



Attention-Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) & Money Management Woes

AD/HD is a neurobiological disorder that affects attention, focus and control of impulsive behaviours. The symptoms involve two clusters: inattentive behaviours and impulsive-hyperactive behaviours that form three subtypes:

Combined – both inattentive and impulsive-hyperactive features (most frequent subtype).

Predominantly Inattentive – distractibility, loss of focus, difficulty with time management, initiating and completing tasks (second most frequent subtype).

Predominantly Impulsive-Hyperactive – difficulty tolerating delay and controlling impulses of all types (e.g., desires for food, high speed), jumping to conclusions, interrupting, physical restlessness (least frequent subtype).

Characteristics	Money Management Woes
Inattention to details, difficulty initiating tasks that are routine (lack novelty and interest)	Difficulty paying bills, filing taxes, procrastination re paperwork
Difficulty keeping track of personal belongings – Disorganization at home and office	difficulty locating important papers, receipts
Difficulty with planning	Difficulty with budgeting, saving
Intolerance of delay, impulsivity	Buying on impulse, excessive spending, changing jobs or residence without considering consequences

Potential Negative Financial Outcomes:

- significant debt
- high credit card balances
- problem loans
- penalties for failing to complete paperwork (taxes, registrations, late payments)
- bankruptcy
- underemployment
- not prepared for retirement.



Recommended Strategies for Assisting Adults with AD/HD with Money Management:

Time management

- Planner (include banking, paying bills, sorting mail and email)
- Prioritizing To-do lists – daily and weekly (importance and urgency)

Organization of financial papers

- One “special spot” for financial papers; files with dividers (e.g., for taxes keep a folder for receipts for tax-deductible items)
- Daily mail routine (put financial papers in special spot immediately)
- Filing system (labeled file folders, colour coding)
- Consider on-line banking (no hunting for checks, recording them, mailing them) – automatic withdrawals for monthly payments (e.g., car payment, mortgage)
- Maintain an organizational system – need a simple routine and structure the AD/HD adult can live with – sort, put away things on a daily basis

Breaking down tasks into manageable chunks

- Develop a budget or spending plan, e.g. Calendar system: can see visually when have financial obligations (at beginning of month, record all incoming money and major financial obligations)
- Keep track of expenses for one week (carry a notebook, use palm pilot...), then one month, etc.
- Break down specific tasks to be done daily, weekly, monthly and yearly.

Control impulsive spending

- Take a list when go shopping
- Use cash rather than credit cards (cut up credit cards; freeze them in an ice tray)
- Carry a calculator to add up purchases as they accumulate
- wait a certain number of hours before a purchase

Sharing information with adults with AD/HD:

- Provide key points in written format with interesting visuals
- Colour code materials
- Engage them actively with material
- Allow movement or build in movement breaks
- Break information into small chunks
- Provide routines and cue systems
- Build in opportunities for practice