Staying Focused at Work with Adult ADHD

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ADHD and Work

Has your boss been onto you about meeting some deadlines? Maybe you forgot to answer some emails that should have been addressed yesterday. If your attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is getting you into trouble at work, you may be happy to know that there are ways you can get your work done and be good again with the boss.

Your limited attention span and distractibility are traits that lead you into lost minutes, perhaps hours of productivity. You don't have to make an appointment with your doctor to get meds to remedy the problem. Just follow the tips outlined below and you will be on your way to making your boss happy...and making your ADHD and work, work!

- **Focus on the big jobs first**
  Sort things into priorities. You may have some jobs that are soon to be due and other jobs that can wait. Use files that indicate the jobs you need to address first. This way you know what is urgent and what can be placed on the backburner.

- **Don't let your emails control you**
  When emails let you know there is a new message, it often pops up on your screen or gives an annoying ping. Everyone has the urge to check and see if it is something important. They are distracting and it is hard to get back to the task at hand once you start looking through your inbox. Instead of opening email every five minutes, put your email on silence and don't open them until a designated time you allot. You will save a lot of time at your desk by doing this.

- **Limit other distractions**
  Voicemails, instant messaging, and other communication avenues can disrupt the workday. Set aside a time to check voicemails and shut down the instant messaging system if you are allowed to. This will keep you on task and focused on your work. You may elect to shut the whole computer down if you don't need it.

- **Break tasks down**
  If you become overwhelmed, you will not get anything done. Try to organize your projects by breaking things up into smaller units or tasks. This makes them more manageable and relieves you of any anxiety or pressure you feel. Give yourself realistic goals to attain.

- **Find a quiet cubicle**
  It would be great if everyone could have their own private office, but that isn't reality, unfortunately. If a person is chatting constantly on the phone, it is hard to concentrate on your work. Some ways to minimize distractions is to share a space with someone who does more computer work than phone work.

- **Use a timer**

A timer can be set to go off at intervals if you are one who has a wandering mind. A beep can remind you to get back on task. It is like a cue that tells you, “Wake up and get back to work!” You can set it at 10-minute intervals to start. As you get better with staying on task, you can then set it to 20-minute intervals, working up to one every 30 to 60 minutes.