

Managing a House and Family with ADHD

*GUEST EXPERT: Terry Matlen, MSW, ACSW, is a psychotherapist, writer, consultant, and ADHD coach with a special focus on women with ADHD. She is the author of *The Queen of Distraction* and the founder of the social networking site WomenADHD.com.*

CHADD: When a whole family is affected by ADHD, parents and kids, how can we create a peaceful household?

TERRY MATLEN: We need to start reframing who we are as parents and a family. We need to change our internal expectations and shift our strategies so that ADHD



can begin to work for us. There is no right way to make a meal, organize your home, or raise your kids. It's time to make up your own rules in your home and in your life that work for you. Make accommodations. Allow your family to do things differently. Figure out what works for you.

When you do figure out accommodations that work for your life, focus on them. Work to the areas where you do function well as a family. Understand that you have your challenges, but that you have these great things too.

As a mom with ADHD, how can I be content with day-to-day tasks that don't excite me?

For stay-at-home moms, days are often unstructured. It can be hard to complete tasks because they are boring and repetitive. Try taking a boring task and pairing it with something you enjoy. You could fold laundry while watching your favorite TV show, for example.

Another suggestion is to invite a friend or relative over. Have them help you tidy up your house and then switch and go to their house and help them. Partnering with someone else allows for conversation. It may not make the actual task less boring, but it will allow for the environment to be more enjoyable.

How can I explain ADHD to family members who are skeptical?

Instead of using the word ADHD, start by using descriptive words about your behaviors. If you struggle with disorganization, you might say "I tend to be disorganized." If you're habitually late, say "I tend to be late." Start off with descriptions and then gradually come around to explaining that ADHD is a medical condition.

Some points to start with include: "It's how I was born," "It's highly genetic," or "I probably got it from..." and name another person your family who may have characteristics like you have. If your family members are open to reading about ADHD then have other information to share with them.





GUEST EXPERT: Caroline Maguire, ACCG, PCC, MEd, is a personal coach who works with children with ADHD and their families. Why Will No One Play With Me, her guidebook for parents on becoming their child's play date coach, will be released in 2017.

CHADD: How can I motivate myself, stop procrastinating, and become consistent with an activity?

CAROLINE MAGUIRE: Individuals with ADHD have an underaroused brain. One of the big ways to end procrastination and begin to move forward is to figure out how to “ignite your brain.” What is it that you do that is fun and interesting? How can you use it to rev up your brain and overcome underarousal? The more our brain is stimulated the more it can focus. If an activity becomes fun and interesting, then your brain is better able to stay motivated allowing you to finish an activity.

Also, break things into small, measurable tasks. Your chances of success skyrocket when trying to do one small thing. Find

ways to reinforce your commitment to your activity. Share it with your spouse, a friend or family member. Involve others to help keep you accountable.

Should I encourage my spouse to seek help for his ADHD?

This can be a difficult situation, but I would absolutely find ways to encourage your spouse to seek help. We're all trying to model behaviors. The more we as adults seek help and try to change, the more our children are likely to respond to help.

One creative way to have your spouse receive help is to involve him (or her) in your child's treatment. For example, if the child is seeing a coach or therapist, ask for sessions that include you as parents. This is not to make your spouse feel forced, but to take the approach that we all have things we can work on. 🗣️

Robyn Maggio, MSW, is the education and training coordinator at the National Resource Center on ADHD.

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— Dr. Mary Rooney, Clinical Psychologist specializing in ADHD

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