

Resolve To Regain Control

by Diane Trautman

Is “getting organized” a perpetual New Year’s resolution? Are you running faster each day and getting farther behind? Have you started a multitude of projects and failed to complete any of them to your satisfaction? Do you often feel overwhelmed?

Maybe you are suffering from culturally induced Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), says a former Harvard Medical School instructor and ADD expert. In his book “CrazyBusy: Overstretched, Overbooked, and About to Snap”, Edward M. Hallowell, M.D., discusses the many ways in which we permit ourselves to be distracted and co-opted — to our detriment — by some of the things and people in our lives. Fortunately, Dr. Hallowell also offers exercises and strategies to help us reclaim our lives, from consciously limiting what he calls “screensucking” (time wasted on the computer, video games, BlackBerry, etc.), to eliminating “frazzing” (ineffective multitasking). In layman’s terms, he explains how our brains are designed to function under optimal conditions to help us better understand how we undermine ourselves with some of the choices we make.

In our society, ADD is a common diagnosis. While some children may need to take medication, parents understandably are reluctant to put their kids on these drugs. Even when a child hasn’t been clinically diagnosed with the disorder, a parent will tell me that their child displays many of the key behaviors. A professional tutor will have the experience and skills to help your child organize their work and focus on the most important concepts in their lessons. Some tutors even have training in this particular area. Still, we parents have to manage effectively the day-to-day environment and routines that can keep our children happy and productive.

As difficult as it may be to stop or at least slow down and reevaluate our lives, perhaps this is what we need to do for our own sanity and for the mental health of our children. I equate it to the airline instructions requiring us to place the oxygen mask first on ourselves and then on our child. Dr. Hallowell, who has overcome both ADD and dyslexia, says that ADD is a gift, but one that, like our modern life, is difficult to unwrap. Learning how to refocus on our priorities and control the factors that would otherwise control us are steps that will lead us and our children to happier, healthier lives.