

Integrative Treatment for Adult ADHD

Most adults with ADHD have struggled for most of their lives before their ADHD was diagnosed. They have done their best but still not achieved as much as they would have hoped. Fortunately, there are techniques that you can use to help you feel better and get more done. Integrative treatment for adult ADHD involves the following four modalities. Not everyone needs all four, but the combination tends to yield the best results.

Education

The first thing to do is to learn about ADHD and its typical difficulties—and to have your family learn about it too. This understanding makes it easier to pick the strategies that will help you be more effective. In addition, education also reduces the unproductive blame and guilt that make you feel bad but don't help you get more done. It can be really liberating to learn that some of your difficulties with attention, memory, and organization are based more in neurology than in your character or bad choices. There are a bunch of good books available, but you can also check out the websites of the two national ADHD advocacy organizations at www.chadd.org and www.add.org.

Medication

Although there are no magic potions, generally ADHD medications are safe, well tolerated, and can help you to meet demands more consistently and accurately. They increase focus and concentration, allowing your true abilities to shine through. Adults with ADHD say that medication provides a sense of clarity, in contrast to a disorganized jumble of thoughts. You will need to work with your prescriber to find the right dose and maybe try a couple different medications to find the best one. It may be helpful to bring in a family member who can provide additional information about how the medication is working.

Coaching

Of course, pills don't teach skills, which is the third part of the treatment. The combination of understanding why certain kinds of mistakes are common to those with ADHD, plus the improved functioning that comes from medication, puts you in a better position to make further changes. Coaching can help you to handle daily demands more effectively. This involves far more than giving obvious advice (like pay your bills on time)—you know all that stuff already. Coaching focuses on practical strategies to help you get stuff done. Because your coach or therapist really understands ADHD, she is able to work with you to create strategies that are more likely to be successful.

Psychotherapy

Your therapist's job is to work with you to overcome the effect that a lifetime of ADHD difficulties has had on how you feel about yourself and how you get along with others. He may help you take a more active problem-solving approach and help you reduce avoidance, procrastination, worry, and pessimism.

Reprinted with permission from *Integrative Treatment for Adult ADHD: A Practical, Easy-to-Use Guide for Clinicians*. Ari Tuckman (2007). New Harbinger Publications. This handout and others are available free of charge at www.TuckmanPsych.com.