

STRATEGIES TO REDUCE DISTRACTIBILITY

The “Attention-Deficit” part of “Attention-Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a bit of a misnomer. People with ADHD can often focus intently on activities they find stimulating, novel, or interesting. With more mundane (and often routine) tasks or those perceived to be boring, tedious, or uninteresting, the ADHD brain is easily distracted. And once distracted, it is hard to re-focus attention to the initial task. To improve focus and reduce the likelihood of becoming distracted:



1. Turn off your devices and remove all sources of social media.

Social media is designed to be addictive. Once you look at your phone or check email, one can easily be led down the rabbit hole and into a world of distractions. Turn off devices or place them in a separate area so you won't be distracted by the latest notification.



2. Clear your workspace.

It is easy to become distracted by clutter on your desk or workspace. Clutter makes your brain work extra hard as it tries to maintain focus. Clear the area and make sure all needed materials are within reach.

3. Name or describe your current task before moving on to another.

If you have to pause work on a task in order to gather material or engage in another tasks, describe or label your current task. “I’m working on second quarter taxes.” “Second quarter taxes.” State the described task over and over again to enable yourself to recall what you’re working on and to return to that task.

4. Wear noise-cancelling headsets.

Some people can focus better with soft music playing in the background. Others prefer music with more pep, such as music by Alex Cruz (available online for free.) Others find they work best with white noise in the background or no sound at all. The key is to block sounds that distract you from the task at hand and keep you focused.



5. Break up the work.

The ADHD brain craves novelty and tends to lose focus on long, tedious tasks. You can more easily satisfy the need for novelty and sustain attention by working on several projects during the day.

6. Break up longer projects into shorter tasks.

Take a brief break after finishing one step and going on to the next one. (Take a break at least every 90 minutes and every 20 minutes if the task is tedious or uninteresting.) Be sure to pat yourself on the back or shout an internal “hoorah!” after completing each of these smaller tasks.



7. Use a Distraction Log.

A distraction log is a dedicated notebook that you keep beside you when engaging in a task. It can be used to write down ideas or thoughts of things you need to do that pop up as you attempt to focus on a task. Writing it down may relieve the potential for these thoughts to de-rail your focus.