLOSURES

- ✓ I have no conflicts of interest to disclose

Planner disclosures

The following series planners have no relevant conflicts of interest to disclose; other disclosures have been mitigated.

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OBJECTIVES

1. Learn the ADHD skills “starter pack”
2. Common provider pitfalls to avoid

CALENDAR AND TASK LIST

1

*"I'm forgetful!"
"I have a system... of
sticky notes"*

- Do they use a calendar and task list?
- If so, what do they use?
- How helpful do they find it?
- Do they actually use it daily?
- Too complex? Too simple?

TIPS

- **Goal:** Free up space in your brain by getting all your to-dos and appointments out of your brain and onto something else
- 1 calendar, 1 task list
- Doesn't matter if electronic or another format
- What matters is that they use it daily
- **Common Pitfalls:** anxiety, avoidance, not using the system

*"I don't get the
important things
done!"*

TIPS

- **Goal:** Manage overwhelm and figure out priorities
- Use the ABCs
- **A** = needs to get done ASAP, like yesterday
- **B** = important, longer-term tasks
- **C** = can wait, but get done if time
- **Common pitfalls:** too many A tasks, never getting to C tasks (but that might be ok?), not scheduling the task, rigidity, Cs above As

2

PRIORITIZING TASKS

BREAKING DOWN TASKS

3

*"I get so
overwhelmed!"*

TIPS

- **Goal:** Break down big tasks until they feel doable then add steps to task list
- What's the first thing that needs to happen for this task? What next?
- Do you want to avoid this? Is it doable in a day?
- **Common pitfalls:** not breaking tasks down far enough, difficulty identifying the steps

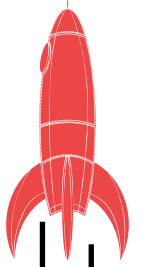
*"My attention
span is so bad"*

TIPS

- **Goal:** Attention tracking and training
- Attention span is a muscle and varies!
- First, gather data on attention span for a boring task
- Second, practice the delay technique – write down distraction and practice refocusing
- **Common pitfalls:** Not trying this skill, beliefs about attn getting in the way, expecting "achievement" not continual progress

4

DISTRACTABILITY DELAY



SKILL 1: CALENDAR AND TASK LIST



This skill might be helpful for people who say:

- *"I'm forgetful!"*
- *"I have a system... of sticky notes"*
- *"I don't need a system, I keep it all in my head."*



SKILL 1: CALENDAR AND TASK LIST

GOALS & PITFALLS

- **Goal:** Free up space in your brain by getting all your to-dos and appointments out of your brain and onto something else
- 1 calendar, 1 task list
- Format can be paper, electronic
 - What matters is that they use it daily
- **Common Pitfalls:** anxiety, avoidance, not using the system, married to a system that doesn't work for them

HELPFUL QUESTIONS

- Do they use a calendar and task list?
 - If so, what do they use?
- How helpful do they find it?
- Do they *actually* use it daily?
- Too complex? Too simple?

SKILL 2: PRIORITIZING TASKS



This skill might be helpful for people who say:

- *“I don’t know what to do first.”*
- *“I never get the important things done.”*
- *“I always wait until the last minute to start something.”*
- *“I’m always just putting out fires!”*



SKILL 2: PRIORITIZING TASKS

GOALS & PITFALLS

- **Goal:** Manage overwhelm and figure out priorities
- Use the ABCs
 - **A** = needs to get done ASAP, like yesterday
 - **B** = important, longer-term tasks
 - **C** = can wait, but get done if time
- **Common pitfalls:** too many A tasks, never getting to C tasks (but that might be ok?), not scheduling the task, rigidity, Cs above As, only including work tasks as A tasks

HELPFUL QUESTIONS

- How do you decide what tasks to do first?
- What types of tasks do you tend to prioritize over others?
- When you have multiple tasks, how do you decide the order to do them in?

SKILL 3: BREAKING DOWN TASKS



This skill might be helpful for people who say:

- *“I get so overwhelmed.”*
- *“It just seems like too much!”*
- *“I have no idea where to get started”*
- *“I feel like I have task paralysis.”*



SKILL 3: BREAKING DOWN TASKS

GOALS & PITFALLS

- **Goal:** Break down big tasks until they feel doable then add steps to task list
 - What's the bare minimum starting point?
- **Common pitfalls:** not breaking tasks down far enough, difficulty identifying the steps, shame or embarrassment/"I should" beliefs

HELPFUL QUESTIONS

- What's the first thing that needs to happen for this task? What next?
- Do you want to avoid this? Is it doable in a day?
- What's holding you back from making this a smaller step?

SKILL 4: DISTRACTIBILITY DELAY



This skill might be helpful for people who say:

- *“My attention span is so bad!”*
- *“I just can’t focus.”*
- *“I start a task, but find myself doing something else!”*



SKILL 4: DISTRACTIBILITY DELAY

GOALS & PITFALLS

- **Goal:** Attention tracking and training
 - Identify what attention span actually is, and fit tasks to that span of time
 - Attention is a muscle that can be strengthened
 - Attention span is not good or bad – but varies with understandable external and internal influences
- **Common pitfalls:** not trying this skill! Beliefs about attn getting in the way, expecting it to be something you “achieve” rather than continue to work on

HOW TO

- **Tracking**
 - Pick a boring task you’ve been avoiding
 - Time how long it takes until your attention wanders – do this a few times
 - Break the task down to fit average span
- **Training**
 - Do the task for the allotted time frame
 - Write down distractions
 - Check in after: need to add to task list? Need to do now? Unimportant?
 - Keep returning to the task at hand
 - Use mantras: *Am I doing what I’m supposed to be doing?*

OBJECTIVE 2: IDENTIFY COMMON PROVIDER PITFALLS TO AVOID

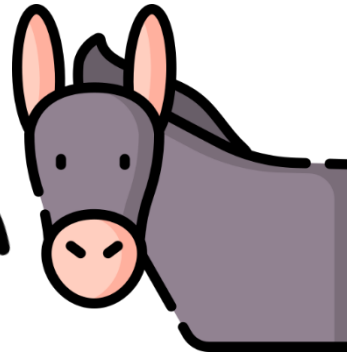
ADHD SKILLS: COMMON PROVIDER PITFALLS

Doing the work for the patient
(or centering your experience)



Making assumptions

- What skills someone already has or does not have



Not following up



Being too rigid with skills



Dumping, not dosing, skills

