



4 Reasons Why My ADHD Brain Rejects Zoom



“Studying our co-workers in their native environments is fascinating. We laugh as pets and children wiggle onto laps during Zoom calls. We admire home décor. We ask about exotic fish. Oh, wait. I’m still in a meeting. What did the guy from marketing just say?”



As the pandemic emptied schools and offices last March, a country founded on freedom was reduced to two action items. The first was to quarantine. The second? Meet up via Zoom.

It only took a few weeks for Zoom to become a household verb. Parents scrambled to connect kids with their teachers on the web conferencing platform. Office meetings — once held in bare rooms with limited distractions — were now multimedia affairs with kids and pets as a backdrop. Paying attention in a virtual meeting ignoring all of life's noise became a challenge for everyone. But for those with ADHD, the Brady Bunch-esque grids of meeting attendees continue to pulverize us with visual overstimulation.

I am incredibly grateful for Zoom. I was able to virtually interview for my job during the April 2020 surge and bond with my new team. I don't think Zoom is as awkward for most people as it is for me. But here are the four main challenges I face... and the silver lining of each.

1. Visual distractions are everywhere.

People are fascinating. Many adults with ADHD — including me — function like social anthropologists and hyperfocus on new stimuli. Studying our coworkers in their native environments is captivating. We laugh as pets and children wiggle onto laps during Zoom calls. We admire home décor. We ask about exotic fish. We admire virtual backgrounds. I almost lost it when a cat walked across the desk of a coworker with an outer space background. Cats in space? I have to take a picture. Oh, wait. I'm still in a meeting. What did the guy from marketing just say?

I need to pay attention. But it's impossible not to sleuth out other backgrounds. It's like an Easter egg hunt — except everyone else is listening to the meeting and I am hunting for eggs. For the most part, people with ADHD don't do well with auditory learning or cues. We are visual. Unless a presentation is shared on screen, my mind wanders.

Silver lining: Noticing personal touches is a way to connect with my team in an authentic way. And with the host's permission, I can record meetings for later reference. Recording in-person meetings would be too difficult (and creepy) to do in real life.

2. I have to sit still.

I get fidgety. It's usually about 10 minutes into a Zoom call when I start craving the distraction of a snack. I switch my video off and dash downstairs to the pantry and then back upstairs with my headphones still in my ears. I know I'm on mute. But what if people can hear me chewing my lemon Luna bar? I develop Zoomuteaphobia, a self-classified condition marked by paranoia that the mute button will fail.

Silver lining: I splurged on a balance ball chair. Now I can wiggle around and strengthen my core at the same time.

3. Everyone is staring at me.

As I update my team members on a project, my brain is on edge as 10 faces stare blankly at me. Cue

my rejection sensitive dysphoria —that sour sidecar of ADHD. Are they waiting for me to fail as I stumble through my words? Of course not. I joined one of the most supportive and kind teams with which I've ever worked. Still, I imagine what their thoughts could be. *How many times is she going to say "um?" Why does she grimace every time someone asks her a question?* In reality, my team is not waiting for me to mess up. They are keeping up with email on the side or studying other meeting attendees in the gallery view. Or they're distracted like me, shooing cats from keyboards or eating their own lemon Luna bars.

Silver lining: I switch away from the gallery view to focus only on the person speaking. Maintaining eye contact through a computer feels more comfortable than the intensity triggered by in-person eye contact. Plus, humans will meet in person again one day. I'm sharpening my skills to come back stronger than before.

4. Conversations can be awkward.

It happens on almost every call. I begin to talk at the same time as someone else. It's awkward. But the polar opposite — silence — is worse. I can identify at least two times I asked a question or delivered an update in a meeting, only to be met with blank stares. Sometimes blank stares are caused by frozen internet connections — but sometimes they are not. It's hard to be okay with that.

Silver lining: While reviewing the meetings I (hopefully) recorded, I listen carefully to dialogue from colleagues whose conversational styles I admire.

5. Pushing Forward

Virtual meetings will remain a staple even as the pandemic clears. Though I feel like a talking head on TV, I realize no one expects me to speak like a professional broadcaster. I don't have to be sorry for making nervous gestures. As my mentors assure me, it's okay to say "I don't know the answer to that, but I'll find out and get back to you."

Zoom can be awkward, yes. Zoom also keeps us safe and cozy in our homes. It helps many of us continue working, attending virtual school, and visiting with family. The universe made a point of this literally just as I finished this last paragraph. A good friend texted; her husband tested positive for COVID-19. He was likely infected by his boss at work. I'm reminded how lucky I am to be physically distanced from my own team at work. We're all safer because of Zoom and other web conferencing apps. For me, the safety and connection offered via Zoom is worth these ADHD-specific challenges a million times over.

Zoom and the ADHD Brain: Next Steps

- Read:** [ADHD Brains Working at Home: A Beginner's Guide to Telecommuting](#)
- Learn:** [8 Secrets to Finding Focus While Working from Home with ADHD](#)
- Understand:** [The ADHD WFH Guide: 7 Ways to Build Essential Structure Right Now](#)



New Year Plan: One Thing Today

New Year's Resolutions don't work for ADHD brains. But small changes — made with purpose and realistic expectations — can add up to huge change. Here is a plan for building healthy new habits in 2021 by doing or considering just one thing each day.

Why Do Resolutions Fail?

It's simple: If you slip up on January 9, you are more likely to call yourself a failure and give up for the rest of the year if you feel you've broken a "resolution," says Roberto Olivardia, Ph.D., a clinical psychologist at Harvard Medical School and member of the ADDitude Medical Review Panel.

If, on the other hand, you set out to make just one small daily change — an action taken, a thought considered, a resource read — then one bad day is just one bad day, and tomorrow is another chance to do better.

With that in mind, we hope you will use this daily calendar to guide you through 31 small but important steps forward as we begin 2021. Each one is designed to improve your New Year along one of seven fronts: nutrition, home organization, physical and psychological health, self-care, relationships, productivity and time management, and self-esteem.

ADDITUDE

One Thing Today

JANUARY 2021

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<p>“If you schedule a task, your chance of actually doing it increases from 40 to 70 percent.”</p> <p><i>—Judith Kolberg</i></p>					<p>1 Ask a friend to share a positive memory of you. Reciprocate. additu.de/reclaim-you</p>	<p>2 Walk for 20 minutes today. All good habits start somewhere.</p> 
<p>3 Organization projects that require larger gross-motor skills provide a physical sense of well-being. Start one today.</p>	<p>4 Check for synthetic dyes in “healthy” foods like salad dressing and popcorn.</p> 	<p>5 Say no to an obligation that brings more stress than satisfaction. additu.de/pressures</p>	<p>6 Exercise first thing. Take medication an hour later to maximize its benefit.</p>	<p>7 That task you’re avoiding? Do one thing to advance it today. additu.de/just-start</p> 	<p>8 Truly listen to your partner — without interrupting or explaining — for 5 minutes.</p>	<p>9 Disarm your brain’s fight-or-flight reflex by playing joyful music. additu.de/fight-flight</p>
<p>10 Use a hanging sweater stacker to hold 6 to 10 pre-selected outfits. additu.de/25-rules</p>	<p>11 If you or your partner gets angry, stop the discussion. Go for a walk. Try again later. additu.de/push-pause</p>	<p>12 To avoid getting sidetracked, say out loud, “I am doing this now; nothing else.”</p>	<p>13 Tack up a Post-It that reads: “This will pass. Stay steady.”</p> 	<p>14 Read <i>When: The Scientific Secrets of Perfect Timing</i> to explore your natural energy patterns. additu.de/energy</p>	<p>15 Move a worry out of your head and onto paper to see it objectively.</p>	<p>16 Exercise routines stick when they make us smile. If you hate yoga, don’t do it. additu.de/move-happy</p>
<p>17 Set up an opportunity to praise your child by making an offer they can’t refuse.</p> 	<p>18 Move tasks from your to-do list to your calendar or planner. additu.de/gsd</p>	<p>19 When anxiety flares, stop and <i>name</i> your emotion with compassion, kindness, and no judgement.</p>	<p>20 Have you lied to cover up a mistake? Shed self-hate by coming clean to someone you trust.</p>	<p>21 Remember: 100 years from now, no one will know the difference. additu.de/no-self-hate</p>	<p>22 Hard-boil eggs for a high-protein snack that’s easy to grab from the fridge.</p> 	<p>23 Classify your clutter as friend (keep), acquaintance (keep temporarily), or stranger (remove). additu.de/just-stuff</p>
<p>24 Send a “thinking of you” text to 3 friends you miss.</p>	<p>25 Take a fish oil supplement containing 800 mg of EPA, 400 mg of DHA, and 100 mg of GLA.</p> 	<p>26 Ask yourself: What stops me from putting away the things I pull out? What destroys my good intentions?</p>	<p>27 Falling into negative headspace? Stop and list the day’s wins—however small. additu.de/self-defeat</p>	<p>28 Stop cheating yourself out of deep, restorative sleep by hitting the snooze button.</p> 	<p>29 Normalize your emotions by acknowledging them in specific terms—frustrated, annoyed, anxious—out loud.</p>	<p>30 Give yourself permission to let something go if the fight is not worthwhile. additu.de/pick-battles</p>
<p>31 Repeat after me: “I don’t need ‘fixing.’” additu.de/not-broken</p>						

additu.de/1thing



Mental Illness Does Not Fear This Pandemic

“I don’t have answers. But I needed to speak directly to those of you who cannot stop their child from leaving to get a fix and returning to your home with the remnants of everyone they encountered. To those of you who are facing the same fears... you are not alone. I am here and I am terrified.”

My 19-year-old son isn't social distancing. He isn't washing his hands as much as he should. He leaves all day and comes home in the middle of the night. I have other young adult children living in my home following all the rules.

"You are his parents; why don't you just make him stay in? Why don't you just kick him out?" For you parents reading this who have a child with mental illness and/or chemical dependency, you understand my anguish. Especially those of you who have a child with Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD) — you understand that there are no simple answers, no simple solutions. In addition to the ODD, my son has been diagnosed with generalized mood disorder, anxiety, ADHD, auditory processing disorder, and learning disabilities.

Our requests mean nothing to him. Our logic and reasoning mean less. My child does not fear the virus. The virus is a weak opponent. My sister, whose son is in active drug addition, said of her son, "This pandemic is nothing compared to his last relapse." As if life can't throw enough punches, a week before the pandemic hit, my son and his girlfriend, with whom he has a 4-months-old baby, broke up. No big surprise. But all of our emotional strength is being depleted trying to endure the pandemic. Now imagine having to start the "You need to be a responsible father" conversation at the same time. Please send oxygen masks.

Every day, I think about telling my son to not come home, to find another place to live. Do I let him hit "rock bottom" during the worst pandemic in the modern history? Or do I say, "He is sick and now, more than ever before, he needs to know he has a safe place to go." When I hear that door opening in the middle of the night and I know he is home safe, I retrace his steps with my disinfectant bottle... then my body rests.

And what about my other children? They are upset and anxious enough. Missing college life, work, friends, and even graduation. Do I want to spark a traumatic, loud, and emotional family upheaval by asking him to leave? Do I keep paying for his cell phone, in case he gets sick? I wonder what happens if he gets sick. Will he wear a mask? Will he stay isolated? Will his nicotine- and pot-filled lungs be able to fight the virus?

Yes, he is still working — at a fast food restaurant. So there he is exposed, too. He would never not go. His job saves him. First off, he needs it. He is making car payments to us. His car is his refuge. He spends hours a day just sitting in it, trying to escape reality. As long as he is making his payments on time, we let him keep it. Secondly, work is his social circle. His friends there accept him. I am guessing some are like him, though I have never met one. “Birds of a feather...” you know the rest. I don’t have answers. But I needed to speak out — directly to those of you with a child who needs to keep going to an AA meeting. To those who need the school social worker to help you all get through another day. To those of you who cannot stop their child from leaving to get a fix and returning to your home with the remnants of everyone they encountered. To those of you who are facing the same fears... you are not alone. I am here and I am terrified.

To the doctors, nurses, and first responders fighting the virus, I want to express my heartfelt “Thank you.” To the same who are taking care of the mentally ill during this time, another heartfelt “Thank you.” Maybe you, too, are one of the parents to whom I am speaking and you have double duty. We are on the front line battling as well. We live in the world of constant unknowns. The pandemic will end eventually, but we must return to our post for a lifetime. When he left this morning, my son turned back to me and said, “I took my medicine” before walking out the door. So there is always hope.



Autism spectrum disorder ([ASD](#)) begins in early childhood. It's a condition that's related to brain development, although doctors [aren't exactly sure of the cause](#). Risk factors may include genetics, environment, and even pregnancies in older women. It's [important to note](#) that there is [no connection between vaccines and autism spectrum disorder](#).

Autism spectrum disorders used to be defined by intense, obvious symptoms that generally represented only the most challenging cases. Now that scientists have more information, it's understood that [autism exists on a wide spectrum](#)—and is pervasive enough to affect up to 1 in 54 people. The rate at which children suffer from it is [increasing](#), and understanding the signs and symptoms of the condition is vital to ensuring a high quality of life for those affected.

Autism Spectrum Disorder: Understanding the signs and symptoms

Early signs

As children develop, problems in socialization and communication are likely to be the first indicators of ASD. Trouble interacting with other children, or engaging in [repetitive patterns](#), are good reasons to alert a pediatrician, who can [arrange a preventative screening](#) if necessary. Common signs of autism are seen by two years of age, but each case is unique, and may be revealed alongside other symptoms.

Common symptoms

There are [clear symptoms](#) to look out for when interacting with a child who might be on the spectrum. Some social indicators of ASD include:

- Not responding to their name, or resisting physical contact
- Inability to make eye contact or demonstrate facial expressions
- Trouble communicating, either through inability to have a conversation or speaking in abnormal tones
- Repetition of words or phrases without context
- Difficulty recognizing non-verbal cues
- Not expressing emotion
- Inappropriate approaches to social interactions, such as being disruptive or passive

In addition to trouble with socialization, those on the spectrum may exhibit patterns of behavior that appear repetitive and limited, such as:

- Rocking, spinning, or hand-flapping repeatedly
- Biting, head-banging, or other actions that cause self-harm
- Sensitivity to light, sound, touch or taste (through specific food preferences)
- Fixating on specific activities, or objects—including a detail without understanding its purpose
- Odd movement patterns or poor coordination

Living with autism spectrum disorder

Because the range of symptoms for ASD [are so broad](#), each child's prognosis is different. While there is no way to prevent ASD, treatment starting at an early age can make a big difference. Many children will go on to live completely normal lives and even see their symptoms become less visible as they learn to manage them.

The most important thing for children with autism is building a unique [course of treatment](#) for their specific symptoms with an experienced physician. Components of ASD treatment plans are likely to include:

- Behavior and communication therapy
- Educational therapy
- Family therapy
- Medication (to manage symptoms)
- Managing other medical / mental health issues

Most children with ASD will continue to develop into strong, well-rounded people with a little extra love and support. Although they may have some unique requirements, the right learning structure and support system will prepare them for college, employment, independence, and a happy, healthy life.

Information on this site is provided for informational purposes and is not meant to substitute for the advice provided by your own physician or other medical professional. You should not use the information contained herein for diagnosing or treating a health problem or disease, or prescribing any medication. If you have, or suspect that you have, a medical problem, promptly contact your health care provider.



Q: Online Schooling Is a Nightmare. How Can I Help My Struggling Teen?

If your teen hates, avoids, and/or is failing online learning, try asking the school for help, and try these small but helpful adjustments at home to boost motivation and build up confidence.

Q: “My daughter is struggling with just about every aspect of online schooling now. She has trouble staying organized, remembering assignments, and motivating herself to do the work. It takes her a long time to do homework, and she hasn’t done so well on tests, either. On top of that, she is unwilling to ask her teachers for help. Her struggles are a huge stressor for me, as I cannot stay on top of her all the time. What can I do?”

While many schools are doing a great job with making online learning compelling, some schools, unfortunately, are falling short. All of your daughter’s struggles right now are pointing to one thing: she is spent, overwhelmed, bored, and unengaged with school.

If you haven’t already, communicate with the school about what’s going on instead of only managing this only at home. Involve your daughter in the conversation. Ask the school what they will do to better support your child and your family, and check in with your daughter about what types of support she will actually accept. Make sure you outline what the school will take care of, and what you can do at home to assist your daughter.

How to Support a Struggling Student at Home

1. Break down and structure assignments. Get into a work rhythm by first understanding when your teen is most productive. Work with your daughter to determine how long she can stand being online before her brain starts to get tired and create structure around that (alternate between 20 minutes of work and 5-minute breaks, for example). When it comes to breaks, talk about what she can do that will be restorative but also keep her motivated. The order of assignments is also important – does she prefer to tackle the tough stuff first and end with the easy assignments, or vice versa?

2. Set up visual cues for tasks. Whiteboards, checklists, charts, and other visual systems are immensely beneficial for teens with ADHD. The less they have to store inside their head and remember, the better. These systems also cut down on nagging. Encourage your daughter to write out assignments and important due dates on a large, prominent whiteboard to which she can easily refer. Then she can erase them when they are completed. You can also use Post-Its.

3. Work offline as much as possible. Having to stare at a screen for hours on end is one major reason behind your daughter's struggles. Have her print out assignments, readings, and other materials as much as possible for a much-needed screen break and to refresh her mind. Encourage her to read physical books, too, so she can underline and better engage with the text.

4. Set up a system of checks. Constantly nagging or checking up on your daughter won't help and might actually backfire. But having a check-in schedule can reduce stress, manage expectations, and keep your daughter on track. One idea is to meet at the beginning and end of the week (you can also loop in the teacher or another educator) to talk about homework, tests, and any other school matters.

5. Come up with a plan about asking for help. One of the reasons it's especially hard for kids with ADHD to ask for help is because of shame — on top of anger and frustration — over what they're being asked to do. They may think, I hate asking for help. I want to be like everyone else and do it the way they can. Asking for help is also complicated for parents — When should I intervene, and when should I let them handle it on their own?

If she doesn't want to reach out to you all the time (and if your time is limited), encourage her to reach out to teachers, classroom aides, tutors and/or other educators for their assistance. After all, they know the material best and can probably convey it to her most effectively

6. Talk to your child's doctor. If she is taking ADHD medication, it could be the case that the medicine is wearing off or no longer working in this learning environment. Consult with the prescribing doctor to see what they recommend.

Struggling Student with ADHD: Next Steps

- **Guide:** [The Most Useful ADHD Accommodations and Modifications for Distance Learning](#)
- **Read:** [5 Focus Tricks for Students with ADHD Learning at Home](#)
- **Download:** [The ADHD Guide To Distance Learning](#)

Behavior Management Consultants celebrates the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. . Dr. King understood the importance of diversity and inclusion, humanity and social injustice. It wasn't just his uplifting words it was his belief in the power of his words. He was a light that drove out the darkness that helped define change and transformation.

Please take a moment to watch his infamous "I Have A Dream" speech as it is even more relevant today.



IMPORTANT
NUMBERS



IF YOU NEED
HELP, PLEASE
MAKE THE CALL



GET THE SUPPORT
YOU NEED



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ALONE



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**Runaway and
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**Drug and Alcohol
Hotline:**
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**Food and Hunger
Hotline:**
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**Homeless Services
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Rape Crisis Hotline:
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Abuse Hotline:**
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**National Teen
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Helpline:** 1-866-
331-9474

**Crisis Lifeline for
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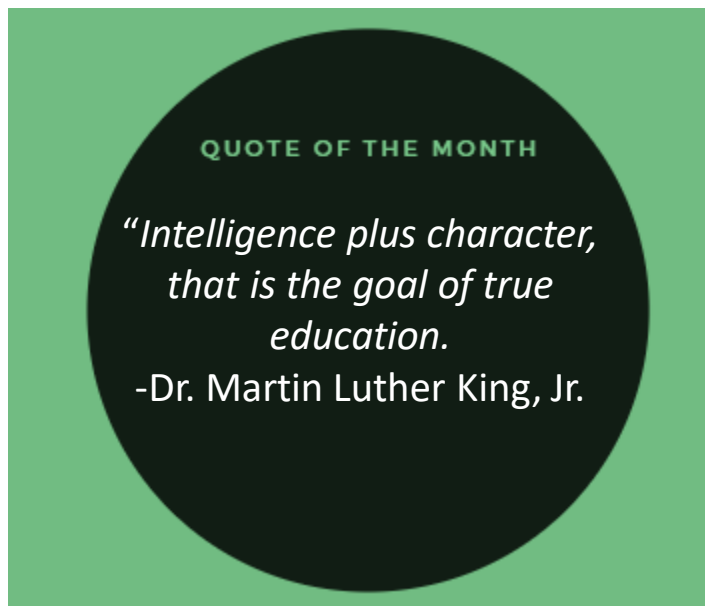


Behavior Management Consultants believes that, “No Child is Born Bad”. Our mission is to educate, mentor, and assist parents, caregivers, and professionals to cope with, socialize, and identify values important to today’s youth.

The goal is to serve public and private social service organizations including, but not limited to:

- Residential Treatment Facilities (RTFs)
- Juvenile Detention Centers
- Residential Treatment Centers (RTCs)
- Public Schools
- Community Based Organizations (CBOs)

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