CHADD Ask the Experts

Live in Harmony

Tips for the Non-ADHD Partner

Susan Dillon Tschudi, MA, LMFT

www.therapybysusan.com
therapybysusan@gmail.com
Live in Harmony: Tips for the Non-ADHD Partner

Which is it? ADD or ADHD?

- ADHD, Predominantly Hyperactive/Impulsive Type
- ADHD, Predominantly Inattentive Type
- ADHD, Combined Type

What causes ADHD/what doesn’t
Common characteristics of Adult AD/HD

- Inattention
- Impulsivity
- Restlessness
- Distractibility
ADHD
we think more things
before breakfast
than most people
think all day.

I wish I could sleep...
but my A.D.D. kicks in
and well basically,
one sheep, two sheep,
cow, turtle, duck,
'Ole McDonald had a
Farm...Hey Macarena!
Part One

3 Roadblocks to Relational Success
Live in Harmony: Tips for the Non-ADHD Partner

Roadblock

Anything that prohibits a relationship from being mutually satisfying and fulfilling.
Live in Harmony: Tips for the Non-ADHD Partner

Roadblock One: Overhelping and Excessive Caretaking

Overhelping
- Doing too many things for your partner without consideration

Excessive Caretaking
- Too absorbed, too wrapped up—almost to an obsessive degree—in managing your partner’s life.
Live in Harmony: Tips for the Non-ADHD Partner

Roadblock One: Overhelping and Excessive Caretaking

Overhelping
- Doing too many things for your partner without consideration

Excessive Caretaking
- Too absorbed, too wrapped up—almost to an obsessive degree—in managing your partner’s life.
Live in Harmony: Tips for the Non-ADHD Partner

Is This You?

Why do I feel this way?

Why do I do what I do?

Am I doing anything to make it worse?

Am I willing to make changes for the sake of my relationship? (EVEN IF IT IS DIFFICULT?)
Roadblock Two:

Learned Helplessness

- A person’s conditioned belief that he/she isn’t capable of doing anything or accomplishing anything.
Roadblock Three:

The Parent Trap

- Unhealthy communication pattern in which the non-ADHD partner approaches and relates to the partner with ADHD as a parent would treat a disobedient child
- Non-ADHD partner responds in child-like manner
- Includes both verbal and non-verbal communication
- Extremely toxic
Roadblock Three:
The Parent Trap
Avoiding the Parent Trap

• Communicate as an adult
  • Your words express what you need or feel

• Use assertive communication
  • Express your needs and wants in a manner that is direct and honest, not hostile or mean
Live in Harmony: Tips for the Non-ADHD Partner

Avoiding the Parent Trap

- Assertive Communication Tools
- ‘I’ statements
- When I ________, I feel ________, and I would prefer ________
- Avoid Absolutes
- Frequently /More often than not /It seems like a lot of the time
- Play the Broken Record
- Calmly and firmly restate your point (or request) regardless of your partner’s responses.
Live in Harmony: Tips for the Non-ADHD Partner

Part Two

Strengthening Personal Boundaries
Live in Harmony: Tips for the Non-ADHD Partner

Strengthening Personal Boundaries

Personal Boundaries:
Our emotional needs and preferences and how they get played out in reciprocal interactions with everyone in our lives, especially our partners.

How do I like to be treated?
What will I allow, and not allow, to be said and done to me?
What seems appropriate to me, both verbally and physically?
What are my priorities?
What is my bottom line?
Strengthening Personal Boundaries

*Strong Personal Boundaries* equal a sense of protection and security and creates respect and dignity in relationship.

*Poor or weak Personal Boundaries* result in feelings of vulnerability and defenselessness and create anger and resentment in relationship.
Live in Harmony: Tips for the Non-ADHD Partner

Strengthening Personal Boundaries

*Boundary difficulties in an ADHD relationship*

- *Time*
- *Forgetfulness*
- *Impulsivity*
- *Distractibility*
Live in Harmony: Tips for the Non-ADHD Partner

Strengthening Personal Boundaries

Take a Personal Inventory

**Purpose:** Learn how to express your desires, needs, and feelings with more clarity and less emotion

- What makes me feel content?
- What makes me feel productive and effective?
- When were the times in my life when I felt most content, productive, and effective?
- What gets in the way of my feeling contented, productive, and effective?
- How have I tried to change the things that get in the way?
- Have those efforts worked?
- If not, is there anything that I could do differently in the future?
Live in Harmony: Tips for the Non-ADHD Partner

Strengthening Personal Boundaries

Create a *Won’t Do/Will Do List*

Purpose: Replace old, dysfunctional ways of expressing desires and needs with ones that are healthier.
Example of Won’t Do/Will Do List

Problem
My husband avoids conversations about money.

What I WON’T Do Anymore
Badger and nag him. Get angry at his avoidance.

What I Will Do in the Future
Have more awareness of the appropriate time to approach him.
Ask permission to have the conversation.
If he avoids the conversation, voice my frustration in a calm manner.
If necessary, make money decisions on my own.
Live in Harmony: Tips for the Non-ADHD Partner

Strengthening Personal Boundaries

1. Take Inventory
2. Won’t Do/Will Do List

Put plan into action:

3. Choose appropriate time
4. Communicate in caring manner
   ▪ Ask permission
   ▪ Use ‘I’ statements
5. Do follow up*
   * Keep options open – you may have to revise plan
An old Chinese proverb says:

The best time to plant a tree was thirty years ago
but the next best time to plant a tree is TODAY
What will you do TODAY to?

To stop overhelping and excessive caretaking

To avoid the Parent Trap

To create healthier personal boundaries
Live in Harmony: Tips for the Non-ADHD Partner

Q & A

therapybysusan@gmail.com

www.therapybysusan.com

www.lovingsomeonewithadd.com