



ADHD and Emotional Management

- ✓ Have you ever had the impression that you get over-excited too quickly or that you get too intensely angry?
- ✓ Does your impulsivity prevent from you taking a step back so that you can calmly analyze things?
- ✓ Are you the type of person who reacts rather than acts?

If you answered yes, **“Hurry up and read what follows!”**

Over-reactivity associated with ADHD can give us the feeling of being on an emotional rollercoaster and can lead to major impacts on our relationships.

Over-impulsive reactions are often regretted and can eventually cause us to avoid at-risk situations and to isolate ourselves.

Taking a time out precedes self-reflection and helps us take a step back in order to Act rather than to React!

Tips for Acting Rather than Reacting

When your emotions are about to explode . . .

1. Taking a time out helps you to physically calm down.

Given the link that exists between our negative emotions and the physical symptoms we feel (e.g., anxiety \leftrightarrow muscle tension), it is essential to keep our bodies well in control to be able to manage our emotions properly. Here is a list of useful strategies to know (those interested can read the descriptions at the end of this infosheet).

ACTIVE Relaxation Techniques

- Regular physical activity
- Massage therapy
- Jacobson's progressive relaxation therapy
- Slow abdominal breathing and cardiac coherence



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2. Self-questioning (Reflective Questioning / Introspection??)

Once people have better control over their emotional outbursts, it is time to initiate an introspective process to question their automatic negative thoughts. Becoming aware of their cognitive distortions allows people to undertake a *cognitive restructuring* exercise.

This process is designed to lead them **to intercept their automatic thoughts** and to **raise reasonable doubts** about them.

Readers interested in initiating the cognitive restructuring technique are invited to read the following infosheet (including Ramsay & Rostain's list of cognitive distortions experienced by adults with ADHD):



Cognitive Restructuring 101

- Available in the *Tips* section on the following websites: www.cliniquefocus.com, www.attentiondeficit-info.com

3. Acting rather than reacting!

Next, it's time to walk the walk! It's not enough to talk about it. You have to do something about it!

The **exposure technique** helps to gradually tame negative emotions (e.g., performance anxiety) that generally provoke avoidance behaviour, such as procrastination.

A concrete example of the exposure technique is the “10-minute strategy,” which is described in the infosheet:



Time Management to Boost Your Productivity

- Available in the *Tips* section on the following websites: www.cliniquefocus.com, www.attentiondeficit-info.com



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Details for interested readers

Regular physical activity

In addition to helping you manage your emotions, physical activity allows you to better channel your hyperactivity and boost your concentration.

Massage therapy

For those who are not fans of physical activity, massage therapy can be an interesting option for relieving muscle tension.

Jacobson's progressive relaxation therapy

Knowing this technique will allow you to use it when you see fit (e.g., when you're stuck in a traffic jam after work) and to adapt it by choosing specific muscle groups based on the physical pain you feel.

The following websites provide an introduction to Jacobson's technique:

- [http://www.ithaca.edu/cross/SUPERVISION/MATERIALS/TREATMENT/TREATMENT%20\(PDF\)/Modified%20Prog.%20Relaxation.pdf](http://www.ithaca.edu/cross/SUPERVISION/MATERIALS/TREATMENT/TREATMENT%20(PDF)/Modified%20Prog.%20Relaxation.pdf)
- [http://www.ithaca.edu/cross/SUPERVISION/MATERIALS/TREATMENT/TREATMENT%20\(PDF\)/Modified%20Prog.%20Relaxation.pdf](http://www.ithaca.edu/cross/SUPERVISION/MATERIALS/TREATMENT/TREATMENT%20(PDF)/Modified%20Prog.%20Relaxation.pdf)

Slow abdominal breathing and cardiac coherence

Anxiety, anger and several other negative emotions increase heart rate, blood pressure and breathing. Regaining control over our heart rate and breathing is the first step involved in the more specific emotional management techniques.

Websites, application and video on slow abdominal breathing and on cardiac coherence:

- <http://www.amsa.org/healingthehealer/breathing.cfm>
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xI3sVuH7rms>:
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=22deFvgJF4Q> (video showing a bubble rising and falling to guide your breathing rate)
- <https://itunes.apple.com/ca/app/respirelax/id515900420?mt=8>

Mindfulness

Mindfulness means directing our attention in a specific way: deliberately, in the moment, without any value judgements (Jon Kabat-Zinn).

Book: Mindfulness Prescription for Adult ADHD by Lydia Zylovska:

<http://lidiazylovska.com/about/mindfulness-for-adhd/>

Interview with the author: <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/here-there-and-everywhere/201206/adhd-mindfulness-interview-lidia-zylovska-md>



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