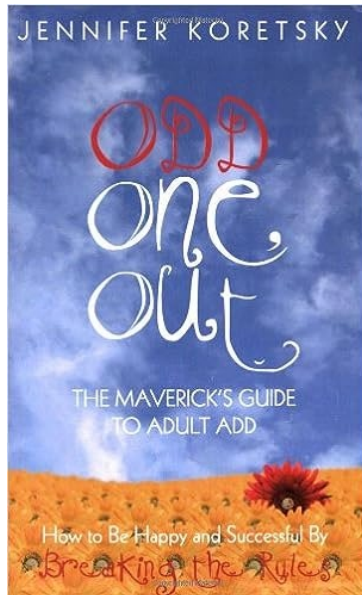


## Odd One Out The Maverick's Guide to Adult ADD



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My name is Jennifer Koretsky, and I'm a maverick. I'm used to being the odd one out. I have adult ADD Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder. I'm actually proud of that fact! I don't think that ADD is a bad thing. Sure, I have my share of challenges. But I think having ADD means that I have a lot of gifts and talents that many people only wish they possessed.

At this point in your life, you have a choice. You can choose to see your ADD as a disability, or a difference. You can feel sorry for

yourself, or you can embrace your differences and take pride in your maverick nature.

It was almost like my mind couldn't sit still. If I wasn't bored with my apartment, I was bored with my job. If I wasn't bored with my job, I was bored with who I was dating. I had a restless mind!

She listened carefully. And then she said something that I will never forget. "Jennifer, I don't think you're depressed. I think you have Attention Deficit Disorder. ADD." I nearly fell off the couch. Clearly, this doctor was nuts.

All my life, I had felt miserably overwhelmed and ready to blow at the slightest upset...but all my life I had done the best that I could with the knowledge and the tools that I had.

I continued to see that psychiatrist, who wasn't crazy after all. She turned out to be a wonderful doctor and resource for me. It took a long time, but we found a psychostimulant medication that helped with my ADD and didn't have side effects.

I have long since gotten over my fear and shame about taking medication. I'm a great person with a lot to offer, and the medication is merely a tool that helps me along the way.

The more I embraced myself as the person that I was and the person that I wanted to be, the more I realized that I didn't have to be stuck following the rules that other people follow.

I wanted to create my own rules in my own game, and play that game in a big way. That meant being a maverick. It meant being the odd one out.

I was succeeding in life, ADD and all. I had a deep level of self-

awareness, and I was always willing to learn and improve. I had a special knack for using my ADD traits to my advantage. And I did that by allowing myself to be the odd one out, even when it was really uncomfortable. It became clear to me that if you treat ADD like a problem, it will become a problem.

Breaking the rules can absolutely help you get ahead, but even mavericks need some structure.

Successful ADDers have their challenges, but either learn to manage those challenges, or just accept them and move on. Their challenges don't stop them. This group isn't without problems, though.

And then there are the adults with ADD who aren't so successful. They're not very happy. Their self-esteem is practically nonexistent. They never miss an opportunity to put themselves down.

I determined, through my research, that there were 5 Essential Skills that successful adults with ADD have mastered. To be a happy and successful ADDer, you have to know how to:

Break the Cycle of Overwhelm, Work With Your ADD Not Against It, ADDjust Your Attitude, Take Control of Your Space and Time, Live Out Loud

Education It's information that inspires change. Becoming educated about ADD and the ways it can affect you is the first step to identifying changes that need to be made.

Awareness Self-awareness is key when making personal change. It's impossible to change that which you are not aware of. You have to practice self-awareness in all areas of life to determine what's working, and what isn't.

Reframing It's important to realize that every person always does the best they can. No one purposefully under-performs, underachieves, or disappoints.

Action Here's some great news: the action steps often happen all on their own! When you gain knowledge, practice awareness, and realize the positive reasons that change needs to take place, action will unconsciously follow.

Change is something that we will practice our entire lives. Real, lasting change takes time, and can't what you want from this book and leave the rest.

When your focus is on so many things at once, no matter what actually gets done, there's always much more waiting for your attention. There is so much to do at home, at work, at school, or wherever, that it feels like you just can't possibly do it all. You feel like you're always running so far behind that you'll never catch up. This is the world of adult ADD.

Your ADD challenges directly correlate to your stress levels. The more stressed out you are, the more your ADD will challenge you and present problems.

When you have adult ADD, stress very quickly becomes absolute and total overwhelm. Once overwhelm sets in, you become easily distractible and forgetful. You lose track of time. You feel disorganized. It affects every little thing you do.

It's impossible to learn how to manage your ADD without learning how to manage your stress.

You have to give yourself permission to take the time to step back from all the stress, drop your to-do's, and recharge. You have to slow down.

ADDers often resist the idea of slowing down. When there is always so much on your mind that needs attending to, the idea of slowing down seems counterintuitive.

Slowing down doesn't mean stopping. Rather, slowing down is about removing yourself from stressful situations so that you can relax and de-stress.

Some good ways to slow down are: Taking a walk Journaling  
Meditating Listening to music Practicing yoga Playing with kids  
Spending time with pets Crafting (knitting, wood working, scrap  
booking, etc.)

Being artistic (singing, painting, writing, dancing, etc.) Practicing a  
hobby Exercising Taking a drive Going out for a meal

Going out with friends Reading for pleasure (as opposed to  
reading for school or work) Taking a nap Watching TV.

Something that you won't find on the list of ways to slow down is  
anything related to computers. The Internet, email and computer  
games are like quicksand for ADDers!

The more you eat nutritious, whole foods, the better you will feel.  
The better you feel, the easier it is to manage your ADD.

If you're not currently exercising, try to think about adding in some  
physical activity that you personally find fun and fulfilling.

It's important to pay attention to what stimulates you, and stay  
away from those activities for an hour or 2 before bed.

Adults with ADD spend a lot of time trying to fit in by doing things  
the way they think other people do them. We try to play by other  
people's rules, and it often doesn't work.

One of the biggest mistakes that adults with ADD make is that

they hold themselves to unrealistic expectations.

You are who you are. You, like all people, have both weaknesses and strengths. You have challenges, problems, and “issues.” You also have talents, strengths, skills, and passions. Together, these traits combine to make you the person you are. Mavericks understand that who you are is not good or bad, it just is.

When you begin to look at what’s right with you, and what you are capable of under the right circumstances, you open up a world of possibilities.

Knowing Some adults with ADD “idle” higher than others and are capable of getting more done in a day than most people, which is a nice benefit! And mavericks can use hyperactivity to their advantage. It can provide fuel to get important things done and to think up elaborate or creative plans.

Maverick ADDers need to have a keen awareness of their hyperactive minds, and take steps to slow them down when they turn to nagging, negative thoughts, or overwhelm.

Impulsivity can also be a positive trait. For example, many adults with ADD are known among their friends and family as being fun and spontaneous. New ideas are plentiful, and are often backed up with intense energy.

**TAKING ACTION** Moving from thought to action can be quite difficult for ADDers. Some common challenges in this area include:

- Prolonged and frequent periods of procrastination
- Trouble activating or getting started during the day
- Trouble activating or getting started on individual tasks  
Difficulty prioritizing tasks
- An inability to organize physical spaces and/or mental thoughts

- Trouble making and trusting decisions, both large and small
- An inability to create and stick to effective structure
- Difficulty attending to details Boredom with the minutia of day-to-day

Adults with ADD commonly go through the day feeling overwhelmed by all that has to be done, and not knowing when or how to do it all.

As seen in the last chapter, this overwhelm tends to shut down the ADD brain, which in turn makes prioritizing, organizing, decision making, and taking action in general more difficult.

Similarly, the longer a decision is put off and pondered over, the bigger it seems and the harder it becomes to make a decision.

It's widely accepted that ADD doesn't affect long-term memory, but it does affect short-term, or working, memory.

Feeling overwhelmed by too much information, too many distractions, or too much stimuli Mavericks can learn to accept that their working memory won't be as sharp as other people's sometimes, and deal with it.

Creating a detailed to-do list, and losing it an hour later One of the lesser-known challenges of adult ADD is an inconsistency in alertness and energy levels.

These issues with alertness and energy regulation might not be a big deal if the rest of the world didn't operate on a strict schedule. But most ADDers are forced to abandon their natural biorhythms in order to operate in a world that is largely 9-to-5.

Energy regulation can be extremely troublesome at work or school when you're forced to conform to other people's time-lines and energy levels.

Mavericks need to work with their own biorhythms as much as possible. That means taking advantage of the times in which your

brain is most alert, and not trying to squeeze too much out of yourself during the times when you're naturally less energetic.

Adults with ADD tend to be highly sensitive and emotional. This becomes a problem when you're overwhelmed and frustrated, because it is more difficult to control your thoughts, feelings, and emotions when your brain feels like it's operating at full capacity.

Mavericks allow themselves to feel their emotions fully and without judgment. They strive to express these emotions in a healthy way, and use their emotional nature to make sincere connections with other people.

Mavericks honor who they are without trying to be someone else. Working with your ADD means that you know who you are, and you accept who you are. You may identify areas of your life in which you want to improve, but for the most part you commit to working with your individual characteristics and qualities whether they are "challenges" or "advantages."

Another important element of working with your ADD is to understand the best and easiest ways for you to unload information. I call this "clearing the mental clutter."

Adults with ADD are subjected to more stimuli and distractions than the average person, and therefore finding a way to stop paying attention can be just as important as learning how to pay attention in the first place!

Here are some different ways that you can work through thoughts and feelings that seem hard to let go of:

1. Move It Release your stress and frustration with movement. Use a vigorous workout to relieve your stress, or take a leisurely stroll to clear your head.
2. Write It I highly recommend journaling for ADD management.



It's a great way to process your thoughts, feelings, and frustrations.

Additionally, making lists, creating mind maps or brainstorming, writing poetry, and other forms of putting pen to paper can provide great relief for a cluttered mind.

3. Speak It You can also try verbally processing your thoughts. When something is sitting heavy on your mind, talk to a friend, family member, therapist, coach, or anyone else who will listen.

The key to working with your ADD is really just allowing yourself to be who you are challenges, quirks, and all.

If you get feedback or criticism from people who don't understand why you are the way you are or why you do certain things the way you do them, don't backtrack. Don't apologize, don't justify, and don't try to change simply because someone else doesn't understand you. Just explain that you work best when.

Mavericks know that when you embrace yourself as the total package, your confidence will radiate and others will accept you, too.

Being a happy and successful adult with ADD requires you to do 2 things: focus on your strengths, and maintain a positive attitude.

So many ADDers spend too much of their time focusing on what they think they do wrong.

Creativity I've never met an ADDer who wasn't creative in one way or another. Being creative does not necessarily mean being artistic, although that very well may be the case. There are tons of ADDers who are writers, painters, performers, photographers, and so on. Other ADDers are problem solvers. They enjoy taking a problem and finding unconventional or unobvious ways to solve it.

Some are innovative and strategic thinkers. They are really good at coming up with new ideas and planning out how to implement them. There are a lot of ADDers out there who are entrepreneurs and inventors and tech wizards

When an ADDer sets their mind on an important goal, look out! This drive to succeed may not always be evident because it often requires an intense desire or passion. Everyone experiences tragedy, hardship, and disappointments. It's a part of life. And adults with ADD arguably have more difficulties than others due to our common challenges. But we also have great strength and resiliency.

Of course, adults with ADD have many more strengths and talents, but these are highly desirable qualities.

People become successful when they focus on, and build upon, the things they're already good at.

If you really don't know what you're good at, then I suggest 3 things:

- Ask the people you trust. You'll be pleasantly surprised when you see that the people closest to you generally agree on what you're good at.
- Pay attention to the compliments people give you. Say thank you and take the positive feedback.
- Identify your interests and the things you're passionate about. Somewhere in these, you'll find what you're good at.

**DON'T BE A BMW** "BMW" is short for someone who bitches, moans, and whines. BMWs never get anywhere in life. They're too busy complaining and finding problems with everything.

I can understand how people with ADD can become BMWs. You spent a lifetime feeling different and being the odd one out. You've probably had your share of criticism like "you're lazy," "you don't try hard enough," "you make careless mistakes," "you could do so much better if you only applied yourself," and much worse. And these experiences may have caused you to develop some bitter, cynical tendencies. But staying bitter and cynical is your choice. So is moving beyond it.

Perfectionists are so busy trying to make things perfect that nothing ever gets done!

Recognize that managing your ADD is not about curing it. It is about knowing yourself well enough to know when you aren't where you want to be...and knowing how to get back. It's a process, and it always will be. Sure, it will get easier with time, practice, and patience. But you will make mistakes. Deal with it, and move on.

Mavericks understand that some people will like you, some people will hate you, and most people will be indifferent to you. That's life. You can't win everyone over. Don't waste your time trying. If you are true to yourself and don't hurt anyone, then who cares what other people think about you?

A lack of organizational skills is probably the biggest source of pain for adults with ADD. This applies to physical spaces, as well as mental. Cluttered homes, chaotic thoughts, and mismanaged time are hallmarks of ADD in adults, and these areas often take the most time to improve upon.

It's time to face facts: you will probably never be an expert organizer, and you will probably never be a master of time management, either.

For adults with ADD, details are a drag. We tend to see the big picture and want to jump straight to the finish line, wishing we could skip all the steps in between. Organization is a problem specifically because it's all about the details.

ADD mavericks don't feel the need to plan everything, but know that a little planning time makes a tremendous improvement in efficiency. Once the skill for planning is developed, many adults find that their lives change dramatically, and positively!

Jumping into a disorganized space and trying to assess all the details and make decisions on the fly causes ADD overwhelm, and overwhelm causes paralysis. The easiest way to avoid this is to plan in advance. Having a plan is akin to having a system to follow. The guesswork is removed and the stress is avoided.

Lots of adults with ADD are tempted to believe that the time required to plan is not actually work and doesn't count as time spent working towards a goal. This could not be more untrue. Planning is a necessary step and should not be skipped.

Then, follow these simple guidelines:

- Determine the objective for your organizing project.
- What do you want to accomplish? Connect with your personal motivation.
- Why is this goal important to you?

Determine 3-5 steps that you will need to complete in order to achieve your organizational goal. Estimate the amount of time it will take to achieve the goal. Then, because ADDers have a poor sense of time, consider allotting double the time of your initial estimate. (The worst that can happen is that you end up finishing early!)

Schedule in time to work on your project. Finally, it's a good idea to schedule in maintenance time. All your hard work isn't worth much if your space becomes disorganized again in a few days.

Always aim for 3-5 steps. If you have less than 3 steps, then you're generalizing what has to be done and attempting to do too much in big chunks.

One of the biggest downfalls that ADDers encounter in the organizing process is "all or nothing" thinking. All or nothing thinking means that a project is either done or not done. You've

either achieved your goal, or failed. There is no in between. One of the benefits of having a plan is that when your steps are laid out, you can easily see how close you are to completing your goal.

It's easier to see shades of grey when you have a piece of paper that confirms

Serious mavericks may want to keep a separate list for all those "great ideas" that pop into your head that you want to accomplish someday, but don't have time for right now.

Your to-do list is a living tool. Don't let it stress you out, and don't assign any emotion to it. Your list simply helps you keep track of what you need and want to get done, as well as what you have done. You'll add things to it almost every day. And hopefully, you'll cross things off it every day, too! Your to-do list will change constantly, and it will always be necessary. Make it your friend.

As an adult with ADD, you can pretty much count on forgetting things. It's part of having attention inconsistencies. So rather than relying on your memory, you have to rely on systems.

First, choose a time of day in which you can consistently take 15 minutes to plan. You'll want to make sure that you choose a time in which you're alert and have a good deal of energy.

Review your to-do list. Notice not just what you have to do, but also what you have actually accomplished during the day. Ceremoniously cross off or highlight your accomplishments.

As you review your schedule for the day, you'll notice that there are empty pockets of "free time" in your day. "Free time" is not necessarily yours to do anything you want with, but simply time you have some leeway with. This is time in which you can start knocking off the things on your to-do list.

When planning your schedule, you want to make sure that you

take your natural biorhythms into account, and respect your limits.

One incredible benefit of learning how to manage your time effectively is that it allows you to actually plan and schedule your self-care. This includes proper sleep, downtime, and fun time.

Sometimes it seems like taking a class or working on a creative project will take too much time. You may actually have to create this time in your schedule, and you should!

Life is not all about being productive and accomplishing things. It's also about having fun and enjoying yourself. So when your life feels so packed that there's no time for fun, it's necessary to create that time. Be a maverick and make fun a priority.

Once a week, on the same day every week, you tack a few extra minutes onto your daily planning time so that you can review your whole week. This is helpful for a number of reasons.

First, it gives you the opportunity to assign certain tasks to certain days. However, learning how to put it all together is a process. You've struggled with time management all your life, and that's not going to change overnight. It's going to take commitment and flexibility.

Don't aim for perfection. You're going to screw up sometimes, so count on it! But being in control of your time sometimes is a hell of a lot better than never being in control of your time. Small steps lead to big improvements.

And because putting all these steps together may seem overwhelming, I encourage you to start small and build on your successes. Begin It's time to start living, really living, for yourself. This is what being a maverick is all about: living out loud.

Living out loud is about identifying what you want in life, and believing in yourself enough to go for it. You have to stop telling yourself that your dreams are out of reach and start thinking about

how to make those dreams come to life. And in order to dream big, you have to start small.

When you live out loud, you know who you are and what you want, and you don't apologize for it. You trust yourself. You listen to your intuition. You live with intention, and you don't doubt yourself.

Don't let the doubt, judgment, or jealousy of others stop you.

Never Let Fear Make Decisions for You I can't stress this enough so I'll say it again: NEVER LET FEAR MAKE DECISIONS FOR YOU! Fear is a normal human emotion, and fear serves a very useful purpose. It helps keep us in check. It helps ensure that we make good decisions. But when it comes to living out loud, fear

Living out loud requires you to take risks, both big and small. And risks involve fear. Risk taking is not thrill seeking. We're not talking about engaging in dangerous behavior. We're simply talking about stretching your comfort zone. This means that you are willing to endure some uncomfortable feelings or situations in order to achieve the things you want.

Feeling fear is okay. In fact, it's healthy! But fear becomes a problem if it stops you from achieving—or even attempting to achieve—your goals.

“Well, you will fail”. And you better get used to it, because it will happen a lot.” My forehead was crinkling on the other end of the phone. I didn't like what I heard. “And when you do fail,” he continued in a very matter-of-fact tone, “you will get right back up. You'll do what you can to figure out what you did wrong, and then you'll be one step closer to success.”

One of the reasons that adults with ADD don't live out loud and embrace the maverick within is they're afraid of failure. It's time to change your perspective on failure.

If you're going to live out loud, you can't be afraid of failure. You have to accept it, and even expect it, as a part of life.

You won't always get it right the first try. You will screw up. And you won't always be the best. So if you tell yourself the opposite, and can't attain these impossible feats, then of course you'll feel like a fraud.

Failure is really a form of feedback. When trying to achieve a goal, you may fail many times. And each time you fail, you're given a piece of the puzzle you're trying to solve. Knowing what doesn't work only brings you closer to finding out what will.

Bonus Tip: Winners do quit, and quitters do win. I'd like to meet the jerk who coined the phrase "winners never quit and quitters never win." It's the biggest load of bullshit that's ever been fed to us.

Real winners know when it's time to stop working towards unrealistic goals. Real winners know that quitting is not a sign of weakness. Real winners make informed decisions about when it's time to keep pushing, and when it's time to quit.

They identify the dreams that are most important to them, and they take concrete steps towards achieving those dreams.

First and foremost, you have to believe that you are capable of achieving your dreams. You may never be able to afford a yacht, but with some work and determination, you could buy a pleasure boat. Or you could take a lavish vacation on a yacht. You may never be President of the United States, but you could be a local or state politician and still make a very big difference. So what's stopping you?



Most people think that a lack of money is what's stopping them from achieving their dreams. That's an excuse.

Our dreams are never really about money; they're about the lifestyles that we would live if we had a lot of money. We all think that money would bring with it toys, freedom, and happiness. And I'm sure it would! But you can have toys, freedom, and happiness without winning the lottery.

You just need to identify exactly what it is that you feel like you're missing in your life you need to really examine your dreams to find out and then begin working towards achieving those things here and now.

Money is not what stops people from achieving their dreams. Confidence and the lack of a plan are really what stop people. You deserve to have everything that you want in life. You deserve to define success and happiness for yourself, and you deserve to achieve success and happiness on your own terms.

This is a basic human right, and one that adults with ADD so often rob themselves of simply because they think they don't deserve it!

If you're going to be a maverick and live out loud, then you need to convince yourself, right here and now, that you deserve it. You deserve to take those dreams and turn them into reality.

Start by determining what you want in your life. Not necessarily what things you want in your life, but what elements you want in your life. Do you want more freedom? Do you want to work less? Spend more time with your family? Travel the world?

Be more creative? Explore your talents? Think about it. And if you really want that expensive sports car or that vacation home, well then, my friend, live out loud and go for it!

Create a clear vision of what you want to achieve. Journal about it, daydream about it, and maybe even share it with a supportive person in your life. When you know what it is that you want, you

can start working towards achieving it. Jump ahead and work backwards. Ask yourself where you want to be a year from now, and then take some time to plan some steps. Figure out what you can do in the next year to work towards your goal, then figure out what you can do in the next 6 months, the next 3 months, the next week, and even tomorrow!

Dreams don't come true unless you make them come true. And when your dreams come true, you're living out loud. You're embracing the maverick you were meant to be.

I've worked with quite a few coaches. When looking for a coach, whether in my personal life or my business life, I always look for someone who has "been there and done that." Someone who understands the situation that I'm in and what it's going to take for me to move to the next level.

Do you ever run late? Do you miss deadlines? Do you get distracted and lose focus? Hell yes! Successfully managing your ADD is not about eliminating your ADD challenges.

It's about learning how to manage your ADD most of the time. It's about knowing when you need help getting back on track. It's about noticing when you've been sidetracked, and knowing how to get back to where you need to be.

It's about understanding that you will have challenges, but they don't need to bring you down or get in the way of you achieving your goals.

Live successfully. Live happily. Be a maverick. And never be afraid to be the odd one out.