Tips for Reducing Impulsivity With ADHD

by ERIC PATTERSON

ADHD Impulsivity

Hyperactivity, inattention and impulsivity comprise attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in children. But as those with the diagnosis age, the symptoms begin to change. Often, the hyperactivity fades and many become hopeful that the child will 'grow out' of the disorder altogether. Unfortunately, the inattention (a difficulty in focus and concentration) and impulsivity (a habit to act without forethought or considering consequences) remain, and sometimes become more problematic.

If left untreated, impulsivity in adults with ADHD can negatively affect work, relationships and potentially lead to issues with the law. As a result, preparing yourself and taking preventative measures is a necessity. Here are some ways to control your impulses and improve your decision making skills.

Know Yourself

This first tip is important for any number of mental health conditions. Knowing yourself means learning which people, places and things push your buttons, as well as understanding the role you play in allowing your buttons to be pushed. These are your triggers for impulsivity. What situations make you more likely to make impulsive decisions? Does drinking alcohol or using other drugs increase your impulsivity? Try to avoid these triggers. Look at which triggers you can remove yourself from completely and which ones can be minimized to some level. Prevention is always better than damage control.

Track Your History

Occasionally impulsivity can lead to a good result, but more often it ends in hurt, frustration and other negative consequences. List and inspect past situations where your impulsivity got the better of you, and ask others in your life to provide their perspective on your actions in those situations. When reaching out to people, be aware though, some people may think your impulsivity is funny or exciting since they do not have to live with the consequences.

Limit risks

With the information gained in the first two tips, you can plan ways to limit the risks of impulsivity. Do you spend too much money impulsively? Then cut up your credit cards and only carry a limited amount of cash with you. Do you often speak impulsively or say things in an overly blunt manner? Consider carrying a small notepad with you where you can write down your ideas. Try practicing assertive communication techniques to manage the tone of your remarks. If alcohol is a trigger, but you are not willing to completely stop drinking, find safe situations and supportive people to drink with to improve decision making.

Share information

The supportive family and friends you trust will be happy to know that you are working to limit your impulsivity and will no doubt offer their services to assist you in achieving your goals. Let them know how they can be a part of your treatment team.

Be spontaneous

Reducing impulsivity doesn't have to mean reducing fun. The difference between being impulsive and being spontaneous is only about two seconds of thought. By slowing down briefly, you can process pros and cons of a situation, make a more informed decision and then act. Acting spontaneously instead impulsively usually ends in more positive consequences.

If impulsivity related to ADHD continues to be a part of your life into adulthood, stop waiting for it to go away. Instead, take action. Following these tips will help you to continue having a fun, enjoyable life, without the negative consequences attached. You and the others in your life will wish you had started sooner.