Daily Planner

Individuals with ADHD often have a good understanding of what they need to do but may lack the motivation to do it[1]. Tools such as the daily planner can help increase motivation to perform tasks by providing the structure necessary to accurately identify and arrange your responsibilities and commitments. Read below to learn more about how a daily planner can help you turn your goals into actions.

What is a Daily Planner?

A *daily planner* is a journal, chart, or app that helps you to organize everything you have to do in a day. Typically, these planners have sections for each day, with slots for each hour of the day. Planners can range from simple, such as a calendar where you write down the various tasks and times you want to complete tasks each day, to sophisticated, such as a bullet journal where you utilize various symbols to prioritize, group, and keep track of specific tasks, events, and noteworthy moments in a day.

The type of daily planner you select should be based on your personality and needs. Many experts recommend using a paper rather than electronic planner, as most individuals fail to check their phones or tablets enough to make electronic planners useful. Moreover, a paper planner can be easily accessed or even kept open on a desk so that you may casually reference it at several points throughout the day.

What Should You Keep Track of on Your Daily Planner?

Put simply, your daily planner should be used to keep track of how you want to spend your day. Typically, this includes professional, personal, social, recreational, and self-care activities. It is also a good idea to transfer the tasks on your daily to-do list to your planner, as having set times to do these tasks will increase the likelihood of you accomplishing them. When identifying tasks to include on their daily planners, some people also like to include notes with reminders of important information needed to complete the tasks. Other people like to use colors to group tasks into various categories or priority levels. You can be as creative as you would like to be when organizing your daily planner—just remember to choose a system that works for you!

Using Your Daily Planner

A good way to begin using your daily planner is by devoting at least 10 minutes per day for planning. At the beginning of these 10 minutes, start by scheduling all of the normal activities you might complete in a day. This includes tasks such as morning wake-up routines, work,

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[1] [1] Ramsay, J. R., & Rostain, A. L. *Cognitive-behavioral therapy for adult ADHD: An integrative and psychosocial medical approach* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

classes, meals, chores, leisure activities, and sleep. Then, add any less frequent appointments you might have such as doctor's visits, car maintenance, or other important meetings. Next, review your daily to-do list to determine if any tasks you identified might reasonably fit into the day's schedule.

As you review the tasks you've written on your daily schedule, make sure you've identified a definite start and end time for each task. Keep in mind that it may be difficult to estimate how long it will take to complete some tasks. Try breaking these tasks up into the smallest chunks possible, which can increase the accuracy of your estimate. Also, as a general rule, err on the side of under-scheduling, adopting a "less is more" mindset. Finally, be sure to schedule downtime in your planner and to review it early and often.

Summary of Tips:

1. Choose a daily planner that works best for you. It should be something that could be easily accessed on a regular basis.
2. Spend at least 10 minutes a day completing your daily planner.
3. Start by recording all of the normal activities you would complete on an average day.
4. Add any less frequent appointments you might have.
5. Transfer the tasks from your daily to-do list onto your daily planner.
6. Make sure you leave adequate buffers between tasks.
7. Schedule downtime.
8. Review your planner early and often throughout the day.