



I KEEP FORGETTING THINGS

David B Sachar MD

“I KEEP FORGETTING THINGS”

**David B. Sachar
M.D., FACP, MACG, AGAF**

e-Book 2016 International Psychotherapy Institute

From *Achieving Success with ADHD: Secrets from an Afflicted Professor of Medicine* by David B. Sachar

Copyright © 2012 David B. Sachar

All Rights Reserved

Created in the United States of America

“I KEEP FORGETTING THINGS”

Let's start with a simple problem—forgetting things. Whenever I left the house to go to work, it seemed I had forgotten something I needed: pens, wallet, pager, appointment book, a manuscript I was reviewing, whatever.

Simple Rule #1:

Post a checklist on the door.

Nothing special. You don't have to read and abide by every detail of Atul Gawande's brilliant little monograph, "The Checklist Manifesto." Just make a list of the essential items for every day's work and stick it up on your exit door.

Here is what mine looks like:

- Pens
- Wallet
- Calendar books
- Blackberry
- Pager
- Special

The only reason that "Keys" isn't on my list is that I can't start the car without them anyhow, and house and office keys are also on the same key ring.

And what does "Special" mean? It refers to anything I particularly need for that particular day. It means I pause for a moment and think about that day's "special" activities—a journal review, a meeting agenda, notes for a research conference, etc.

I should point out that reviewing the list isn't sufficient. As you read each item, pat yourself wherever needed to be sure that the item is actually there. Nobody has to watch you go through this odd self-touching ritual; just do it.

Simple Rule #2:

Set up a tray.

For physical and occupational therapists, "ADL" means "Activities of Daily Living." For those of us with ADHD, it could stand for "Accessories for Daily Living," many of which are tabulated on the sample checklist in Simple Rule #1 above. The checklist, however, only reminds you what they are; it doesn't tell you where to find them.

So set up a tray somewhere near the entrance to your home. When you get in, dump the accessories into the tray: car keys, sunglasses, wallet, whatever. If you need to keep some of the items with you wherever you go at home—perhaps your pager or cellphone—then have a second tray in the bedroom for those articles.

Now nothing gets forgotten or lost; everything is in the trays.

Simple Rule #3:

Don't go yet; stop.

As you leave a room, don't leave. Stop for a minute; look around. Is there a book on the desk that you're supposed to take with you? Is your briefcase sitting there, left behind? The pause just gave you a second chance.

Or if you're in the kitchen, are your breakfast dishes still on the table? Pick them up, rinse them off, put them away, and make somebody happy. Dirty clothes in the bedroom? Same thing; into the laundry hamper. Now you're not a slob; you're a hero.

Simple Rule #4:

Never assume that you're going to remember something without help.

If you are interrupted while you're on-line or on the phone, and there is something you were supposed to do when you were finished, the chances are that you're going to forget the task by the time you return to the computer or the telephone. So just as you are turning away to deal with the interruption, write yourself a 2-3 word reminder that you are sure to see when the interruption is over. A notepad next to the computer or the phone is a handy device for this purpose. You might even jot the reminder on a Post-It® note to stick on the computer screen or the telephone. Don't let these notes accumulate, though; they could pile up, make a mess, and thus become part of the problem instead of the solution. As soon as your memory has been jogged and the purpose fulfilled, discard the note and leave the pad free for the next time.