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3 Methods for Clearing Mental Clutter

By Jennifer Koretsky

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Many adults with ADD have a hard time slowing down their brains. Thoughts often come at whirlwind speed, and it can be hard to concentrate on the tasks at hand when so many other thoughts are floating around in the brain. I call this "mental clutter."

Often times, mental clutter is made up of worries and bad feelings. (Very few people get overwhelmed by the amount of positive thoughts in their heads!) Regrets of the past and worries about the future can easily overshadow the present moment. Self-doubt can also take up a lot of space in the mind. When an excess of these types of thoughts take over in the brain, it can be stressful, upsetting, and sometimes even paralyzing.

The best way to clear this mental clutter is to process the thoughts, rather than letting them swim around in your brain. Doing so will allow you to focus on the present moment, and feel more calm and centered.

The following 3 methods have proven very helpful in clearing mental clutter.

1. Write

A great way to clear mental clutter is to transfer the thoughts from your brain onto paper. This can be in the form of a to-do list, an email to a supportive person in your life, or a journal entry. When the thoughts are recorded, there is no need for your brain to hold on to them.

Additionally, if you feel weighed down by a situation (like an argument with a family member) writing about it can help you process your feelings. You can get a better grip on the events, how you feel, and what you might have done differently. A page or two might be all it takes.

2. Talk

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Many people with ADD are "verbal processors." This means that we often work through thoughts and feelings by talking them out. It helps to have an objective person to talk to, who can mirror your thoughts and talk them out with you. However, the very act of talking is often what does the trick, so having someone to talk to isn't always necessary. Many people find that talking into a tape recorder suits their needs. Others talk to plants or animals. (I talk to my dog so much that I'm surprised she doesn't talk back by now!)

3. Move

Some ADDers can clear mental clutter by moving. Something as simple as a 10-minute walk can give the brain a needed jolt. Others may find that they feel free of extraneous thoughts after a visit to the gym. The time alone combined with the physical activity proves to be a successful formula for some ADDers to work through their mental clutter.

It's best to experiment with the different methods and see which work best for you in the different areas of your life. The important thing to know is that with a little time-out, mental clutter can be cleared!

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Jennifer Koretsky is an ADD Management Coach who helps adults learn how to manage their ADD and move forward in life. She offers individual and group coaching, workshops, and skill-building programs. Her work has been featured in various media, including The New York Times Magazine. Subscribe to Jennifer's free email newsletter, The ADD Management Guide, by visiting

Letting Go of Clutter In Your Office

By Angie Dixon

Some people would say I'm the last person in the world to be writing about clearing out clutter; I seem to accumulate so much of it. But I also get rid of it, when it reaches the point of bothering me.

That's the first thing about clearing out clutter. Everyone has a threshold at which the clutter starts to bother them. My husband's threshold is much lower than mine, and when he starts clearing out, I jump in and help him. But in my office, things go to my threshold and no further—usually. Recognizing your threshold and working within it is the first key to letting go of clutter. If it's really not bothering you, and you can find everything you need, it's not essential to tackle it right away.

The second key to letting go of clutter is to bring the recycle bin (for paper without staples) and the large kitchen trash can (for everything else) into your office and put them beside the desk, which is clutter central in most offices. Get a box of manila file folders, a box of hanging file folders, and a plastic file box, the kind with a handle that you can get for about ten bucks at a big office supply store. And a pen.

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Pick up every piece of paper off your desk, one sheet or sheaf at a time. Start with paper because there's usually more of it than anything else. Don't touch anything twice. When you pick it up either put it in the recycle bin (remove staples first), put it in the trash if it can't go in the recycle, or put it in a folder, label the folder, and put the folder, inside a hanging folder, in the plastic file box. Don't worry about organizing the files. Just get everything out of site and off your desk. Get two or three boxes if you need them. They stack nicely out of the way against the wall.

Once the paper is off your desk, you should be able to see the surface, which will probably be littered with books, pens, soda cans, memo pads, and CDs, if it looks anything like my desk. Take one category at a time, like CDs, and put all of them away. Then books, and so on.

The rest of your office may be cluttered in the same way as your desk, with stacks of papers and books scattered around. Use the same method. Start with the paper, don't touch anything twice, and declutter by category—CDs, books, etc. after the paper.

De-cluttering doesn't have to mean deep-cleaning, though you may get motivated and do that. Really it just means getting the clutter out of the way so you can work. Letting go of it is as simple as realizing you don't need it where it is right this minute, and putting it somewhere else—even if that somewhere else is the recycle bin.

A good rule of thumb is, if you can get that piece of paper again, especially by printing it off your computer, you don't need to keep it. Now, you might, if it's important. But just use this as a rule of thumb.

Happy clearing!

Angie Dixon helps small business owners get their acts together. She is a personal development coach specializing in helping people integrate their home and work lives so they feel less stretched and more balanced. Get her FREE EBOOK on balance at

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to discover how coaching can change your life, contact Angie at

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