

Speaker 1 ([00:00](#)):

If it's October (which it is) then it must be ADHD Awareness Month (which it is) and it's ADHD Awareness Month, it must be time for TADD talks from ADDA. They're kind of like TED talks but shorter, snappier, ADHD-friendly, if you will. And this year they're all about executive function. You know ...that front part of our ADHD brains that helps us plan and prioritize and remember what we're doing and follow through. Or not. So here's your chance to hear from 31 different experts. It's just another way ADDA supports adults with ADHD. Let's listen in..

Speaker 2 ([00:39](#)):

Hello. Welcome to TADD talks with ADDA. I'm Liz Lewis. I'm the founder of healthy adhd.com and ADHD enclave coming to you from central PA. I am excited that ADDA invited me to be with you today. So this year ADDA has chosen the topic of executive function for the annual tad talks. I've always liked executive function as a framework to talk about symptoms. And in particular, I like Dr. Brown's model, which is what we are using. I actually think it's great to have language, to describe our experiences. My only issue with executive function as we sort of toss around the word executive function on the internet, is that having a conceptual understanding of ADHD is great, and in particular the little chart to look at is great, but it doesn't actually help us day to day. It's really hard in the moment to pull up that little chart in your mind and be like, this is my, you know, I'm having a problem right now with emotional regulation, that does not always work.

Speaker 2 ([01:48](#)):

So I've been thinking a lot about this and you know, what I think is kind of helpful, flexibility, agility, adaptability, and how we think about ourselves and how we think about ADHD and all the symptoms that each of us are dealing with. So, I just wanna be clear like over time and through experiences, some of us can get really rigid in how we think and how we respond to the world. And this actually makes all of our executive functions worse when we are sort of in a pattern of behavior and thinking. So, I designed a whole session that I'm going to go through some of this at the conference for today in the interest of time, I want to focus on one specific executive function that I hear about a lot, and that is activation on the Dr. Brown model. It is represented as organizing, prioritizing, and starting to work.

Speaker 2 ([02:52](#)):

This is also known as task initiation. So this is the thing, we with ADHD, we have a lot of conditions to doing things. I did not come up with this on my own. Dr. Russ Ramsey actually calls this Goldilock syndrome. We need to have things just so. Everyone has conditions, everyone, but with us, with an ADHD adults, we have this sort of delicate balance of internal and external conditions that have to be met in order to do the thing. Otherwise, we are much more likely to not do the thing. So I'm gonna start with what he calls external conditions. So external conditions are things like environmental cues and distractions, or having your supplies. At the point of performance. I personally have a ton of external conditions to doing things. If I want to write, I have to have all of my reference materials spread out around me. The room has to be just a certain temperature and the ceiling fan has to be on, and my belly has to be full. And my water bottle has to be full and sitting next to me. And I prefer to have my dog here, but my dog is old and she farts a lot. And so I have to have a, a candle lit usually most of the time. See, I know it's ridiculous, but those are my external conditions to writing.

Speaker 2 ([04:23](#)):

So switching for a second, let's talk about internal conditions. Internal conditions are things like mood being in the mood to do the thing, having perceived that you have enough energy to do the thing, ambiguity, if you don't understand the task, why you're doing it, what the expectation is, how to start, ambiguity is gonna kill it. Like it's, you're unlikely to get started. And big thing with ADHD is tolerating discomfort, almost everything from getting up in the morning to, I don't know anything requires momentary discomfort to do it. It is not comfortable to stand up from my chair right now. I don't wanna do it. And that temporary discomfort for some of us with ADHD can be a little debilitating. We, we can't face the Ugh of doing things. And so learning how to tolerate that and move through it and knowing that you can feel uncomfortable, but you can still do things is a huge part of task initiation.

Speaker 2 ([05:27](#)):

And also, I describe this as the ADHD equation we do in our head where our internal dialogue says, how much time is this gonna take? How much energy, what are the chances somebody's gonna get mad at me? What are the chances I'm gonna be disappointed or upset? What if the outcome we can't control the outcome? It could be negative. It could be positive. We just don't know this internal chatter is a big it's a big thing for us and if it is not online and it's not working for us, and sometimes it's not it's, it's really hard for all of our conditions to be met. So again, there is this balance between internal and external conditions for a lot of us to do things. And it is tough and it's delicate for a lot of us. So that is sort of me explaining the executive function and why it feels so hard. So I'm gonna give you, I think I came up with four, yeah. Four ways to try to get, to try to think about this, starting in a different way, little bit more flexibly. Okay. Number one, identify your conditions, your internal and external conditions. Hopefully yours are not as crazy as mine, but maybe they are. I mean, that's fine, but really think about it. What are your conditions to doing things? What do you need to know to start

Speaker 2 ([06:51](#)):

Number two, align the task as much as you can to your needs and values. And I'm going to give you questions to ask yourself for this. First, why is this task important to me? Is this task important to me? How does it align with my why or my purpose or my needs and values? Does it align? If not, maybe you need to reconsider what are the consequences? If I don't do it, why not do it tomorrow or next week or next year? And the last one is what's the payoff. If I do. So, ask yourself some questions to figure out if this even aligns this task, this thing in front of you, to your needs and values, try to put it in that space for yourself.

Speaker 2 ([07:50](#)):

All right. Number three, get really clear on the first step I have noticed with my clients and with myself, if I don't know the first step to do something, if I don't really break it down into my new detail, sometimes I just can't. For example, when I wanna write, I can't just start writing. I actually, the first thing I have to do before I do anything else is I have to close out my email because I can't have my computer open with my email browser and, and pull up a document at the same time. It's not gonna work. So for me, number one is to close out my email. So get really clear on the first step, no matter how tiny. All right, last one, number four. And this is gonna sound like, I don't know, like a broken record, because you've probably heard this before, but make it time bound. When you were feeling Ugh about doing something, especially a non-preferred task in front of you. Don't don't picture the finish line.

Speaker 2 ([08:51](#)):

Remind yourself that you can be uncomfortable. You can tolerate anything for one minute. You can tolerate anything for three minutes. So engage in this Ugh sort of starting behavior, whatever it is for a very, very short period of time. At the end of that time, check in, see if you've made any progress. See how you feel. Are you still in the Ugh or have you already moved through it? Could you tolerate another three minutes? Okay. Those are my four tips for being a little bit more flexible in activating as an executive function. I'm glad you could join me today for ADDA's TADD Talk about executive function and activation. I'm Liz Lewis. If you want more information about me or my work with ADHD adults, find me online healthyadhd.com or email me liz@healthyadhd.com. Thanks for your attention.

Speaker 1 ([09:55](#)):

Hey congrats. You did it. Listen to the entire TA talk. And if you think this is great info, there's even more at the 2022 international ADHD conference. It's a hybrid conference that happens November 16th through the 19th live in Dallas, Texas UL cast on the web as a virtual event, find out more at [ADA that's d.org](http://ADAthat'sd.org), where you can catch ADHD webinars, join peer support groups and get ADHD classes. It's truly priceless, but membership costs less than \$8 a month. Okay. Enough of the chatter we'll see you tomorrow with more executive function information.