



Beverly H. Rohman



Mental Abilities of ADHD

Ever felt stuck, unable to do even a simple task, and then someone comes along and gives you the biggest compliment? All of a sudden you feel you're on air, floating above the clouds, able to take on the most complicated and difficult task with ease. That's often how it is with people who have the kind of brain wiring that is called Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Children and adults who have ADHD --- whether actually diagnosed or identified through personal assessment and gathering of information --- are usually very creative and talented, but often get stuck in a rut or get sidetracked before they begin. However, when you put them in the right environment, with encouragement and appreciation for their abilities – Wow! – they take off like there's no tomorrow and are able to get the most incredible things done.

In order to appreciate the buried treasure within individuals who have ADHD you need to answer the question ***How do you uncover and build upon the creativity and mental abilities of someone who has ADHD?*** For both the ADHD child and adult, the key is to build a positive environment where their creative strengths can flourish. When on-task and engaged in an interesting activity, the ADHD mind is freed up, allowed to think, and has the potential for producing amazing results. However, when pressured into an overloaded state, the ADHD child or adult freezes up and gets stuck. To ensure the mind's ability to flow, here are some key elements to create a favorable environment to support creativity.

1. **Find the right activity.** Don't attempt to force a square peg into a round hole. One of the best ways to provide support to someone who has ADHD is to encourage them to do what they love. When you do what you love, the work becomes play and success comes easily. This is why many of the greatest CEO's, inventors, actors, and musicians throughout history have been identified as having ADHD. Doing what they love, their minds have been free to think and take them where others never dared to dream.

2. **The importance of physical environment.** Having ADHD can be a double whammy when it comes to productivity. Children and adults with ADHD are often disorganized or have a hard time keeping their personal areas straightened up - yet it is hard to think in a jumbled or messy space. Michael Sandler, an adult with ADHD, says that *"it can create a spiral effect, keeping us from producing quality work, and frying our minds. The worse our work space gets, the less we're able to focus and produce."* He calls the point of no return "Critical Mass."

When this point of disorganization in the environment is reached, people with ADHD lose the ability to maintain their focus and keep on task. To prevent this, they need to look at ways to keep their world organized. *“Box up what you don’t need and hide it in the garage or a closet...you’ll find it if you truly need it,”* Sandler explains. Label drawers, buckets, or shelves for specific items and practice keeping things exactly where they’re labeled. Work with a coach to develop the right tools, the right strategies, the right systems, and the right support that helps to get the jobs done.

3. Build your routines for success. While they protest against it, children and adults with ADHD require structure to thrive. Without structure, they are prone to spin off in a thousand different directions, work tremendously hard, but have little to show for it. The key is to build a daily routine so that they can get things done on time without fears of failure or panic.

4. Build on results, not how you get there. The ADHD mind is always looking for new and creative ways to do things. One of the most important points to remember is that creative thinking does not work in a linear fashion, as in ABC. The ADHD mind often finds a better and more direct route from A to C. Allow them the freedom to think differently and you may be surprised at the results. A supportive environment produces positive energy and fosters success.

Remember, it’s not the road you take, but that you achieve the success you want. One of my favorite sayings from an unknown author (probably with ADHD) was given to me by a client and says....”It took a long time to get here, but I am right on time!” People with ADHD may have a different sense of time, but, oh, what great results come when they are allowed the flexibility that opens up creativity, positive energy and out of the box thinking! Finding the strengths and developing the positive qualities that can be part of ADHD help to foster the feeling of “I can do this” in those whose lives are often mired in the negative attitudes associated with ADHD. Look for their mental abilities, provide encouragement and a supportive environment and watch them sprout wings and fly!

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