



## LIVING THROUGH THE PAIN OF ADD

*[Diagnosed Late in Life]*  
Delivered from Distraction (excerpt from Ch 35)

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**The feelings of futility I am about to describe need not plague a person who has ADD. If you get the right kind of help, your life will certainly improve.** How much varies from person to person, but life with ADD can always get better. Never give up. There is *always* hope.

**The dark side of ADD can lead you to feel absolutely hopeless,** unable to find any seed of success despite trying as hard as you possibly can. This is particularly true in adults because so much damage was done to them while they were growing up. ... Diagnosis and treatment help enormously, but they do not cure ADD. It is still difficult to get organized. Procrastination remains an exasperating problem. Inconsistency remains a problem. Moods can still veer toward the downcast, if not depressed, and confidence still lags.

You can feel stuck in a pointless Sisyphean<sup>1</sup> struggle, doing your best to carry on, but gradually losing faith that you will ever make lasting progress. You don't want to burden your friends, so you keep your misery to yourself. You [doubt that therapy would help even] if you could afford it, as you have tried it in the past and received no benefit, even through the therapist seemed to be a good one. You use every ounce of your energy to meet your responsibilities, but the piles of stuff that surround you keep growing as your ability to manage your life fails to keep pace with the demands that increase day by day.

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Each day imposes a new ordeal. The people [you] turn to for help just don't get it. They offer reasonable advice, like putting a hook up next to the door for keys, making lists, and allowing more time to get ready. But they add the one phrase that shows how profoundly they misunderstand: *try harder*. [You] are already trying as hard as you can. [you] are trying as hard as a dozen people could. [Their] advice cuts you down, undermining your efforts even further. *I can't try any harder*. ..... *So does that mean there really is no hope?*

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Proper treatment will help, but it never solves everything. Even with proper treatment, there usually remains a residue of frustration, an echo of despair.

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For those whose ADD was not diagnosed and treated until they became grown-ups, the magnetism of past experience keeps bringing them back to old habits and old states of mind, even if they have received the best treatment available. They are haunted by fears of failure, even if they have succeeded many times. They are still tormented by feelings of insecurity, even if they are objectively as secure as any human can be. They can't believe they have achieved what they achieved, which means they can't fully own it, enjoy it, and feel nourished by it.

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[The dark side of ADD for most adults] is composed of pessimism, frustration, moments of despair, surges of self-contempt as well as baseless rage at others, unpredictability, lapses into addictive behavior and substance abuse, ongoing struggles to get organized, feelings of being ineffectual and feckless no matter how successful the person becomes, and periods of being remote, cut off, and impossible to reach.

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<sup>1</sup> Sisyphean: Endlessly laborious and fruitless. "resembling the labors of Sisyphus," 1635, King of Corinth, famed as "the [craftiest](#) of men," he was condemned in the afterlife to roll uphill a stone which perpetually rolls down.