

Don't Forget Your Family

Steven* is a successful Washington, DC attorney who uses his AD/HD to hyperfocus on tough cases and win. He has learned to turn a potential AD/HD weakness into a very real strength.

His wife, Vanessa* is also a busy professional who is trying to balance her own career along with raising their three children and managing her husband's AD/HD. She could use Steven's help in the morning, especially since she has to leave for work before he does, but Steven doesn't do mornings very well.

Unfortunately, Steven gets so focused on his cases that he forgets about everything else. He forgets to get the kids ready for school or even forgets to take them to school at times. He's so hyper-focused that he sometimes even forgets to say hello to Vanessa and the kids, or to tell them he's leaving on an out of town trip.

His forgetfulness made his family feel he didn't value them, which made Steven miserable. It wasn't that he didn't care. He was simply too distracted by work to show it.

We solved the problem with a pack of colored index cards. Steven wrote each of his daily tasks on a card, making sure to post them in places where he'd be sure to notice them: on the door of the refrigerator, above the sink, on cabinets.

For the first time in his married life, Steven was remembering to turn on the dishwasher, take out the trash, turn off the coffee pot before he left and do other chores

that Vanessa was always having to remind him to do.

Vanessa no longer complained about the chores not getting done, but she didn't like the cards cluttering up her home. To keep everyone happy, we transferred the cards to a bulletin board and instead hung discreet color-coded ribbons in spots where Steven needed something to "hook" his memory. For example, a small yellow ribbon was discreetly attached to the alarm system, a small red ribbon to the dishwasher, and a blue ribbon tied to his suitcase to remind him of the card in its front pocket.

This blue card in the suitcase is the most important of all. It reminds him of things he needs to do before he goes out of town and when he returns. The list includes "kiss Vanessa," "hug the kids," and "ask about how their week was before doing anything else."

Now when Steven travels, his family knows he's thinking about them because he writes down his thoughts and puts the notes in the same pocket with the blue index card so that he remembers to talk about them when he arrives home.

That makes Vanessa and the kids happy, and Steven even happier, because they finally know what he's always known but forgotten to show all along — that he loves them. ■

Sandy Maynard is a professional coach in the Washington, D.C. area, and can be reached online at www.sandymaynard.com.

Reminding Yourself

If index cards and ribbons don't work for you, try these high-tech tricks:

Ontimereminder.com

An online reminder service you can use to create and schedule any kind of reminder: wake-up calls, daily appointments, social calendars, medication and even a bid-watcher for E-bay fans. How it works: once you enter your information online, the computer will actually call you at the requested times with a pre-recorded or custom reminder message. Cost: from \$4.95 to \$39.95 per month, depending on the amount of reminders you order.

MSN Alerts

A free information delivery service that will send alerts to your e-mail, mobile phone or MSN Messenger for calendar events, appointments, breaking news, stocks and more. How it works: after signing up for a Microsoft ".NET Passport" online, you custom program your alerts to be sent to your preferred device. Cost: free.

Palm Pilot Desktop Alarms

Along with the reminder function on your Palm or PDA handheld device, you can "Hot Sync" with the Palm Desktop program to receive pop-up reminders on your screen. How it works: after programming an event into your Palm Desktop, choose the "alarm" function and set it to alert you at any time before the event. Cost: The retail price of your selected PDA device and software.

Technophobes Can Try These Low-Tech Options:

Carry one master notepad or date book with you at all times to use for to-dos, appointments and notes.

Use a small tape recorder or the "memo" function of your cell phone to record reminders for yourself.

In a pinch, write reminders on your hand.
-KW