

Getting Organized with the Three-Card Technique

Objective

To increase organizational skills.

You Should Know

When you have ADHD, it can be challenging to get and stay organized. Being organized might not come naturally to you, and you may be overwhelmed if you're unsure how to get organized. Starting some regular routines to get organized can help you feel less overwhelmed and frustrated. The "3-card technique" is a simple way to take some of the guesswork out of organization.

But first, consider Celia as an example. Celia's family often jokes about her forgetfulness and disorganization. She's lost her cell phone, and frequently misplaces important papers for school. Celia doesn't find it funny at all; in fact, she is tired of misplacing things, losing track of time, and forgetting important project deadlines. Her teachers express their frustration, and one teacher even called her lazy. She is starting to feel really depressed because she just can't seem to figure out how to get it together.

What to Do

First, identify the areas of your life that need more organizing. For example, you might have a disorganized bedroom or a messy backpack. Your desk or locker at school might be filled with papers, food wrappers, or other items. You might experience "electronic" disorganization; your phone, planner, or email might be impossible to navigate. List three areas that need consistent organizational help:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Next, take out an index card for each area and label the top of the card. On each card, write three specific tasks you can do every week to keep each area organized. On the same day and at the same time each week, pull out the cards and complete the three items. Make this a routine by setting up a notification on your phone, or create a reminder using a reminder app.

What day/time will you complete the three items on each card? Would it be easier to do one card at a time, on three days? For example, complete tasks on card 1 on Monday, card 2 on Wednesday, card 3 on Friday. Describe your plan.

Put the cards in a specific place, or ask a parent for help keeping track of your cards. Don't worry if you forget one week; just pick up where you left off. Look at Celia's example:

BEDROOM

1. Place all dirty laundry in the hamper and put all clean clothes away.
2. Put items in the closet: shoes, tennis racquet, etc.
3. Clear off desk, and put items in drawers or in the trash. Place important papers for school in the red folder.

Reflections on This Exercise

Once you have practiced the 3-card technique for several weeks, describe your experience.

Did you find this task easy or hard? Did you ask for help? Explain.

How helpful was this exercise in helping you get organized? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?
