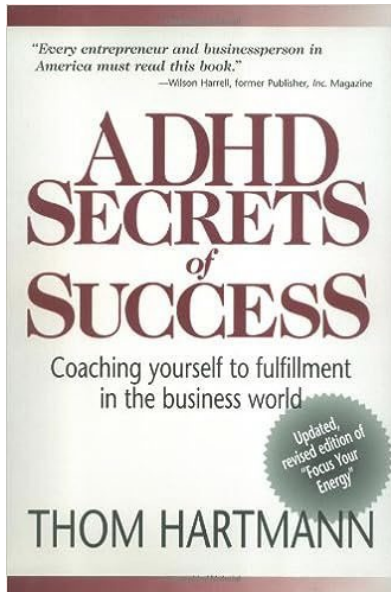


# ADHD Secrets of Success Coaching yourself to fulfillment in the business world



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These are some of the behavioural traits that characterize adults with ADHD:

- Disorganization
- Procrastination
- Taking on too many projects simultaneously, often without finishing them
- A constant desire for high stimulation
- Low threshold for boredom

- Impatience
- Impulsiveness
- Dislike of established channels
- A feeling that you haven't lived up to your potential

It's short, to the point, and contains few needless words. But its message is vitally important. When talking to people in the workplace about business books, I repeatedly heard the complaint that they were tired of wading through fifty pages of boring exposition to get to one small nugget of truth.

Even though they'd buy the thick business books, they'd often shelve them in frustration. So, when writing, I was careful to get right to the core of matters. Consider this book an executive summary. Read it slowly, because the information is dense.

The bottom line appears to be that my original hypothesis presented in 1991 and reported in TIME magazine in 1993 was right: ADHD isn't a disease but a collection of skills and abilities (and not-abilities) that predispose people to be brilliant Hunters and lousy Farmers.

Many Hunter adults I interviewed said that regular, cardiovascular exercise was an important part of their lives, producing noticeable changes (sometimes lasting for days) in their ability to focus, think clearly, and control their impulsivity.

"Why didn't you take it?" "My wife said it wasn't a real job. Adults don't jump out of airplanes for a living. She wants me to work a normal, nine-to-five job, even if it's only in a factory." He looked up. "She won't be married to a professional sky diver.

Says that's for boys who never grew up." It was probably the hundredth time that I'd heard that a Hunter adult "just never grew up." Emergency medical technicians, emergency-room physicians, fighter pilots, police officers, in-the-field troubleshooters or engineers, consultants, and, of course, entrepreneurs. Over and over again they reported that people around them wanted them to "just grow up." Stop taking risks. Stop enjoying all that stimulation. Stop wanting to go your own way. "You've

gotta learn to conform, to play the game, to calm down and relax," they're told. But the true Hunter knows it will never happen.

How to have successful meetings. In talking with Hunters in the business world over the years, one comment I hear frequently is how much they hate meetings. Meetings seem like such a time-waster, particularly when they're run by an obsessive Farmer.

Talk drones on, nobody ever gets to the point, and frequently issues aren't even resolved. They're just discussed. I've tried many strategies myself over the years to avoid or shorten meetings.

They've included insisting that meetings be held in rooms without chairs, that there be absolute time limits (usually fifteen minutes, which is about the limit of my attention span for boring things), or requiring everybody to write down in advance a one-page-or-less strong sense of individualism, high creativity, and the ability to be a self-starter are recurring themes in the lives of ADHD Hunter adults, and this makes them far more likely to start their own business

There's also the lure of not having to dance to another person's tune. The entrepreneur can run his or her own show, keep his own hours, fashion the business after her own personality. A new challenge, and often a new risk, wait around every corner.

Build a business, not a job The trap that many Hunters fall into is that they end up creating not a business, but a job for themselves. organizing your company from day one as if you were going to sell franchises of it, you'll discover that you're effortlessly insuring your own comfortable retirement. (And, who knows? One day you may actually decide to franchise the business, in which case you're way ahead of the game!)

This process involves creating a structure. Whatever your specialty may be, keep refining it and focusing it more tightly. You can broaden it later, if necessary, or shift to other associated areas if your primary focus doesn't work out. Franchisers call the process of defining and writing this down the "Marketing Manual." It defines the nature of the company, how it's different from other businesses, what its competitive strengths and weaknesses are, and how the product will be brought to market.

The overall "Management Manual" of a franchise defines on a separate page each of the jobs that must be done in a company. Sometimes several jobs will be done by one person, or several people will do one job, but, nonetheless, each function within the company needs a definition.

This sounds simple on its face. But the first time I put a company franchise manual together, I was startled by the number of details that I would have otherwise overlooked if I had been writing just a general business plan. It bordered on being a Farmer job, but was worth pushing through and completing because it ultimately led to success and liberation.

Create a business you can use. The annals of business success are filled with such stories of people who started companies or invented products because they themselves needed them. Looking at a problem in a new way, asking yourself if there's some other way to solve this.

One of the most powerful ways to cultivate and strengthen your Hunter skills is to make use of daily "quiet time." I was first introduced to this when I learned Transcendental Meditation back in 1968, when the Beatles were studying with the Maharishi—it was all the rage among teenagers.

But there are many other ways and techniques for meditation. These range from reciting a rosary to simply sitting in a chair in the office with the door closed for fifteen minutes each day and "purposefully daydreaming."

From the answers to these questions should come a sense of your purpose. It may not be definable immediately; it may be days before you can even articulate it in words. But when you get close to it, you'll intuitively know it. And then you can set your true goals.

It's really true that there's very little new under the sun. But there are so many, many ways in which products or services that are being offered now can be manufactured or produced or marketed better.

We applied ideas from the airlines to build our travel agency. It's to show that we didn't do anything "new," but applied "proven marketing principles" in a new way to an old industry. We simply did our homework, and then we created a business that was something we thought would be fun and congruent with our goals at that time (our kids have now seen the world several times over).

These stories, which we accumulate along the course of our lives, are the lens through which we view reality.

They color our perception of the world around us, of our place in it, what other people are like, and what we can and cannot do. These stories come from our parents, our peers, books we've read, movies we've seen, and people we've heard on Oprah. And they can either build us up or tear us down.

By changing our circumstances, over which we do have control, we can actually change our emotions, over which most people think they have no control.

This isn't feel-good psychobabble or new-age psychology. It's a functional truth: the conscious mind can hold only one thought at a time. And, startlingly enough, you control, to an extent you probably never dreamed possible, what those thoughts are and will be.

Hunters, one of the most common stories is: "I have a mental disorder, a neurological imbalance in my brain, and therefore I'm doomed to forever be a wreck." Some people are so attached to what they call their ADHD illness, to their sense of themselves as a victim, that they even resist the idea that being a Hunter may have its positive sides.

They'd rather put their life in the hands of others, blame their failures on their genes, "What a man thinks about he can become. What he persistently thinks about, he cannot help but become."

But Louise has developed a great technique for dealing with her fears of the future and the unknown. "I always ask myself, 'What's the worst that can happen?'" she says, "And when I look at that, and accept it, and then anything that happens differently is a great improvement.

It's a liberating feeling to know that even the worst isn't the end. When you find yourself reacting emotionally to a business idea, examine that emotion and see if it's founded in some intuitive truth.

Fear is almost always the result of destructive self-talk. Fear of failure is conquered by perseverance and by recognizing that failure is a normal part of life and a requisite for learning.

The concept of original awareness. As you set down the car keys, look for a moment at the top of the kitchen counter where you're putting them, and take notice of them there.

When people can't remember things, it's most often because they failed to pay attention to them in the first place.

Diet and exercise are two simple demands of the body and mind of the Hunter. To be successful in business or in life, one must first be functional. Daily exercise has been demonstrated to improve mental functioning, and may even reduce the severity of ADHD "symptoms."

Whether you've decided to start a business, get a new job, or become the next Robert Ludlum, the first step in tracking your quarry, in achieving your goals, is to write them down. Make it short and sweet: One sentence should do it, two or three words is even better. (Hunters know the importance of brevity!) hold a visualization of your goal, and your achieving it.

Then develop your action plan. How are you going to reach your goal? What are your timelines? What are the individual steps to get there?

One of the best I've come across over the years is to make a daily "To Do" list on a legal pad. Have two boxes on the desk labeled "A" and "B," and an empty drawer labeled "C." Everything on the list, and every piece of paper that comes into the office, is daily prioritized as either an A, B, or a C. A's are the things that must be done immediately. After you've defined the A's, number them as to the order in which they'll be done, and then stick to the list. If there are large A's, which are going to take large blocks of time, or even span over days or weeks, break out one- to

two-hour B's are the important things that you need to get to when you're finished with all the A's. Jot down C's are things that can wait until later, whenever that is.

You spend ten minutes every morning rewriting your list, copying things from the day before on to a new page and looking over the new day's mail, you'll find that some B's will become A's. Some will become C's. Some C's will drop off the list altogether, or will begin to rise in priority. Every day, look over each item and assign a letter to it. Once a year, take your "C" drawer and dump it into a box or file labeled "C Stuff From

This simple organizational system is the best I've ever found, and I've tried dozens. It's simple enough for the get it-done-quickly Hunter, yet works.

But Hill also discussed visualizing a group of advisers in your own mind during a quiet time at home, with eyes closed, and having periodic meetings with them, each being an expert in a particular field. (It sounds odd, but really works for some people. A psychologist friend who used to do this said that he felt it was a non-threatening way of unlocking below-consciousness knowledge.)

My motto has always been to hire people better than myself in whatever area of expertise they're needed, right on up to senior management. An organization, after all, is nothing more or less than the people in it! Mediocre people will inevitably create a mediocre company.

Hunter's instinct is to mess with everything—to stick his or her nose into every aspect of the business, and to offer opinions, whether solicited or not. If you're going to run a successful business, you must learn to moderate this instinct.

Time, to a Hunter, seems like such a variable commodity. She always thinks that there'll always be a little more that she can pull out of the hat. Sure, I'll take on that responsibility; it won't take more than an hour or two, will "Force yourself" sounds like strong language, but that's what it usually takes to get an entrepreneur to invest the time and effort necessary to truly train someone to do a new job.

One of the biggest stumbling blocks to growth and delegation, and one of the main reasons why employees fail and resent their bosses, is a lack

of proper training.

The hours you invest in teaching people to properly do the jobs you intend to delegate to them will be returned to you in hundreds of hours of future freedom from those jobs. Street-smart businesspeople know the math of this equation, and even though it's frustrating, boring, and difficult, they force themselves to train people properly for their jobs.

Then, in 1980, I was visiting the apartment of a friend who's a successful novelist and a classic Hunter. He was preparing to send off a manuscript to his publisher, and told me that the way he wrote was to do only five pages a day: no more and no less.

At that rate, he told me, he'd produce several novels a year, and, before he became successful, he still had time for his "day job," which had included everything from being a spy (for our side) to a taxi driver. Now that he was making a good living from his writing, he still kept the same pace, and used the extra time for "fun and recharging." It sounded like a good idea, and I started using it. Since then I've written nine novels, a dozen nonfiction books, and hundreds of published magazine articles. I've learned to apply this same principle to business projects. If we need to put together a slide presentation as sales tool for our company, I'll allocate an hour a day to work on it. If I try to spend more time, it becomes so tedious I start procrastinating, or else the quality of my work suffers.

So, in all cases, break big projects into little pieces, and they will get done. . .even though, as a Hunter, you may have a hard time imagining this happening.

Forgiveness is a tool, and of course, my friend hadn't really discovered anything new. As long as you hold a grudge, carry an anger or a hurt, against anybody including yourself you're stuck to that pain, like a persistent piece of gum on your shoe. Forgiveness is not a weakness, it's a strength. It's a shedding of those pains and encumbrances.

Never criticize, complain, or condemn This is the first golden rule of the Dale Carnegie Course, and it's brilliant.

Another area to hunt for success is in your relationships. If there's such a thing as a perfect marriage, I've never seen it there's always something more we can do for and with our spouses. They are, after all,



our most important support.

Because of the apparently genetic nature of ADHD, odds are if you're a Hunter and have children, at least some of them are also Hunters. This creates a special challenge for parents, as parenting, in and of itself, is a hard job.

Throw ADHD into the mix on both the parents' and children's side, and the household can dissolve into chaos.

This is where becoming more aware of impulsivity, and teaching that awareness to your children, is particularly important. Be wary of the angry, unthinking answer; the snap decisions about punishment or consequences; the brush-off when kids need help with homework (it's as boring for parents as it is for kids!). All these can add up to a worsening of the child's problems around his or her own Hunterness, and will damage parent-child relationships.

Hunters thrive on stimulation. The first rough draft of this book was written during a week's vacation with my family in a seaside house on Harbor Island, South Carolina. The theory was that we'd spend a week there, on the seashore, with nothing to do and nowhere to go, and I'd relax. It sounded good in theory, but as I type these words, watching the surf pound the sand just a hundred years in front of me, I must confess that the nine hours of writing I've done today is more gratifying to me than any amount of lying on the beach in the sun would have been. I used to feel guilty that I was what society calls a workaholic.

Now I understand that it's part of my basic mental and physical biochemistry, and I have learned to relax into it, rather than fight it. I've learned to build in family time, considering it a project right along with everything else, and, using the techniques in this book, have accomplished much (and, hopefully, have learned good lessons from my failures).

Focus your commitment Goethe, the German poet/philosopher and author of Faust, said, "Until one is committed, there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness." This is a profound and almost metaphysical truth. I've started many businesses, ventures, and projects in a halfhearted fashion, and none of those ones succeeded.

Most were the product of an impulse, an enthusiasm of the moment, that later died.

On the other hand, when a person totally commits him- or herself to a project or enterprise, charging ahead with a clear and well-thought-out plan, doors that were unimaginable in the original brainstorming and planning start to fall open.

Goethe observed this, and wrote, ". . .the moment one definitely commits oneself, then providence moves too. All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred. A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one's favor all manner of unforeseen incidents and meetings and material assistance, which no man could have dreamed would have come his way." Since childhood.