


HARNESSING THE ADVANTAGES OF ADHD



How to use the ADHD brain to your advantage.

A close-up photograph of a man's face, slightly out of focus. He is holding a small, round, metallic object (likely a coin) very close to his right eye, between his thumb and index finger. The background is a blurred, textured wall. In the top right corner, there is a dark circular overlay containing white text.

**What if
your brain is
faster than
normal?**

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Unofficial ADHD Test

During this test you'll need to keep your own score by giving yourself one point for each yes.



What is ADHD?

- Associated with impaired occupational, family, and relational functioning as well as poor driving skills
- Linked to lower dopamine transporter density (DTD)
- Estimated prevalence of ~11% in children
- Estimated prevalence of ~2-4.4% in adults
- Screening questionnaire available at ADD.org

ADHD Presentations

Common Presentations:

- Inattentive (previously called ADD)
- Hyperactive/Impulsive

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Poor Control/Application != Broken



Disorder or Neurodiversity?

- Often linked with genetic variation of the 7-repeat allele of the DRD4 gene which varies by geography
- May confer evolutionary advantages

“Atypical (neurodivergent) neurological development is a normal human difference that is to be recognized and respected as any other human variation.”

-Thomas Armstrong, PhD

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Steps to Harness Your Brain

1. Self Analysis

Beneficial Traits

- Handling Crisis Well
- Creativity
- Strong Intuition
- Quick Study
- Less Risk Averse

Successful Individuals with ADHD*

- John F. Kennedy
- Albert Einstein
- Bill Gates
- Sir Richard Branson
- Paul Orfalea
- Cameron Herold
- Seth Godin
- John Lee Dumas
- David Neeleman
- Michael Jordan
- Michael Phelps
- Justin Timberlake
- James Carville

* Not all officially diagnosed

ADHD Tendencies

- Extreme focus in some activities
- Easily distracted during other activities
- Prefers working late at night
- Craves stimulation and often restless
- Drive for perfection in most or all endeavors
- Goes overboard on some projects and avoids others
- Routinely avoids commitments or takes on too much

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Tendency – Hyperfocus / Microfocus



Tendency – Hyperfocus / Microfocus

Manifestation

- Moments of deep and intense concentration
- Difficulty regulating one's attention span

Tendency – Stimulation Craving

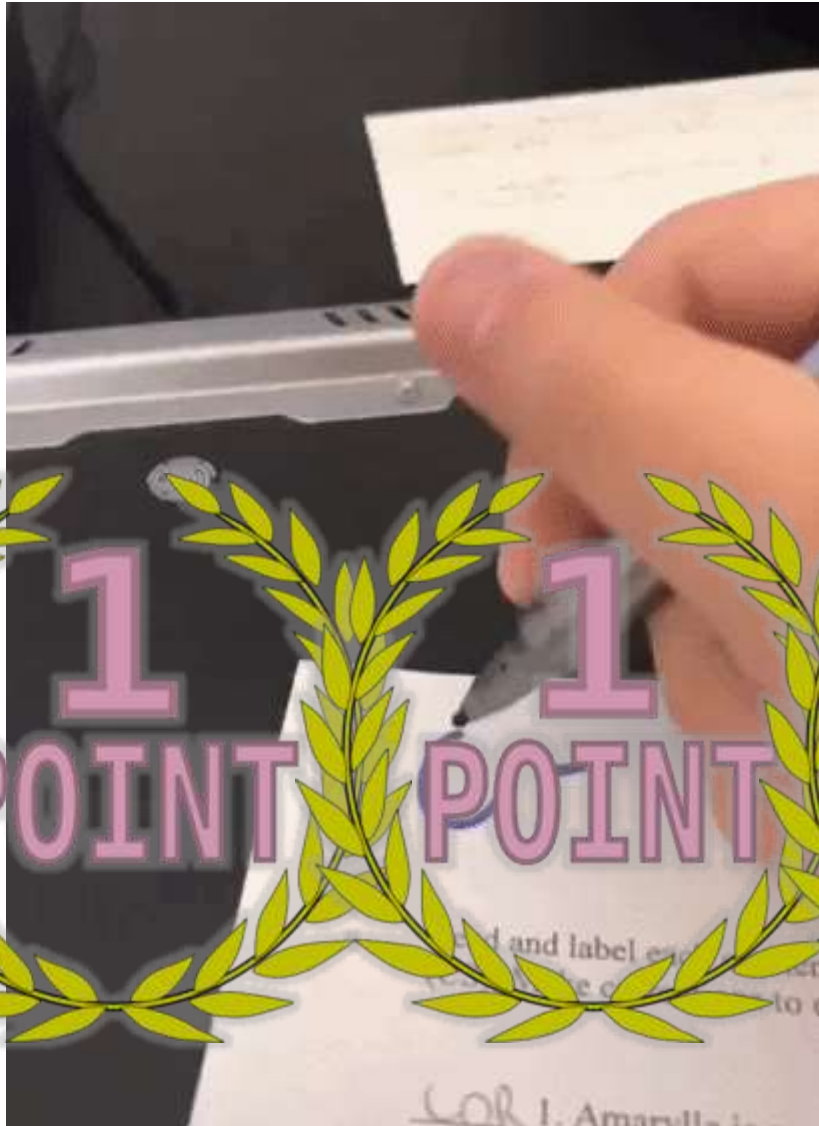


Tendency – Stimulation Craving

Manifestation

- Stimulation craving results in destructive behavior
- Restlessness leads to distraction and inattentiveness

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Tendency – Out of Sight, Out of Mind...and In Sight Too



Tendency – Out of Sight, Out of Mind...and In Sight Too

Manifestation

- Living in the moment with little focus on the past or future
- Going months without thinking about close friends
- Forgetting to respond to messages despite wanting to continue the conversation
- Leaving things out so you'll see them when they are needed

Tendency – All or Nothing



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Tendency – All or Nothing

Manifestation

- Tend to seek perfection and invest 110% in projects
- Avoid endeavors requiring limited investment

Tendency – Perfectionist Procrastination



Tendency – Perfectionist Procrastination

Manifestation

- Compulsive need perfection in most efforts
- Avoids activities where perfection is unattainable

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Steps to Harness Your Brain

1. Self Analysis
2. Develop Strategies

Tendency – Hyperfocus / Microfocus

Manifestation

- Moments of deep and intense concentration
- Difficulty regulating one's attention span

Techniques

- Select time and environment to harness focus
- Identify strategies to transition from hyperfocus

Tendency – Stimulation Craving

Manifestation

- Stimulation craving results in destructive behavior
- Restlessness leads to distraction and inattentiveness

Techniques

- Select time and environment to limit distractions
- Substitute positive sources of stimulation
- Tie distraction limitations to objective completion

Tendency – Out of Sight, Out of Mind...and In Sight Too

Manifestation

- Living in the moment with little focus on the past or future
- Going weeks or months without thinking about close friends
- Forgetting to respond to messages despite wanting to continue the conversation
- Leaving things out so you'll see them when they are needed

Techniques

- Select time and environment to harness focus
- Identify strategies to transition from hyperfocus

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Tendency – All or Nothing

Manifestation

- Tend to seek perfection and invest 110% in projects
- Avoid endeavors requiring limited investment

Techniques

- Micro-moment approach for dreaded tasks
- Use time limits instead of task limits

Tendency – Perfectionist Procrastination

Manifestation

- Compulsive need perfection in most efforts
- Avoids activities where perfection is unattainable

Techniques

- Identify impact to determine appropriate effort
- Focus on general analysis with limit on level of detail

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Steps to Harness Your Brain

1. Self Analysis
2. Develop Strategies
3. Design Structure

Structure Techniques

- Adopt a positive mentality
- Eliminate decisions by making them in advance
- Utilize tools to enforce your strategies

Organizational Coping Mechanisms (Skills)

Address inattention and impulsivity using:

- List Making
- Scheduling
- Emailing
- Project Planning
- Break Taking
- Outsourcing

“If I compare my daily output with that of a normal person, then I achieve about 150% just because of what I can compress into a day...and it’s clearly because I am totally structured.”

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Does your to-do list include eat breakfast, get dressed, brush teeth...because you may forget, but mostly because you love checking things off?



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Do you also dislike brushing your teeth because it's boring and takes two whole minutes?



Structure Techniques

- Adopt a positive mentality
- Eliminate decisions by making them in advance
- Utilize tools to enforce your strategies
- **Modify your habits to encourage positive change**

How Habits Work

- Habits are made up of a cue, routine, and reward
- Cues fall into five categories
 - Location
 - Time
 - Emotional state
 - Other people
 - The immediately preceding action
- Anticipation of rewards develop into a craving

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Do you notice little things that other people miss?



Hacking Your Habits – The Cue

When you feel the urge for your habit, ask yourself:

- What time is it?
- Where are you?
- Who else is around?
- What did you just do?
- What emotion are you feeling?

Hacking Your Habits – The Reward

What craving do you think your habit is satisfying?

- Try substituting another reward.
- Try substituting the opposite reward.
- Keep experimenting until you find a substitute.

Hacking Your Habits – The Routine

Insert a new routine between the cue and reward.

- Write a plan for what you will do when the cue occurs.
- For example: “When [cue] I will [routine] because it provides me with [reward].”
- Try it for a week and re-evaluate.

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Steps to Harness Your Brain

1. Self Analysis
2. Develop Strategies
3. Design Structure
4. Incorporate Support

Self Support

- Set reasonable goals and avoid perfectionism
- Replace critical self-talk with positive encouragement
- Incorporate rewards for correct behavior

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Are you interested, but kind of yawning? Give yourself a point!



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Falling asleep? Give yourself two points!



External Support

- Seek allies with similar traits
- Inform and involve family, colleagues, and friends
- Explore trading tasks
- Consider professional assistance

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Steps to Harness Your Brain

1. Self Analysis
2. Develop Strategies
3. Design Structure
4. Incorporate Support
5. Periodically Re-evaluate

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If you were like this your whole life, give yourself three points!



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If were not like this your whole life, get yourself checked out for depression, anxiety, thyroid problems, or ask someone who knew you as a child.

Remember that poor self assessment and memory problems are common traits.

Review

1. Self Analysis
2. Develop Strategies
3. Design Structure
4. Incorporate Support
5. Periodically Re-evaluate

References

- Faster Than Normal by Peter Shankman
- The Power of Habit by Charles Duhigg

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