A Stronger Mindset to Overcome Life’s Challenges

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Neurology Drives Psychology

- ADHD is a neurologically-based information processing disorder.
  - Our busy, distracting world makes these weaknesses more obvious.

- People with ADHD are more likely to have certain kinds of experiences which shapes their psychological mindset.
  - We interpret events and make meaning of them.
Interpretations Determine Outcomes

- We interpret events and make meaning of them.
  - Different people can interpret the same event differently.
  - The same person can interpret an event differently over time.

- By changing our interpretations, we can change the psychological impact.
  - Even if the event stays the same.
Past, Present, Future

- Interpretations of past events determine our current mindset. . .
- . . . which determines how we interpret current events. . .
- . . . which determines our future mindset. . .
- Momentum can be your friend or your enemy.
A Better Future

- By changing our interpretations, we can change an event’s psychological impact—and then what we do about it.

- This is the power of an ADHD diagnosis—it changes a character defect into a treatable neurological condition.
3 MINDSET TRAPS
They Kinda Make Sense. . .

- Mindset traps have a certain logic to them, based on the person’s experiences and how other people interpreted those experiences.
  - If they didn’t have some logic, we wouldn’t use them—that would be crazy!

- Mindset traps offer some benefit, but it winds up being less than a more productive mindset would.
  - Or they carry a high price elsewhere.
Avoidance/Protective Pessimism
Avoidance is Tempting

- We all would like to avoid the things that are boring, make us uncomfortable, or tend to not go well.
  - This is especially true when we are unclear about the methods to use or the task’s goals.
  - **Neurology:** people with ADHD have difficulties with self-activation.

- Current benefits/costs are weighted over future ones.
Track Record ➔ Expectations

- Due to previous struggles and failures, many ADHD folks avoid certain tasks.
  - There is a certain logic to this.
  - Psychology: rationalize bad choices by talking themselves into it with seemingly logical reasons.
Protective Pessimism

- If at first you don’t succeed... then don’t get your hopes up.
  - Optimism risks disappointment.
  - Trying and failing is seen as a character judgment—it’s safer to blame failure on half-hearted efforts.

- Pessimism, anxiety, and depression are reasonable feelings before ADHD is diagnosed and treated.
Avoidance/Pessimism Solutions, 1

- Figure out the specifics for vague projects/goals.

- Create more immediate rewards.
  - Work towards positives, not away from negatives.

- Vividly think about the future benefits/costs in order to make the future loom larger.
Avoidance/Pessimism Solutions, 2

- Separate feeling from acting—do it even if you feel anxious or uncertain.
  - Remind yourself that sometimes comfort comes after trying something, not before.

- Accept that risk is a requirement for success.
  - But don’t put your entire self-worth on the line.

- Treat anxiety and depression, if necessary.
Black & White Thinking
Life at the Extremes

- Black and white / all or nothing thinking over-simplifies the world: always/never, all good/all bad, only/every, etc.
  - Anything in the middle needs to be rounded up or down in order to fit into one of two categories.
  - We need to distort reality in order to make it fit.

- We are more likely to go black and white when we are emotionally fired up.
Solution: Look for the Grays

- Black and white / all or nothing thinking is de-motivating because it sets too high a bar.

- Notice what went well or is positive, even in the worst experiences.
  - What did you do well?
  - What did others do well?
  - What did you learn from the experience?
Solution: Re-Define Success

- Broaden your definition of success so you’re more willing to take a chance (and not feel like you failed).
  - Approach challenges like a scientist—sometimes you need to try something to see that it doesn’t work. If you’re one step closer, then it isn’t a failure.
  - Moving on—don’t make things worse by wasting time wallowing in the extremes.
Self-Mistrust
Self-Mistrust

- Many people with ADHD suffer from self-mistrust, the belief that they can’t rely on themselves to do the right things at the right times.
  - Past: “Did I do everything I should have?”
  - Future: “Will I do everything I should?”

- Unfortunately, their unpredictable and inconsistent track record justifies it.
Self-Mistrust Solutions

- Treatment changes the odds—addressing your ADHD makes new things possible.
- Learn as much as you can about ADHD and good strategies.
- If your current clinicians aren’t getting the job done, find new ones.

- But still set realistic expectations.
Self-Mistrust Solutions, 2

- Create better processes and systems—even (especially) the ones that don’t naturally fall into place.
  - You’ve already figured out the easy ones.

- Faith comes from good processes, not from good intentions.
  - Processes are more sustainable.
The Books

INTEGRATIVE TREATMENT for ADULT ADHD

A four-part, comprehensive treatment model that includes:
• Family education as a clinical intervention
• Effective medication options
• Coaching for better time management, organization & more
• CBT for depression, anxiety & self-esteem issues

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FOREWORD BY KEVIN R. MURPHY, PH.D., Director of The Adult ADHD Clinic of Central Massachusetts

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