

By Cynthia North; Certified ADHD Life Coach

Living life easier is good for all of us, ADHD-minded or not. You do not have to have Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) to use what is shared here in the ADHD uPLifted Series to improve your quality of life. Do you want to find ways to work with your brainpower? Then you are in the right place. The ADHD uPLifted Series is a monthly newsletter written by me to offer you tested ways to lift up your chin and find your strengths. Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder is a different ability in mastering life. Whether you are diagnosed with ADHD or you think you have ADHD this is the place to find helpful tools, tips, strategies, and fast facts. I hope you find this information value-added.

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[podcast ep: #204]



1. FAST FACT

ADHD AND EMOTIONS

WebMD states, up to **99%** of teens and adults with ADHD are more sensitive than usual to rejection.

And nearly **1 in 3** say it's the hardest part of living with ADHD. (Watson, 2018)

*"We can complain because rose bushes have thorns, or rejoice
because thorn bushes have roses."*



-Abraham Lincoln

2.

Emotional Regulation, Who Me?



By: Cynthia North, CALC

Emotions run deeper than feeling happy or sad. For people with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), emotions can wash over them like a tsunami wave. ADHDer's often feel life bigger and stronger than the neurotypical person. This intensity makes experiencing emotions even harder to manage. Research shows individuals with ADHD tend to have sudden difficulty managing frustration, impatience, and excitability. An ADHDer's emotions can come on strong with little to no warning signs, often caused by something seemingly small to the bystander. When the emotion runs its course, the ADHDer looks back in dismay, "Who me? I did what? I don't remember saying that." Despite emotion dysregulation being a strong component of ADHD, it is not commonly part of an ADHD screening or included in the DSM-V as a symptom of ADHD. ADHD symptoms often cause unwanted behaviors. Therefore, understanding emotion is crucial to managing symptoms.

In this month's ADHD uPLifted Series, I have chosen to highlight emotion, a key element of ADHD ignored within the DSM-V and skipped over by many practitioners. I come to the coaching profession with a unique perspective as a neurotypical wife and parent of ADHDer's. I have experienced the intense emotions and witnessed the fallouts from them. I have seen emotion at its highs and lowest of lows. I want to bring awareness to the topic of emotion because I know how intense emotions can be. But, before I dive into emotion, I want to pour a proper knowledge foundation of what ADHD is. In this ADHD uPLifted Series, I will explain the three types of ADHD, explain emotion versus feeling, and provide ten strategies to help build emotional awareness. Let's get started.



If I asked a random person to write a script for the upcoming play about Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), I think they might open the set with a scene somewhat like this.



And Action

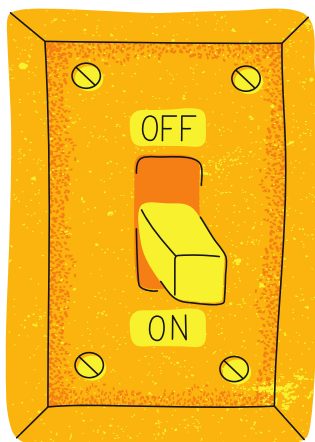
A boy bounces around the room, unable to sit still, blurting out with disruption during the lesson—the teacher perched at the front of the room with an irritated face, disappointed again. Classmates look on with judgment and contempt for the boy's annoying behavior. The boy with ADHD moves around like a busy bee at work, sometimes excited and other times bored or highly frustrated.



Does this sound like the ADHD stereotype society has painted for decades? Maybe you have heard something like this before? Despite increased awareness, mainstream society still believes in this stigma. Improvements in understanding ADHD have occurred, but there is still more to acknowledge in this brain difference. ADHD is much more than the childhood disorder labeled onto the backs of busy boys¹. ADHD is a neurochemical brain difference affecting interest and regulation. There are three types of ADHD. The "ADHD boy" society knows has ADHD- hyperactive type. What about the young girl missed in the scene daydreaming in the corner? She has ADHD- inattentive type. Or the quiet boy looking on with his knee ready for a space shuttle launch. He has ADHD-combined type. The girl in the corner and the boy ready to blast off may go unnoticed and untreated for years. These kids grow up with their ADHD symptoms, up to 18, to be exact. They do not grow out of their ADHD. Their ADHD evolves with them as their brain develops and changes with knowledge and experiences. The mismanaged ADHD adult then struggles to manage life with weakened executive functioning skills. They may find themselves always late, misplacing things they need, frequently changing jobs, weighted with strained relationships, thoughts and emotions running rampant, and the list goes on. Big Sigh.



ADHD is unique to each person diagnosed or not. ADHD, at its most basic expression, starts in the brain with interest or a lack thereof. It is not a deficit of attention, as its name indicates. Instead, ADHD is more inconsistent attention in areas that do not spark interest. With interest, the ADHD brain produces more of the neurochemicals it thrives on, resulting



in greater focus and attention. The ADHD brain does not function like a dimmer switch with the ability to soften the intensity or amp up the interest. In the ADHD brain, the interest switch is either **on or off**. In my previous article, 100 Billion Chances, I shared that the brain has over a billion neurons. Successful ADHD children and adults need to use their strengths and develop coping skills to deal with their symptoms. It is a giant mathematical algorithm in balancing strengths and weaknesses that makes fitting all ADHDer's into one box impossible- But society will still try.

Mainstream society has created boxes to fit in. Understanding emotions is a key component to understanding human nature. We need to behave a certain way while knowing certain things to conform to societal norms. Behavior is an expression of emotions and feelings through skills and knowledge. As children move through school, these boxes are either checked off or not. The ADHDer is a star stuck by its shining points at the boxes' entrance, unable to get through. Psychology Today writes, "Unlike small children, adults are expected to be able to manage their emotions—especially anxiety and anger—in a manner that is socially acceptable. (Emotion Regulation, 2020). Adults expect other adults to control their emotions in the words they use and the actions they take. Individuals who cannot control their emotions are more likely to be lonely, fired from their jobs, or be incarcerated. Many experts, including William Dodson, believe the DMS-V has left out emotion dysregulation as a critical component in the ADHD diagnosis. If you have ADHD, are a parent of a child with ADHD, or a spouse, you know how emotions can run rampant and strike with lightning speed. Emotions are not moods. Due to the missed emotional component of ADHD, many individuals are diagnosed and treated for depression, anxiety, or bipolar before being diagnosed with ADHD. Dodson states, "On average, an adult will see 2.3 clinicians and go through 6.6 antidepressant trials before the diagnosis of ADHD is made" (3 Defining Features of ADHD That Everyone Overlooks, 2018).



Emotional dysregulation is a critical component of ADHD and could be a vital clue towards diagnosis. What are emotions anyway? Emotions are a state of mind. They come and go.



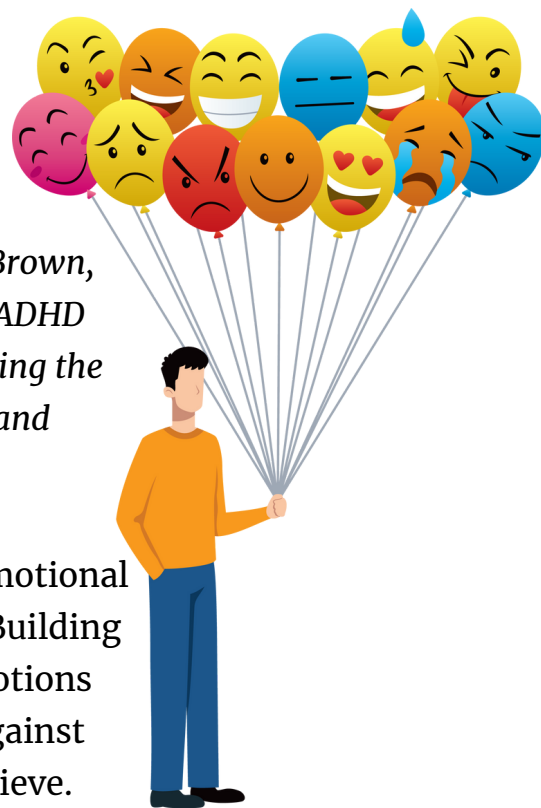
Emotion regulation is the ability to exert control over one's emotional state (Emotion Regulation, 2020). For people with ADHD, emotion control can be challenging.

"Processing emotions starts in the brain," says Thomas Brown, Ph.D. "Sometimes the working memory impairments of ADHD allow a momentary emotion to become too strong, flooding the brain with one intense emotion" (7 Truths About ADHD and Intense Emotions, 2018).

What can you do when emotions get out of control? Emotional regulation is the process of working through emotions. Building self-awareness is the first step to working with your emotions and not letting the feelings your emotions evoke work against you. Emotions and feelings are not the same as many believe.

In a blog, Behaviors, Emotions and Feelings: How They Work Together, Deavers shares *"emotions create a physical response within your mind and your feelings are consciously something that you're thinking about, they can have an impact on your behavior"* (Behaviors, Emotions And Feelings: How They Work Together | Betterhelp, 2020). Identifying your emotion may start with how you are physically feeling. The most basic emotions are happy, sad, anger, and fear. Experts have shown through studies there to be up to 27 different categories of emotions from these four basic emotions. Feelings come from our perception of a situation. Emotions can then go through a perception funnel- perceived as weak or strong, good or bad, positive or negative. In the article, How Emotions Effect Learning, Behaviors and Relationships Desautels states,

"what we perceive and expect is what we get! The brain sees and responds to perception, not reality... We are neurobiologically wired, and to learn anything, our minds must be focused and our emotions need to "feel" in balance. Emotional Regulation is necessary so that we can remember, retrieve, transfer, and connect all new information to what we already know. When a continuous stream of negative emotions hijacks our frontal lobes, our brain's architecture changes, leaving us in a heightened stress-response state where fear, anger, anxiety, frustration, and sadness take over our thinking, logical brains (Desautels, 2016)."



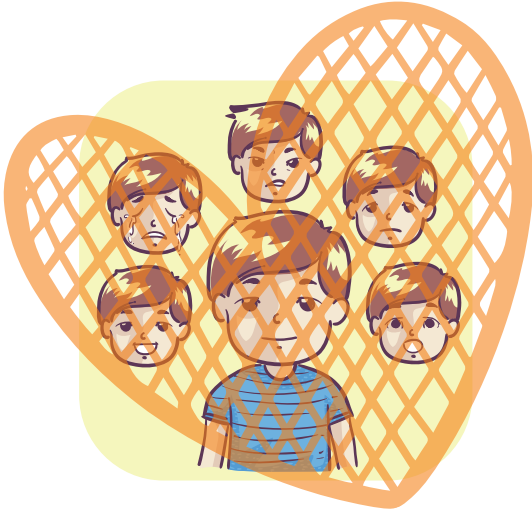
Two people can experience the same situation and walk away with vastly different feelings from the triggered emotion. This is because emotions do not come on consciously; feelings do. And with ADHD, you may experience emotions with greater intensity and may even suffer from Rejection Sensitivity Dysphoria, a comorbidity common with ADHD.

Clearly, dealing with emotions is critical to maintaining a balanced life. But, how can you be in control of the behavior that seemingly takes over? The first step is to become the moderator of your emotional experiences rather than choosing to shove them aside, suppress, stuff, eliminate or ignore them. Becoming the moderator puts you in the driver's seat. You can then choose "Yes, Me" through your thinking process. Emotional Regulation is a learned skill and practiced from early childhood. How emotions are accepted and expressed is part of the cultural norm and learned through emotional expressions and tolerations within family units.

Self-awareness is your friend. Become aware of your triggers. Maybe you were told, "stop being a cry baby," "you are too sensitive- toughen up," or "you are a demon." People often carry these early labels on into their adult life. What you believe you become. More people tolerate outbursts than a person crying, even though crying is a natural emotional response. Crying is perceived as a weakness and an unacceptable emotional response (Kiirtaara, 2018). Uncontrolled rage can land you in jail. Learning to accept all emotions is essential. The behavior our emotions evoke is where we need to focus our attention. The first step to emotional regulation is to acknowledge how you display your emotions through your behavior. **Emotion=Behavior**. Behavior is a learned manifestation. Do you rage with anger or take a deep breath and walk away for a few minutes? Emotional regulation can be practiced with different techniques and skills.



You are a shining star! And yes, with ADHD, your shining points get in the way. You have to work harder to live within the rules and standards set by the mainstream brains'. Through this ADHD uPLifted highlight on *emotion*, I hope that you have learned you can become your own self moderator. You are not alone. Embrace your ADHD brain. Yes, this brain difference is hard to cope with and manage at times. But, you are also shining bright in your gifted abilities. Maybe you are a numbers person, gee, thank you for this because I am not! Perhaps you are keenly aware. Maybe you are a problem solver or a creator. We need you and your differently wired brain to keep our world moving forward. Lucky for us, everyone's brain is neuroplastic and can continue learning, adapting, and strengthening. With proper attention, you can predict the incoming tsunami and be prepared to respond.



Toss a Net Around Your Emotions

By: Cynthia North, CALC

Emotional Regulation can be tricky with ADHD. Play around with any of these strategies. Then, please share in the comments how you have tweaked them to fit your emotional needs.

10 Ways To Honor Your Emotions

1. STAR Method

Stop and Pause- Allow for a Pause. In pausing, you allow your brain time to think. This moves you towards a "responding state" rather than behaving quickly in "reaction mode". Sometimes this first action is the hardest to initiate during times of intense emotions and heightened feelings.

Think- Allow yourself to shift your thinking. How can you challenge your own perception?

Action- What action can you take now?

Reflect- What happened? What could I do differently next time?



2. Calm With Breathing Techniques



Deep Breathing- slow your breath and bring your mind to each inhale and exhale repetition.

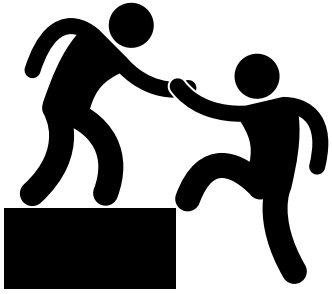
Belly Breathing- feel your breath fill the space into your abdomen, repeat.

Double Inhale- Inhale once through your nose, pause, inhale deeper and then slowly exhale through your mouth.

3. Name It to Tame It- emotions and feelings can be tamed through acknowledgment. The trick to training is to know what you are trying to tame.

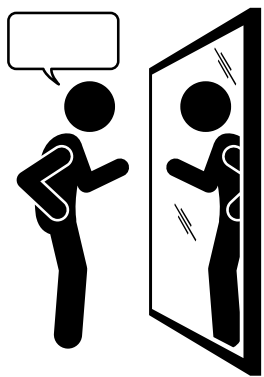
Name your Emotion. "I am mad and feel like I am exploding inside." Or "I am afraid and feel like running away."





4. In Good Company- the best way to be your best self is to be with others also striving to be their best selves. Assess who you surround yourself with and then ask, **"Am I my better self when I am with _____?"** Place yourself with people that lift you up.

5. Control Your Thoughts- How aware are you of your thoughts. When you feel intense emotions coming on or after an episode, try a *brain dump*. Write down or voice record everything you are thinking. Keep recording your thoughts for 10 minutes. Brain dumping allows you to acknowledge what you think when you have strong emotions. Then, return to the brain dump exercise at a later time. Filter through your thoughts and ask, **"Are my thoughts true or false?"**



6. Self-Talk, Are you a frenemy? A frenemy is a person who is a friend and enemy. Being a frenemy to yourself will affect your emotional state. Negative self-talk is detrimental to your emotional well-being. What you tell yourself you will be. You know what you say inside your head. Would you say that same message to a friend?

Ask Yourself

"Is what I say to myself lifting me up?"

"What about saying this to myself is serving me towards being the person I want to be?"

What you say you become. So keep your messages uplifting. Cast a net around negative self-talk. **"Oh, there is Negative Nelly again. I can keep trying."**



7. Visualization- Take Five With Your Senses-
Use the power of your mind to visualize yourself somewhere that can activate your five senses. Close your eyes. Think about what it is like to be at the beach. What do you see, hear, smell, taste, and feel? Your prefrontal cortex activates thought control by taking your mind to your

enjoyment place. During a 5 Senses Visualization, choose a place of enjoyment that can trigger all five senses. As for me, I go to the beach. For you, maybe it is a hike into the woods, a seat in a pizzeria, or your mama's kitchen. You can go anywhere. Just take your five senses with you.



8. E.M.O.T.I.O.N.S----- Question It!

Energy- what energy am I putting out? What is the cost of this energy?

Motivation- what is motivating me? Identify my trigger.

Optics- How do I look to others? What do others see in me?

Timing- What is my timing? Am I reacting or responding?

Implementation - How can I use what I have learned from this emotion in the future.

Opportunity- What opportunity do I have with this new awareness?

Needs- What are my needs when I am experiencing this emotion?

Serving- How is this emotion serving me now?



9. Find the Positive Finding the positive is to shift your perspective from your negative thoughts towards positive outcomes. Perspective work requires you to analyze and take a different stance. This requires you to look at your emotions from a different angle.

For example, if you were to move negative emotions towards positive results, what would you need?

Negative: I am angry because I didn't make the team. I feel like quitting!

Positive: I am angry because I didn't make the team. I feel like quitting but instead will keep practicing, so I am better at the next try-outs. Acknowledging you are angry shows the importance of continuing to try again. Anger means something has significance. *So dig deeper- what is so important that you are angry enough to quit? What do you really need?*



10. Ask for Help One of the hardest yet most important awareness's to acknowledge and accept is when additional help is needed. Emotional dysregulation is real and often

difficult to navigate alone. Reaching out for help from someone who can be truly supportive and without judgement is key to gaining control of your emotions. You may be fortunate to have a family member or trusted friend to confide in or you may benefit from seeking a completely unbiased professional educated and trained in ADHD to help you work with your emotions. You can have a trusted person navigate through this with you. Needing help is not a weakness. Choosing to partner with someone that will help you make forward progress towards your goals becomes your strength. All you have to do is be open to asking for what you need.

*"You become what
you believe."*

-Buddha



3. I am

ADHD uPLifted App of the Month

Apple Store 149.6K Ratings 4.9

Google Play Store 23.5K Ratings 4.8

Ages 4+

Free and Premium (\$19.99/yr) Versions

Daily affirmations help rewire our brains, build self-esteem and change negative thought patterns. Empower yourself by verbally affirming your dreams and ambitions. Choose from many daily intentions and set reminders to be delivered throughout the day.

*I am is available on **Android and iOS** devices.*

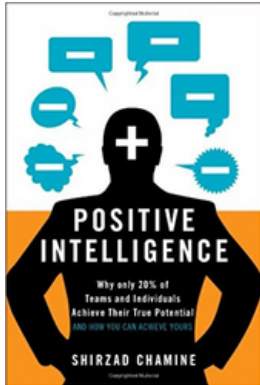
Receiving positive affirmations throughout my day has helped to shift my energy. I have set my reminders for key times throughout my day. I know I am prone to pick up my phone before lunch and when I downshift in the afternoon. This app even allows me to input my own affirmation that I am working on now, "I am in control of my response."



When you find yourself in a storm initiate positive thought power as your **anchor**. You can take control of your ship and set sail with the **energy** you create. -C. North

4. READERS

Corner

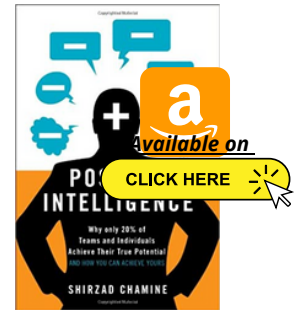


Positive Intelligence: Why Only 20% of Teams and Individuals Achieve Their True Potential and How You Can Achieve Yours

Hardcover – April 1, 2012

Shirzad Chamine (Author)

4.6 of 5 922 Ratings



Shirzad opens his readers to the process of growing their Positive Intelligence (PQ). PQ measures the percentage of time your mind is serving you as opposed to sabotaging you. While your IQ and EQ (emotional intelligence) contribute to your maximum potential, it is your PQ that determines how much of that potential you actually achieve. With higher PQ, teams and professionals ranging from leaders to salespeople perform 30–35 percent better on average. Importantly, they also report being far happier and less stressed.

(Amazon.com: Positive Intelligence: Why Only 20% of Teams and Individuals Achieve Their True Potential and How You Can Achieve Yours (9781608322787): Chamine, Shirzad: Books, 2021)

"I am actively applying Shirzad's PQ practices in my daily life by acknowledging my Judge and Pleaser sab's. Moving towards positive reframing and greater self-awareness in my surroundings shifts me towards accessing my center sage brain. This shift in mindset opens me to a happier lifestyle. I want everyone to have this mindset at their disposal." C. North

5. LISTENING TO NOW

I appreciated Dr. Dodson's thought about self-esteem and self-worth built through self-efficacy- being able to go out there and do what you want to do now. (Listen in at 21:20). He also clarified that in studies CBT has failed because it did not change the core ADHD symptoms of inattention, impulsivity, hyperarousal. Those symptoms are still there. You need CBT to deal with these thoughts and behaviors. (Listen in at 33:00) You have to do "it" your way!



"How ADHD Shapes Your Perceptions, Emotions & Motivation"
[podcast episode #204]_(58 minutes)

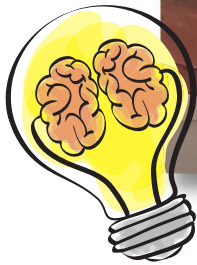
William Dodson, M.D.



Patients and clinicians who rely on the DSM-V alone tend to overlook these defining features of ADHD:

1. an interest-based nervous system
2. rejection sensitive dysphoria
3. intense emotional responsiveness

Here, leading ADHD expert William Dodson, M.D., explains how these core features affect the daily life of individuals with ADHD, and how they often complicate diagnoses and treatment plans.



About Coach Cindy

Thank you for joining me. My name is Cynthia North. Most people know me as Cindy. I am a Certified ADHD Life Coach devoted to partnering with clients to create self-success within ADHD. I work with all ages having a special interest in coaching parents and family units. I have an innate desire to empower others no matter what difficulties they face.

ADHD has touched me personally and professionally.

I know first-hand how ADHD symptoms and its' behavior can wreak havoc on family dynamics. I chose to become a trained ADHD Life Coach because I want others to discover the greatness within ADHD strengths while working with their executive functioning challenges. I am where I am today because of my two dynamic ADHD children. They both teach me and open my mind to more each day. Their needs were beyond a hug, discipline, structure, or praise. I sought professional help, ultimately finding a Life Coach.

Life experiences have made way for opportunity. I am on a journey to slay stigmas surrounding brain differences. Finding a Life Coach to empower my child led me to become a trained ADHD Life Coach myself so I can serve others past their ADHD stigmas. Choosing to strengthen your inner-self is where Empower Me starts. The work is an inside job where your "me" begins. Connecting your heart and brain with a Coach creates empowerment opportunities.

EmpowerM3 - is where the 3 connect.



There is a more extraordinary tomorrow when the discovery starts today.

Resources

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Notes:

