

2017 ADHD Awareness Expo Transcript

“On Time and In Control with ADHD”

with Coach Lynne Edris

As I mentioned, I am an ADHD Coach, and I’ve been a coach for quite a while—at least a decade now. Of course, you can learn more about me, personally and professionally (what I do, where I come from, and all that kind of stuff), on my website at www.CoachingADDvantages.com. But I think it’s important that you realize that I get this topic more than many people do. I mean, I REALLY get it!

I’m a woman with ADHD myself, and one of my biggest struggles historically has been with punctuality. It was a struggle most of my life. I have three sisters and a Mom who are all very ADD, so I come from a whole family of chronically tardy women as we call it! My poor father spent a good portion of my childhood alone in the car waiting for us.

So, I grew up pretty much being late and being surrounded by tardiness, and I developed a reputation when I was a young adult for being late, much to my dismay. When I was in my 20s, I realized that some of my really good friends had been telling me that the events and things we were doing together started earlier than they really did so that I wouldn’t hold them up! And that was really tough for me to hear, because I’m a pretty smart cookie. I’m very responsible otherwise. That’s who I am and that’s who I want to be. Who I don’t want to be is the “chick” they have to tell the party starts at 8:00 when it really starts at 8:30 or 9:00!

So, fast-forward some 20-some odd years or more, and it’s a completely different story! I’m actually the reliable one. I’m the punctual one. It’s not easy for me, but I’ve learned how to be that way. So I mean it when I say that if I can learn to be on-time, you can, too! Because I really do get it.

Our struggle with being on-time, our struggle with being punctual, isn’t just a nuisance, and it isn’t just an inconvenience. It impacts every single area of our lives.

There are ***Social/Interpersonal Impacts...***

People draw conclusions about us when we’re late... about our character and about who we are. So, no matter how good our intentions are, and how much we strive to be punctual, when we are late (especially chronically late), people perceive us as “flaky”, inconsiderate, disrespectful, and even unreliable. And even if those labels don’t really match who we are on the inside, that’s how we’re showing up to others when we are consistently and chronically late. And...

It impacts our ***Work***, it impacts our ***Careers***, and our ***Schooling***.

Many of us have lost opportunities at work or at school because of our difficulty with being on-time. I’ve have many clients over the years who have either actually lost jobs or missed out on career advancement because they really can’t show up on time.

So, of course, there’s a real ***Financial*** component to our struggle with punctuality in, sort of, the bigger picture, not to mention in the day-to-day way it hits us in the wallet: speeding tickets, missed appointment fees or other late fees, and on and on. It really can take a big toll on our wallets and our financial well-being.

And, of course, our struggle with punctuality creates a lot of **Stress** for us when we're constantly on "High Alert." When we're constantly rushing and racing against the clock, as well as stress for those who are waiting for and counting on us.

But it also impacts our **Self-Concept**; how we feel about ourselves and how we see ourselves. Eventually, if we don't get a handle on our late tendencies (let's call it that) we can start to see ourselves as flaky. We can start to see ourselves as unreliable as well. And...

We start to believe that we don't have control of our lives or our futures.

So... if the cost of being late all the time, if the toll associated with being seen as flaky and unreliable by others and by ourselves, is so high..

Why don't we get it together?

Because it's not easy! I know that first-hand.

People with ADHD struggle with punctuality because we tend to have what I call a "Wonky Sense of time." We tend to be what we call "**Time Blind**". We have difficulty judging the Flow of Time. We have difficulty estimating how long tasks take or remembering how long they've taken in the past

Our sense of time tends to be sort of **Subjective** & Situational. So, it tends to be dependent on how interested in or stimulated we are in the moment. So, when we're bored or disengaged, time feels like it moves really slowly. When we're interested or when we're stimulated, time feels like it flies.

Also, our ADD-related **Executive Function Challenges** impact our ability to be on-time. Punctuality requires **Organizing**. It requires **Planning**. It requires **Prioritization**. All of those things can be a struggle with ADHD with our Executive Function challenges.

Many of us with ADD also have a punctuality-related problem that I call "**One-More-Thing-Itis**". That is when you have to do just that one more thing before you head out the door—that one more thing that makes you on the wrong side of being on time. And that One-More-Thing-Itis is definitely a symptom of Poor **Task Management**. So, not being organized and on top of the things we need to do can cause that One-More-Thing-Itis to be a really big problem. And that is all wrapped up in **Time-Management**. So, if we don't have good skills and good habits and behaviors in place for task management and the bigger picture time management stuff, One-More-Thing-Itis is definitely going to get in our way of being on time.

Some of us also have what I call a **Fear of Being Early!** You've heard of "FOMO", but I call this "**FOBE!**"

Sometimes, for a lot of us with ADHD, it feels like being bored or being Idle is worse than being late! And this, again, can be a symptom of poor Task-Management and poor Time Management. When we're Always Behind, we can't stand the thought of wasting time waiting or being early when there's so much to do!

These are all things that can contribute to why it's so difficult for an individual with ADHD to be on-time consistently.

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So, as individuals with ADHD, we have all these things working against our natural ability to be on-time, but it doesn't mean that it's not something we can learn to do. And seriously! If I can learn to do it, anybody can.

It's important to keep in mind the **Benefits of Learning to be On-Time**. In ADHD Coaching, we want to get the client in touch with what the real payback is for them when they're trying to make a change. And in terms of punctuality, the payback is going to be a little different depending on the individual and what's important to them in terms of their values, but the bigger picture, general payback is that...

You can actually reach your potential!

You can **End the Stress** and the struggle of constantly being late, and **Have More Energy** for what's really important to you: what you really care about. Whether that's your family, your friends, your career, your education, or other things you want more energy for: for you and your own hobbies and interests and things you care about. Those things that matter to you. Those things that bring meaning to your life. Remember those? So many of us lose track of the kinds of things that make our lives feel more fulfilling when we're living on the hamster wheel that life becomes when we're always late, and we're always behind. Improving punctuality improves you and it improves the quality of your life overall, really, in just about every aspect!

Most of all ...

It puts you back In Control of your Time and In Control of your Life.

So, before I get to solutions, I'm always compelled to give you my little coaching disclaimer:

First and foremost, you need to know that coaching isn't just about tips and tricks and tools. It's much deeper and much bigger than that, so when I'm working on punctuality with a client, we're going much deeper than general tools and tactics. But I'm going to give you the tip of the iceberg here in this Expo vide. First off...

Your Thinking Needs to Change! If you want to be on-time, you need to address how your thinking may be getting in the way. I know that's not the first thing my clients think of when we start working on punctuality.

I want you to think about: ***What does "On-Time" Mean?*** Most of us don't really think about this, so I'm going to give you an example: If you have a 9:00 doctor's appointment, think about how you would define "on-time" for that 9:00 appointment? I'll tell you what on-time doesn't mean! "On-Time" doesn't mean pulling into the parking lot at 9:00. It doesn't mean jumping in the elevator or sprinting up the steps or down the hallway at 9:00. It doesn't even mean blowing into the room like a whirlwind at 9:00! It means being settled in, being fully present, and fully transitioned and ready to go BY 9:00. The same goes with any meeting, meetings at work, with anyone else, or anywhere else. We need to look at what "on-time" means for different commitments.

Next, look at how you think about scheduling appointments. ***Think about Travel time.*** You know, travel time is much more than just "Driving" time or passenger time! Yes, we need to take traffic, weather, and other unexpected delays into account, but there are other things we need to take into account, too, that are a little bit less obvious.

I call this the ***"Time Warp"*** challenge.



All those little things that comprise leaving, my house or my office, were never something I thought of. In my old house, the garage door was right beside the kitchen. And I used to say that the door to the garage was a time warp. Because I could see the clock on the range in the kitchen, and be on time, but somehow be late by the time I got to the car. I used to joke around about it, and I even checked to make sure the clock in my car and the clock in my kitchen were in sync, but it wasn't until I really dissected it that it that I made it make sense for me.

Even when I was super organized and had all my stuff together and right by the door, I'd still end up a few minutes behind. So, looking closer, it all made sense. Opening the door to the garage. Putting the garage door up. Opening the car door. Climbing in. Buckling up. Starting the car. Disengaging the brake, putting it in reverse. Backing out. Putting the door down. All that stuff. Every one of those things takes just seconds, or portions of a second, but all together, they add up—sometimes, to another 3-5 minutes or more. And that's if I'm super organized and I don't have to run back in the house because I thought of something else that I'd forgotten!

So, you have to take into consideration all of those "time warp" things, and you repeat all of that stuff on the other end. Park the car. Put the car in park. Turn off the key. Engage the brake. All that stuff Get out. Walk to the building. You get the picture!

So, if you start timing yourself and you see what the range of time is that all of those little things add up to include. You may be shocked!

Next, in terms of thinking, you need to ...

Acknowledge & Address the Fear of Being Early. Most of my clients need to do some work here. They need to really identify and get in touch with why it matters for them to be punctual. And again, it's a little different for each of us depending on our values, our lives, and so on, but, at the very minimum, if you can't work yourself through that fear on your own or with a coach, start thinking about how you can use any "waiting" time really constructively. Just catching up on email on your smart phone might not feel constructive enough. It might still feel like wasting time, so make sure you have an effective task-management system or to-do list, and look for creative ways you can actually get some of those things taken care of while you wait. It can make a big difference!

I do my holiday greeting cards, for example, in between appointments while I wait. I have a whole system set up with a tote bag where everything (stamps, pens, address labels, cards), all of that stuff goes in a tote bag and I lug it around with me. My cards are done a little bit at a time between appointments, in waiting rooms, waiting for kids, and all that stuff. So if you can find something truly productive that you can do, it can help a lot with that fear of being early.

Also, on the practical side of things... make sure you **Always Wear a Watch** and put clocks everywhere that you can. I have a strong preference for **Analog Clocks**. And I talk with a lot of my clients about this. There's something different that happens when we process what we see visually on an analog clock (the old fashioned clocks that have hands that tell time) compared to a digital clock. If you have to leave at 8 and you see 7:56 on a digital clock, for example, you'll probably do the math and think about what you can do to fill those four minutes if you're anything like me. But, when you see that same 7:56 on an analog clock, you're more likely to think, "Oh crap! I'd better get moving!" It's a different way of processing time, and it can make a big difference.

And I hear from people all the time, speaking of clocks and watches, that they don't need to wear a watch because they have a phone, and they can tell the time on their phone. But, I'd like you to think twice about that, too! It's

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a disruption and an interruption to have to pull out your phone, to unlock it and look at it. If you're in a meeting or even lunch with a friend, it looks a little bit rude and it looks a little bit disrespectful and like you're not paying attention. At the very least, you can put an app on your phone that leaves a clock face visible when the phone screen locks. It can make a huge difference!

And do yourself a favor and...

Set your Clocks and your Watches to the Real Time! So many of us have played this game. I tried to play the game years ago, but you're smarter than to try to fool yourself. It rarely helps. We usually end up just doing the math! So, do yourself a favor and set it to the real time to help yourself really start to get a handle on your time-blindness and your sense of time.

If you want to be *On-Time & In Control*, you need to **Make really good use of Timers & Alarms**, also. They can be so helpful in so many different ways. Here are just a couple, quick ideas...

One timer or one alarm is rarely enough! For those of us with ADHD, transitions can be hard. Switching from one activity to another is difficult. It takes time, and it takes energy, so make sure you set a **"Transition Timer"** that gives you plenty of time to transition out of whatever it is that you're doing. And then have another timer, the one I call my **"Drop-Dead Timer"**, that is actually the time that the task needs to end.

Think differently about how you use timers and how you use alarms, and Time Tasks you do often: especially those that put you on the wrong side of punctuality. That can be a really big eye-opener.

Playing **"Time Estimation Games"** where you estimate how long something is going to take and then time it to compare Reality with your estimation can really help with your awareness, and it improves ability to judge and it gives you **real data** you can use to make decisions. So, if you're one who struggles with one-more-thing-itis, this can be a big one. Knowing that it takes 7 minutes to fold a load of towels, and 22 minutes on average to fold a load of whites in the laundry will make you think twice about emptying that dryer when you've only got 5 or 10 minutes before you have to leave. Timers and alarms can be hugely helpful, and alarm clocks as well, especially in the morning.

I want you to think about and really look at how you use your alarm clock. First of all, again, is it set to the right time? But, really **Rethink the Snooze!** If you're someone who hits the snooze over and over and over again... If you're like my clients who go for 30-45 minutes plus with the snooze button over and over until they actually get up at the very last minute, anyway, you're losing 30-45 minutes of good, quality sleep. So re-think the snooze and rethink how you use your alarms.

I set two alarms. I have a dual alarm clock—I still have an old-school alarm clock. I have one alarm that goes off, and the second one goes off just 3 minutes later. My feet need to hit the floor when that second alarm goes off. And I want you to think about working for it!

Put your alarm clock across the room. If you use your phone, or whatever you use, put it across the phone. Put it close to the bathroom. I've had clients who will put their alarm clocks in or right beside the bathrooms where they're going to shower, so they're almost right there.



And if you really struggle with alarm clocks and getting up in the morning, it's really important that you **Take a look at your Sleep Habits**. Do you need to go to bed earlier? What do you need to do to get more sleep more often?

One of the things that can be really helpful for us ADDers who are not morning people is to do what you can to **"Clear the fog"** in the morning. So, get yourself moving first thing. Think about what helps you clear that morning fog? Is it Exercise? Are you better off if you shower right away? Some clients keep their meds right by their bedside so they can take it 1st thing when their alarm goes off. Avoid things that put you back in the fog; things like the internet, TV, email, and things like that.

This is all about **Working on Self-Awareness**. I encourage my clients to keep a simple log or make notes on their calendars so that they can get to the real root, practically, of what's making them late. Start to pay attention to what's really going on with you: **What are YOUR time drains? Where do you get off-track?**

Think about new what I call "policies" or "non-negotiables" for punctuality. Redefine on-time. Redefine your travel time. All of those things.

Again, so much of punctuality goes back to having good task management and time management systems, tools, and behaviors. And, of course, I can't really go into those topics here now, but I'd be remiss if I didn't mention the power of routine and the power of habit, and how much of a difference having good habits and solid routines or rhythms can make in your ability to be on-time!

Automate what you can. Put good **Evening Routines** in place that help your mornings be much easier. Put good **Morning Routines** in place and have **Checklists** for yourself so that all you have to do is tick stuff off to get out the door.

Again, I know I've just hit really the tippy tip of the iceberg here, but I hope you find something helpful here to get you **On-Time and In Control** of your days!

If I can do it, you can, too!

If you have questions this topic, want to learn more about the programs and services I provide, or share some feedback, please feel free to visit my website, at www.CoachingADDvantages.com where you can contact me.

I'm here to support you!

Take care,

Lynne Edris, ACG
Life & ADHD Coach

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