

## Chore Score Worksheet

*To measure who does what, and how they feel about it.*

Track your chores for 1 week. At the end of each day take 5-10 minutes to make sure you've captured that day's chores – you'll have trouble remembering them accurately if you leave it longer than that. Track your tasks using a worksheet laid out in four columns like the example below. Assign each chore a likability rating and a difficulty rating. (Note that these ratings are your opinion only. You will likely rate the same chores – such as doing dishes or going to the grocery – differently. At the end of the week, sit down and compare your chore charts. How do your efforts compare? Is one spouse doing all the “fun” stuff? Are the hours you are putting in balanced? Create sheets with the headings below as a starting place for developing a more satisfying distribution of effort for you both based upon your personal preferences, strengths and weaknesses.

<b>Chore</b>	<b>Hours (decimals)</b>	<b>Likability Rating</b>	<b>Difficulty Rating</b>

### **For likability ratings, use these numbers:**

- 1 = I like doing this
- 2 = I don't mind doing this
- 3 = I dislike doing this
- 4 = I hate doing this

### **For Difficulty Ratings, use these numbers:**

- 1 = Very easy (*mindless or simple*)
- 2 = Moderate (*takes some planning and/or time*)
- 3 = Fairly difficult (*somewhat strenuous, more planning, a good challenge*)
- 4 = Very difficult (*physically strenuous, many complex steps, new, challenging*)

## Recipe for Beating the Chore Wars

To organize and prioritize tasks around the house, as well as keep the ADHD spouse Here's a great idea for organizing and assigning chores that solves numerous issues in the Chore Wars all at once:

Get a recipe box and fill it with 3x5 cards. Create five sections in the box: This Week; Later; To Discuss; Done; Blanks.

1. Every time you think of a task around the house that needs to be completed, create a card for it and put that card in the "To Discuss" section.
2. Schedule a regular meeting once or twice a week to sit down together and discuss the cards. Decide which tasks are the most important and can be reasonably done this week and hold on to them. Put the other cards, in basic order of importance, into the "Later" section.
3. The cards you are holding are the "This Week" tasks. Discuss what each task entails. Does "finish the bathroom remodel" include painting, or just installing the toilet and laying tile? Who, exactly, will do the work? When, exactly, will it most likely get done? Do you have all the supplies? Do you both understand what the job entails? How many hours do you think it will take? Does any of it need to be hired out? Ask yourselves whether or not the number of tasks for this week seems reasonable once you know all the details. If you have too many tasks for the time you have available, take the least important and add them to the front of the "Later" section.
4. Put the remaining cards into "This Week" along with any notes you've added from your discussion that might be useful reminders (i.e. "tile and toilet only")

Go to the box each time you're ready to "tackle tasks" and work on something in the "This Week" section, preferably the first card. When a task is completed, put the card in the "Done" section.

### **Why This Works**

This system works for a whole variety of reasons:

- Each week, the outstanding tasks are "re-prioritized". There are always more tasks to be done than can be completed...this helps ensure the most important are tackled first – and that both partners agree on which are the top tasks.
- Both partners gain a more complete understanding of what their spouse contributes.
- The ADHD partner benefits from the planning expertise of the non-ADHD spouse. While reviewing when and how a task is to be done,

both members of the couple can assess whether or not the planning is realistic. In addition, the non-ADHD partner gains a better understanding of what the ADHD partner is thinking about the project – communication is clarified.

- The box is easy to locate, and progress can be tracked. When a project is done, the card is taken out of the rotation.
- This system relieves anxiety for the non-ADHD spouse. Every time she thinks of a task she can just write it down and be assured that it will get adequately discussed that week. Putting the task into the system means it will no longer be “hanging over her head” and she can move on to thinking about something else. The benefits of this to *both* members of the couple are enormous.

## Two-Day Validation Tracking Worksheet

For two days, note rate every response you have towards each other. To do this well, you'll need to sit down about once an hour and think about your interactions during that hour for those times you are interacting. "1" is a wonderful interaction that validated your or your partner. "5" is an interaction that completely invalidated one of you. Any time you have an interaction - good or bad - write it down. Track your own behavior as well as your spouse's. This goes both ways.

Automatic "5"s include:

- Criticism
- Contempt
- Stonewalling
- Sarcasm
- Defensiveness
- Criticism masked as "help"

Paying no attention (for whatever reason) should also be noted in the poorer end of the spectrum (you can figure out later if it was due to the ADHD symptom of distraction or an intentional put down).

At the end of the experiment, find some time to sit down together and talk about what you've discovered. There may be patterns, such as a non-ADHD spouse being particularly critical around a subject such as not getting enough attention. It's likely that many of your invalidating actions are centered around ADHD symptom responses. There may be areas of strength that you need to note, as well.

My hope is that this exercise will do three things for you:

1. Make you more aware of the frequency of this destructive behavior so you can diminish its presence in your lives
2. Get you thinking about better, more validating, ways to respond in these same situations in the future.
3. Help you decide to reinforce existing validating interactions

You may find this exercise a bit depressing. But the first step in changing behaviors is identifying them.

## Resources

### ADHD

#### ***Delivered from Distraction***

*Edward M. Hallowell, M.D. and John J. Ratey, M.D., 2005*

This book provides an excellent overview of what ADHD is all about and how you can get the most out of life with ADHD. The authors use a “strengths-based” approach to dealing with ADHD and view it as “a way of being” rather than a “disorder.” They provide concrete information about how to treat ADHD and the common issues that people with ADHD encounter. *Driven to Distraction*, written ten years earlier by the same authors, is still relevant today.

#### ***Women with Attention Deficit Disorder***

*Sari Solden, MS, MFCC, 1995*

Women with ADHD face special issues related to their gender and societal expectations that most men with ADHD don't face. They also face special challenges when it comes to asserting themselves effectively to deal with ADHD. Solden is the leading expert in this topic and this is her seminal work. If the woman in your couple has ADHD, this can be a life-changing book.

#### ***More Attention, Less Deficit: Success Strategies for Adults with ADHD***

*Ari Tuckman, PsyD, MBA, 2009*

This ADHD handbook is written in an even-toned, practical style and organized in discreet chapters, letting the reader choose what he or she wants to work on first. Though the book is long, it tackles issues in short, succinct chapters, such as “Manage the Mail and Get the Bills Out on Time” and “Expectation Management: Promise Only What You Can Deliver” and “Is ADD an Excuse or an Explanation?” Chapters usually give explanations for what is going on, as well as specific tactics for overcoming the problem.

#### ***You Mean I'm Not Lazy, Stupid or Crazy?!***

*Kate Kelly, Peggy Ramundo, 1993 (since updated)*

This book is extremely well organized, and provides many useful ideas for how to manage ADHD successfully. It is a good complementary book to *Delivered from Distraction* for those who are just starting to learn about ADHD, going into different aspects than *Delivered*. The sections on coping strategies and turning ideas into action are particularly good.

### ***ADHD in Adults: What the Science Says***

*Russell A. Barkley, Kevin R. Murphy, Mariellen Fischer, 2008*

This 500-page book, filled with graphs and charts, is for those who want a look into some of the research about adult ADHD. The authors go into great detail about their ideas - spending 50 pages, for example, on how they believe ADHD in adults should be diagnosed differently than in children, and the data analysis they used to reach their conclusions. Be prepared for lots of statistics, and many mentions of the word "disorder". This will tell you the unvarnished facts about ADHD. Written for very interested adults as well as researchers and practitioners.

### ***The Gift of Adult ADD: How to Transform Your Challenges & Build on Your Strengths***

*Lara Honos-Webb, Ph.D., 2008*

If you are a person who hears that ADHD life can be better but has trouble imagining what that might look like, *The Gift of Adult ADD* can help. Honos-Webb writes this book for people with ADHD first, and other adults second. She offers real-life examples of how adults have found what they love and let that guide them into life "in the sweet spot". *The Gift of Adult ADD* includes many specific tips and activities for creating change for yourself in a world that's not highly attuned to ADHD. The section on the promises and pitfalls of diagnosis should be read by both partners.

**Film**– *ADD & Loving It* (Google it for the current link) was first broadcast on Canadian TV. It's loads of fun and informative, as well.

**Websites:** The following websites are just some that contain helpful information about ADHD and support for adult ADHD:

*adhdmarriage.com* – blogs, seminars, coaching, up-to-date treatment information, a community forum for discussion and much more. The best site available on the topic.

*adultadhdbook.com* – Ari Tuckman's site includes informative short videos about many aspects of ADHD

*caddac.ca* – The Centre for ADD/ADHD Advocacy in Canada hosts a very complete list of resources and information for those living in Canada.

*Drhallowell.com* – Dr. Hallowell's site provides his ideas and opinions about ADHD

*CHADD.org* – one way to find a local support group, as well as background information

*ADDcoach4u.com* – Coach Pete Quily has amassed a large database of information. Particularly of interest – his information on international support groups and resources

## Coping Skills

### ***The Dance of Anger: A Woman's Guide to Changing the Patterns of Intimate Relationships***

*Harriet Lerner, Ph.D., 1985/2005*

If you or your spouse is experiencing any anger in your relationship and you can read only one more book, this is the one to pick. This bestseller is *the* best book on how to address anger, period.

### ***Dare to Forgive***

*Edward M. Hallowell, M.D.*

This gem of a book not only makes the case that the ability to forgive is a sign of strength, but it also provides a step-by-step process for moving from anger and distress to forgiveness. It is a very useful book for those who are caught up in a destructive cycle of anger and retaliation in their relationships.

### ***I Love You But I Don't Trust You***

*Mira Kirschenbaum*

Broken trust is a key issue for many couples impacted by ADHD. Kirschenbaum explores what partners need to do to rebuild trust and helps you on the journey.

## Communication Strategies

### ***Beyond Reason: Using Emotions as You Negotiate***

*Roger Fisher and Daniel Shapiro*

Although this book was written with a business audience in mind, it provides an excellent simplification of some of the basics for understanding and creating better ways to communicate. It's highly relevant for couples struggling to communicate through the often-difficult emotions stimulated by dealing with ADHD. I highly recommend it.

### ***How to Improve Your Marriage Without Talking About It***

*Patricia Love, Ed.D., Steven Stosny, Ph.D., 2007*

One of the challenges of relationships isn't just ADHD, but also gender differences. This book explores two huge communication issues that all couples experience – men's shame, and women's fears of loss and abandonment. These fears are heightened in ADHD relationships, as excessive shame is a common side effect of ADHD, and distraction on the part of a male partner with ADHD can lead his wife to feel abandoned. You may not agree with, or be able to, "not talk about it" but you

will come away from reading this book with a far greater understanding of some of the hidden undercurrents of your relationship.

### ***Getting the Love You Want***

*Harville Hendrix, Ph.D.*

Hendrix's work began of a new type of therapy – Imago Therapy. Part of his theory is that we choose partners based upon “unfinished business” with our parents – continuing on our path to work out unresolved conflicts in our lives. Even if you aren't completely persuaded by his premise, his exploration of communication, mirroring, validation and improving a relationship in trouble is right on target for couples with ADHD.

### **Divorce, Separation and Whether to Stay Married**

#### ***Should I Stay or Go? How Controlled Separation Can Save Your Marriage***

*Lee Raffel, M.S.W.*

There is no doubt that many couples struggling with how ADHD affects their marriage contemplate divorce or separation – and many actually end up getting divorced. This book helps you to create your own answer to the basic question “Should I Stay or Go?” that desperate spouses may ask, and provides a number of ways to think through how a separation or divorce might proceed. Raffel is an advocate for “controlled separation” as a last ditch effort to get some distance from each other and save a marriage, and she provides very specific guidelines for how couples might decide whether or not to try this route, as well as many examples and real-life stories.

#### ***Too Good To Leave, Too Bad to Stay: A Step-by-Step Guide to Help You Decide Whether to Stay In or Get Out of Your Relationship***

*Mira Kirshenbaum*

This is an insightful and thoughtful guide to resolving relationship ambivalence (that period when you can't decide whether to stay in your marriage or leave it). Under the theory that relationships are too complicated to weigh good vs. bad, Kirshenbaum offers 36 diagnostic tests against which you should measure your relationship and your feelings. She likens the process to how doctors diagnose illness. One caveat – be careful to look at whether unresolved anger around your relationship, or ADHD symptoms that can be treated and, therefore improved, unfairly bias your answers to the negative.

### **Counseling and Therapy**

#### ***How Therapy Can Be Hazardous to Your Marital Health***



*Speech by William J. Doherty, PhD*

This speech, given in 1999 at the Smart Marriages Conference, can be found at <http://www.smartmarriages.com/hazardous.html>. I highly recommend it for anyone considering counseling as Doherty provides good perspective into finding an effective marriage counselor. In addition, the site at which the article is posted points to other useful marriage and counseling resources.