

Adult ADHD Treatment Group

Santa Clara Department of Adult Psychiatry

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This group is scheduled to meet every **Monday 5:30pm-7pm**

Program Overview:

Attendance:

All referred members are welcome to attend this 8 class series for education, skills training, and peer support for adult ADHD symptoms. The 8 topics are rotated through approximately every two months. There is open enrollment; therefore members can start the group on any Monday of the month and are welcome to return on an as needed basis for ongoing support in successful application of the skills, goal setting, accountability and material review.

Cancellations:

On rare occasions, the class may be cancelled due to clinic closure or dates in which the group facilitator is absent from the clinic. If you are pre-registered for the group on a date which group has been cancelled, the clinic will attempt to contact you to inform you of the cancellation. Given the drop-in nature of the class, it will be difficult to notify all potential members if the group is cancelled; as a result, if you have not been in attendance recently, we encourage you to call the clinic ahead of time at 408-366-4400 to ensure the class is being held that evening.

Group Expectations:

- Please do your best to come on time.
- Maintain confidentiality of other group members.
- Be supportive and respectful of each other.
- Take a break if you need one. Exit through the reception area for restrooms.
- Bring your folder to each class.
- Each time you check-in for the group you will be given a brief assessment (AOQ) to complete by the front desk staff. Please submit these to group leader by the end of each group.

GROUP STRUCTURE

Research outcomes suggest that routines and external structure are helpful to those with ADHD, therefore, we will follow a similar format each group session.

Check-in: This is your opportunity to briefly get to know group members; and, for returning members, an opportunity to discuss progress or barriers in application of the skills.

Core Concepts: Although we introduce a new topic each group, we will consistently include the following core concepts so that everyone has a foundational understanding of the ADHD brain and how these skills can help.

- **Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy Model:** The CBT model (Page 4) is a visual reminder of how each session targets an important aspect of ADHD treatment.

This helps answer the question:



*“Why is this important for me to know?”**

- **Brain-based Differences:** We will also highlight a particular aspect of neuro-cognitive functioning that is impacted by ADHD to provide a rationale for why the ADHD brain performs differently, and where additional support is needed in skills training.

This helps answer the question:



“Why is this so hard for me to do?”

- **Skills Training:** Although understanding your brain and behavior is important, chances are you sought out treatment in order to make some changes. At this time, we discuss specific, evidence based strategies related to the session topic (1-8).

This helps answer the question:



“What strategies can I use?”

- **Goal Setting:** Positive changes will not occur unless you take an active role in your treatment. This doesn't mean just showing up to group every week. Little will change unless you repeatedly follow through with application of these skills in your day to day life. This requires some commitment and planning. There is also a take home activity at the end of each session.

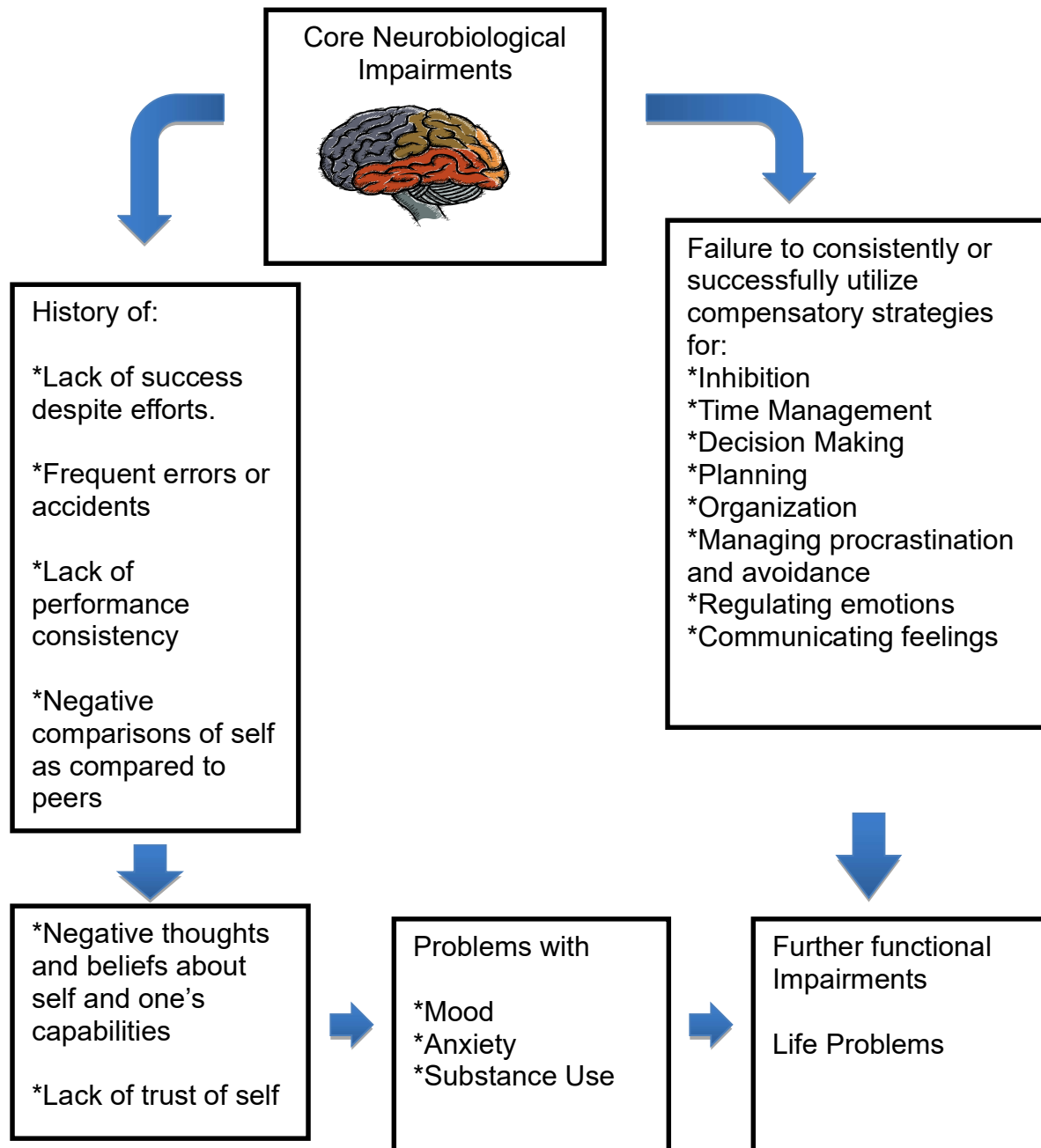


This helps answer the question:

“What am I willing to do?”

*Look for these symbols and questions as a guidepost in each session.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Model of ADHD



Although there is no “cure” for ADHD, many adults notice significant improvements in the quality of life through treatment. The most effective treatment of ADHD includes a combination of Cognitive Behavioral Psychotherapy & medication management of symptoms (as appropriate).

ADHD Basics: What is Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)?

ADHD is a neurobiological disorder which begins in childhood and often continues into adulthood. ADHD consists of a persistent problem with inattention and/or hyperactivity and impulsivity that interferes with functioning or development.

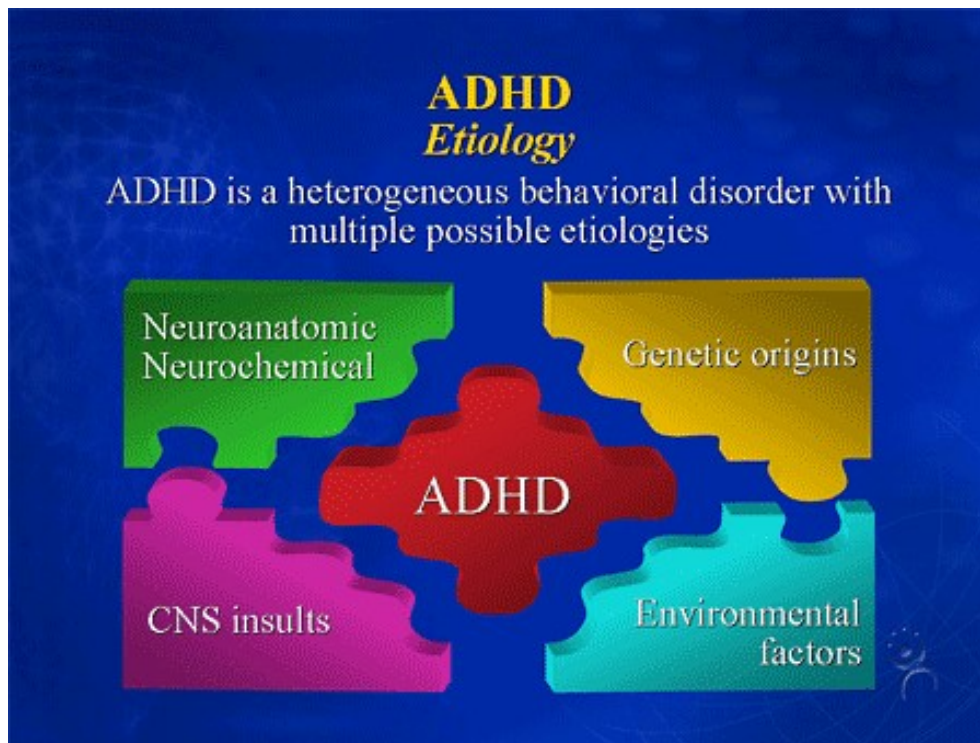
Individuals with ADHD have some combination of the following symptoms:

Inattention:

- Difficulty Sustaining Attention,
- Easily Distracted
- Failure to give close attention to details
- Chronic Procrastination
- Difficulty following through on instructions
- Difficulty organizing tasks and activities
- Poor Time Management
- Frequently misplaces items
- Forgetfulness

Hyperactivity and Impulsivity:

- Often fidgety
- Difficulty sitting still
- Restlessness
- Difficulty engaging in leisure activities quietly
- Often "on the go" or acts as if "driven by a motor"
- Has difficulty waiting his/her turn
- Interrupts or intrudes on others
- Impulsive: Acts before thinking and often does things one later regrets.
- Emotional Regulation Difficulties (this is not included in the current diagnostic criteria, but is widely supported in research regarding ADHD symptoms)



Brain-based Differences:

What cognitive differences are responsible for these symptoms?

Executive Functioning Deficits: ADHD can be described as a disorder of Executive Functioning (EF). Executive Functioning is an umbrella term used to describe the brain's ability to self-manage or self-regulate (also known as cognitive control or supervisory attentional system).

We can think of EF as like the “Executive or CEO of our brain.” It is responsible for the following:

- Attention
- Inhibition/Impulse Control
- Activation and Motivation
- Judgment and Decision Making
- Organization and Project Planning
- Regulation of Emotions

Let's suppose that the CEO in charge of the ADHD brain could use some additional support and training in these areas.



Session 4: Organization and Project Planning

Although related, let's focus on each separately for ease in discussing strategies.

While using the term Organization we will be referring to the orderliness of your physical space and possessions.

When describing Project Planning we are referring to organization of ideas.



Why is this important for me to know?

Organization of items in your home and workspace helps to maximize efficiency. You'll spend less time looking for things, be exposed to fewer distractions, and your surroundings will look more neat and attractive.



Project Planning allows you to identify the distinct steps necessary along the way in order to reach a desired goal. Large goals feel less overwhelming and more approachable because you can approach them one step at a time.

With a plan, you make less impulsive errors that you could have avoided with some foresight. You are also more likely to stay on task and stay motivated since it assists you in keeping the end goal "in sight" even as you are doing what seem like menial tasks.



Why is this so hard for me to do?

Organization challenges commonly present in the following two ways:

1). Difficulty identifying and selecting an organizational system to utilize.

Selecting an organizational system can be overwhelming because of the seemingly endless options available, fears of choosing the "wrong system", never shifting from the task of researching the options to choosing and implementing one.

2). Once established, difficulty maintaining the system over time.

Many of the "up-keep" or "maintenance" tasks for organization in our daily lives require repetitive and unstimulating behaviors. Consider tasks like cleaning up after preparing a meal, putting the dishes away after they have been washed,

completing the laundry, putting tools away after using them for a project, filing paperwork for later retrieval, etc.

Organizational systems are a challenge for ADHD adults to maintain because they require consistency in placement (categorical filing system), as well as follow-through in putting an item away from its storage place after the novelty of the task requiring the item has worn off. It also requires inhibition of the impulse to turn towards a more immediately rewarding activity.

The “outer world” or personal spaces of an ADHD adult may be an external or visual representation of how it might feel to navigate their brain.



VS.



Project Planning:

Planning a large project can be especially challenging to an individual with ADHD because successfully deciding how to execute a project or task, then following through with the steps required until completion requires many of the Executive Functions that we know are impacted by ADHD.

Successful project planning requires the following:

- Time management
- Scheduling
- Prioritizing
- Activation (getting started)
- Sustaining motivation etc.



This can make large projects or problem solving extremely daunting for and ADHD adult!!



What strategies can I use?

Organization:

Can you identify any areas where organization is lacking in your life?

- Work space/desk
- Kitchen
- Storage of important personal documents/paperwork/home office
- “Junk drawers”
- Garage
- Closets
- _____
- _____

For an effective organizational system, meet these three criteria:

- Each item is easily identifiable/visible.
- Each item is easily accessible- Items should be as easy to put away as they are to take out.
- The storage of items is neat in appearance (free of visual distractors- clutter is stressful)

STRATEGIES for Organization:

- Use organizational tools that are available. This includes desk and closet organizers, storage boxes with labels, color coded file systems, etc.
- Use a “quick sort” system to get rid of clutter with these four categories:
 - Keep (and sort/put away)
 - Trash
 - Donate
 - Belongs Elsewhere

This allows you to break through the obstacle of not knowing where to start and fear of throwing away valuable items. You can always decide to move these saved items into a different category at a later time. It also quickly eliminates a chunk of the clutter in the trash pile and only leaves you with what you want to “re-sort” later.

Return to each of the other three piles; keep, donate and belongs elsewhere and do a detailed sort of each of those as needed. Then decide where each will end up.

You may need to break this whole task down into micro steps where you are

not doing it all at once. Although completely following through with the task until completion is ideal, this may not be possible due to attention span or limited time. It is okay to break down each step and only do one within a 15-30 min time period.

- Have the first two of these “quick sort” categories available to you at all times in each room. Have a trash can in every room and a “sort” box/basket available which you empty once full.
- Filing Paperwork
 - Making decisions about folder titles can be challenging.
 - You also might find that it is difficult to recall where you stored documents when you need to retrieve them later.
 - Let your filing system reflect how you remember things.
 - For example, when considering how to file paperwork for your car, do you choose automobile? Ford? Insurance? Go with the label you most readily will retrieve, if you refer to it as “car” make a “car” file.
- Don't allow things to pile up- it will take more time later (laundry, dishes, etc). Mantra: *“What you don't do today won't go away, it will just be that much harder tomorrow!”*
- Set a regular routine for daily tasks and a schedule for tasks that repeat weekly. Draw upon other techniques from other chapters such as using external cues in the environment set up close to the “Point of performance” (Session 2).
- Create “Stations” to help with organization and task efficiency.
- Take reasonable steps to prepare for common errors which can prevent small mistakes from “blowing up” into larger scale crises. Draw upon planning or organizational “mistakes” you’ve made in the past to identify what might help. For example:
 - Duplicate Keys for home/car/office etc.
 - Extra jacket/shoes/umbrella in car.
 - Stash at least a \$20 in car for “emergency use.”
- Take a before and after picture of the space that you are working to organize as evidence to you (and perhaps an accountability partner) of what you have accomplished. This also can evoke positive emotions and rewards to focus on what you HAVE done, not just what is left to be done.
- Sometimes people find it helpful to hire a professional organizer or enlist the support of an organized friend when setting up a new system.

STRATEGIES for Project Planning:

- Practice proactive planning by setting aside time every evening to plan for the next day. *Get needed materials ready (e.g., books, clothes, keys, phone numbers, medication, papers, pack lunch), pack the car the night before or do anything else that will prevent frantic chaos the next day or forgetting of something important.*
- Write it down! Make problems external, physical, and manual! Use visual aids so you can scan all the facts in front of you, complete it in a way that you can physically manipulate the information to make it real and manageable (note cards, large white board, word document etc), use tools such as pros/cons lists, list all the tools materials needed, or using a flow chart to assist with project planning.
- Make yourself accountable to someone else (or create a system whereby you are more accountable to self). Set small goals and check in.
- Make tasks manageable- break down into smaller steps and reward yourself after each step (to be discussed more in chapter 5).
- Use the Project Planning Flow-Chart (see next page) or another system to write out your plan.

Mantra: *“If you are having trouble getting started, then the first step is too big!”*



What am I willing to do?

ADHD TREATMENT GROUP

Session 4 Take-Home Exercise

Organization and Project Planning

The goal of this take-home assignment is to implement some of the behavioral skills that we discussed in today's session. In review of today's material, we discussed strategies that have been found effective for ADHD adults because of what we know about difficulties with **Organization and Project Planning**.

Organization involves:

- Choosing a system which is easily to use and maintain.
- Using a "quick sort" approach to keep clutter down.
- File using labels that reflect the way you think.
- Create regular routines and set up external cues to support the habit.
- Be proactive and prepare for common errors

Project Planning involves:

- Scheduling in time to plan.
- Write it down. Make ideas physical and more tangible.
- Set time limits for decision making.
- Breaking down large tasks into smaller goals.
- Reward yourself after each step.
- Creating an accountability system.

Make a commitment. Choose one of the abovementioned strategies to implement for homework (or create your own). Write about it below: