

If You Love Someone Who Has ADHD, Don't Do These 20 Things

BY JUNE SILNY

You wonder if everybody's life is as chaotic as yours. Something's not right.

Your child doesn't act like the other children in the class. Homework assignments guarantee a night of fights, slammed doors, and tears shed. The teachers call you in for conferences weekly. Your husband gets fired again claiming all his bosses are jerks. You work overtime so your car isn't repossessed. Your sister cancels every time you plan to meet for dinner. Your teenager is hanging out in the local piercing parlor. And your daughter can't find her car keys whenever she's walking out the door. Your relationships are constant conflicts.

You've considered splitting up, but you can't afford to live on your own. You've thought of quitting your job, packing your bags, and running away. You're tired all the time. You're trapped, choking, and you cannot breathe.

Loving someone who has ADHD can make your life crazy if you don't get a grip on it. The doctors prescribe medication. The therapists tell you what to do, but your home is as wild as a college frat house.

A person with ADHD can be hard to live with. The thought patterns and behaviors of a person with ADHD never go away. They are manageable, but that too, is a full-time challenge.

Without proper care, ADHD can lead to substance abuse, overeating, unemployment, toxic relationships, divorce, constant conflict, academic failure, insomnia, stress, anxiety and panic attacks. A person with ADHD has an active thought process of options, possibilities, and scenarios the average person cannot even imagine.

Eventually, reality bites. The rent is due, the electric bill is unpaid, and your checking account is overdrawn again. You're exhausted from staying awake worrying all night. You want to run away, but your problems are like misspelled tattoos that stay with you wherever you go. There is hope. It doesn't have to be that way. As a person with ADHD has to work through his challenges, you as his lover, parent, sibling or friend also have to learn coping skills to improve the situation. Don't do these 20 things if you want to have a happier life together.

1. Don't live in denial - Admit the truth.

Call the problem by its name: Attention-Deficit/Hyperactive Disorder. Your life will become easier when you identify it, own it, talk about it, and stop running from it. Admitting that it exists is the first step to freedom. There is no reason to feel ashamed. Many of history's greatest contributions have come from people with ADHD. Scientists, authors, artists, musicians, and entrepreneurs have become successful because they have a creative vision that average people do not possess.

2. Don't criticize - Judge favorably.

Realize that your loved one with ADHD is trying his hardest, even though it's not good enough for your standards. Lighten up, go easy, and give them time. They will accomplish what they have to do, but not on the schedule you have in mind. Allow them time and space to accomplish their tasks. Influence them with love, not with criticism.

3. Don't accept excuses - Encourage and inspire them to achieve their goals.

ADHD isn't an excuse for an irresponsible lifestyle. It just means that what comes easy to you, may be difficult for them. It doesn't mean that they can't do something, it means that it's harder for them. Simple tasks that you take for granted; such as opening mail, trashing junk mail, and placing your bills in a "to be paid" folder, feel like a climb up Mt. Everest to a person with ADHD. It doesn't make sense to someone who doesn't have it. Try to be encouraging, in spite of your doubts and disappointments. Point out the times when they succeeded.

4. Don't be a coach - Be a cheerleader.

Stand on the sidelines; grab your pom-poms and start cheering. Words of encouragement have more power than insults and put-downs. Coaches are in-your-face critics. Their job is to point out the negative. Cheerleaders stand on the side, rooting for success, believing in their teams ability to achieve. Let your loved one with ADHD know that you are on the same team.

5. Don't make unrealistic demands - Stay with the possible.

When a person with ADHD gets stressed out, an obsessive thought pattern of "what-ifs" begins. Screaming and shouting, "Just do it already. Stop making such a fuss," will not break through compulsive thinking. Accept the fact that they may not be able to do what you want, when you want it, or how you want them to do it. If it's something important, be specific.

6. Don't give instructional lectures - Be respectful.

Lectures are not helpful if a person feels like they are being spoken to like a child whose baseball broke the neighbor's window. If you have something to say, be sure to choose the right words at the right time. The timing of your conversations determines if you will be heard or ignored. Schedule a time to talk. Rehearse your speech so that it comes out as love, not control.

7. Don't be impulsive - Practice patience.

Someone with ADHD is impulsive. If you are the rational thinker in the relationship, your ADHD loved one is depending on you to be wise and patient. Two impulsive people reacting emotionally and regurgitating information at each other, does not make for a happy ending.

8. Don't be a martyr - Call for backup.

Have a support team to help you through the struggles. You don't have to manage everything alone. Call a friend, a therapist, or a loving relative. Find someone who just listens. If you don't want advice or suggestions, a comforting shoulder to cry on can strengthen you and change your outlook

9. Don't forget your goal - Prepare for a positive outcome.

Sometimes words come out that you later regret saying. They can't be taken back. Hurtful words leave deep wounds. Keep your goals in mind. What would you like to accomplish? Ask yourself, *if I say this will it lead to a negative or a positive outcome?* It's up to you. You determine the outcome. Go slow. Think before you speak.

10. Don't feel guilty - Know that you are doing your best.

Feeling that your loved one is hard to love, or that you don't like their behavior is a sad feeling to experience. If you're a parent and are upset about your child's behavior, guilt runs through your veins. It's not your fault. You're doing the best you can. You're in a tough situation and you aren't always sure which is the best way to handle it. Be gentle with yourself.

11. Don't try to control them - Control yourself.

Intimidating or threatening does not inspire change. Trying to control people is never effective. When you don't know how to motivate your loved one, think about how you can change your approach. You can't control other people; you can only control your words, thoughts, and reactions towards them.

12. Don't lean in - Step back.

Intense emotions are negative emotions. Leaning in and pushing a person to perform isn't the most effective way to reach the result you desire. When stress is high and you feel like screaming, back off. Stepping back gives you time to breathe, relax, and readjust your thoughts.

13. Don't label them - Be compassionate.

Judgment is easy; compassion is hard work. Don't box them in as a "forgetful, lazy, disorganized mess," or "someone who will never succeed." Labels create pre-determined expectations that last for years. People become what you see them as.

14. Don't say "never" - Nothing stays the same.

When times are tough, it's hard to remember that tough times don't last forever. Things will get better. Believe it. "Never" is a word of hopelessness. Start saying, "not yet." The only thing constant is change.

15. Don't say "Just do it" - Understand that they can't.

An ordinary thinker cannot understand how a person with ADD/ADHD can't accomplish the simplest tasks such as paying bills, organizing papers, and putting their clothes away. These tasks may be easy for you, but

remember, the person with ADHD also has a hard time understanding why they can't pay a bill or manage their mail.

16. Don't be afraid to help out - Offer a helping hand.

It's important to teach your loved ones how to be responsibly and independently. But also remember, that there are times when it's okay to offer assistance. Even Einstein had a helper. His wife cooked for him, cleaned up after him and did his laundry because his high-powered mind was too busy discovering the quantum workings of the universe to take time to put his dirty socks in the laundry bin.

17. Don't have unrealistic expectations - List what you love about them.

Accept your loved ones as they are. Just like with any other relationship, you have to look for the good, and stay focused on it. Never lose sight of the awesome qualities of your ADD/ADHD loved one. If it's your partner, remember that their fun-loving, impulsive personality is probably why you fell in love with them. Go back to the beginning. Love them again, as if you first met them. If it's your child, remember the feeling of holding your newborn baby in your arms for the first time.

18. Don't neglect other family members - Spend time alone with them.

ADD/ADHD can take over your home environment, subliminally controlling everything and everyone in it. Spend time with other family members. They need you, too. Go to the movies or go get some ice cream with them. Remind them that they still exist for you. Hug them and hold onto them.

19. Don't get mad - Pause for peace

Make peace in your home and your life your priority. The other lessons will soon fall into place if your home is a loving environment. Anger is easy. Staying quiet takes strength. Put your relationships before your feelings. You don't have to verbalize every comment that comes to mind. Place your ego on the side until your anger subsides.

Don't ever accept abusive behavior of any type. There are certain relationships that are unhealthy, toxic, and need to end. Seek professional help.

20. Don't forget to love yourself - Do something that makes you happy

ADHD relationships can suck the joy out of life. You realize that you haven't laughed in a month. You forgot how to smile, and you can't remember the last time you had fun. Make time for yourself. Do something that makes you happy. Have fun again, and do it often.

Let this little story inspire you:

After she received an ADHD diagnosis for her 7-year old son, a woman went to the psychiatrist. Frustrated and distraught that she couldn't handle her own child, she cried, "What more can I do? I'm doing everything I can. I don't know how to handle my own child." He looked at her and quietly answered, "Love him more."

That wasn't the answer she had hoped for. Through her tears, she pleaded for answers, "Love him more? I'm giving this child everything I can. I'm empty inside. I've got nothing left. How can I love him more?" "Try harder. Dig deeper. You can do it," he answered.

When you love someone who has ADHD, they are a part of you. They live in your head and in your heart. You were chosen for this task. Love them more.

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<http://www.lifehack.org/articles/communication/you-love-someone-who-has-adhd-dont-these-20-things.html>