

Loving Someone with The Gift of ADD

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Do you want to create a passionate partnership?

If you love someone with ADD you can learn how to

- increase emotional intimacy and satisfaction in the relationship,
- create positive habits to prevent blow outs,
- recognize the power of the “ADD zone” to unleash cooperation.
- Create a positive reframe of ADD symptoms,
- Start activities that will create positive partnership habits

Can you relate to this?

“When I point out how some of the things he does is because of his ADD, like impulsivity, speaking his mind, and lack of attention to certain things or keeping a good attention span, he tells me he can understand that. But understanding that does not fix it.”

- This E-book will present a revolutionary new approach to increasing relationship satisfaction – a focus on creating habits that will create happiness and intimacy, rather than a focus on solving problems.
- This E-book will show readers how to create powerful partnerships rather than just managing relationship crises.
- This E-book will validate your struggles of living with your ADD partner and give you skills for creating intimacy in light of specific challenges.

Have you ever struggled with this?

“You see, after my boyfriend got in control of his life as a child and adolescent, he stopped seeking help for his ADD. The things I was witnessing with him were the untreated ADD symptoms. I asked him if he was still getting help for this issue, and would tell me “oh its not a big deal, I already grew out of it”. His parents and family seemed to think the same thing. No body treated his ADD like it was still around, although, to someone like me, who knows the symptoms, I could see the ADD was still very much present.”

This E-book will give you the tools for helping your partner see the role ADD plays in your relationship. How? If you learn to see the gifts of ADD, your partner will be more willing to see the role ADD plays in his or her life.

One reader writes me:

“I am still trying to convince my husband that this is a real issue and we can get help, but he is still very reluctant to it. I think deep down he knows that there is a problem, but facing that do not sit well with him.”

A person will more willingly face problems if they realize that you are not blaming them and can also appreciate the many gifts they have in addition to the struggles.

Introduction

Setting Expectations to Keep Your Sanity

“The only thing I was certain about was that I love my boyfriend, so I knew that I would figure it out and do whatever it took. I also knew how much he loved me. Of course I would go through spells where I would forget about his ADD and just look at his behavior and translate it as lack of love. But when I was in my right state of mind, I could see otherwise.”

Because the symptoms of ADD read like a checklist of complaints, it’s easy for a partner to throw up their hands in despair and wonder – “can this ever work?” The quote above guides the way toward a strategy for setting realistic expectations. Once you know the symptoms of ADD you can realize that these symptoms are differences – not behavior meant to annoy you.

The symptoms of ADD are real and debilitating. They can be clustered into three categories:

- Difficulty concentrating
- Feeling driven by a motor
- Impulsiveness

Many ADD experts have argued that these symptoms are all caused by a failure of executive functioning (Barkley 2007). Whereas most people have a “little general” or an “inner CEO” in them that directs, controls, and organizes their lives, people with ADD are driven instead by impulses, whims, and emotions.

Adult ADD is a relatively new phenomenon, and as such, only recently made it into the 2013 edition of *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual*, the formal diagnostic manual for psychologists and psychiatrists. Leading ADD experts Russell Barkley, Kevin Murphy and Mariellen Fischer (2007) have found that persons with Adult ADD are often:

- Distracted easily by unimportant stimuli
- Impulsive in decision making
- As if driven by motor and have difficulty stopping when involved in a task
- Prone to jump into a project with following directions
- Likely to forget about promises and commitments
- Likely to mix up the order and sequence of well defined tasks
- Likely to drive their cars too fast
- Likely to struggle with paying attention in work and recreation
- Disorganized (p. 188).

Just realizing that these symptoms are the way your partner works may help you to set expectations that won't keep you constantly in a state of disappointment or anger. One way to keep the passion alive is to see the gifts in these "symptoms."

Quick Tips:

It's not 50-50.

- Don't get bogged down in who is doing their fair share. For a relationship to work each person has to contribute 100%. Once you recognize the way in which your partner is contributing that you may not have been counting, you will feel less

resentment. For example, your partner may do sloppy housework but keep your social life hopping – that counts!

- There's no accounting for taste – don't get in arguments where there's no right or wrong answer. If your partner likes a table cloth on the table and you don't, have a discussion that doesn't turn into a logical debate or argument. There is no right or wrong answer – the only way out is to recognize the difference in taste and creativity compromise.

The Gifts of ADD and Why You Need to Know Them

Generally it is pretty straightforward that we are attracted to those who like us and who show us they like us. That is so simple it hardly seems worth taking the time to say it. But why do many of us fall into the trap of nagging or scolding or trying to change those we love. When we keep the focus on what's wrong we decrease the attraction and ease of loving communication. When we focus on what is right we increase the attraction and communication and loving gestures flow effortlessly.

So if you love someone with ADD, you need to focus on the gifts of ADD to keep the passion alive. The biggest benefit is that the real problems will be resolved not by scolding but by unleashing the motivation in your partner to cooperate with you.

When you focus on your partner's gifts, you make them more likely to cooperate with your desire for them to pay attention to you and follow through on commitments.

When you focus on your partner's problems, you make them less likely to cooperate with you.

Why is that?

1) You get more of what you focus on. By constantly bringing your partner's symptoms front and center, you bring more attention to them, creating more problems. If you've read anything at all about the law of attraction or more scientifically the Self-Fulfilling Prophecy, you know that you draw to you more of what you focus on.

2) Reactance is a fundamental law of human nature. It means that if someone is trying to control you, most people feel a natural tendency to buck the control and demonstrate that they cannot be controlled. This is a common human tendency, **BUT IT IS MUCH STRONGER IN PEOPLE WITH ADD!!!** The more you try to control your partner's symptoms the more they will buck you. If you have ever heard of "reverse psychology" which is not a real psychology term but most people understand that it means if you want something from a reactant person you need to ask for the opposite. If you have ever tried to get a 2 year old, a teenager or a person with high levels of reactance to do anything, you may have discovered yourself that "reverse psychology" works.

3) When you focus on your partner's problems, you violate the fundamental law of attraction. They feel less attracted to you and then they begin to question the commitment, which sets up a vicious and destructive cycle in the relationship.

**So, You need to know the gifts of ADD
to create a Passionate Partnership.**

The Gifts of ADD

The typical ADD symptoms of impulsiveness, focusing difficulty, and non-compliant behavior can be reframed as creativity. For example, the ADD tendencies toward being “spacey” and daydreaming will be shown to promote fortuitous insight, imagination, daring originality, and intuition.

Nature can provide adults with ADD the calming influence they need. If your partner gets lost staring out windows or planning extreme vacations, you can be reassured that his or her constant need for activity and unquenchable desire to connect with nature are important personal needs and style that offer a great gift.

Many times when ADD adults are not paying attention they are tuned into other people on a deeper level – it is a gift of interpersonal intuition. ADD adults can seem distracted when they are connected to you on an emotional level. They may be sensing what you feel or wondering what’s really bothering you, all the while not listening closely to your words.

The ADD symptom of hyperactivity can also be seen as a surplus of energy. You will be guided to view your surplus energy as a valuable resource. Impulsivity can also be seen as a willingness to take risks. It can also be a need to create structure rather than follow structure. Impulsivity can also be seen as an authenticity, ADD adults are connected to their inner whims and urges and you will never be left wondering what they are really thinking, feeling or wanting to do.

The lack of emotional control can also be seen as a capacity for emotional sensitivity and expression. Emotional intensity is a great gift that opens up the possibility of authentic relating, and deep passions to fuel your partnership.

Not that you have seen how these symptoms can be translated into gifts, practice focusing on all of the gifts in your partner.

Creativity: Life is Messy – With an ADD person

The messy, unplanned lifestyle of your ADD partner can be overwhelming. One key to learning to cope with this lifestyle is to recognize that disorganization is not meant to make you mad. The messes and the unruly hours and erratic schedules can be directly translated into creativity. A creative person may be so lost in his or her imagination they don't even notice the messes!

When you feel tempted to scream "don't you see these huge messes?" you might remember that in fact your ADD partner may quite literally not be paying any attention to the messes they create. That's right, he or she may be so lost in thoughts, imagination or generating new ideas that the real world is like the paler reflection of their real world – their imagination.

There are many specific strategies to use to actually begin to solve the problem of the messes, but a big step toward harmony in your relationship is the simple realization that they are not doing it on purpose and many times they are not paying attention the messes that annoy you so much. Indeed, they probably don't even notice the messes that vex your day to day existence.

Coping with Erratic Schedules

For the ADD partner, the daily nine to five grind can be intolerable. An ADD adult often has a great need to “mix-it-up”, to have a lifestyle that gives them freedom and control over his or her schedule. Many ADD adults like to work at odd hours, or have a need to be free when others are working. ADD adults can’t stand it when every day is like the last day or this week is just like last week. They feel compelled to break free of the daily grind. This is related to the ADD need for constant stimulation. Just breaking up a schedule – say working late in the evening rather than in the morning – can provide some of the needed stimulation.

One of the major themes of my book *The Gift of Adult ADD* (Honos-Webb 2008) is that the “symptoms” of ADD should be translated into needs. This means that rather than saying the ADD adult has a disorder because they seek high levels of stimulation, we could do better by saying that the ADD adult has a high need for stimulation and should work toward meeting that need.

In this way, rather than blaming your ADD partner for their crazy lifestyle, you might see it as a step toward meeting his or her need for high levels of novelty. This trait is directly related to creativity. Creativity is the compulsion to bring something new into the world and is directly related to being bored with the status quo. You might notice the creativity your partner brings to the table in addition to or in place of complaining about the disruptions and erratic schedules. As an example begin to notice how your partner makes the world seem more alive, more interesting, draws your attention to things you didn’t notice and makes you see the world in a whole new way.

Interestingly, the more you appreciate your partner for the gift, the more likely they will be to cooperate with your need for order, structure and organization. In addition to turning the

scolding dynamic around by focusing on and appreciating the gift of creativity, you can try some of the basic tips below to help your partner get organized.

Quick Tips:

- 1) Don't try to get your partner to spend long periods of time cleaning up or organizing. Ask for 15 minutes a day.
- 2) Create a challenge where you and your partner throw out 5 things a day.
- 3) Offer to be your partner's organization buddy if something needs sustained attention. Go with him or her and help them organize.
- 4) Make a weekly trip to an office store or a specialty store in organizing. Think of it as a field trip, just for gaining ideas for how to organize. If each month you buy one new organizing tool, you will begin to see changes over time. (Or have a disorganized pile of organizing tools....)

Interpersonal Intuition: Translate Your Conflicts into Guidance

Free Therapy from Your ADD Partner

Every relationship has conflicts. All of us are so different – in terms of needs, wants, values, personality styles – that it's a miracle that anybody ever gets along for more than five minutes. Sometimes ADD partners can use their great gift of interpersonal intuition to create even more conflict. Interpersonal intuition means that sometimes when your partner is not listening to you they are distracted by tuning into your underlying emotional state or unspoken issues you are

dealing with. When you are talking about a great victory you want to talk about, your partner might come back to you with a statement of how afraid you are. It may seem to make no sense and it may irritate you out of your wits. Of course your ADD partner may be off target, but many times when he or she makes these off the wall comments he is right on. ADD people have a great ability to feel underlying emotions that are driving behavior or are being covered over by behavior. For example, you may talk about achievements as a way to sooth yourself from an underlying anxiety. The ADD partner will tune into the anxiety and not listen to what you say about the achievements. In some way you can see this as “free therapy.” They are pointing out the underlying source of your need to talk about achievements. The problem is of course, you may not really want “free therapy.”

Here are some quick tips for handling “free therapy”:

- 1) Don't argue with it, validate but indicate that is not your point. For example, “You're right I'm always a little anxious, and it's still important for you to listen to my recent success.”
- 2) If you have any interest in exploring it deeper you might say, “you're usually so good at reading people like a book, what do you think I'm so afraid of?”
- 3) If you think your partner is off the mark completely you can still maintain good will by saying something like, “That's an interesting perspective.”

Translate Irritations Into A Practice

Because ADD partners can be electric in their energy and overbearing in their emotional displays, you might find yourself irritated frequently. One strategy for handling this is to translate your irritation into a practice. Just as if you want to get physically strong, you have to dedicate time each day to lifting weights, or if you want to achieve mental peace you have to

become disciplined in setting aside time for devotion, relaxation or meditation, so too do you have to develop a practice for tolerating irritation if you are going to be able to build a strong partnership. Much of your irritations will be caused by the partner directly but there are many other factors that create your irritation.

One possible activity to try is to draw a pie chart in those moments where you are really irritated. In the pie chart you will allocate percentages to the multiple sources of your irritation. For example, if you are really irritated with a partner you can consider some of the following sources contributing to your irritation:

- 1) Work stressors in your own life that have nothing to do with your partner
- 2) HALT – are you Hungry, Angry, Lonely or Tired about other things that contribute to your irritations?
- 3) Family stressors involving your children, your siblings, your brothers that are wearing at you but not directly caused by your partner.
- 4) Lack of recreation in your life. This is a recreation-deficit disorder and should not be blamed on your partner. If you create more recreation, relaxation and fun, your ability to handle differences will increase.

These are just a few alternative sources of irritation that you should consider before you fall into the trap of believing your partner is the only source of your irritation.

Another strategy for reducing your irritation is to think of all the problems that are common in the general population – that you don't have. You can be grateful for your partner when you get a sense of struggles many people go through that you don't have to. If you were to read through enough magazine articles about relationship struggles you might find that all of the

following are very common relationship problems. You can circle the ones that don't apply to you and funnel some of your irritation off by being grateful for these problems you don't have:

- Your partner blows all of his or her own money and your money
- Your partner had a drug or alcohol problem
- Your partner has serious legal problems
- Your partner is addicted to porn
- Your partner has no interest in sex
- Your partner has too much interest in sex
- Your partner is an ex-con
- Your partner is unfaithful to you
- Your partner is not a good parent
- Your partner alienates all your friends
- Your partner won't do anything around the house
- Your partner can't find or keep a job
- Your partner is physically or emotionally abusive
- Your partner is a gambling addict

This is just a small sampling of common relationship problems. If you find that many of these do apply to you, you might consider getting some personal therapy to find out if you are able to know what your own needs are and take care of yourself. If you are in a physically or severely emotionally abusive relationship, you should seek help immediately. However, if you find that you do not have most of these problems, you can feel grateful and perhaps gain

perspective on the problems that you do have. Many times we compare our relationships to a false ideal of some perfect soul mate relationship that is conflict free. In reality, that is not a fair standard to compare your relationship to.

In this way, you translate your irritation into a practice of examining your own life and current stressors as well as gratefulness for the problems you do not have.

Mental Toughness

Sometimes the quickest fix is so obvious but we don't like the answer. In our world of tell-all, victim mentality we often overlook that taking the hits of our daily life with mental toughness without expecting our romantic partners to hear all about it and patch it up can have a transformative effect on a relationship. If you want a passionate relationship, you can't expect that one person, even the one you commit your life to, would or should want to hear about every upset in your life. This is probably sound advice for any relationship, but with an ADD partner, the requirement of listening to every in and out, every dramatic turn in your personal or professional life will likely cause intense disappointment in you. An ADD partner will be less likely to have the patience to listen to the details of your personal disappointments.

I think it's important for your partner to learn to pay closer attention to you. In my book *The Gift of Adult ADD* (Honos-Webb 2008), I offer many tips and tools for the ADD adult to begin to pay attention and listen to their romantic partners. For example I suggest "The five minute rule." ADD adults should begin to "build their listening muscles" by practicing listening without interruption to their romantic partner for 5 minutes each day. When they get good at that they can increase their "reps" or increase the amount of time they listen without interruption.

So that's one tool you can use to fix your ADD partner. But you also have to work on fixing yourself. For example, you can practice building your own capacity to tolerate

disappointments without having to share each and everyone with your romantic partner. Imagine yourself as a fierce ninja warrior who sees challenges as obstacles to be overcome with ferocious effort. If someone is threatening you in a work situation, or a friend is annoying you, or a tangential talker is ruining your book group, set yourself the challenge of facing the challenge yourself, toughening up and working toward problem solution or just tolerating the predictable ups and downs of life. Of course you want your ADD partner to practice listening, and if you practice facing down some of your own problems with daring and guts without sharing each and every turn with your partner you will find relief from your chronic sense of disappointment.

What Can I Learn From This?

The easiest thing to do in any conflict is to blame the other person. The most beneficial thing for the relationship and your own personal growth is to ask yourself first, “What can I learn from this?” For example if you constantly fight about not getting your needs met – whether it be for attention, sex or support – you might learn how to translate your complaints into needs. You can learn to honor your needs and gracefully share them without complaining that you’re not getting what you want. It can be as simple as saying “ I want to have more time with you when you are not texting other people or searching the internet” rather than saying “You’re always on that damn phone!”

When you ask yourself, “What can I learn from this?” you might also find that you begin to realize more and more what you really do need. It’s easy for all of us to get caught up in the struggles of day-to-day life and forget to connect with our own deepest needs. Our conflicts can be signposts helping us to figure out what we need most in any given time. The trick is to

- 1) figure out how to meet the need and whether our partner should be the person to meet the need
- 2) if our partner is essential to meeting the need, make a request rather than a complaint.

Step one can provide great liberation if you realize that no person can possibly meet all of our needs. For example if we have a great need to share our enthusiasm about combing a beach with a metal detector, but our partner shows no interest in the topic, we might be better served to find a group of people who share our passion and get that need met in a supportive setting.

When your first question in any conflict is “What can I Learn from this?” we will accelerate our personal growth and increase our own sense of passion and purpose.

Emotional Sensitivity: Who Wants To Be An Intimacy Pioneer?

Loneliness Offers The Possibility Of Something New

One of the great gifts of ADD is emotional intensity. You probably have experienced that you rarely are left in the dark wondering what does he really want now? ADD adults can seem to overreact, to have an easy fire temper and many other problems that feel difficult to live with. You can begin to understand that underlying these symptoms – including impulsiveness – is a clear direct and strong connection his or her emotional currents. If you can channel this sensitivity in the right direction it can become fuel for a passionate partnership.

You can help your partner and yourself translate your own emotions into guidance. As an example, the ability to admit when you feel lonely can help you become a relationship repair genius. Many times people believe that when they feel lonely in a relationship it means there is something wrong with the relationship. But no matter how many social connections you have and no matter how intimate your romantic relationship, you will at times be left feeling lonely. No person can ever understand where you are coming from and connect with you all day every day. Some research has shown that even highly attuned mothers of newborns providing the optimal level of care, are only responsive 30% of the time. We can hardly expect that level of

attunement in a romantic relationship. Therefore there will be many times – EVEN IN OPTIMAL CONDITIONS – when we will feel lonely in relationships.

The best ways for handling this feeling are to give yourself permission to express it without blame. If you can simply tell your partner that you feel lonely and why you feel lonely you have increased your intimacy in your relationship and likely decreased anger and miscommunications. There is also great benefit to increasing your capacity to tolerate loneliness. If you can feel lonely and not have it turn to anger you are giving a great gift to your partner. Of course he or she needs to learn this basic skill of being lonely without lashing out too.

The feeling of loneliness can help you create a new sense of accepting the magnitude of our many differences. Being able to express it without blame opens the door to increasing intimacy and understanding. Sometimes the benefit is that you agree to disagree or that you accept differences are not disorders. This means you don't make your partner wrong for not being able to see a situation from your perspective. You can take the approach – “hmmm, isn't that interesting how differently we see the same situation” and recognize that our varied perceptions is a fundamental condition of being a human.

Disappointment Is A Call To Examine Expectations

When you feel disappointed on a day to day basis it is a signal to examine your relationships. I hope it is obvious that major life issues such as abuse or infidelity don't fall into this category. By disappointment, I mean things like your partner not listening closely to you or getting you a gift that's far off target from your own tastes or being insensitive about an upset in your life. By examining your expectation, I don't mean throwing them out. Some of them will be essential standards for you to uphold, like the expectation that your partner demonstrate respect

for you in an on-going way, but some of your expectations you might find to be unreasonable when you examine them.

Only you can know what needs of your own are entirely essential to your well being. For example, one person may know in the core of her being that her partner must show a high capacity to be caring, to show sympathy for others. Other expectations may prevent you from being able to stay happy in any relationship. For example, one woman who was single listed her expectations for a partner as a man who was emotionally sensitive, highly educated, with financial abundance, who was very attractive and physically fit. She felt that she could never find anyone who lived up to her expectations. In her case, she kept raising the bar so that the slightest inattention became a signal of emotional insensitivity. In addition, her “expectations” read like a superficial list of demands. Sure it might paint a picture of many women’s ideal mate, but her focus was so much on finding someone who lived up to her expectations, she often failed to consider her own level of emotional sensitivity to incredible men who fell short of her expectations. As she began to translate each disappointment into a call to review her expectations, she began to look within and realized that the source of her expectations were own sense of insecurity. She realized that coming from a place of insecurity was not a great position to attract any man, let alone the “ideal man” by her standards.

In any intimate relationship, if you expect to never feel disappointed, your expectations are unrealistic. Remember that your partner will have different needs, expectations, ideals, values, habits than you. It is impossible for you not to have conflicts in assumptions and expectations. In this way, it is entirely predictable that on a daily basis you will both be disappointed with each other in some way. You may be disappointed with your ADD partner that she or he generates so many ideas that she never translates her big ideas into real world outcomes. Or your ADD

partner may be disappointed with you that you get bogged down in details and miss the fun in life. When you recognize that a disappointment-free relationship is unreasonable, you free yourself to begin the work of using disappointment to examine your own expectations. You will begin to sort out which expectations are reasonable or unreasonable. You can then look at your unreasonable expectations and continue the process of reflecting where they come from. You may find that unreasonable expectations come from:

- Hollywood movies
- Your parents need for you to live their unlived life
- your friends ideas about the ideal partner
- your own insecurity
- your family culture
- TV shows
- Magazines
- Self-help experts

Whatever the case, you can use your disappointment – not as an excuse to leave a relationship – but rather as an opportunity for increasing your personal growth and capacity for intimacy.

Should You Stay or Should You Go?

If you are wondering when has the line been crossed and when is it time to set your boundaries and gracefully leave a relationship, you will have to rely on your judgment, your heart, your emotions and support from those who don't have an agenda for you and your

relationship. Below I offer a tool for helping you gain some clarity. Before I reveal the tool, I'll give you some examples that show the complexity of deciding to stay or go.

*1) **The Smart and Sexy Pirate.** Sally was in love with her boyfriend who attractive and charming. He was also intelligent and kept her thinking and inspired. However she kept having this problem that she couldn't trust that he was faithful to her. He also wasn't sure she could trust everything he said. Sometimes she wondered if he had a hidden agenda with her.*

*2) **The Golden Retriever that Was Hard to Live With.** Beth was living with the guy of her dreams. When she met him she fell in love with his good looks and intelligence. Now that they were living together she realized he was not easy to be with. He argued about everything, always playing the devil's advocate. She knew he had a heart of gold and was totally devoted to her, but wondered if marriage was in the cards since day to day life was more challenging that she thought.*

*3) **The Trophy Partner.** Brad was in love with his girlfriend who was everything he ever dreamed of. She was beautiful and fun to be with. After they moved in together he noticed that she spend a lot of time recreational shopping and asked him if he would like to finance her cosmetic surgery. He thought she was already beautiful and didn't think she needed any improvements. She told him she just wanted to make him the happiest man in the world. He was worried about staying with someone who was so high maintenance, but was she was easy to talk to and the life of the party.*

Reading through these brief excerpts its obvious that each decision is highly personal and you would need to know lots more information to have a clear idea if a person should stay or go. But these stories illustrate the basic points of my tool for helping you gain clarity.

For purposes of simplification, think of each person as having 3 different layers that reveal themselves, the longer the relationship.

1. In the dating relationship, you only get to know the Superficial Side of your date. This is the person's personality and level of attractiveness. A person can be shy or outgoing, fun or serious, assertive or passive among many other traits that we can figure out within a few dates. Many people make decisions about whether to keep dating someone on appearance alone. Many people also make judgments about level of success early on and use that as the main factor in deciding whether to continue a relationship or not.

2. If a couple decides to live together or have been dating for a long time they get to see another layer – what is this person like to live with on a day-to-day basis – this is the Daily Dose layer. Some people are irritating, stressed out, easy to be with, woefully disorganized or super-orderly. A person who is more controlling might be harder to live with and a person who was more passive might be easier to live with.

3. At some point you will gain a sense of the Core Essence of a person. Is this person solid gold, easy to trust, predatory or a natural born wanderer among many possible examples.

Most of us understand that in deciding to stay in a relationship, the most important layer is going to be the Core Essence of a person. The problem is that it can be really hard to figure out what is the Core Essence of a person and what is the Superficial Side and what is the Daily Dose.

For example the Smart and Sexy Pirate was a thumbs up in the Superficial Side and the Daily Dose. He was attractive, successful and on a day to day basis fun and stimulating to be with. All of these traits can create high powered feelings of attraction that make it confusing that at the end of the day, you don't trust this guy. If you find yourself wondering if he's telling the truth, and knowing at some level he can't be faithful to you, you might consider if this guy is really a keeper. This can be really hard to do with all the intense feelings you might have that might drown out the still small voice that knows something is off. If deep down you know something is wrong but are hopeful that he will change once you get married, you might want to ask yourself if that is a realistic hope. Many times it is not.

In Beth's case, she was confused by the day to day irritations of arguments over small things. In her gut she knew the guy at his Core Essence was solid gold. When she reviewed her past relationships she realized they had failed because she had been attracted to the "bad boys." She reflected that those relationships had failed because over time she couldn't trust the bad boys who lived up to their reputation. When she was able to separate the day to day irritations as reflecting the friction of managing two lives with their own stressors from his central core as a loyal and loving partner she realized that she was eager to forge a passionate partnership with this "keeper." She sought therapy to understand why she had ever found "bad boys" so attractive and gain communication skills to smooth out the day to day irritations.

When Brad used the tool of layers to sort out his complicated feelings for his girlfriend he began to see that his girlfriend's consumerism was a reflection of a Core Essence that was empty and desperately insecure. Even though she was beautiful she never felt good enough. She had never explored her depths because she had so many men interested in her that if one relationship

didn't work out she always had many temptations and men eager to rescue her. He realized that spending his life supporting her recreational shopping to fill her inner void would be a life of hardship.

If you are wondering whether to stay or go, you can use this tool of peeling away the layers of the Superficial Side, The Daily Dose and The Core Essence to help you make your decision. The most important factor should always be whether you are passionate about your partner's Core Essence. Daily problems can be resolved with improved communication skills and other relatively easy fixes. It is foolish to believe that you will be able to make changes in a person's Core Essence. It might be tempting to stay with someone who impresses your friends with their attractiveness and charm. Sometimes you might be tempted to stay with someone whom you have great sexual chemistry with but are constantly questioning their honesty. If you are looking for a relationship for the long haul, focus on the Core Essence.

Try the activities on the next page if you need some help sorting out the different layers. Write from your gut rather than your prefabricated thoughts that you have re-hashed over and over again. If you start to contradict yourself – KEEP GOING! Don't try to be consistent, you just might uncover some deeper parts of your own self.

What I know about my partner's Core Essence is:

If I had enough self-esteem that I didn't need a "trophy partner" I would love to be with someone who was:

If I realized that the art of loving involves increasing my ability to love as much as be loved I would be able to:

After you complete this activity, read through your answers and jot down some notes about your partner if the following layers.

1. Superficial Side

2. Daily Dose

3. Core Essence

Your Role as the Non-ADDER

Why Scolding Won't Work: Relationship Mindfulness

I realized that with the type of person he was and with his ADD, me letting him know when he “hurt my feelings or upset me” every time it happened would take us nowhere. He did not have the patience for it.

I began to just let things go. He would say and do things that would really erk me, but I learned to just try to let at least half of those things role off of my shoulder. This actually helped me too, since I was not always getting upset. There were times when this was harder than others, but I would always tell myself “ he did not mean that, look at him he doesn't even realize what you said”.

Are you tired of getting nowhere with your efforts to help your ADD partner get with the program? It may be as simple as remembering to take his shoes off or as complicated as trying to get him to listen to you. One thing that is likely to make the problem worse is scolding.

The reason you keep scolding is that you believe it is your only path to changing the problems that are such big problems. The problem is that scolding is actually likely to make things much worse. Why?

The answer is a psychological term called “reactance.” Every human is driven by reactance but for those with ADD it is a driving personality trait. Reactance is the human tendency to feel threatened when someone tries to limit our freedom. When we feel someone is trying to control us, we may be driven to preserve our freedom by being downright defiant. A common example is if someone calls your home with a hard sell sales pitch, you might be inclined to hang up just because the person is so pushy, even if you might otherwise have been looking to gather information on that particular service. In your relationship, if you try to control another person, they might be motivated to resist just because of this human tendency to preserve our sense of freedom.

In ADD people, reactance tends to be a driving force. I think it is one of the gifts of ADD, but obviously it can go terribly wrong if unchecked. Why is it a gift? We know that many of our institutions and systems are quite frankly messed up – or at least in need of changes here and there. The person who has high levels of reactance is often going to be the person who points out what needs to be changed and be a force for change.

However, in romantic relationships, this same quality of reactance can wreak havoc. But there is a way out with you having to compromise your own freedom. The technique you can use to address problematic behaviors is Relationship Mindfulness.

It is an adaptation of the stress management technique called “mindfulness.” If you’ve picked up any magazine or self-help book in the last few years, no doubt you have heard about it. Mindfulness means that you take a few minutes where you will be present with your inner workings – thoughts, emotions – and observe them without judgment. Rather than act on them you just notice and observe. Relationship Mindfulness adapts this strategy for handling your partner. In a nutshell here is what you do. Think of an example like when your partner won’t pay attention to you because they are addicted to their iphone. For this to work, you have to in a non-scolding voice made a clear and direct request that you need them to limit their phone use. Here is the scolding way of handling the situation:

You: “Will you get off that phone? How many times do I have to ask, this is driving me crazy?”

Your Partner: “Get off my back, I’ll just be another minute.”

Notice that the scolding itself will probably create reactance, making your partner LESS LIKELY to actually get off the phone.

Here’s relationship mindfulness:

You: “I notice your still on your phone.”

Your Partner: “Oh yeah, sorry, I know you’ve told me it bothers you, I’ll just be another minute.”

You: “You just want to finish what you’re doing then, you’ll get off, that makes sense. I’m eager to connect with you.”

Your Partner: “That’s right, let me finish up here.”

While I won't promise this will solve the problem in one minute, you have made it **MORE LIKELY** that your partner will get off the phone, because you have not limited their freedom so you have not triggered reactance. In addition, they will feel **MORE LIKELY** to connect with you because you have shown that you understand their underlying motivation which might be to complete what they are in the middle of.

If it's true that scolding doesn't work, here are some roles that are **LESS LIKELY** to get the changes you want to see. Remember, the issue isn't that you are giving up on getting the changes you want to see, the point is that you want to increase yourself of having success by increasing your partners **MOTIVATION** to change.

To increase your partner's motivation what you want to do is develop the discrepancy between what you want for each other and the behavior they are doing. Keep your eye on the prize: having a Passionate Partnership. Just by reminding your partner of where you want to go, you will have more success than telling them what they should not be doing.

What Roles Not To Wear

If you have ADD, you will be relieved to share this with your romantic partner to turn around a damaging pattern that often happens in relationships where one person has ADD.

Do you love someone with ADD? If so you can begin to transform your relationship now or prevent problems down the line by identifying what role you might have fallen into.

Because ADD is defined by a checklist of symptoms, people who are partners with ADD adults often find it too easy to fall into unfortunate roles with their partners. Below are a few predictable roles you might recognize in yourself.

- 1) Parole officer – if you keep a close eye to recent infractions with a sense of duty about summarizing these to your partner, you have fallen into this role.
- 2) Police officer – a police officer doesn't so much monitor the running tally of infractions as she might be on the lookout for any new infraction. The police officer role means that you have a heightened awareness and tendency to try to catch your partner doing something he or she shouldn't do.
- 3) The judge is a role you might fall into in which you are constantly trying to examine the evidence to determine if your partner's behavior falls into the category of right or wrong. In this case you resort to argument and rationality to sift through evidence.
- 4) Lawyer – you might have taken on a lawyer role if you find that you are constantly making a case that your partner has committed a "crime" which can be as simple as forgetting a chore or as major as relapsing into an addiction. You can recognize this role by a constant need to ask questions as if you were giving a deposition. Questions are often leading, meaning that you are focused on finding fault rather than hearing it from your partner's perspective.
- 5) Accountant – an accountant keeps a running tally of credits and debits and is vigilant to ensure a "balanced budget of love." If you have an ADD partner you might be keen to see that they contribute their "fair share." When you feel that the balance sheet is unequal you resort to demands for more effort from your partner.

Although these might all feel like legitimate strategies for coping with a person with ADD each one of these roles will create substantial problems in your relationship. These roles are so compelling to take on because they seem like they will work! It seems if you point out

infractions or an imbalance in the love budget you are being sensible in addressing real problems. The reality is that these approaches do not work! This means you will not change behavior by taking on one or more or all of these roles.

All of these roles are adversarial and imply that you are right and your partner is wrong. That will destroy the power of a passionate partnership. A partnership means you must join together as equals. Passionate means that the heart, soul and emotions have equal weight as much as rational argument and accumulated evidence. If you clean up the kitchen five times more often than your partner, but your partner brings fun to the table every night – how do you do that math?

The Gifts of ADD are often not recognized. In order to appreciate your partner's gifts, you might enjoy my book *The Gift of Adult ADD* (2008). The resources at addisagift.com will help you transform your relationship from one of these unfortunate roles into a passionate partnership!

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Dr. Lara Honos-Webb is a clinical psychologist and author of *The Gift of ADHD*, *The Gift of ADHD Activity Book*, *The Gift of Adult ADD*, *The ADHD Workbook for Teens* and *Listening to Depression: How Understanding Your Pain Can Heal Your Life*.

What is Coaching? Coaching can take your family life into an entirely new direction. Small shifts in response to ADD behaviors can make huge differences in your results. Parents can channel high energy intensity by teaching kids to label, feel, and release emotions rather than acting them out. Kids can learn positive self talk and gain motivation and confidence.

For individual coaching, I "hold up the mirror" to the one-of-a-kind unique never-before-seen talents that you have to offer the world so you never again doubt your own precious gifts.

Sometimes your gifts are so big, others are shy to tell you about them or just downright intimidated by you. Sometimes your gifts have gone decades without being noticed because they weren't the sort of talents that got you good grades. I've seen people with open hearts, wicked senses of humor, geniuses for intimacy, and arrestingly original problem solvers who just got in trouble at school for the very gifts that now unleashed can change and heal the world.

About the Author.

Lara Honos-Webb, Ph.D., is a clinical psychologist licensed in California. She is author of *The Gift of ADHD* and *Listening to Depression: How Understanding Your Pain Can Heal Your Life* which was selected by Health Magazine as one of the best therapy books of 2006. *The Gift of ADHD Activity Book: 101 Ways To Transform Problems into Strengths* and *The Gift of Adult ADD* were released in 2008. Her work has been featured in Newsweek, The Wall Street Journal, The Chicago Tribune and Publisher's Weekly, ivillage.com, msn.com, abcnews.com as well as newspapers across the country and local and national radio and television. Her books have over 125,000 copies in print. The American Psychiatric Association included the *Gift of ADHD* (2005) in its recommended reading list in their "ADHD Parents Medication Guide." She specializes in the treatment of ADHD and depression and the psychology of pregnancy and motherhood; she speaks regularly on her areas of expertise. Honos-Webb completed a two-year postdoctoral research fellowship at University of California, San Francisco, and has been an assistant professor teaching graduate students. She has published more than 25 scholarly articles. Visit her websites at www.visionarysoul.com and addisagift.com.