

FROM

Seasonal Tips for Anyone Affected by AD/HD

By Karen Sampson, MA



THE RUN-UP TO THE HOLIDAYS IS IN FULL FORCE, offering everything from excitement to frenzy. For those whose homes are affected by AD/HD, it is often a time of both excitement and frenzy. For adults, couples, and families dealing with AD/HD, the holidays take some additional thought and planning—and a healthy dose of humor.

Each of us has an image of the “perfect” holiday in our minds. Many of us create undue stress in our lives by trying to achieve this image of perfection and end up missing out on the joy of the season. Instead, with a pad of paper, calendar and a realistic set of goals, we can plan and enjoy the holidays by following the advice of a CHADD member who wrote to us: “Change the expectations so the holiday works for you, not the other way around.”

So we dug into our archives in search of more gems like that. We found many ideas to make this holiday season flow more smoothly and become a pleasant experience in your home.

HOLIDAY POCKETBOOK

Many people affected by AD/HD have already heard the wisdom of budgeting and still struggle with it—especially during the holidays, with beautiful decorations and advertisements that all have the same goal of convincing you to part with more money.

It seems that modern holiday celebrations are designed for overspending. But in a season meant to bring joy, overspending can lead to stress, difficulty keeping up with bills, and a host of other problems. So, seize the moment and consider the following tips to help control holiday spending, before the season gets the better of you.

HYPERTO HAPPY HOLIDAYS



1. Know yourself.

It is important to understand how AD/HD affects your life in general and your spending behavior in particular. Develop a holiday spending plan, including in it how much you can spend on gifts, when sales will be held, and how many shopping days are left. On paydays, separate the money for gifts from the money for necessary expenses, and take care not to “borrow” from either pile. If needed, ask a friend to help you develop your spending plan.

2. Know your salesman.

Merchandisers have expertise in getting people to spend money. Some adults with AD/HD may find these tactics particularly difficult to resist. Instead, shop early and with a circular in hand. Better yet, plan your shopping in advance, and create a detailed list you can stick to. Walk away from any high-pressured sale you encounter and practice the polite phrase, “Thank you, but not today,” for any insistent sales clerks trying to get you to buy something.

You might find that a few “thinking missions” ahead of time—where debit and credit cards, checkbooks, and cash stay home—are helpful in deciding purchases and becoming familiar with store layouts and what merchants have to offer. If more than one store sells your holiday gifts, note the prices. Then you can add this new information to your shopping plan.

3. Know the consequences.

Considering potential financial and interpersonal repercussions can motivate you to spend within limits. Buying



something may make you happy now, but will it add to the joy of the season later? True peace and joy come from knowing the bills are paid, groceries are bought, and the family is together, and not necessarily from the newest toy, gadget, or really kickin’ boots.

4. Make a plan.

You’ve combed the circulars and undertaken a few thinking missions. Your holiday budget is drawn. Now is the time to devise the shopping plan and work in its limits. It should also have a timeline that includes deadlines to keep you on pace and help you avoid the last-minute spending that usually results in overspending. Also, take into consideration holiday shopping crowds and whether you’ll be shopping alone, with a companion, or with a child. Choose stores and times that best fit your needs.

HOLIDAY TRAVEL

You have been on the ball and made your travel arrangements ahead of time, taking advantage of lower fares for advanced booking. You’ve also taken into account the best time of day or the season for you or your family members to travel.

Now comes the actual journey. Traveling with AD/HD takes some planning beyond air flights and hotels.

For Yourself

1. Consider your daily needs and how they can be met while you’re on the road. How much do you rely on your planner or PDA? What about com-

puters and email? Do you employ medication to control your AD/HD symptoms? Is there a particular morning coffee you crave or an evening snack? Take account of all of these things and plan your general day in advance, packing anything necessary for your day to run smoothly.

2. Check with your airline, hotel or travel agent to see if they can assist in meeting your needs.

Ask for aisle seats if you know you’ll need to stand or walk a short distance for comfort. If you are carrying medication for AD/HD or other health concerns, check ahead of time for the proper way to pack them. Make sure you have any needed documentation or prescriptions with you, and always pack your medication in your carry-on bag. If you are traveling outside of the country, contact U.S. Customs for the proper way to carry your medications between countries.

3. When packing your carry-on bag, keep in mind your level of tolerance for inactivity.

Bring appropriate diversions, including books, laptops, and MP3 players.

For Your Partner

If you are traveling with someone who is affected by AD/HD, you may need to be proactive in making your travel arrangements and packing. Many of the previous suggestions can apply, but also step back and offer guidance rather than doing it for your companion. Casual reminders rather than demands often go further in creating a pleasant experience. Plan



ahead if you think a particular task or item will be missed, and help to avoid a problem.

For Your Family

Forethought goes into just about everything for parents, grandparents, and guardians traveling with children.

1. **Just as adults need to check on medication concerns for themselves, they need to do the same for the children in their care, along with any necessary documentation of their children's disabilities.** Talk with the agent booking your travel, and ask about special accommodations or recommendations to make the trip more pleasant for all involved.
2. **Always make sure medications are carried in their original containers, you have your medical insurance cards with you, and documentation or consent forms for emergencies.**
3. **When packing carry-on bags, make sure you have activities for the kids.** Coloring and activity books are great for all ages; older children and teens may need a variety of books

or magazines. Again, MP3 players can be useful, as can small game systems. The idea is to keep children occupied, especially when their attention can shift quickly. If necessary, talk with your child's doctor for medication and behavior suggestions.

HOLIDAY BEHAVIOR

The amount of stimulation brought by holiday events—especially those that include crowds and seldom-seen family members—can easily become too much for adults and children affected by AD/HD. Parents and relatives can help children with AD/HD by understanding that the frenzy of the holiday season will affect their kids' daily lives and by expressing some empathy for what they are going through. Adults can be equally kind to themselves or their spouses and partners by allowing "regrouping" time, quiet rooms, or graceful exits from the party.

Think ahead to social situations that may be difficult. Try to plan in advance a variety of "cooling off" activities that can help you or your loved one to gain control during these stressful times and make the event an enjoyable experience.

For Young Children

- › Turn on holiday music, and encourage children to dance to get their "wiggles" out.
- › Provide a special treat that your child needs to sit down to enjoy.
- › Roll up your little one's sleeves, and let him splash in a sink with a bar of floating soap or bath toys.
- › Use a special CD or book for the holiday season as distractions when behavior starts to escalate.



For Older Kids

- › Make "busy time" packets with stickers, coloring books, writing paper, crayons, pens and stickers.
- › Let children pack sack lunches and find different spots in the house or the neighborhood to have lunch.
- › Try art: Bring out the crayons, markers, and colored pencils, and let your child color in a special coloring book or use butcher paper to make a mural. Other possibilities include using modeling clay, gluing cotton balls together or on paper, or making chalk drawings on the sidewalk.

- › Record a favorite family TV show or find a special movie to play when quiet time is needed.

For Adults

- › Plan ahead for how long you would like to remain at an event.
- › Offer to help out in areas that are more suited to your abilities, whether it's the excitement of watching the kids or the calm of helping to do dishes.
- › Talk with the host or hostess ahead of time, and ask if there is a room available if you need a little bit of time away from the hubbub.
- › Be willing to politely intervene when you see your companion becoming stressed in the situation. You may realize it before he or she does.

HOLIDAY HOME

There's no place like home, or so Dorothy told us. Getting ready for the holidays at home can test anyone's patience. Some may find it difficult to start or stay on task. The first suggestion might be to offer to co-host holiday events with another family member, perhaps even at that person's home. Otherwise, we have some suggestions.

1. Develop routines.

Keeping in mind that CHADD doesn't endorse products or Web sites, many CHADD members have shared their secret with us: FlyLady (www.flylady.net). The FlyLady (so named for her love of fly fishing) is all about "baby steps" and routines. She explains how to develop a routine to tackle the holiday season and the rest of the year.

You design your own routine, with her guidance, to fit the needs of your life. Since routines are a great help to families and single adults dealing with the effects of AD/HD in their lives, FlyLady's plans and control journals work well to help you get ready for the holidays and stay organized throughout the year.

2. Make a plan.

The bigger the project, the more important the plan. Scout out your apartment or house, and note what needs the most work, what needs the least amount of work, and where the best hiding places for stuff might be (that includes cramming things under the bed,

but only for quickly tidying up during the holidays.)

3. Set the timer.

Once you have a plan, set the kitchen timer for five, ten or fifteen minutes—and attack the first room. Pick up, stuff away, clear out of sight. When that timer dings, reset it for the next room, whether the first is done or not. Repeat the picking up in the second room. *Ding*; move on to the third room. Set the timer again, grab something to drink or nibble and sit down and rest for the fourth round. *Ding*, and you're back to the first room. Do this until each room is picked up, dusted, and vacuumed and any additional scrubbing is completed. Repeat this for as much time as you have available. Breaking it up over the course of a couple days or a week is a good thing, too.

4. Follow these handy tips.

- › Leave a second garbage bag at the bottom of the pail, under the current one. That way you have one handy in a pinch without having to hunt for it.
- › Keep no more than one extra of household supplies—laundry soap, paper towels, etc.—on hand. Don't fill up your cupboards with more than you need, but make sure you have a back-up at the ready so you don't lose your stride.
- › Keep all of your cleaning supplies together—a mop bucket makes a great container to stick everything in so that you can move from room to room quickly.

5. Since the best ideas often come from those who "walk the same walk," here are ideas CHADD members have sent us.

- › Get out of having the celebration at your house. It saves on the cleaning and the prep time. Consider co-hosting family events at another relative's house.
- › Limit the number of guests. A dinner party of six is more manageable than one of twenty-six. Since this is a holiday season, make use of the time by having two small dinner parties with different guests or one intimate party and then making reservations for the larger group at a favorite restaurant.
- › Many grocery stores will prepare the entire holiday meal for you at a reasonable cost. Order ahead, pick it up, follow the store's reheating instructions—and serve it in your own dishes! Remember, humor and spontaneity go a

long way during the stress of the holiday season. Allow yourself to be creative when faced with a challenge. Perhaps one of the most creative solutions we've heard came from a CHADD member who wrote that he once had a stack of newspapers piling up in the dining room for a couple of years. As company was coming rather soon, he struck upon a plan: He placed a board across the tops of the piles and draped a holiday tablecloth over

it. The piles were successfully hidden, and the set-up "didn't look bad, really."

He added, with a touch of irony, that his newspaper-holiday table stayed in place for a few more holidays before finally making its way to the recycling bundles. ●

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