

Don't Go This Alone

by Marie S. Paxson

JUST ABOUT EVERY MAGAZINE OR NEWSPAPER YOU RECEIVE THESE DAYS discusses the economy. CHADD realizes that financial matters are on everyone's mind. For people with AD/HD, finances present unique challenges. Treatment for AD/HD comes with out-of-pocket costs, whether through copayments, individual coaching, tutors, or summer programs. Adults with AD/HD may experience reduced earning potential. This could be due to the tendency to change jobs frequently or to the effect of the disorder on organization and working memory—very necessary skills when managing money.



Recently someone asked me, "If you could only make one suggestion for people with AD/HD, what would it be?" My number one answer—don't go this alone!



CHADD is committed to being here for you during the difficult times. While no one foresaw the current economic situation, we have made plans and adjustments as necessary over the past months so that we can continue to provide information, advocacy, and support to the AD/HD community. February's *For the Fridge* is devoted to managing money more carefully.

Recently someone asked me, "If you could only make one suggestion for people with AD/HD, what would it be?" My number one answer—don't go this alone! Research shows that educating yourself about this disorder is key to successful management of the symptoms. Studies also demonstrate the importance of peer support, suggestions, and understanding from others who have walked the walk. But sometimes, when we have a list of unfinished tasks that need attention, we are reluctant to take the time to attend a support meeting, watch a DVD on AD/HD, or seek solutions from an online community. Maybe you even feel a little guilty reading this magazine if you have work piling up around you. Most likely you don't realize that this is what some experts say you *should* be doing if you are affected by AD/HD.

I hear from parents who will miss a CHADD meeting on a relevant topic because their child needs them at home to help with homework. Adults with AD/HD may have overcommitted their time and energy. Sometimes missing a meeting is indeed necessary, but a case could be made that missing one night of assisting with homework to learn about a new strategy or resource could actually improve your situation.

Spending time with others who deal with AD/HD, whether in person or online, can be very

empowering and calming. When you have a more balanced perspective, you are in a better frame of mind to deal with whatever comes your way. Taking time for education and support isn't self-involved or a misuse of your time. It is proactive.

While I've not visited the site, I've heard that the virtual world, Second Life, has communities devoted to health concerns, including AD/HD. So while avatars and alter egos aren't my cup of tea, this shows that there is a real need for us to connect with others dealing with similar issues. CHADD's Facebook page provides an excellent choice for online connection.

This issue of *Attention* focuses on co-occurring conditions and some of the limitations on executive function for those with the disorder. Many of us are aware, firsthand, of the darker side of AD/HD. Along with learning how to work around some of its negative traits, progress probably won't occur without working toward acceptance. Some of what we are dealing with won't change, so we have to change our expectations and perceptions. There is a saying in some circles, "Don't go to the hardware store for a loaf of bread." You may need to work within some of the limitations, rather than act as if they don't exist.

I don't see how acceptance can occur without sharing our individual stories or learning from others walking the same path. I'm privileged to have spoken with so many of you in the past few months, to share your strength and successes and to empathize when things aren't going so well. In addition to our group voice in our affiliation with CHADD, as individuals we have a lot to offer to help others with AD/HD. ●

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