

Tools For Focused Action

Choosing the right tools to work with your ADHD

Marla Cummins

Composed in the United States of America

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This book has been published by Cummins Coaching and Training.

For information, email marla@marlacummins.com.

www.marlacummins.com

Introduction

You may sometimes think, "If I just had the right tool, then I could get organized and get things done!"

While tools are definitely not the magical answer, coupled with the right strategy, the right tool can certainly help you manage your ADHD .

“Tactics without strategy is the noise before defeat.”

– Sun Tzu

Though it is important to choose tools that will support your overall strategy, you may often find yourself attracted to the novelty of new technologies, new systems, new strategies... the next “shiny penny.”

Makes sense.

As an adult with ADHD this novelty can feed your need for stimulation. But it also makes the process of choosing the right tool from among the many options even more challenging.

My intention in providing you this list is to help you:

- think strategically when choosing tools so you can be sure you are choosing tools that are a good fit for your needs.
- make the process of choosing the right tools less overwhelming... easier.

Questions You Can Use To Choose The Right Tool

So you don't waste your limited time and energy impulsively adopting a tool you don't really need, first ask yourself the following questions:

1. Do I really **need** this tool?

If the tool doesn't fulfill an important need, consider whether it might just be a fun toy and will be a distraction. You don't need more distractions, right?

2. Do I already have a **similar tool**?

Consider whether you have the capacity — time and energy — to invest in replacing it and whether your current tool might just be good enough for now.

3. Am I **willing to commit** the time and energy needed to learn how to use the tool?

Really ponder this question. Because many tools do not work right out of the box, and you may need to spend a considerable amount of time figuring out how to customize it for your own use. So, if you don't feel you are up for this right now, hold off until you are ready.

Alternatively, if you really do want to learn how to use the tool, think about what kind of help you may need to effectively adopt it.

4. Can I maintain my interest in using this tool on an **ongoing basis**?

If you can't, the investment may not worth it. But, if you are concerned you may lose interest and you still want to use the tool, consider what kind of support you need to use it consistently.

Tools

To help you think about what types of tools may help you work with your ADHD better and minimize your specific challenges I've outlined a few **examples** of tools in various **categories**.

Of course, it is impossible to include every tool that might help you, and there will always be newer and better tools.

So, while this list is by no means an exhaustive one, it will help you to **think about possible ways you can use tools to help manage your ADHD symptoms**.

Tools To Help You Remember Your Goals

ADHD Adults often **conceive of time as now and not now** because of:

- poor sense of time.
- working and long term memory challenges.
- difficulty making the connection in the moment between a long term goal and an associated reward that is too far in the distant.
- internal and external distractions.

As a result of the tendency to live too much in the present it can be a challenge to working effectively toward longer term goals.

Below are tools to help you remember and make the visceral connection in the moment to the rewards associated with your long term goals.

1. Make a [collage](#) that speaks to your goals.
2. Carry a small [meaningful object](#) with you that will remind you of your goal.
3. Put a [note](#) in a place where you will see it daily, like on your bathroom mirror, computer screen, car dashboard, or bedroom mirror.
4. Write in a [journal](#) each day describing how you lived according to your values and what steps you made toward your goals. [Penzu](#) or [Take Flava](#) are two electronic journal options.
5. Imagine the impact of your decisions by using an app like [Future Me](#) to write a [letter to your future self](#) 1, 5, 10 or even 30 years from now. What will he/she say to you?
6. Set an [online sticky](#) with a message you see when you go online each day.

Tools To Help You Remember & Execute On Your Tasks

Of course, remembering your goals is just the first step.

The next step is **remember and plan to do the individual tasks** associated with the goals. Key to being able to do this is using one tool — **a Task Manager** — for all of your **to dos**.

In order to choose the right planning tool you will want to consider the complexity of your planning needs, as well as your preferences.

1. [PowerPlanner](#) is a unique paper based planner made specifically for people with ADHD. This is a great tool, if you prefer paper and need more structure in your planning.
2. [Planner Pad](#) is another paper based planner. If you are looking for a simple, easy to use alternative, this may be perfect for you. It is a great way to visualize and then schedule your to dos. Even comes with a 6 month guarantee!
3. [Web-based](#) task management tools like [Toodledo](#), [Todoist](#) and [Nozbe](#) are great if you have a complicated work and/or home life and prefer to see your task in a linear way.
4. Another [web-based](#) task management tool is [Workflowy](#) , but much simpler than the three above.
5. If you work with a team and want everyone to see the tasks, [Asana](#), another [web-based](#) task management tool, is a great option.

Tools To Help You Brainstorm

Sometimes when you start a project you are not ready to plan sequentially, but need a container to hold all the ideas swirling about in your head.

One great way to do this using a [mind mapping apps](#). [Xmind](#) is one example.

Tools To Remind You to Follow Through

Once you have a plan you have to remember to follow through, of course. But with a weak working memory and long term memory challenges this can be difficult for Adults with ADHD.

Setting **reminders** for **date and time sensitive appointments** is the key workaround for this challenge.

Here are a few tools you can use that will send you reminders:

1. [FollowUpThen](#) is a free [email reminder service](#).
2. Alternatively, you could try a [telephone reminder service](#), such as [WakeUpLand](#) to get you out of bed, take your meds or get you to your important appointments on time.
3. [Calendar reminders](#) are of course great for time sensitive appointments.

One caveat. Getting a reminder in the middle of the day to remind you to pick up something after work is not going to be helpful; you will most likely forget it by the time you are able to act on it.

Best to use reminders for date and time sensitive tasks.

Tools To Help You Manage Your Time

Once you have a good enough plan and remember to do something you still may have challenges:

- initiating.
- focusing and attending to the task at hand.
- minimizing distractions.

Here are some examples of **tools** to help you **manage your time** and **stay on task**.

1. [The Pomodoro Technique and Timer](#) will help you get started, sustain your attention and estimate time by chunking your tasks and charting your progress. As one client said to me, “This system must be made for people with ADHD!”

2. [Vitamin R](#) is another application for Mac users that can help you counter procrastination and stay focused by also chunking your tasks. A former client said, "I was astounded by how productive I was. The slices go by so quickly and I had a real sense of accomplishment."

3. If you struggle with being aware of the passing of time, the [Time Timer](#) is the perfect tool to help you visualize your time.

4. Also, a simple [timer](#) or [online alarm clock](#) can help give you the “jolt” you need to transition to your next task, which can be especially helpful if you tend to hyperfocus.

5. [Grindstone](#) is another app you can use to track the time you spend on computer related tasks. And, as you become more aware of how long it takes to complete different tasks, you will be able to more effectively plan.

Tools To Help You Schedule Meetings

The back and forth volleying of email needed to schedule meetings can be a real time waster, for sure. Luckily, there are a couple of great tools you can use to make scheduling more manageable.

1. If you need people to schedule appointments with you, check out [TimeTrade](#).

2. [Doodle](#) is a great tool to use when you need to find a common meeting time among several options.

3. [Event Time Announcer](#) makes it easy to schedule with people across different time zones.

Tools To Help You Create Habits

One of the ways to make it **easier to remember** and **follow through** is to make tasks automatic through the **creation of habits**.

Sure, building new habits and breaking old habits is more challenging when the executive skills you need to do this effectively are weak. But that just means you need to be a little more creative in figuring out how to do this, right?

Below are a few tools that can help you build habits.

1. [42goals](#) has a great user interface to track your daily goals.
2. With [Beeminder](#) you can plot your progress on a yellow brick road and set it up so they take your money if you go off track. Though you can also use the app without pledging money.
3. [HabitForge](#) will send you daily reminders to help you follow through until your habit is well established.
4. [Fabulous - Motivate Me!](#) comes highly recommended from a client, and you can find here for [iphones](#) and [androids](#).
5. [Exercise trackers](#), such as the [Fitbit](#), are another option.

Tools to Help You Go To Sleep and Wakeup

There is plenty of anecdotal evidence to suggest a greater occurrence of sleep problems in Adults with ADHD than the general population.

And, because lack of sleep can make your ADHD symptoms worse, one of the important ways you can manage your ADHD is to [address any sleep challenges](#) you may have.

Below are just a few of the many tools you can consider to help with your sleep challenges.

1. To help you fall asleep you might consider using a white noise app, such as the iOS [White Noise Free](#) or the Android [White Noise Free](#).
2. So that the blue light from your electronics does not prevent you from falling asleep, you might also try a [blue light filter](#), such as [f.lux](#) or [blue light blocking glasses](#).
3. If waking up is your challenge, you might need more than a run of the mill alarm clock. Check out the [Sonic Bomb](#).

Tools To Help You Focus and Attend Better

As you know, staying focused on a task and not allowing external and internal (thoughts) distractions get in your way is a challenge for Adults with ADHD.

In fact, it is not possible to focus 100% of our attention on one task, as everyone has a bit of floating attention (attending to something other than your primary task).

But, no surprise, Adults with ADHD can have a great deal of floating attention!

One way to stay focused on your primary task is to **give your floating attention something** to do by **listening to music** or **using a fidget toy**.

1. Using a tool, such as the [Buddha Machine](#), [SimplyNoise](#) or [Focus@Will](#) to produce music or sounds to keep your brain engaged, is one way to focus better.
2. You may also want to try a fidget toy, such as [Kinetic Sand](#) or [Spinner Ringers](#).

Tools To Help You Reduce Computer Distractions

Computers, perhaps, more than anything else can be a real time waster. Below are a few apps to help reduce the distractions related to computer use.

1. Use an app, like [Instapaper](#), to save links you find so you can read the page later when you have time.
2. And when you need to use your computer, but want to limit your access to the internet try [FREEDOM StayFocused](#) , [KeepMeOut!](#) or [RescueTime](#) .

Tools To Help You Organize Computer Information

While it will take a bit of time up front, organizing your files and passwords will definitely save you time in the long run.

1. You can make life easier by using a tool like [LastPass](#) to save and access your online passwords from any device.
2. Using a back-up service, such as [Dropbox](#) or [Google Drive](#), is critical if you want to really have peace of mind that you can [access your files](#) whenever you need them.

Tools To Help You Organize Your Notes

Do you try to keep your planning ideas, thoughts from meetings or just random ideas in your head? You know that is a real gamble if you want to remember them later.

Instead use one of the options below.

1. [Evernote](#) is a popular choice to organize and store notes electronically. It is also one of my favorite tools!
2. Similar options to Evernote are [One Note](#), [Simplenote](#) and [Google Keep](#).

Tools To Help You Remember Temporary Notes

I bet some of your ideas have been lost because you did not write them down quickly enough. Try one of the tools below to capture your ideas when it is not convenient to access another tool.

1. Use [AquaNotes](#), a waterproof notepad, to capture your next flash of brilliance when you are in the shower.
2. [Boogie Board eWriter](#) is great for quick notes you don't need to keep long term, but also don't want to forget.
3. If you are on the run and want to **record a note to convert to text**, try an app such as, [Evernote](#), [Dragon Mobile Assistant for Android](#) or [Dragon Dictation for iOS](#)

Tool To Help You Organize Your Papers

If you are looking to maintain your paper files well enough so you can find what you need when you need them, here are a few possible solutions.

1. If you want to go paperless, use your **scanner** or try a stand-alone scanner, like [Doxie](#) and then organizing the papers in an app like Dropbox.
2. If you are looking for a **complete solution** for filing your hard copies, check out [FreedomFiler](#) or [PaperTiger](#).

Tools to Help You Find Items You Misplace

While it is a good idea to build the habit of having a home for all of your belongings, mistakes happen. Here are tools you can use to attach to items just in case...

1. [Click 'n Dig! Key Finder](#) is a great tool if you tend to misplace your keys.
2. [Tile App](#) is another tool you can use to find a variety of items you might misplace.

Tools To Help You Organize Your Finances

Using money management software can help you see at a glance all of your financial transactions in order to make better financial decisions.

1. If your primary objective is to be able to track all of your financial information in one place, [Mint](#), is an excellent choice.
2. But, if budgeting is your primary concern, then [YNAB](#) may be a better choice, though it is not free.
3. And, if investment planning is what you are looking for, [Personal Capital](#) is a good option.

Conclusion

Now that you have reached the end of the list you may be wondering, "Now what do I do?!"

For some people, having a list of tools is enough. They will be able to pick a tool, put it to use and see some positive changes.

What is more common, though, is a feeling of uncertainty and maybe even overwhelm about where to start.

My **suggestion** is that you:

1. Choose an area where you want to make improvements.
2. Think through what is getting in the way of making the changes you want.
3. Determine what you need to do or stop doing to make the changes.
4. Choose the tool you think might help you.
5. Then experiment with the tool for a sufficient amount of time, a few weeks, to see if it works for you.

And, remember, "Tactics without strategy is the noise before defeat." ~ Sun Tzu

Need Support?

I hope you found a "nugget" you can use in the above suggestions. [Sign up](#) for my ADDED Perspectives Newsletter to continue receiving similar tools, tips and strategies.

If you don't want to do this alone and need someone to guide you through the process based on your unique situation, see if my [coaching services](#) may be a good fit for you.

And then [contact me](#) for a **Complimentary Consultation**, if you would like to discuss your situation and explore how I may be able to help you. Because when you have a customized strategy that fits your unique needs you will be able to reach your goals with greater ease.

I wish you all the very best on your journey.

Marla