



Women and ADHD: What To Do When You Feel Overwhelmed

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Even today, between work and home, women have a lot to juggle. “Though in recent years, men have been more hands-on with household and childcare responsibilities, the bulk of the work still, for many, lands on the woman’s shoulders,” said [Terry Matlen](#), ACSW, a psychotherapist and author of [Survival Tips for Women with ADHD](#).

Whether you have kids or not, balancing a slew of commitments can get overwhelming for women with [ADHD](#), said [Stephanie Sarkis](#), Ph.D, a psychotherapist and author of several books on ADHD, including [10 Simple Solutions to Adult ADD](#). That’s because the nature of ADHD makes it tougher to prioritize and schedule, she said.

And, unfortunately, it’s common for women with ADHD to beat themselves up for not getting things done. Many women feel incapable and struggle with low [self-esteem](#), Matlen said. “Women with ADHD are well aware of their shortcomings, but often they don’t understand [them] in the context of their ADHD brain.”

Here, Matlen and Sarkis, who both have ADHD, offer their tips for coping with overwhelm when you have the disorder.

Create Structure

Structure is vital for people with ADHD, and it’s key for calming the sensation of being overwhelmed, Sarkis said. Without it, she said, inertia can set in, leading to even more stress over time. When creating a structured schedule, record everything you need to do each day. Block off free time, too.

Get Educated

Educate yourself on how ADHD affects you, Matlen said. For instance, ADHD has nothing to do with being incapable, unintelligent or lazy. ADHD is a medical disorder that impairs your executive functioning, or your ability to plan, prioritize, organize and pay attention.

Take a Step Back

Reassess your situation and options, Matlen said. For instance, if you have kids and work full-time, can you switch to a flexible schedule, work from home or go part-time? “Know that once your children are older, the workload as a parent often retreats and full time work might be easier,” she said.

Hire Help

This might mean hiring a housekeeper, professional organizer, bookkeeper and babysitter, even when you’re home, Matlen said. Many people mistakenly believe that hiring professional help is a luxury. It’s not.

As Matlen explained, “it’s an accommodation so that the adult woman with ADHD can manage her full schedule without falling apart.” For instance, hiring a bookkeeper to manage your bills and filing not only helps you stay organized but it also lets you avoid overdraft fees and IRS penalties. (And those definitely get pricey.)

Set Limits

“It is important to set limits and say ‘no’ to the things that are not a good use of our time, or things that do not make us happy,” Sarkis said. Saying no can feel uncomfortable, especially if you’re a people-pleaser.

If this sounds familiar, Sarkis suggested these three strategies.

1. **Recognize that you might be a people-pleaser.** According to Sarkis, a people-pleaser does things for others to their own detriment. They withhold their feelings or give until it hurts. They may be afraid of showing their “true self” because of a fear of rejection or dislike by others.
2. **Consider the reasons you don’t set limits.** For instance, Sarkis said, is it because you’re iffy on what setting limits entails or you’re worried what’ll happen when you do decline?
3. **Determine which activities provide energy and which drain it.** Then consider how you can minimize or eliminate the negative ones.

"The more you say "yes" to things you enjoy and "no" to unhealthy or non-beneficial things in your life, the happier you will be."

And always remember that it's OK to say no, she said. "In fact, it is one of your rights as a person."

Revise Your Expectations

Avoid setting sky-high expectations, and comparing yourself to others without ADHD. As Matlen said, "Don't expect your home to look like your neighbor's or sister's. When ADHD is in the mix, it's imperative to give yourself some slack."

Reach Out

Connect with other women who have ADHD and struggle with the same or similar experiences. Remember you're not alone! Matlen suggested checking out these websites: www.ADDConsults.com, www.MomsWithADD.com, www.WomenWithADHD.com. Or "search on Facebook for 'women with ADHD.'"

Seek Therapy

Women with ADHD can feel especially overwhelmed when their ADHD isn't being properly treated. Seek [therapy](#) with a clinician who specializes in adult ADHD. Therapy can help you manage disruptive symptoms – and dismantle decades of diminished self-esteem, Matlen said. Plus, a therapist can help you establish structure for your day, Sarkis said.

Reassess Your Relationships

"You need people in your court – people who understand you and will not judge or berate you," Matlen said. She suggested surrounding yourself with loved ones who understand and accept you, and letting go of people who don't and of toxic relationships.

Remember Your Strengths

When you're overwhelmed, it's easy to forget your strengths and focus on your shortcomings. But Matlen encouraged readers to focus on strengths. "You may be a great listener, have musical or art talent, be full of exciting ideas and projects, etc."

Having ADHD is overwhelming enough. But when you're juggling many responsibilities and wearing many hats, you might feel like you're sinking.

As Matlen said, remember to cut yourself some slack. Re-evaluate your schedule, consider all your options and seek support. ADHD is a real disorder that disrupts your daily life. But with some help and readjustments, you can curb your stress and [anxiety](#).

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