

Attention Deficit Trait: How to recognise and fight against it

OROBİ BAKHTIAR

One of the most dependable stress triggers in the workplace is something that is sort of an epidemic these days: Overwhelm. In fact, the state of having too much to do and not enough time to do it is the very definition of stress, which happens when demand overloads the perceived ability to handle it. The trigger with overwhelm is the volume of to-do's combined with time limits that make us feel out of control — another turn on for stress.

Adding to the pile is the sheer volume of information overload most of us face, which is outstripping human bandwidth, undermining productivity, engagement, and work-life balance, and driving a burgeoning malady known as Attention Deficit Trait, or ADT. Attention Deficit Trait mimics the conditions of Attention Deficit Disorder, which is genetic.

ADT, though, is a byproduct exclusively of the environment — too many interruptions and excess data overwhelming brain neurons.

Symptoms

The core symptoms are distractibility, inner frenzy, and impatience. People with ADT have difficulty staying organised, setting priorities, and managing time. These symptoms can undermine the work of an otherwise gifted executive.

The symptoms of ADT come upon a person gradually. The sufferer does not experience a single crisis but rather a series of minor emergencies while he or she tries harder and harder to keep up. Shouldering a responsibility and not complain as the workload increases, executives with ADT do whatever they can to handle a load they simply cannot manage as well as they'd like.

The ADT sufferer, therefore, feels a constant low level of panic and guilt. Facing a tidal wave of tasks, the executive becomes increasingly hurried, curt, peremptory, and unfocused, while pretending that everything is fine.

How to Manage ADT

Unfortunately, top management has so far viewed the symptoms of ADT through the distorting lens of morality or character. Employees who seem unable to keep up the pace are seen as deficient or weak.

How can we control the rampaging effects of ADT, both in ourselves and in our organisations? While ADD often requires medication, the treatment of ADT



certainly does not. ADT can be controlled only by creatively engineering one's environment and one's emotional and physical health.

Promoting positive emotions

The most important step in controlling ADT is not to buy a smartphone and fill it up with to-dos, but rather to create an environment in which the brain can function at its best. This means building a positive, fear-free emotional atmosphere because emotion is the on/off switch for executive functioning.

There are neurological reasons why ADT occurs less in environments where people are in physical contact and where they trust and respect one another.

When you comfortably connect with a colleague, even if you are dealing with an overwhelming problem, the deep centres of the brain send messages through the pleasure centre to the area that assigns resources to the frontal lobes.

Taking physical care of your brain

Sleep, a good diet, and exercise are critical for staving off ADT. Though this sounds like a no-brainer, too many of us abuse our brains by neglecting obvious principles of care. You may try to cope with ADT by sleeping less, in the vain hope that you can get more done.

This is the opposite of what you need to do, for ADT sets in when you do not get enough sleep. There is ample documentation to suggest that sleep deprivation engenders a host of problems, from impaired decision-making and reduced creativity to reckless behaviour and paranoia. Diet also plays a crucial role in brain health.

Many hardworking people habitually inhale carbohydrates, which cause blood glucose levels to go haywire. This leads to a vicious cycle: Rapid fluctuations in insulin levels further increase the craving for carbohydrates. The brain, which relies

on glucose for energy, is left either glutted or gasping, neither of which makes for optimal cognitive functioning.

Organising for ADT

It is important to develop tactics for getting organised. Your goal is to order your work in a way that suits you so that disorganization does not keep you from reaching your goals.

First, devise strategies to help your frontal lobes stay in control. These might include breaking down large tasks into smaller ones and keeping a section of your workspace or desk clear at all times.

Similarly, you might try keeping a portion of your day free of appointments, e-mail, and other distractions so that you have time to think and plan. Because e-mail is a wonderful way to procrastinate and set yourself up for ADT. At the same time, you might consider holding specific "e-mail hours," since it is not necessary to reply to every e-mail right away.

The Steel
Revolution Continues

....

Introducing

BSRM Xtreme
B500 DWR

the tough steel

BSRM
building a safer nation