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Success for the ADD Student

Healthy Steps for a Happy Ending

Spring is here and so is the end of the semesterand panic time. Things appear to be going along fine ---- then, suddenly, your peaceful world comes crashing down and you realize that you haven't kept up with the reading, you have research papers and projects due, and exams are just around the corner. You are feeling incredibly lost and confused. For the college student who learns differently, the challenge is the same --- how to survive and succeed.

Did you know that many of the world's most brilliant minds had difficulty in school? Thomas Edison was kicked out of three schools by the age of nine and told that he was uneducable. Albert Einstein barely survived high school math. Rocket scientist, Werner Von Braun flunked ninth grade algebra. Winston Churchill failed the entire eighth grade. Leonard Tolstoy flunked out of college. Sir Isaac Newton barely made it through grade school. Louis Pasteur struggled to pass chemistry; and Abraham Lincoln only made it through one year of formal education. Why did such brilliant and creative minds struggle in school? They were all dreamers, creative thinkers and they all had Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), or its associated traits. These traits gave each of them tremendous gifts and creativity, but made it difficult to survive an educational system where focus and attention were required while day-dreaming, creativity and out of the box thinking were discouraged.

For students with ADD and ADD traits, college is far more challenging than high school. There is a tremendous amount of freedom, infinitely less structure, and huge time demands that pull the student in all directions. They are trying to manage and organize class work, social networks and learn how to prioritize mountains of new information. While handling these efforts on their own for the first time, they realize they are dependent on their own internal structure and discipline --- or lack thereof --- to prepare term papers and study for those all-inclusive finals. This is a sometimes overwhelming task for most students, but particularly challenging for one who has ADD.

“Don’t give up. Don’t dwell on what you haven’t done. Focus your energy on what will give you the best chance for success,” says Michael Sandler, frequent contributor to *ADDitude Magazine* and author of *Conquering College with ADD: The Ultimate Success Manual for ADD Students, from Applying to Academics, Preparation to Social Success, And Everything Else You Need to Know*, Sourcebooks, June 2007.

Simple steps in times of stress can lead to great success.

1- Take stock of your situation: Where are you behind and what needs to be done. List all your assignments and responsibilities. Block out time on your calendar.

2- Prioritize and schedule: Make a schedule based on what efforts will make the greatest impact. Do the most difficult work first and at the time of day when you are most rested.

3- Organize your environment: Clean up your work space and post copies of schedules and motivational messages ----- “*You can do it!*”

4- Eliminate distractions: While studying, turn off cell phones and limit number of times you check e-mail. Set alarms to keep you on track. Remember, this is a temporary measure -----but worth it.

5- Make your health a priority: Take time to sleep, eat, and exercise to maintain a healthy body and mind. Use short breaks for physical exercise - do some jumping jacks or sit ups. More exercise can generate more positive mental energy.

6- Ask for help: Visit the Resource Center and discuss your schedule with a counselor. If you have been formally diagnosed with ADD, ask for accommodations. Find a coach. Study with a buddy or friend.

Following these healthy steps you are certain to be headed in the right direction for success. Take action now and expect a Happy Ending!

*For more information about learning differences and ADD, contact
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