
Recommended Reading: Out of the Fog: Treatment Options and Coping Strategies for Adult Attention Deficit Disorder by Kevin Murphy and Suzanne LeVert
By Peggy L. Ferguson, Ph.D.

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Out of the Fog: Treatment Options and Coping Strategies for Adult Attention Deficit Disorder, written by professionals for non-professionals, dispels the mistaken assumption that people simply outgrow Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). In this book, Murphy and LeVert explain the neurobiology of ADD/ADHD without giving you a headache trying to read it. They use case scenarios to make it easy for the public to be able to relate to the problems, symptoms, and possible solutions that adults with ADD/ADHD often experience.

ADD/ADHD is very real. It impacts the breadth and scope of one's life. This book shows some of the common difficulties and problems that adults with ADD/ADHD are often confronted with, as they pursue careers, marry and have families, friends, and a life. They discuss the variety of psychological and pharmacological treatment available. It goes beyond the anecdotal information that the books of non-professionals cover and teaches on the symptoms, how to select professional help, coming to terms with the diagnosis, medication options, and the need for new or enriched living skills. There are diagnostic questionnaires that will assist in you not only self-screening for ADD/ADHD, but also in identifying problem areas to target in your counseling and/or recovery efforts.



I personally recommend Chapter Seven, Taming the Organizational Devil for many of my patients, not only the ones that either have ADD/ADHD or show signs of the disorder, but to patients who have difficulty with organization, time management, procrastination, anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem.

Disorganization, one of the symptoms of ADD, can sabotage the best of intentions, lead to inertia, feeling overwhelmed, and cost a great deal of time, money, and mental resources. Disorganization can effect your ability to “get started”, to “follow through”, or to accomplish your goals. It encourages procrastination, and feeds feelings of self-worthlessness, anxiety, and depression.

<http://www.peggyferguson.com/RecommendedReading.en.html>

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Outline

Taming the Organizational Devil

By Kevin Murphy and Suzanne LeVert

The organizational devil seems to be everywhere at once, sabotaging your attempts to maintain order and structure in your life. The organizational devil is in the closet, hiding shoes in inaccessible corner, in the foyer, dropping your keys behind the bureau, in the office, losing the sales report in a pile of stuff to be filed on your desk, etc.

In order to tame the organizational devil, you must come to grips with one undeniable truth--the organizational devil that has been sabotaging your life lives inside of you. Its not fate, bad luck, or gremlins. The organizational devil is learned patterns of behavior. And it can be tamed by learning new tricks and techniques. You will be able to replace chaos with order. You will be able to make plans and set goals with a greater degree of confidence and self-assurance.

Skill building techniques, like all new learning, is a process, with setbacks and with continued practice and patience--ultimate success.

The following outline sets out a plan of action for taming the organizational devil:

1. Prepare yourself for success.

A. Prepare yourself emotionally.

1. Ask yourself these questions:
 - Do I constantly put down my efforts to succeed?
 - Am I all too ready to give in to failure?
 - Am I surrounded by chaos?
 - Do I feel along in my efforts to grow and change?
 - Do I believe in my heart and mind that I cannot succeed?
2. If you answered yes to most of these, you probably do a lot of negative self talk.
3. Therefore reorganizing how you think about yourself and your chances of success are appropriate. Review your work on negative self-talk and learn to plan to succeed.

B. Prepare your Physical environment.

1. Clear away some of the clutter.

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- Things you need for this:
 - a filing system
 - a wastebasket
 - 3 file folders marked "to do, to file, to store"
 - your planning notebook
 - ruthless determination
 - 2. Create work spaces conducive to the way that you work best.
- C. Prepare the People around You.**
1. Reach out and ask for help. Enlist the aid of a partner or a coach, who can remind of goals, stay focused, monitor progress and efforts.
- D. Prepare your mind.**
1. Use creative visualization. Envision the chore or task completed, then imagine yourself working to your goal step by step.
 2. Picture the life you want to lead and believe you can live it.
 3. Set priorities for change.
 - a. Ask yourself:
 - Am I overwhelmed by the disorganized state of my home and my office?
 - Is there a pattern to my disorganization?
 - Do I feel that I am the only one who can do a job right?
- 2. Decide where to start.**
- A. Choosing among the competing priorities may seem overwhelming.
 - B. Every single problem that you solve will help you gain more control over your environment.
- 3. Examine the situation.**
1. Tonight before you go to bed, think about everything that happened to you today.
 - Write down what you were doing every time you felt frustrated, confused, or rushed during the day.
 - Divide the day's frustrations into two categories:
 - those material in nature (scattered paperwork, etc.)
 - those involving time management (overcommitting, losing track of time, etc.)

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- Prioritize the problems within each category according to the amount of aggravation they cause you.
- 4. Solve organizational and time management problems by doing the following:**
1. Learning new skills and habits.
 - Learn to keep tract
 - Write down appointments and deadlines in a date book and you'll always know where you are supposed to be and what you are supposed to be doing
 - Use a Time Management Plan faithfully
 - The Master List
 - The Daily Schedule
 - The Project Planner
 - Make planning a habit
 - Learn to delay gratification.
 - Plan for procrastination (if you are guilty of this)
 - Use these tips:
 - Break large projects down into smaller tasks.
 - Know your limitations and learn to say no.
 - Schedule time for blowouts and goof-offs
 - Procrastinate wisely by planning ahead
 - Strive for simplicity and comfort
 2. Learning to delegate
- 2. Create your system.**
- A. Things needed for your system:
 1. A filing system
 2. Permanent storage for obsolete but important stuff and documents
 3. A schedule for performing tasks and projects
- 3. Working the system.**
- A. **Organize your Personal Belongings.**
 1. Throw or give away what you no longer need.
 2. Store things for future use or sentimental purposes
 3. find the most logical and accessible space for every day items.
 - B. **Tips for Building Organizational Skills**
 1. Don't allow yourself to get overwhelmed by the big picture.
 2. Tackle one problem at a time.
 3. Learn to be ruthlessly about obsolete paperwork or useless

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items.

4. Use logic when designing space for paperwork and/or personal objects.
5. Deal with each new item immediately. Sort mail within 24 hours.
6. Stop and think before you add any new items to home or work environment.

C. Work on time management skills.

1. Use these tips:
 - a. Use post its for reminders
 - b. Take on creative or demanding tasks during time of day when you are most focused and efficient.
 - c. Try doing more than 1 nondemanding task at a time.

D. Manage paperwork with these tips:

1. Sort thru in-box daily.
2. Create efficient system for paperwork; throw away nonessential documents; place those that require action in folders marked "to do, to file, to read, etc."
3. Handle paperwork only once whenever possible.
4. Take advantage of technology.

E. Find Support

F. Celebrate Success.

1. Use these tips:
 - a. never lose sight of your accomplishments.
 - b. prepare a list of appropriate rewards and indulge in one whenever you reach a goal or finish a task.
 - c. believe that you are deserving of rewards.
 - d. consider setbacks opportunities for growth.
 - e. concentrate on your assets; not your liabilities.

This outline represents an excerpt from Chapter 7, Taming of the Organizational Devil. Out of the Fog: Treatment Options and coping strategies for adult attention deficit disorder by Kevin R. Murphy, Ph.D. and Suzanne LeVert, (1995). Hyperion. NY.

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