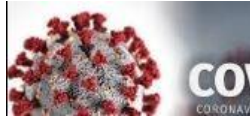


# Our ADHD Strengths Are Needed More than Ever - Ten Tips to Help Us Through This Crisis



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The Covid-19 pandemic presents households affected by ADHD with a whole new mixed bag of challenges.

It's just been announced that UK schools will close from Friday 20<sup>th</sup> March, joining many schools across the world, and many office based employees are already working from home.

Others may be self-isolating if they themselves or any family members have symptoms.

Whether or not we may relish the idea of being at home indefinitely, possibly with hyperactive kids and restricted social contact, the situation is a huge upheaval and challenge for us all.

Whatever we are feeling, dealing with the next few months will certainly require us ALL to pull together, utilise our strengths and our courage, whilst managing our ADHD challenges in this new world we find ourselves in.

**Here's a few tips that may help ease the transition:**

## **1. Stick to your normal daily routine as best you can**

It would be easy to treat every day like a weekend or that time between Christmas and New Year when you don't know what day it is – getting up at different times, forgetting to remind the kids to brush their teeth. But living without structure can increase anxiety and a sense of 'dislocation', especially when we have no end date.

Aim to get up at the same time as you normally would, shower, get dressed, stick to normal mealtimes, get outside, as well as a 'plan' for a normal work or school day based at home.

## **2. Don't beat yourself up if this breaks down a little**

Whether you are managing yourself or your whole family, adjusting to being at home full time will inevitably take some practice. Allow yourself some flexibility, as being *too* rigid might increase tensions between family or household members. Adding to existing distress is to be avoided at all costs. A routine is to aim for, in order to be as productive and mentally healthy as possible.

## **3. Give yourself external and external space**

If you can get outside in the open air (in a garden or park), do so daily if the current advice suggests it's safe for you to do so. This will help you feel grounded, give a feeling of 'normality' and help protect your mental well-being. For children, it's a chance to let off steam as they would do during school break times. Remember to stay a safe distance from others to adhere to social distancing though!

Internal space can be in the form of yoga, meditation, deep breathing, or even just 5 mins alone time for peaceful reflection or to remember what you are grateful for. This is a great opportunity to encourage children to do this as a lifetime habit, if they don't do so already.

#### **4. Keep connected using phone and video links**

It would be very easy to slip into a detrimental form of social isolation with no conversation or contact with fellow humans whilst we are in 'self-isolation'

Make it a 'must' that you speak on the phone or via video link to friends and family at least once a day. There's all sorts you can do – even some online community choirs have been springing up over the last day or so.

#### **5. Offer to help your community if circumstances allow**

There will be a great need for society to help look out for vulnerable members of society as we go through the coming months. To help our sense of purpose and build self-esteem, I would encourage ADHDers and their families to look for local websites and Facebook groups in order to volunteer. This might be in the form of delivering food to elderly neighbours, volunteering online to check people's well-being, and so on.

#### **6. Lower your expectations, both for yourself and others**

It's tempting to say you will now have more time to read/write those books, decorate the whole house, whilst working from home and schooling your kids, all at the same time. Not to mention worrying about family members' health and taking care of your own. This is totally unrealistic. Get through each day and try and stay safe and healthy. Meltdowns may be inevitable. Others in your home may not behave as you would expect as they adjust too. Please don't beat yourself up, nor be too disappointed in others. Take a pause. Be kind and understanding. These next few months may well be the most challenging our society has faced for decades. But you've got this!

#### **7. Keep up to date with news on the crisis once a day from credible Sources**

The volume and pace of new information / misinformation about Covid-19 online is dizzying, and can be highly addictive for anyone. For an ADHD brain it's an even bigger draw (especially if you have a decades long obsession with viruses, count Outbreak as one of your favourite films, and your pandemic survival box has been ready since 2003)

We get a dopamine hit from moments of crisis too, and watching the news unfold like this can mean we risk falling into hyper-focus that's difficult to break from. If this is the case, limit yourself to checking in on the main headlines on Coronavirus once a day. Make sure this is from credible sources like the BBC news website. There's lots of wild conspiracy theorists on Twitter to add to an already anxious time. But If checking any updates on the situation is making your mental health much worse, don't be afraid to take a break for a day or two, as long as you stay up to date with important info on school closures or restrictions on travel, for example.

## **8. If you need time to vent, worry or wallow, set a timer**

This is a challenging time, and it would be strange if this didn't increase our anxiety in some form. Allow yourself a set time to vent your frustrations to a trusted adult friend or family member on the phone if need be, or set a timer for 5 mins to 'wallow' briefly in your concerns, rather than let them be at the forefront of your mind all day, before moving on. Scheduling this (and making 'worrying' a task) strangely means the worries become less of a focus.

## **9. Remember that our internal worst-case scenarios most likely do not reflect reality**

Catastrophising. We are great at this, aren't we? Going straight to the worst case scenario. Yes, this is going to be really hard, and for some of us much harder than others. It was clear from mid-January that this virus was of great concern, and wasn't in any way 'like the flu'. But whatever happens, you aren't going to wake up as the only survivor in a zombie apocalypse. (No matter how resourceful ADHDers would theoretically be in that situation). Humans have survived regular pandemics throughout history. We WILL get through this, and witness the best of humanity coming together to support each other as we do so. Focus on helping your community in some way, and these moments of purpose will overshadow the negative thoughts.

## **10. Remind yourself that ADHDers often thrive best in a crisis**

It's worth remembering that in many ways, people with ADHD are often better equipped to handle this type of adversity than neurotypical people. We are great at thinking quickly on our feet, and often adapt well to change. We come alive when stimulated by a new survival situation, thoughts clearer than usual, our dopamine flowing. It does seem almost as if we are living in a Hollywood film, and it can perhaps help us to cope occasionally to joke with others that we are actors in one.

**These situations generally show humans to be who they really are – at their worst and the best. We are already seeing stories of great kindness, but sadly also selfishness.**

**People with ADHD are so often generous and selfless, beacons of light in times of adversity.**

**These strengths are needed more than ever right now. So let's all pull together with purpose, as one community, whilst keeping ourselves and our families safe.**

Take care and keep well,  
The ADHD Action Team

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