

## The Other Side of Adult ADHD

by Astra Tudisco

**MY HUSBAND ROB** is very vocal about his ADHD. When he speaks publicly, he often says, "I have ADHD, but my wife suffers from ADHD because she is married to me." It always gets a laugh, but at times it can be painfully true.

We have come a long way since Rob was first diagnosed fourteen years ago. At first, I was very skeptical about the whole concept of ADHD. We had been having a lot of difficulty in our daily lives, and when I first heard the term, I thought, "Oh great, is this going to be an excuse for the practical problems we face." It wasn't until I read more about ADHD and saw the difference between him when he took medication versus when he didn't that I realized that there was a real



Astra and Rob Tudisco

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medical basis for what had been going on.

Over the years, we've learned a lot about how ADHD impacts our relationship. I've learned not to view Rob's actions in the context that he doesn't care. He also does a lot to let me know that he is not using his ADHD as an excuse. I truly get that now. We are both busy professionals, however, and at the end of the day, things still have to get done. It can be incredibly frustrating. Even if not assigning blame, this issue can still raise a lot of anxiety for both of us.

Educating ourselves about ADHD has been helpful, and a lot of that has to do with support organizations like CHADD. While Rob has found a lot of comfort in meeting others with ADHD and attending conferences, however, I have not found the same comfort. There aren't a lot of resources for those of us who don't have ADHD, but live with it every day. That is what inspired me to



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write this column. There is another side of ADHD that involves those of us who try very hard to understand what those with ADHD are going through, but still have to face the practical frustrations of daily life and our family's needs.

### A little humor, a lot of patience

Rob and I have found that the best way to work together is with more communication, a little bit of humor, and a lot of patience. We are very different people and we approach tasks differently. I am starting to accept the fact that the weekend to-do list has to be made by me. We try to discuss what needs to be accomplished on Friday night or Saturday morning. He takes on some tasks and I take others. Sometimes we do things together. I have learned that if he has agreed to do something, I need to let him do it his way. I can't micromanage or judge. I've learned to be happy that we are getting things done. I also understand that letting him get things done in his own way avoids much of the self-torture that I never realized he put himself through.

We also have to be realistic about our weekend to-do lists. Narrowing it down to a few important items helps us prioritize; we avoid setting ourselves up for failure. Sometimes having a good time and letting the list sit for another week is okay. His ADHD creates some problems for him, so he procrastinates and doesn't do part of his list. For instance, completing forms for insurance claims is overwhelming for him. No one likes

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that task, but it is one that I can handle, so it has become my job. In the past, I would get frustrated because he avoided the project and weeks would go by without the claims being made. By discussing it, we have made the process easier.

My husband's work allows him to get home in the evening before me. I am very fortunate that he is an excellent cook. He doesn't mind doing the food shopping, but I have to make the list and plan the dinner. I used to get frustrated that I had to decide what we eat every night, but when I get home from work he is already making dinner. The fact that we make it happen is really what matters.

Time management is the biggest problem Rob still faces. Sometimes I listen to what he has planned for his work day and I am overwhelmed. I would not have time to breathe. He often schedules his appointments so close together that he forgets about travel time and eating lunch. We are on opposite ends of the spectrum—I am obsessively early and he is perpetually late. We've learned to joke about it now, but in the past it was not funny to be waiting at an event for him to show up or getting to the movie theatre just before the show and getting the worst seats in the house. We've learned that we need to discuss the plan for how long it will take to get where we are going and what time we are leaving the house. By discussing it, he understands my "being late" anxiety and I understand that his "being late" is not intentional. He tries very hard. Knowing that makes a difference, but keeping a sense of humor definitely helps.

### Communication is key

I can't stress enough how important it is to communicate with your spouse when he or she has ADHD. By explaining your feelings, your spouse can see how the things he does or fails to do impact your relationship. In the same way, understanding the pressures and frustrations your spouse faces also helps avoid misunderstanding and bad feelings. We've learned not to expect to know what the other is thinking or feeling. Talk to your spouse and find out why he or she has not done a project or a task. You might be surprised with the answer and it may be something easily rectified by the two of you working together. Even if it is still a challenge, working together will make you closer.

Ultimately, I realize that as frustrating as things can be, I was drawn to Rob for a reason, and he feels the same way about me. Perhaps it is that opposites attract, or that we support each other's differences without even realizing it. I also want to say that if you are in love with someone with ADHD, you are not alone. There are a lot of us out there just like you. 🗨️

*Astra M. Tudisco is a practicing attorney in New York. She writes based upon her personal experiences being married to an adult diagnosed with ADHD for over twenty-one years.*



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