

ADHD Helped Me **FIND SUCCESS** in Pivoting a Business During the Pandemic



by Marc Sickel

LOUIS PASTEUR famously said, “Chance favors only the prepared mind.” I wish I could say that I foresaw the pandemic way back in January when there were scattered reports of COVID-19 infection overseas. Unfortunately, I was taken by surprise like pretty much the rest of the country. And with it, my business, Fitness for Health, an adaptive gym that provides physical training, occupational therapy, and physical therapy to many differently abled individuals, from those with difficulty with basic gross motor skills to elite athletes who are trying to hone their skills.

With the pandemic came nationwide business closures, including my own. While other types of clinical offices, such as psychotherapy, were able to quickly leap to telehealth services, our services were seemingly based on our array of state-of-the-art exergaming equipment. Yes, we're not a typical adaptive gym. We have various extremely cool pieces of high-tech equipment, much of which was designed for elite athletes, and which we have, over time, adapted to our clients' needs. We also have adapted other low-tech techniques to their needs as well, such as using equipment that may accommodate someone who is learning to catch and throw.

When we first had to shut down because of a statewide mandate, we were understandably extremely concerned. Frankly, we are still, more than four months later, not out of the woods. Could we adapt to a teleworld? Could we see clients at their homes instead of at our gym space? How could we ever convince people to come back to our indoor gym once the stay at home order was lifted? This is where having ADHD came in handy.

Sure, having ADHD my whole life has at times not been ideal. Yes, as a child I invariably got into trouble with my hyperactivity and had to try out different medications to treat both hyperactivity and inattention. And yes, I still have to take medication to keep me focused. But like most things that on the surface appear to be deficits, sometimes they can serve us well in a different context. Having a mind that wanders, which is fairly typical of someone with ADHD, has contributed to my ability find creative solutions. When life serves up lemons, like a global pandemic and statewide stay-at-home orders that could shut down your business, you think up a lot of things quickly and rank them to see which are most realistic and which are not.

Could we incorporate a subscription business into our model? We are working on this. If someone does not want to come to our indoor gym space, then they can purchase from us a set of equipment, about \$100 total, and with that we can work them out, either in-person or via telehealth, with similar techniques to those we use at the gym, only low-tech.

Could we see clients who are not developmentally disabled? This was another major decision point and one that we answered in the affirmative. With all of the school-aged individuals—children and adolescents—and their parents needing somewhere to use up their pent-up energy, we have sought to engage with neurotypical individuals. So, we have included those with ADHD and other challenges, as well as those without any diagnosis other than they are bored at home and want a cool exergaming experience.

Similarly, we have been looking at branching out more

into rehabilitation services. Many of our therapists, including myself, have worked with individuals going through post-stroke or post-cardiac event rehabilitation, but it just hasn't been our focus. But now we are looking at partnering with a number of health care facilities in the area so that their patients can receive rehab on state-of-the-art equipment. We are ready to start working with them.

We are also looking at working with various school systems in the area, public and private. For the past seven years we have worked with a local elementary school, and we are seeing if additional schools in the area would like to utilize our services. Now that many people are stuck at home doing virtual school, they may be looking for an outlet more than ever before. We are ready to start working with them, whether in groups or individually.

We are also excited to be expanding our social-motor skills groups for all ages, from young children all the way to young adults. We recognize that many young adults with developmental disabilities are forgotten about in the community, and we don't want to forget them at all. We want to work with them and their families to help them integrate into the community and make smooth transitions from high school to college or supervised living arrangements or just the changing dynamics at their own home as they age.

I don't think I'd be quite as ready for all of these uncertainties if it weren't for my ADHD. Yes, the medication I take, a stimulant, does help me to focus. But having my mind wander is extremely helpful in thinking about various possibilities. As the saying goes, my wandering mind allows me to be ready for chance occurrences. And we are working our hardest to shift our chances for success in a positive direction.

The year 2020 is the start of a different way of living for most of the country, and certainly as a small business owner, it is the start of a different way of doing business. I look forward to the challenges that lie ahead and anticipate that we will tackle each challenge as it presents itself. 🍎

*A nationally recognized innovator in the field of exergaming, fitness, and special needs therapy, **Marc Sickel** founded Fitness for Health in 1989 to fulfill his dream of helping children and adults maximize their physical potential. Having grown up as a child with special needs, Marc used his unique perspective to create a safe, exciting approach to fitness that addresses both the physical challenges and emotional challenges faced by children and adults of all abilities. This innovative approach combines his unique Success Builds Success methodology and state-of-the-art exergaming equipment—much of which he custom designs hand-in-hand with leading fitness manufacturers—to help children and adults develop the motivation and confidence they need to learn new skills and take on new challenges. It has proven again and again to be so successful that clients and families travel from as far away as Bermuda, Texas, and New York just to train with Marc. Learn more at <https://fitnessforhealth.org>.*