

Girls' Grapevine

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ADHD Awareness Day



It seems we always have lots of holidays to celebrate. For those of us with ADHD, holidays can wreak havoc in our less than organized lives. ADHD Awareness Day, however, really is something to celebrate! This year, September 20th has been designated ADHD Awareness Day. The Day offers an opportunity to introduce others to ADHD with all of its strengths and weaknesses and to take time to celebrate with your family. It's important to take some time to look back on your life before your diagnosis and to see all the progress, however small, that you or your child has made since that time.

Be gentle with yourself and learn to love yourself just the way you are. When I discuss their ADHD with people, and ask them if there is anything they would change in their lives, they most often talk about having others understand them better. I rarely, if ever, can remember anyone saying they would change their ADHD. It's just who they are. So have an ADHD party. Send an article about ADHD to your best friend, or partner. Introduce another woman to NCGI. Buy your favorite book on ADHD for your physician, or your child's teacher, or deliver pamphlets about CHADD to your physician, or therapist's office.

In this issue, Kathy Fitzgerald Sherman, author of *A Housekeeper is Cheaper than a Divorce*, writes about how to find household help. Also, Judi Jerome tells us the *Art of Procrastination*, something all of us can admit to! And, on page 13, Barbara Bartocci discusses her efforts as a recovering perfectionist.

So get out there and celebrate! Do something! If nothing else, people with ADHD have lots of creative ideas and energy.

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Ask The Expert

Dear Dr. Quinn,

I am a woman suffering from ADD, and like many other women, I am at my wits end. I have been to several therapists and have been given a prescription, but I have found no real helpful, practical tools (from someone who actually understands ADD) to deal with my issues. I am floundering in a position well below my educational level because I don't think that anyone would hire me to do anything else, and I can't say that I'm great at the job I have. I was diagnosed as a freshman in high school, but my mother felt it would be better for me not to know or be stigmatized with the label of learning disabled as I was also a gifted student. So, everyone just thought I was lazy and if only I would pay more attention to detail and stop procrastinating, which is exactly what my bosses said in my last review.



WW

Dear WW,

In your letter you wrote about your need for practical tools to help your ADD, it sounds like you need a coach or an organizer! Coaching is wonderful for those with ADHD because it gets to all that nitty, gritty stuff that medication does not address. Medication can reduce the symptoms of ADHD and help you concentrate, but it doesn't teach you how to get organized or get that better job.

An ADD Coach is a professional, trained to guide and support a person in overcoming the challenges of living with ADHD. They can help you to:

- Create structure and suggest tools to help you stay on track.
- Improve organizational skills and design organizing systems.
- Plan projects and manage time.
- Set and reach realistic goals.
- Improve lifestyle habits such as diet, sleep, and exercise.
- Improve relationship and communication skills.

To find a coach, visit www.addconsults.com; www.addresources.org; www.americocoach.org; or send an e-mail to dana@danarayburn.com with *Coach Referral List* in the subject line.

Professional organizers can also be found on some of these sites and at their national organization website at www.napo.net.

In addition, I would suggest Dr Kathleen Nadeau's book, **ADD-Friendly Ways to Organize Your Life**. You can receive a 10% discount as an NCGI Member by calling 888-238-8588 or visit our website at www.addvance.com.

Ten Keys to Success in Hiring Household Help

by Kathy Fitzgerald Sherman



Newspaper headlines throw us into a panic over the "daycare crisis" almost on a daily basis. But never do we read about a "housework crisis." Yet housework overload can cost women our health, our marriages, even our sense of sanity. Think I'm kidding? Think the problem is trivial? I sure don't. Housework overload certainly cost me my health. I felt like it was costing me my sanity. And it nearly cost me my marriage.

Measuring Housework Overload

Before I became a mom, I was the quintessential career woman. Ferociously dedicated to my work, I had no plans to stop after my first child was born. Instead, I resolved to hire the best childcare that money could buy. But it didn't take many weeks of motherhood to discover that the best childcare for my fussy baby was *me*, so I put my career on hold, at least temporarily.

I was happy at first, but by the time my second child was born, I felt like I was suffocating. I was bored to tears, missing my professional life, yet didn't have a spare minute to myself. Yes, I loved my children. Yes, I was grateful that I was able to stay home with them, showering them with the love they deserved. But why was I having so much trouble breathing? How could I be bored and overwhelmed at the same time?

While analyzing where all my "mom" time was going, I calculated that I was spending 35 hours each week on housework doing chores like cleaning, laundry, meal planning, grocery shopping, cooking, and tidying up. Does that number seem as outrageously high to you as it seemed to me? I learned while researching my book, *A Housekeeper Is Cheaper Than a Divorce: Why You CAN Afford to Hire Help and How to Get It*, that the average mother of minor children spends 35 hours each week on housework while her husband spends less than nine! And the figure doesn't differ much for employed versus stay-at-home moms: Employed moms spent 32 hours a week on housework while at-home moms spend 39. So I, like millions of other American women, was working the equivalent of a full-time unpaid job, not even counting the hours I spent caring for my children!

Once I realized that housework—not my children—was responsible for my feelings of boredom and overload, I felt better equipped to tackle the problem. I convinced my husband that we should hire a twenty-hour-per-week housekeeper to lighten my load. The strategy worked. In my new-found free time, I was able to launch a writing career and start a publishing company, spend time on the creative aspects of homemaking such as sewing window coverings, resolve some long-standing health problems, exercise more frequently, and enjoy the aspects of mothering that only I could do, such as tell stories and sew one-of-a-kind Halloween costumes. Most importantly, I fell back in love with my husband, free of resentment over the inequitable division of housework.

Success Principles

My personal experiences, both good and bad, have taught me that hiring household help is both an art and a science. If you're considering hiring help of your own, you'll want to know about some of the success principles that I discovered:

1. Clarify how you'll spend your new-found free time.

I put this success principle first because it's one you'll need through every step of the process. Here's a promise: You will face challenges in finding that perfect housekeeper. You might have to struggle to adjust the family budget. You may grapple with your conscience over complying with the "nanny tax" laws.

With every challenge, you'll be tempted to throw in the towel (or, more accurately, pick that towel back up) and go back to doing your housework yourself. That is, unless you are very clear about *why* you want to hire help.

Maybe, like me, you're determined to start a new career or a new business. Maybe, like my friend Beth, you're committed to running your first marathon and need time to train. Maybe, like one reader of my book, you've got high blood pressure or other stress-related health problems. Maybe you are just tired of the fact that you haven't read anything longer than a magazine article in five years, when you used to be a fan of romance novels. Whatever your motivation for hiring help, decide what it is now. You'll need to remind yourself of it when you face the inevitable obstacles.



2. Define your needs before you begin the hiring process.

Housekeepers don't come one-size-fits-all. Just like the rest of us, they have strengths and weaknesses, and a variety of interests. Your priorities and needs are different from your next-door neighbor's. Maybe the person you hire should be too.

If you have young children and need some childcare help, maybe you'll hire a nanny who is willing to do light housework during naptime. If you have older children who need to be shuttled to after-school activities, you might want to hire a housekeeper who also has a clean driving record. If you want help with cooking, you'll need to hire someone with that skill. If you're fanatical about the state of your bathroom tile, be sure to hire someone who is as fastidious as you are.

Identify your preferences and needs first. Then you'll be able to tell when you find the person capable of meeting them.

3. To cost-justify the expense, calculate what it costs you *not* to hire help. Include tangible and intangible costs.

Hiring household help is expensive, I'll grant you. But it could be a lot more expensive *not* to hire the help you need. Or at least, if you consider the cost of not hiring help, the salary expense will seem so much more affordable. Are there any obvious costs that you'll save by hiring help? Do you find yourself eating meals out frequently because you lack the time to cook? Or spend money on takeout? What services do you use that you could eliminate if you have regular help? I had an expensive cleaning service for three hours per week that cost almost half of what I paid my twenty-hour-per-week housekeeper.

What about less obvious expenses? Are stress-related health problems costing you money? What would it be worth to feel better? Do you take pricey vacations to escape a household in chaos? Do you spend money on marriage counseling to mediate housework conflicts? Remember the title of my book: A housekeeper is cheaper than a divorce.

4. Eliminate decision-making from your household routine.

Management experts know that it costs time and money to make the same decisions over and over again. Yet, sometimes it seems as if housework is defined by its repeated decision-making: Do I have enough laundry for a full washload of darks? What shall we have for dinner? Where can I put these project piles so I have room to cook?

I learned that if I organized my household routine to minimize these decisions, I'd make the chores much easier on myself. And I discovered a terrific side benefit: it's much more economical to hire somebody to perform a well-defined routine than to hire someone who is capable of figuring out what needs to be done.

Housework consists of both a mental component and a physical component. The physical component is not insignificant and can't be organized away or ignored. But my aim was to extract as much of the mental "juice" as possible from my family's household routine. Seven key ground rules guided me. You can use these same guidelines to help you identify ways that you can minimize the mental component (that is, repeated decision-making) from your household routine. (See sidebar, "Effective Household System Guidelines.")

5. Prepare written instructions.

It's an unfortunate fact that housekeepers can't read minds. And, unless you're hiring someone to perform only the simplest of tasks for a couple of hours each week, your chore list is likely to be too long to be remembered reliably by your employee. I wrote a detailed instruction manual that my housekeeper refers to daily. It includes a list of which tasks I'd like done routinely on which days, washer and dryer settings for each load of laundry, and a "when you have time" list for chores that only need to be done periodically.

Besides giving you greater confidence that your priorities will be carried out in the way you want them done, your housekeeper will appreciate the written job definition. We all like to know what our bosses consider a "good enough" job. Your written instructions set your housekeeper's expectations while offering her a pat on the back every time she (or he) gets to the end of the written list.

6. Best way to find job candidates: advertise in the classified section of the newspaper.

Though there are many different ways to find household employees, and each method has advantages and disadvantages (see sidebar, "Advantages and Disadvantages of Recruiting Methods"), I have found newspaper classified ads to be most effective. By advertising for the skills you need and mentioning your specific requirements, you will attract job candidates that have screened themselves as a potential match. And, with a large pool of candidates to choose from, you'll be more likely to find someone who closely fits your requirements.

7. Make a checklist of requirements to use during phone screening.

If you do place a classified ad, you should be prepared for an onslaught of phone calls. Since you won't want to interview every job seeker who calls

(see sidebar, "Four-Step Hiring Process"), you'll need a quick way of determining whether you want to continue to spend time getting to know a particular caller.

Remember back in step 2 when you defined your needs? If you turn that list of needs into a written checklist, you can use it to screen job candidates who respond to your ad. I like to type up a requirements list, leaving space for the candidate's name and contact information, job history, and comments. I then photocopy a handful, and leave them near the phone. When talking to a caller, I use the checklist to make sure he or she meets all of my requirements before I decide to proceed further in the hiring process.

8. Speak to job references *before* interviewing in person.

Never invite anyone into your home until you've verified with at least two of their references that they are trustworthy and reliable, that the quality of their work is high, that their reason for leaving their last job(s) made sense (the family's children grew up versus the family decided things weren't "working out"), and so on.

Be sure to let the reference do most of the talking. Start out by introducing yourself, say why you're calling, and ask if they have a few minutes to talk. Then ask the person to describe the work that job candidate did for them. You'll find out if the candidate was telling the truth when describing his or her experience, and also make sure the candidate's experience is relevant for your job. Of course, you'll want to be sure to find out the reference's evaluation of the work.

Listen between the lines. If you sense that the reference is holding something back, ask leading questions until you get a clearer picture. Take the time to interview only those candidates whose references speak highly of them.

9. Plan to spend some time with your new housekeeper.

One of the biggest complaints that people have made to me about their housekeepers is that "she doesn't do as good a job as I do." In other words, the housekeeper doesn't have a sense of ownership about her employer's house. The best way to instill this sense is to spend a few hours the first day or week training your new employee. How else will she know what your priorities are?

The owner of a Texas housekeeper agency recently called me to ask for my help in making her clients understand the importance of training. Servicing the wealthiest clientele, her agency typically provides full-time help for owners of 5000-plus square foot homes. Her policy is that the employer, new housekeeper, and agency owner should sit down for a thirty-minute meeting on the housekeeper's first day to discuss the job. Frequently, the employers beg off of this meeting because they are too busy. But a month later, they'll typically be back on the phone with the agency owner, livid because the housekeeper isn't spending time on the right things.

Don't make this mistake. Do yourself a favor and get your new relationship off on the right foot. Ensure your housekeeper's success—and your satisfaction—through the investment of a little time.

10. Read a copy of *A Housekeeper Is Cheaper Than a Divorce*.

At the risk of sounding self-serving, I recommend that you read my book while you're still in the planning stages of hiring household help. If you don't want to buy a copy, borrow it from your local library. By learning from my mistakes, you can save yourself many wasted hours of grief and dollars spent on the wrong employee.

Happy hiring...and best of luck in whatever venture you will undertake in your new-found free time.

Sidebar: Effective Household System Guidelines

Use these guidelines to eliminate repeated decision-making from your household routine.

1. A place for everything
2. A place that makes sense
3. Everything in its place
4. A schedule
5. Clearly defined responsibilities
6. No entropy generators (junk drawers, "miscellaneous" files, etc.)
7. The tools to do the job

Sidebar: Advantages and Disadvantages of Recruiting Methods

Agencies

Advantages: Easy if good agency, good way to hire cleaning service

Disadvantages: Poor quality help if bad agency, extremely expensive, few candidates to choose from

Referrals

Advantages: Can be easy, person comes with recommendation

Disadvantages: Offend friend if don't hire referral, few candidates to choose from, can be hard to find available housekeepers

Job Boards

Advantage: Candidates usually have low pay expectations

Disadvantages: Response can be slow, candidates not always experienced

Newspaper Ads

Advantage: Lots of candidates to choose from

Disadvantages: Disruptive if large response, cost of advertising

Sidebar: Four-Step Hiring Process

Follow these steps to hire the perfect housekeeper.

1. Phone screening (know your requirements)
2. Reference checking (ask good questions)
3. Interviewing (show-and-tell time)
4. Background checking (optional)

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September is Disaster Preparedness Month

Do You Know Where Your Vital Documents Are?

By Judith Kolberg



You know you need to stow extra water and food for your family in case of a disaster. You're aware flashlights and a first aid kit needs to be ready to go. And your family must know where to meet up if you are separated. There is one more disaster preparedness step: preparing your vital documents. "The tornado suddenly turned toward my house. I grabbed my wife and the keys to my truck and headed for the basement. The house disappeared, taking my wallet with it. I couldn't even prove my identity," reports a Florida resident. According to Judith Kolberg, author of *Organize for Disaster: Prepare Your Family and Home for Any Natural or Unnatural Disaster*, to apply for

disaster relief, claim your possessions, register for aid and benefits, submit emergency insurance claims, and take other actions to make you "whole" after the disaster, carry these documents with you:

Carry A Copy Of

A driver's license or passport, or a photo ID issued from a post office.

Government issue ID proves what you look like, the proper spelling of your name, your official signature, and your date of birth. If your ID does not contain your social security number, pack a copy of your social security card.

The first page (declaration page) of your insurance policies.

The declaration page includes your account number, agent's name, agent's phone number, and your deductible – critical information to file a claim from the field.

If you are undergoing a course of treatment, therapy, or rehabilitation, include a page from your medical record indicating your diagnosis and treatment. If your treatment is interrupted by a disaster, medical personnel can help you re-initiate it.

Carry An Original Of:

A recent utility bill.

It will tie your name directly to your address. If your address is declared a federal disaster area, you may be eligible for temporary housing, extensions on credit card bill payments, and other benefits.

Citizenship, naturalization papers, and green cards.

Include a photo of your family with their names written on the reverse side. This will enable disaster officials to search for missing individuals, find people displaced from one shelter to another, enable website posting, and aid in recovery efforts.

Carry your vital documents and photo in a lightweight, water-resistant, expandable document holder. Stow the document holder in a backpack, pre-packed with a bottle of water, a change of clothes, flashlight, high-protein food bars, small radio, and first aid kit.

Judith Kolberg is a 17-year veteran, professional organizer, specializing in preparing families for disaster. Organize for Disaster is available at www.advance.com for \$15.99.

The Art of Procrastination

By Judi Jerome, LICSW, LADC



For many years, now, I have witnessed so many people with and without ADHD struggling with procrastination. Most people procrastinate on a task or job when they:

1. **They just don't want to do it;**
2. Are **disorganized** in both the preparation, and the actual items needed to put the job together;
3. Develop **paralysis**: can't start, even when the necessary 'ingredients' for the project are available;
4. Have **time management** difficulties;
5. **Sabotage** their own success; And last but not least,
6. Seek **perfectionism**.

Recently, I have come to realize just how delicately all six of these reasons, or as I like to call them, "sub-levels", of procrastination are tied together. When we **don't want to do something**^{#1}, such as a household chore or a business project that we have committed to, the reason is often because we are overwhelmed by the idea of the **preparation and organization**^{#2} that is needed in order to complete the task. In order to do the organizing and prep work we have to have sufficient **time management**^{#4} skills. I'll lump numbers **5** and **6** together because you just can't have one without the other. **Sabotaging success**^{#5} and **perfectionism**^{#6} are partners in the procrastination process. Actually, the sum total of the two sub-levels **#5+#6=#3, paralysis!** Ah, the intricacy of it all!

Let's take a deeper look at these sub-levels.

#1. There are times when we just do not want to do the "have to" or "should" that is hanging over our heads. We breathe a sigh of frustration and our inner child starts pouting. When you don't want to do something, no matter how critical, it often tends to be put on the back burner. Definition of "the back burner": a pile of papers, a sink full of dishes, or an unfinished project. That is usually when I pretend that I want to do it, lie to myself, put an often "fake" smile on my face, and start my "I really want to do this and get it over with because..." mantra. Sometimes, I explore the reason I have committed myself to do it and look for other solutions, or in the case of the dishes, just say yuck and dive in. I never want to do the dishes. I want elves to come in the middle of the night and do them for me. As the rolling stones once sagely sang, "you can't always get what you want..." Speaking of music, if I put on some lively tunes and sing out loud when I do the dishes or cleaning, that fake smile usually becomes real.

#2. When we have a project due, whether it is housecleaning, a written report, homework, a presentation, or something fun, if we don't immediately break it down into sections, each with its own reasonable tasks, timetable and when necessary, carefully labeled file folders, that deadline wall looms large and fast. Why does time go by so fast when you need it the most? Gathering materials for a project, work or play, and piling them up helter skelter, creates this illusion that we have not done any work towards our goal. "Oh wow, that web site is just what I need for my resource list." Do you just click "save" in the Favorites Folder and never find or use it again, or do you first add a new subfolder with the name of the project on it and save it in there, OR copy and paste it into the ongoing list you are keeping in the

project folder on your computer desktop? I am a list freak. I make lists down to the smallest detail and then plug the to-do's into my schedule. When I don't, oh geez, it's too painful to think about it. Of course, when it comes time to shop, it is helpful to *remember* to bring the list with you!

#3. You sit and stare at the neatly organized pile of research, pictures, garden tools, or whatever today's "gonna do this or bust" project happens to be and just keep staring. Sometimes you even walk away and play solitaire on the computer, take a healthy walk around the block, or find something very important to do, hence you aren't *really* procrastinating. There are so many things going through your mind, but the problem is you aren't really paying attention to those messages that are causing the paralysis, yup, the messages. That little voice inside that gives you all the reasons why you just can't get started. It's time to change the tape and rewrite the script! When we practice mindfulness and stay present, we can increase our awareness of what we are saying to ourselves, change the negatives to positives, and then our emotions lighten up and we are able to change the behavior attached to the "self-message". This takes a lot of time and patience so please allow yourself to experience and even enjoy the process.

#4. Lets face it, time management is a whole article (or entire shelf of books) all by itself. How does the whole weekend get by you without having done the laundry? I'm having *déjà vu*, seems like I've written about that before.

#5. and #6. Handing in an assignment past deadline, that has really been completed on time, and being late with paying bills, even though you have the money in the bank, are common sabotages of success. And, I am here to tell you that perfectionism is a big barrier and impossible to achieve. People that give their serenity and personal empowerment away to perfectionism have ironically achieved it, they are ***perfect at procrastinating***. *A tiny confession...* When I was in graduate school and had to write a very difficult 25 page paper, I froze. A wise woman, who I am eternally grateful to "gave me permission to get a C on this paper, as you are allowed to get just one in grad school and this is it". With the pressure (and burden) of perfection lifted, I was able to create a terrific paper that received a B+. (It really *did* deserve an A+)

Procrastination has many sub levels and painful side effects. You saddle yourself with these symptoms every time it rears its ugly head, hill, mountain of morose interference in your path of success and serenity. "JJ's" thesaurus states that another term for procrastination is "self-torture".

Some people with AD/HD have formed patterns, habits that have ingrained their procrastination to such a state that they would benefit from working on this issue with a therapist. Others will succeed by taking action with their coach. Many will benefit by taking advantage of both of these growth opportunities, therapy and coaching.

And finally, as always, remember that mindfulness matters. Being mindful means keeping the project up front in your thoughts to turn it into action instead of filing it away in the deep recesses of your "I'll do it later brain". Practicing mindfulness will keep you living and working in the moment on what you need to do to take care of yourself and continue to take action instead of procrastinating. Please try the following exercise and sample a taste of how mindfulness can help to create action.

TIP #1

As soon as you schedule a project due date on your planner, try the following technique. Sit, close your eyes, and breathe deeply to relax your mind and your muscles. Remember to slowly breathe in and out throughout this visualization. Create a vision of what the project will look like when it is complete. See it; what, if any, colors do you see? Breathe. What is the size, weight, shape? Breathe. What

does it physically feel like to hold it in your hands? Breathe. What sounds accompany this picture? Breathe. What taste is on your tongue? Breathe. What is the scent that accompanies this success? Breathe. Feel the positive emotions that come with this completed project. Is there a smile of satisfaction on your face? Breathe in that smile. When you are finished, open your eyes and remember those emotions that you felt in that moment when you realized that the project was complete; whether it was pleasure, excitement, joy, pride, or sheer relief. Feel it, hug it, enjoy it.

Each time a new project comes up that is a "have to", remember the pleasant emotions from this completed project, and if need be, repeat the visualization exercise.

And a original confession... or two...

July 29th: I originally wrote this article back in April, 2006. Making changes from both mine and my editor's red pens became too overwhelming, so I procrastinated and just kept staring at the folder on my desktop with all of the many drafts. I certainly hope that you have enjoyed the articles that I wrote in the interim, rather than tackle this one. Yesterday, I got a reminder from Emily Quinn, the amazing woman who puts this newsletter together, reminding me that they needed an article for the August edition (as if I could stop forgetting about it even if I wanted to!). Thank goodness for those "up against it" walls.

April 23rd: I am presenting a professional training on Coaching the first week in May that I have known about for 6 months. Although I have gathered many of the materials and made notes (and done some organizing using the MS ONE NOTE Program), I did not sit down to do the bulk of the writing and put it all together until two weeks before the event. I held the proverbial gun to my head in order to hit my "up against it" wall that got my motivation juices flowing. I have accepted this and am being kind to myself about it. But today is Sunday, and I would rather be having fun than working. Procrastination always has a price.



Judi has been in private practice since 1990 working with a variety of issues, and specializing in teens and adults with AD/HD and co-morbid disorders, life cycle transitions, and substance abuse. Judi enjoys coaching teens and adults with AD/HD in all genres of life. She believes that each individual has potential within to achieve success beyond the current limits that problems such as time management, disorganization, morning madness and late night hyper-focusing may be imposing on their lives. Judi coaches people toward accomplishing their dreams as well as their goals. Her motto - Empowerment, growth and maintenance for positive life changes.

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Survival Tips for Women with AD/HD

By Terry Matlen, MSW, ACSW

Time for Homework – Give Yourself Breathers

In college, schedule your classes an hour apart so you can do your homework in between classes at school

RM
Portland, Oregon



For more tips on living successfully as a woman with AD/HD, you can purchase my book, "Survival Tips for Women with AD/HD", a collection of tips by women with AD/HD for women with AD/HD, by going to the www.addvance.com bookstore.

Terry Matlen, MSW, ACSW, is a psychotherapist and consultant specializing in adult AD/HD and is the author of "Survival Tips for Women with AD/HD: Beyond Piles, Palms and Post-its" (Specialty Press, 2005). She is the director of ADD Consults at www.ADDconsults.com and my ADDstore at www.myADDstore.com and serves on the board of directors for the Attention Deficit Disorder Association (ADDA).

I'm a Recovering Perfectionist

Each day, I remind myself I'm human

By Barbara Bartocci



I'm a recovering perfectionist. Like a recovering alcoholic, I can never say I'm cured. But every morning I get up, look in the mirror, and say, **"You don't have to be perfect today."**

Perfectionism has a lot in common with alcoholism:

- Both offer instant highs . . . and long term lows.
- Both require more and more consumption to get the necessary high.
- Both divorce you from reality.
- Both involve depression and anxiety.
- Both are addictive.

The most important difference between the two is that society recognizes the dangers of alcohol abuse. Not so the dangers of perfectionism. If anything, in our success-driven culture, perfectionism has become an epidemic. Men and women are feverish in their determination to achieve in every sphere. . . perfectly. The perfect career. The perfect relationship. The perfect family. At first, the path to disabling perfectionism appears to be the path to achievement: achievers are admired, emulated, fostered. Like the casual drinker who never dreams of becoming a drunk, the outstanding college grad who gets a prestigious position in the business world never dreams that a focus on achievement could lead to personal destruction.

The difference between healthy achievers and overachieving perfectionists? The psychologist who helped me deal with my own perfectionism put it this way: "You are addicted," he said, "to bad feelings about yourself."

We perfectionists are like race cars with two speeds: stop and 120 mph. We're often high achievers – but at a price: either we do *everything* perfectly or we call ourselves failures. There's no room for "second best" or for simply "doing your best." Silver medals don't count; only the gold.

Kathy Ormsby, a star runner for North Carolina State University, ran from a track meet one day out to a freeway overpass, and jumped. She's now paralyzed from the waist down. In an interview months later, she described how perfectionism had imposed such heavy pressure to win *every* race that even death became preferable.

A widely respected physician shocked our local community when he committed suicide. After his death, authorities learned he'd run up heavy debts. Friends speculated that he couldn't admit to a flaw in any area of his life, so he didn't know how to ask for help. He opted, instead, for death.

I admitted to my own perfectionism the way most addicts finally admit to their addiction. I hit bottom. In my case, "bottom" was a severe depression. It trapped me in a dark tunnel, where I could see neither light nor hope.

Dr. David Burns, author of *Feeling Good: The New Mood Therapy*, points out that many people who suffer depression are perfectionists; conversely, many, if not most, perfectionists will experience serious depression at some point in their lives. This is why it's important to become alert. It's time to quit saying, "I'm a perfectionist," as if it's something to boast about.

What are the danger signs of perfectionism?

Here are six:

- 1. Perfectionists are result-driven, not process-driven.** The work we do has no value in our eyes unless it achieves certain goals; but often, those goals are unrealistically high.
- 2. Perfectionists live in a black and white world.** We're either winners or losers. We don't give ourselves any points for trying.
- 3. Perfectionists fail to discriminate.** We wash our cars or paint our toenails just as painstakingly as we might write a major report, raise our children, or love our spouses. Eventually, we burn out.
- 4. No matter what peaks perfectionists scale, we see another peak and say, "That's the mountain that matters."** Our own mountains never count.
- 5. Perfectionists constantly compare.** We can always find someone who does what we do better, or earns more, or has a bigger house or thinner thighs.
- 6. Perfectionists constantly require a "fix."** As soon as I earn one point, I have to earn another – not because the work involved is worth doing, but because I need the confidence. I won't believe I'm really OK unless I get a new win to convince me.

It's not easy to become a recovering perfectionist. I've had to change the thinking habits of a lifetime, but it can be done. The key is to redefine **success**.

No longer do I look only at results. Instead, I now ask myself: Have I done the best I can do **at this time?** Next year, or last month, I might have done better, thanks to more experience, or maybe, more rest the night before, but is this the best I can do **right now?**

If the answer is "yes," I call myself a success.

Our culture supports perfectionism: society judges not how hard you play the game, but only whether you win. I'm learning to "just say no" to that idea.

When I catch myself falling into old habits of comparing, or putting myself down, or feeling bad because I see a mountain that looks better than the mountain I climbed, I holler, "Stop!" and pull out my new definition of success.

Perfectionists never completely recover. We have to fight our craving each day. So every morning, I start over, telling myself, "You don't have to be perfect today." It feels good to know that when I say it, I also believe it.

(Reprinted with permission from The Catholic Digest, Nov., 1989)

Letter to the Editor

Dear NCGI,

I grew up thinking I wasn't good enough. I couldn't do things perfectly. I have now been diagnosed with ADHD, and narcolepsy. The most recent medication, Concerta, has vastly improved my quality of life AND that of my family's life.

The other major player in my life is diet. I avoid certain foods to lessen the narcolepsy. I avoid/minimize dairy products to lessen the effects of ADHD. I am not lactose intolerant. PLEASE, research the effects of dairy products.

People are unaware of the devastating effects of dairy products. I wanted to kill myself within 24hrs. of my son's adoption because I ate a scoop of ice cream to celebrate the long sought after event. As a child, I was wound up, hyper, mouthy, and argumentative. As an adult I get depressed and easily agitated if I consume more than a serving of dairy each day for 2 of 3 days. My son can't have dairy as it does the same thing to him. My father is the same. My son is diagnosed with ADHD. My father has very high scores on the rating sheets, but will not speak with a doctor concerning the issues.

I am more than willing to speak with someone concerning my experiences and knowledge. I want the public to know how much they may be hurting their child(ren).

Thanks,
CW



News and Events

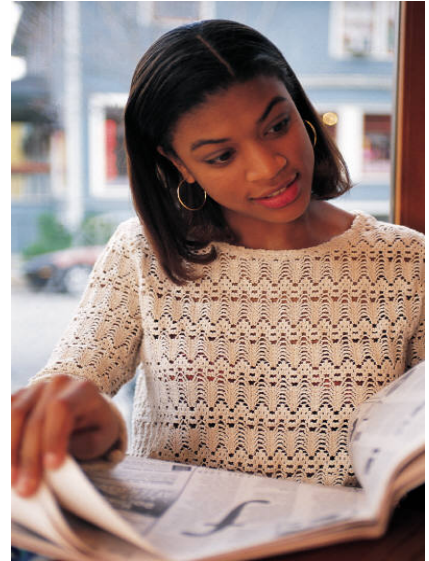
National Eating Disorders Association

September 14-16, 2006

Bethesda, MD

Has your life been touched by an eating disorder? Do you have a loved one struggling with anorexia, bulimia or binge eating disorder? Are you a treatment provider managing these illnesses in your practice? Do you have a passion to raise public awareness about eating disorders and to prevent these devastating illnesses? The National Eating Disorders Association invites you to attend.

For further Conference & Events Information, please go to http://www.edap.org/p.asp?WebPage_ID=782.



CHADD International Conference 2006

October 26-28, 2006

Chicago, IL

CHADD's 2006 Annual International Conference offers opportunities to help you, to help someone you love, to grow professionally and to interact with colleagues from around the world.

For further Conference & Events Information, email Conference@chadd.org or call 800-233-4050.

Last Words

By Betsy Davenport, Ph.D.



Little lies...

We were taught not to lie, way back whenever we were that age. As adults now, we have absorbed the cultural value, and so we don't think lying is good or admirable. Yet, we do it. Studies have shown repeatedly that adults of all kinds tell lies, and regularly. These lies run the gamut from hedging an opinion when a friend asks how the new jeans look, to excuses for work absences. (Women who have children are often faced with saying either, "I'm home with my child's sixth ear infection in as many months," or, "I am ill today and will try to make it in tomorrow.")

In years of working with parents, however, I have noticed a double standard operating: while no adult could – *honestly* – say s/he doesn't ever lie, children are forbidden to do so. Some parents even set them up just to see if they will lie; asking, for example, while holding the dirty sponge, whether it had been put through the dishwasher as requested.

This is a dirty trick if ever there was one, rather like taunting a toddler until her still-unreliable impulse control is overcome by rage and she hits someone. Ah, but hitting isn't "allowed," so the child, *unable* to behave well, is scolded and even sometimes punished.

There are, believe it or not, more than a few types of lies. There is the lie to save face, sparing one (it is hoped) the shame (and ire from some other person) at having not finished a research report on time. There is the lie to make it seem as though your behavior is due to things beyond your control (like especially heavy traffic is what really held you up and made you late. You get the drift, here.)

There are others, but we want to get on to more specifically AD/HD-typical lies; I call them "The Little Lies We Tell Ourselves." These are lies – perhaps told to others or in the presence of others – which are essentially *for oneself*, though the short-term gains are paid for eventually, and with high service charges attached. They are often quite subtle, and for that, easily go unnoticed, even though they are repeated frequently and over many years and settings.

Here we go:

"I'll do that in the morning."

Really? This generally means, simply, *I can't do it now* (an admission that smarts when one realizes it's due to lack of control of one's own brain); or it means *a lot of effort I can't muster just now* (which refers to poor motivation, a frequent and unwelcome companion we encounter, and either do battle with, or surrender to). The "Little Lie" is the failure to recognize the unlikelihood of mood stability and desire as sufficient motivation in another mood and time.

"As soon as I get organized, this will all straighten out."

Well, "as soon as" does not constitute a plan, by any stretch of the imagination. It is likely a comment uttered many times and even if efforts toward organization are made, it's likely they didn't bear fruit. Not ripe fruit anyway – not edible, delicious, tree-ripened, fragrant-pungent fruit in season. Organization is a season that seems never to arrive. The "Little Lie" is that there will be a *predictable* confluence of *a task done*; *a life lived* (not cleaned up after, unremittingly); *new batteries* for the alarm clock in the drawer for installation in the alarm clock that *wakes a person up on time* for work; *adequate sleep* for that waking-up time; all resulting for the nirvana-esque state of organization which supports life and doesn't suck the juice right out of you, instead.

"No need to write that down; I'm sure I'll remember it."

At the time, this is plausible. It (whatever "it" is – maybe a person's name, or a book title, the day of a birthday which is the same as someone else's) is right then the most salient of items on the front burner of one's cognitive stove. Later, though, that lone front burner will be occupied by stopping at the gas station, answering the phone or conversing with someone else. And "I'm sure" becomes, um, a "Little Lie" told to oneself when historical evidence proves it cannot be so.

"That won't take long."

Self-explanatory, like getting to dinner on time or doing in the morning what seems tonight like a good, pleasant and easy task. The "Little Lie" is that it will take that long, and longer, as usual.

"I'm coming, just stepping out the door..."

Go back to the Archives and find the Glossary of Terms, Part I, written in part about this. "Leaving" means your hand is on the doorknob. Anything else is a "Little Lie."

"I'm ready."

No. You're not. Not if you're still in the bathroom, shoeless, just noticed it's raining, the dog has to be let out, you can't find your cell phone, and all manner of other things – some, universal, some highly individual.

This list, while hardly complete, is long enough to be informative, to raise a little consciousness, without being too demoralizing. The job is – when you learn something new, even if for the ninth time -- to put it to use whenever you can. Be a truth-teller ("I cannot do that right now, and I am sorry about it. I will suggest to you later a way to make it come out well done, if later. It would be a great favor to me if you would remind me of this promise in about three hours").

The good news – and the bad – is that these "Little Lies" can plague one for years, even years into treatment and "re-hADD-ilitation" for this (some think) inconvenience-with-a-silver-lining.

Here's a recent one I know about quite intimately. Having been fond since childhood of deep olive green as a color to wear and use in the house, I saw not long ago a briefcase-laptop case I truly loved. Having been using a briefcase big enough to fit a bathtub into, and aware for some time of the "Little Lies" I told myself – "I'll work on that at the office," and "I can take that home to read" – on a daily basis, twice a day, something had to be done.

Fortuitously, the one I loved suddenly went on sale, so I measured my laptop, read the information in the catalog, and ordered. It came, smelling of leather, the right color and – best of all – it was slender. Not big enough to put too many things in which I would not be looking at until the next day, anyway. Aha! A Big Lie, vanquished!

No. I couldn't get the laptop into the briefcase. I pushed, pulled, called in an extra pair of hands (knowing all the while this was not a functional way to use a briefcase – I might as well have a Sherpa as to require someone else to help me get it packed up, and hauled out, every day. Padded nylon doesn't stretch, and I know that.

I used that briefcase for upwards of three weeks, one Little Lie supplanted by another – a fantasy, really – and neither one improving my functioning in the material world one bit. Which is a clue to the AD/HD-style "Little Lies." They are less lies than fantasies.

A few more, for the road:

"I could get this done by tomorrow..."

The important word in that phrase is "could." Not "can," or "will," but a word which is, by definition, conditional.

"If the dogs would stop barking, I could concentrate."

The important word in that sentence is "if." The dogs bark. They bark daily, they receive intermittent training to make them stop reacting as if a falling leaf is a serious incursion on the property, and they are probably bored. No matter why – they aren't going to stop, so "If" they would stop, work "could" (double-conditional) proceed.

"It usually takes only fifteen minutes to get there."

Find Waldo – the word containing the lie. "Usually" is not *always*; and at 5:15 P.M. on a workday is not the time to fantasize being punctual on too little time. At that hour it's more like "never."

Will Franklin Covey take that briefcase back, after my using it for awhile? Probably, but they shouldn't. And in that case, I'll have wasted the money saved on the "Sale of the Year," for a briefcase I loved for its color, slenderness, and the fantasy the "Little Lie" I was plagued by for so long could not be supplanted for another one.

In any case, the day is not made longer even when the briefcase stretches. Time is not elastic, and that's that.