

ACTING "AS IF" for ADD / ADHD ADULTS Play a Role to Maintain Control

Have you ever noticed how improvisational actors can get into the character of a part in just a split second? A member of the audience gives them a situation to portray, and there's no time to rehearse, or think about how to do it. Each actor has only a moment to "turn into" a person in that situation. By acting as if he were a different person, he simply "becomes" that person before your eyes.

As a Coach for Attention Deficit Disorder Adults, I've noticed that often when someone with Adult ADD / ADHD is faced with a situation where they typically have challenges, they compound the problem by behaving even more as if they're someone with ADD / ADHD. In other words, they visibly act ashamed, disorganized, frazzled, and out of control.

However, ADD / ADHD Adults can also choose to act as if they were people who are organized, on time, confident, proactive and realistic. It just takes a shift of mind and a moment of reflection.

Lost Briefcase Leads to Breakthrough

One of my Adult ADD / ADHD coaching clients, Jason, experienced a break-through in his thinking this week that will pay big dividends in his life. It came about when he misplaced his briefcase over the weekend.

As Jason prepared to leave for the office Monday morning, the briefcase was nowhere to be found. Recalling all the places he had it with him over the weekend, Jason despaired of ever finding it again. It contained all his important phone numbers and contact information as well as his appointment calendar.

Jason's initial reaction was to become paralyzed and despondent, flooded with memories of all the times he had misplaced things from childhood on. His self-esteem plummeted. Without his phone book and calendar, he felt helpless to call in for his phone coaching appointment, or to set up an important Monday morning meeting.

Then he asked himself what a non-ADDER -- an organized person -- would do in such a situation. (Even organized people sometimes lose things!) He decided to ACT AS IF he were organized and self-confident.

Acting As If He were Organized

An organized person would not change his whole day and damage his business credibility by blowing off meetings and appointments. A more productive approach would be to simply and matter-of-factly explain the situation and obtain the information needed to keep his appointments.

So, Jason first did an Internet search to find the phone number needed to keep his coaching appointment. Then he asked an associate for help in setting up the Monday meeting. Once this was accomplished, he was able to calmly and analytically think about where he had been with the briefcase, asking his wife to help him mentally retrace his steps.

As a result of acting 'as if,' Jason salvaged his day, located his briefcase, and felt proud of the way he handled the situation.

When caught in the middle of a moment of panic, shame, overwhelm or anxiety, it is very hard to think clearly. Jason needed to get back some feeling of control before he could analyze where he might have left his briefcase. Taking the time to keep his phone appointment and consider effective alternatives put him back in control.

This change in thinking and behavior will reap long-term benefits. Next time Jason misplaces something, he'll remember to take constructive action instead of being paralyzed by shame. This small success also helped Jason realize that **he has the power to create habit changes** that will keep him from leaving belongings behind again.

What if you decided to act 'as if' for a week of your life?

Whether intentionally or not, we all project a message through our everyday behavior. If you act disorganized, overwhelmed and late, that's what others will see. But even with Adult ADD / ADHD traits that undermine you, you can choose to ACT AS IF you were in control. One small behavior change leading to success will help breed more success.

Pick just one habit to change, and ACT 'AS IF' for a week of your life.

With whatever habit you pick, think for a moment about how a person with good habits in this area would behave.

Do you tend to impulsively over-promise?

Act as if you're a more cautious person. Start entering all time commitments on your calendar. Next time someone asks you to do something, say 'let me check my calendar and get back to you' instead of automatically saying yes.

Do you get overwhelmed by so many 'to do's' that you end up doing nothing?

Act as if you were capable of decisive action. Take any one of your to-do's, break it down into small steps, and DO one of the steps. (HINT: Do the easiest steps first!)

Are you constantly late for work, meetings or dates?

Act as if you were a time-conscious person. Commit to leave at **least twice as much time to get there** than you normally do. Then **think** through what you'll need to leave on time, and **do what is necessary to leave on time, no matter what.** It might mean setting a timer to remind you of each stage of getting out the door.

Pay attention to the results of your new way of acting. When you behave as if you were someone in-control, a funny thing happens: you'll notice that you'll actually feel in control. And people will treat you as if you are in control. So acting "as if" can become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

About the Author

Bonnie Mincu, ADD / ADHD Coach, is the Official Guide to [Adult ADD / ADHD](#) at Self-Growth.com. Bonnie had an extensive career in corporate management and executive coaching before starting "Thrive with ADD" for ADHD Adults in 2001. In addition to individual coaching, Bonnie teaches her Thrive with ADD workshop at New York University, and has produced a 5-minute online video, www.theattentionmovie.com. Bonnie helps adults achieve their goals by flowing *with* their ADD traits rather than fighting against them. Her website contains downloadable classes, strategy articles and self-coaching resources for Adult Attention Deficit Disorder at www.thrivewithadd.com.

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