

Communicating, Paying Bills, and Moving Forward

DO YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT ADULT ADHD?

Email them to attention@chadd.org and highly qualified experts will respond.

Communication is a big problem in my household. I haven't figured out how to get my husband to really hear me. My daughter also has ADHD. Life can get very frustrating very quickly when no one seems to be listening.

When someone has ADHD, part of their difficulties with listening result from an impairment in the brain's executive functions called "reconstitution of information." This means that what a person with ADHD hears and what he or she actually processes in his or her brain can be two different things.

Some tips for clearer communication include writing down requests and having your husband or daughter repeat what you said back to you, in order to make sure he or she understood you correctly.

People with ADHD respond well to positive reinforcement—verbal or tangible rewards for behavior—and the ADHD brain has difficulty processing punishment and consequences. Let your spouse and daughter know when you appreciate something they have done or are making an effort to listen. What you focus on grows.

It's also important that you take good care of yourself. If you feel your frustration level is impacting your quality of life, consider individual, couple, or family therapy with a clinician who specializes in ADHD.

Stephanie Moulton Sarkis, PhD | Psychologist, counselor, coach | Author, *Natural Relief for Adult ADHD: Complementary Strategies for Increasing Focus, Attention, and Motivation With or Without Medication* (2015)



My partner and I both have ADHD, but someone still has to remember to pay the bills on time. How do we make this work?

Close your eyes and repeat after me: Automatic. Bill. Pay. Take an hour out of your day to set up automatic bill pay for as many bills as you can. It will save you and your partner stress, panic, and frustration.

It's no surprise that paying bills is the archnemesis of adults with ADHD. You had every intention to pay that traffic ticket that has been sitting on your desk... that is, if you only had a stamp. Fortunately, buying stamps is on your to-do list; unfortunately, buying stamps has been on your to-do list for four weeks. Now you've received another notice saying that you owe double for not paying on time. So, embrace the \$3 online processing fees and look at them as a sort of get-out-of-paying-late-fees guarantee.

Banks offer features that allow for monthly checks to be sent from your account if a bill requires a physical check. So take a moment now, close the other tabs waiting to distract you, and do yourself and your partner a favor by setting up automatic bill pay for your bills. Your brain will now have more memory space to put toward remembering where you put your car keys.

Hawken Vance | Art Director | Adult with ADHD





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How do you move forward if your partner refuses to accept that their symptoms are causing problems in the relationship and you've been in therapy for a couple years?

I would suggest discussing accountability with your therapist. Strong, healthy relationships are ones in which both parties involved hold themselves and each other accountable, work toward their goals and aspirations interdependently, and work with and on and around the flaws we all have as humans.

When communicating about this subject, it is best to use I statements with each other (instead of “you never hold yourself accountable,” try “when you _____, I feel

_____”). Clearly discuss your goals and needs with your partner during therapy sessions.

If you still don't see enough effort or progress from your partner, then it may be helpful to allow your partner to feel the direct results of those symptoms more, especially in places where you aren't negatively impacted by these natural consequences. For example, stop giving reminders when they don't write things down. Don't do this passively-aggressively, but rather from a position of neutrality.

Let your partner see the direct connection between his or her actions (or inactions) and what happens to him or her. Occasionally, and when appropriate, point out this connection. But remember that less is more—let the natural consequences do most of the talking. By picking your battles, you may have more energy to push for the things that matter most to you, without feeling like you are constantly after your partner about everything.

Griffin Harmon | Young Adult with ADHD

A psychologist in private practice in West Chester, Pennsylvania, Ari Tuckman, PsyD, MBA, specializes in the diagnosis and treatment of ADHD in children, teens, and adults. A contributing editor to Attention magazine, he also serves on the CHADD board of directors and conference committee.



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