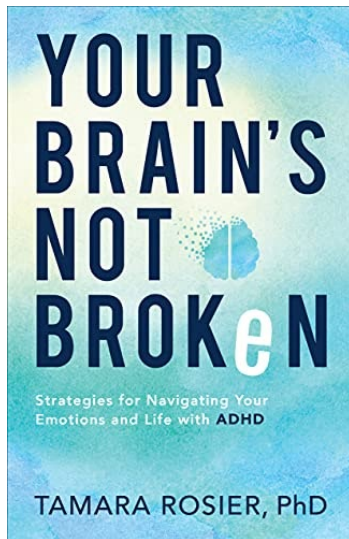


## **Your Brain's Not Broken: Strategies for Navigating Your Emotions and Life with ADHD**



Product details ASIN : B08XLRL3KW

Publisher : Revell (21 September 2021)

Language : English

File size : 7135 KB

On Kindle Scribe Print length : 198 pages Page numbers

source ISBN : 0800741331

Many of my clients, adults of any age or gender, tell variations of the same story. They are exhausted from having so many thoughts that seem to collide at the same time. They are frustrated and angry with themselves for struggling to complete tasks, even ones that seem simple.

The more someone with ADHD tries to manage the complexities of life pursuing a career, raising a family, running a household the greater the demand on their abilities to organize, focus, and remain calm. Though these things can be challenging for anyone, for someone with ADHD, it can feel downright impossible.

“Here’s what it feels like for me,” I told her. “It’s like I’m at a starting line of a race. The whistle blows, the pistol fires. As I move, I stumble and fall. Confused, I look down to see why and find that I’m missing a part of my leg!

It’s clear I won’t be able to run like the others, but no one seems to notice my missing appendage. Instead, they expect me to participate in the race like everyone else! They only fault me for the falls I take and my lack of speed and agility.”

The reality is that ADHD causes us to pay too much attention to everything most of the time especially when it comes from our environment.

However, ADHD expert William Dodson explains that “the vast majority of adults with ADHD are not overtly hyperactive, though they are hyperactive internally.”

Although we may not like to talk about it or admit it, many of us with ADHD have a hard time managing our feelings.

Life can be a balancing act for any adult. But when you have ADHD and don’t know it, it’s easy to conclude that there’s something wrong with you—especially if you don’t have a framework for understanding what you are experiencing. Undiagnosed and untreated ADHD can have wide-reaching effects and cause problems in virtually every area of your life, including home, career, and relationships.

A diagnosis can also often help explain past struggles. After being diagnosed at age forty-five, John exclaimed, “Finally, it all makes sense! I always felt like I was losing my mind. Now I see why some things are just hard for me.” Tracking his ADHD patterns helped him strategize and approach things differently. “I now know that I need to take ADHD into account for everything I do.”

ADHD brain sabotages her in so many ways, but the thing she hates the most is the distortion of her perception of time. This distortion causes an inability to accurately assess the amount of time an activity takes.

Many times, individuals with ADHD feel strong emotions that appear extreme or exaggerated to others.

Folks with ADHD are often like a light switch when it comes to their emotions, motivations, and actions.

Sometimes, because of the working-memory impairment, an intense emotion floods the brain of someone with ADHD.

Ignoring the magnitude of feeling is not an adequate solution. One can't simply stuff emotions and expect them to dissipate. Those emotions will find a way to unstuff themselves—usually at an inopportune time.

Medication is an option for treating emotional dysregulation and gives people with ADHD the same fraction of a second that neurotypical individuals have to feel an emotion coming on and decide whether or not to express it.

In Todd's case, he was diagnosed with ADHD and began medication. His wife immediately noticed a difference in emotional modulation. But pills don't make skills. Todd had developed unhealthy coping skills over his lifetime that he needed to change. This required that he go through a process of unlearning some patterns and learning new ones to manage his emotional responses.

We can experience good intense emotions as well as the less pleasant ones. We seem to experience happiness, gratitude, and contentment more powerfully than our neurotypical peers and loved ones do. We are passionate and strong-willed people.

As we work on the negative aspects of having big emotions, we heal the wounded parts of our self-worth and self-confidence. By increasing our self-awareness and finding new coping skills, we decrease our old, dysfunctional ways of engaging with life. It's definitely hard work but worth the effort.

Many of us with ADHD often feel like Alice in Wonderland. We pop down a hole to follow a thought, and then another almost related idea appears. One concept transforms into another and then another. Our thoughts move so quickly that we don't think of stopping ourselves. And before long, we find ourselves far away from our initial idea or task.

The rest of the world, it seems, is not like the imaginative Alice we encounter in Wonderland. They prefer a different way of thinking called convergent thinking. Convergent thinking is a thought pattern that brings together information that focuses on solving a problem, especially one that has a single, correct solution.

Divergent thinkers have possibility brains. Their minds naturally explore and elaborate on ideas, examining what could be. This divergent thinking has many notable strengths.

ADHD minds with divergent thinking patterns often have an insatiable curiosity manifested by the tendency to ask “why” and to seek connections.

Research suggests that individuals who have strong divergent thinking patterns combine the strengths of fluency, flexibility, originality, and creativity to entertain themselves and others.

If you tend to lean on your divergent thinking patterns, you need to be aware of and understand the cognitive errors that you may be prone to make, or you will find yourself dancing through a minefield. One wrong dance step and you lose a leg—or, more practically, a job. Watch for these common rabbit holes in your divergent thinking.

Both convergent and divergent thinking are important for creative problem solving and project planning which means we should have time set aside for each. The real challenge is to know when to switch gears from our natural divergent track to thinking convergent.

Being Interested Only in Big Challenges: Those who use mostly divergent thinking are often drawn to more complex and difficult endeavors because they are interesting. The easier tasks, many of them convergent, still need to be completed, but because they seem too easy or boring, those with ADHD will often neglect them.

Being in Love with Your Divergent Thinking: After weeks of talking about convergent and divergent thinking, I gave her direct feedback. “I’m not saying that you have to keep your own books, but you do need to provide direction for people who work for you. And that means you need to spend some time in convergent

thinking about your business so you will be able to direct others to know what to do.” Amelia hated that suggestion,

Being Fixated on Your “Potential: Many smart individuals like Juan struggle with the problem of potential. Their divergent brains dream of opportunities and accomplishments. They know they have a high capacity to succeed yet are confused by their inconsistent achievement.

Even after diagnosis, they deny the impact that ADHD has on their performance. Rather than acknowledge the complexity that ADHD adds to any task, they ascribe their struggles to reach their goals as character flaws. They become frustrated and anxious when they are unable to realize their “potential.”

Each time a client goes down that road, I ask, “What do you want to do about it?” We then use convergent thinking to make plans to achieve their goals. When we achieve specific goals, we know that we have stepped closer to our ideal “potential.” Doing something about our capacity usually involves convergent thinking.

Dealing with Imagination Plus Anxiety: Our wonderfully vivid imaginations combine with our anxiety and fears to create monsters cognitive distortions that torture us.

Having No Patience for Nondivergent Activities: “This shouldn’t be so hard,” my husband grumbles as he attempts to make an appointment online. His impatience with mundane tasks quickly shifts into irritation and agitation. People with ADHD tend to believe that mundane tasks should be quick and simple, so they resent it when those tasks take time and energy. Their impatient, emotional responses bubble up from their divergent thinking pattern and aren’t useful in the moment.

Creating Rube Goldberg Machines: A Rube Goldberg machine, named after American cartoonist Rube Goldberg, is a machine intentionally designed to perform a simple task in an indirect and overly complicated way.

Many adults with whom I work unconsciously create convoluted ways of completing a task while exerting maximum effort.

Apply the KISS principle whenever you can. When I catch myself making a Rube Goldberg machine, I say, “Keep it simple and straightforward.” I take a deep breath and slide into a convergent mode.

Getting Stuck in Problem Finding: Given our tendency toward imagination and expansive thinking, those of us who depend on divergent thinking are problem-finding geniuses!

Problem solving is where we narrow choices and choose a direction. Making a decision feels very challenging when we try to rely only on divergent thinking.

“There are so many options. How do I know the best one?” But decision-making takes both divergent thinking and convergent thinking.

Not Monitoring Your Divergent Pattern: Those of us who prefer divergent thinking have the opposite issue. We love the exploration of ideas so much that we forget to shift to the convergent process. There is a time to generate ideas and a time for evaluating them and moving forward.

Trying to think both divergently and convergent at the same time is counter productive. Mixing the two is like putting your foot on the gas at the same time as the brake. Monitor your thinking closely. (Some of my clients set timers for the two different types of thinking.)

Ask yourself, “What is my goal for this part of the task?” If the answer is getting the laundry done, don’t shift to divergent thinking and redecorate the laundry room. Instead, set a timer and tell yourself that you will spend fifteen minutes in convergent thinking while you perform this task.

Our divergent thinking patterns give us astonishing imaginative and cognitive power. But we can mismanage our thinking ability when we create monsters out of ordinary items and events.

Dr. Russell Barkley, an internationally recognized authority on this topic, explains that ADHD is more about loss of interest and motivation than attention and concentration. The key to getting things done is to see the emotions involved and learn to redirect them.

An interest-based nervous system implies that we are motivated by our level of interest in something rather than its importance and priority. In other words, importance, rewards, and consequences don't spur us into action.

"I have always been able to do anything I wanted as long as I could get excited about it." Emotional hyperarousal refers to the intensity of emotion that people with ADHD feel. We have passionate thoughts and emotions that are more intense than those of the average person.

Subconscious emotions are powerful and complex and affect how we motivate ourselves. Especially for those of us with ADHD, the stronger the emotional push, the more likely we will be engaged. Many of us unconsciously call on the emotional part of our brain to initiate a task, especially a task we find tedious, uninteresting, or routine.

We use the avoidance tactic to motivate ourselves to do other things instead of the important task before us. Avoidance lets us feel productive by accomplishing something even though it is not what needs to be done.

Avoidance is driven by a variety of thoughts and habits. We avoid tasks or put them off because we do not believe we'll enjoy doing them or we fear that we won't do them well. We may also use avoidance when we are confused by the complexity of a task (such as filing our taxes) or when we're overly distracted or fatigued. Sometimes we use avoidance despite our best intentions.

Our divergent thinking may work against us when we are trying to get things done. In divergent thinking, everything has the same level of importance.

Prioritizing tasks and knowing what to do first is difficult for those of us with ADHD, so we rely on anxious feelings to tell us what needs to be done.

Procrastination begins with avoidance thoughts such as, I don't feel like doing that right now. We imagine a magical time when we will feel intrinsically motivated to do that task. And we wait. And we wait until we can wait no longer.

This is our genius tactic for getting things done that combines the two previous techniques: avoidance and anxiety.

I began asking my future self a specific question: “What would help you have a great morning?” And it worked! When I answered that question in specific ways, I saw a decline in my nightly procrastination immediately.

“I had never considered helping my future self and setting him up for success.”

People with ADHD are more likely to repeat behaviors that bring actual and immediate rewards, like getting a good laugh from friends or getting fast food in a drive-through. The problem is that most of life doesn't work that way. We must tackle the difficult to get to the reward. Or we must accomplish the mundane to get to the fun. Learning to manage the rewards around us might Fatigue is one of the most common complaints that I hear from my clients when they talk about symptoms associated with ADHD, and usually they are referring to emotional fatigue. Why are we so exhausted? It is exhausting being us because we have feelings about every task that we do.

Each task either is highly emotionally stimulating, creating convincing, strong emotions within us, or is on the other end of the spectrum with little emotional stimulation, providing punier, less interesting emotions.

When our ADHD brains get stimulated by the intensity of any emotion, our attention becomes focused.

Some tasks, however, have little emotional stimulation. Emptying the dishwasher, doing homework, watching shows that we have already viewed on Netflix, or spending time on the internet may have little emotional stimulation.

“Are you saying that people with ADHD don't want to do something until there is a high emotional stimulus attached to it?” The answer is yes. For those people, a high emotional stimulus feels like rocket fuel.

Perception of interest. This is the degree to which a person with ADHD considers how fun an activity will be when deciding how to accomplish a task. Emotional



intensity. This is the degree to which a person with ADHD calculates how much emotional energy a task will take.

We all have our own internal limited battery energy. But those with ADHD find that their battery like the one in my old cell phone is prone to becoming more quickly and easily depleted from activities that others may not find taxing at all.

Duties that I find tedious, like answering emails, invoicing clients, going grocery shopping, and returning phone calls, can feel as though they drain at least 50 percent of my daily battery.

Becoming Energy Efficient: How do you get things done? Writing detailed goals or long to-do lists doesn't make sense. Using malicious motivation is cruel to yourself. Instead, take time to acknowledge how you feel about a task. Do you like it or hate it? Do you have strong emotions about it or little emotional interest?

For those of us with ADHD, mindfully managing our battery usage helps us accomplish more tasks and feel better about ourselves.

Addressing False Beliefs: Learn to listen for the false beliefs that are keeping you overcommitted. False beliefs are created over many years, and people cement these beliefs without questioning their validity.

Another false belief I often see connected with this pattern is when someone incorrectly associates self-worth with checking things off a to-do list. The belief that "I am a worthy human being only when I accomplish things"

Morning Practice. Take fifteen minutes first thing in the morning to breathe and pray. Midday Practice. Try setting a midday alarm for a system check.

Boundaries are rules we set for ourselves, based on our values and priorities. They are the physical, emotional, and mental limits we establish to protect ourselves from

Like so many others with ADHD, I had poor boundaries in almost every area of my life. I didn't learn good boundaries from either of my parents. Their ADHD went undiagnosed, and they didn't set healthy limits for themselves or me.

The House: Think of your internal self—your psyche and personhood—as a house. It's yours alone. No one is allowed to come in unless you have given them permission. It is an intimate space where no family members or close friends have the right to intrude. Not even the God of the universe will enter unless you allow him to.

You decorate the place as you wish. You paint the walls with colors that please you and place photos on the walls that remind you of good times or of your ideal self. In this house, you create your identity your qualities, values, beliefs, and personality.

Everyone's boundaries in their house are unique. The limits you create for yourself will reflect your needs and priorities. Do you need to set physical boundaries? They won't be precisely the same as the list below, but these will give you an idea of what physical boundaries or limits for yourself might look like: keeping a regular bedtime and wake-up time sticking to your budget not having screens (television, phone) in your bedroom not working past 7:00 p.m.

Not answering work emails on the weekends buying only what's on your shopping list (i.e., no impulse buys at Target) doing laundry every Friday not checking Instagram every time you're bored, eating out no more than twice a week brushing your teeth not drinking alcohol on weeknights not keeping junk food in the house limiting yourself to two cups of coffee per day Begin organizing your house by choosing only one or two of the basic limits.

I began with one simple rule for myself—to keep my car tidy. I decided to clean out the trash each time I filled up the gas tank.

Sometimes our housework has more to do with setting emotional limits on ourselves.

Where is your emotional baggage stored in your house? Are there boxes filled with hurt, anger, fear, and anxiety cluttering the hallway? Are there discarded, broken pieces of furniture representing sadness, envy, or shame scattered about your living room? Maybe it's time to rid your house of those things that clutter your otherwise neat home.

“I realized that over the long haul, pretending to be ‘normal’ is exhausting and comes at a dangerously high cost to my self-worth and even my health.”

Sufficient sleep is a crucial part of physical and mental well-being for all humans. Getting a good night’s rest can be incredibly difficult for those with ADHD. Nearly all of my clients have some sort of sleep problem: difficulty falling asleep, experiencing restless sleep, staying asleep, or waking up from their slumber.

The truth is that scientists have identified a vital brain-cleaning function that occurs mostly when your brain is at rest. When you’re asleep, a waste-clearance system in the body, known as the lymphatic system, runs what is essentially a rinse cycle in the brain, using cerebrospinal fluid (the clear liquid found in the brain and spine).

Experts believe that this fluid flows more freely through the brain when it rests during the night. During this time, it washes away a harmful protein known as beta-amyloid. When this process doesn’t occur, scientists believe that beta-amyloid can build up, forming the plaques that are characteristic of Alzheimer’s disease. Sleep is necessary.

Take your own energy rhythms into account when planning your day, and understand that, realistically, you will be effective at certain times of the day more than others.

Try to find a natural rhythm to your day and keep that rhythm.

Mental rehearsal for us means that we imagine ourselves doing a particular task to improve the outcome when we do it for real. Visualization techniques like this are widely used among people who are focused on achieving their peak performance in whatever area they want to excel in.

We can easily imagine the technique of rehearsing being used by athletes, musicians, artists, and actors. Speakers, teachers, and lawyers rehearse before they present. But this rehearsal can also be used to enhance performance in the office, the home, or anywhere it’s applied.

Mental rehearsal is not positive self-talk or imagining scenes that make us feel good. Instead, it is carefully picturing ourselves going through routines. Whether it's precision flying, Olympic figure skating, or something much more mundane like our daily schedule, rehearsal improves our chances of success. It works because our unconscious mind is impacted by repetition and practice as though the activity is actually taking place.

While still lying in bed, I look at my calendar on my phone. I take a deep breath and imagine myself going through each step of my day until noon.

I rehearse my scheduled sessions: I envision my client's face, hear their voice, and feel the connection with them. I listen to myself beginning the session with them: "What do you want to accomplish in this session?" I walk through the actions and attitudes that I want for that part of the day. Then at lunch, I repeat the process, which takes me to 5:00. And then at 5:00, I will rehearse the evening.

Rehearsing is a crucial strategy for me. When I don't rehearse, I might dread the upcoming events of the day, and I tend to gravitate to my usual ways of thinking, feeling, and acting in my normal ADHD state of mind and body, which tends to be frazzled.

Unfortunately, most of us with ADHD have learned to use mental rehearsal to practice the exact behaviors we would rather avoid.

It doesn't matter what your situation is. You can vividly evoke visual rehearsal, shift your emotional state, reframe the challenge, and rehearse desired actions.

When you have ADHD, you are more likely to struggle to accomplish simple tasks in life. Adulthood can feel overwhelming, chaotic, and out of control until you figure out the keys to your management.

Instead of cloaking your ADHD lifestyle or trying to pass it off as normal, create ADHD-friendly ways to move through your life more purposefully.

Children with ADHD know they are different, and this is rarely experienced as a good thing. They often develop low self-esteem because they realize they make

mistakes, like not finishing what they start, misunderstanding directions, or losing their mittens for the fifth time that winter.

Like the toy bird that swims instead of flies, children with ADHD often feel unwanted because they are different.

Children with ADHD can grow up to be confident adults if given the necessary nurturing and skills. respect, stubborn love, and gentle honesty. Endless empathy is without a doubt the most essential quality healthy parents have when raising an ADHD child. Because an ADHD child often has big, untamed emotions, empathy can help you not to take it personally when they say mean words in the midst of a meltdown. A child needs to be treated with respect in order to develop self-respect. When

Stubborn love is a gift to a child with ADHD who feels like a misfit toy. A parent's love provides a shelter for them in a world that feels unsafe.

The healthiest families with whom I have worked also practice gentle honesty. They create a home where feedback (not criticism or lecture) is seen as formative and needed for growth.

Give children opportunities to control their environment, make decisions, use and practice their skills, and try different paths to achieve their goals.

Many people effectively managing their ADHD live the lives they have always wanted to. They learn to gather their scattered thoughts and feelings to accomplish what they set out to do. Their skills, strategies, and techniques help them not only survive but thrive.

Never forget, this is your unique ADHD story. You are the main character of this story that will contain challenges and conflicts, setbacks and forward motion, failures and victories. Those are all a part of your story.

With the tools and techniques you have learned and will continue learning, you will be able to put ADHD in its rightful place—as one of many characters in the story you are writing. How you write the next chapters is up to you.

Perhaps you don't have ADHD, but you've picked up this book because you are in a relationship with someone who does.

You love their brilliant, buzzing mind, but you find yourself exhausted by them. You know that your loved one is capable of tremendous things with a little support and positive reinforcement. But you have feelings too. You may feel lonely, ignored, unappreciated, and like you are the only grown-up in the house. You don't feel like you can rely on your partner. You're tired of taking care of everything on your own and being the only responsible party in the relationship.

Separate who your partner is from their symptoms or behaviors. What ADHD symptom bothers you the most? Why does it bother you so much? What feeling does it evoke in you? How can you reframe it so that you don't take it personally? How will you remember that your partner's symptoms aren't character traits?

Improve communication. How can you be honest about how you are feeling without being critical of your partner? How can you guard yourself from making assumptions about your partner's motivations?

Find the humor in the situation. How can we increase teamwork? How can the two of you build on each other's strengths? What can you do to rebalance the workload around the house? How can you clearly define and divide tasks? How will you get outside help if you are both weak in a certain area?

Having ADHD has a serious effect on one's life and the lives of those who love them. You and your loved ones can build understanding, learn effective strategies, and develop new skills as you accommodate for their ADHD symptoms.