The Problem: Why Strategies and Plans Don't Work

A strategy is an overarching vision or path. A plan is the detailed execution of the strategy. Executive functions are used to problem-solve around specific tasks in the plan. Put differently, executive functions are used at point of performance in the plan where many variables must be organized. In other words, things that are multifaceted and ambiguous must be resolved.

Often, strategies and plans don't work. Why? Because of problems. Let me illustrate with an example.

A business owner implements a strategy to write a weekly blog post to connect with potential customers and sell his product. His plan might be to write a blog post every Thursday at 11:00 A.M. If he has ADHD, the plan fails when he does not write the blog post. Why? Ambiguity! He knows what a blog is and he probably has a topic. The ambiguity is in choosing which five ideas out of 50 are the most relevant, as well as trying to discern the appropriate words to communicate each idea and sequence them in a compelling way for the reader.

The act of writing the blog post requires executive functions. Executive functions are a collection of mind tools used to solve problems. Problems are multifaceted and ambiguous (i.e., writing a blog). Executive functions are impaired for those with ADHD, meaning that executive functioning is less efficient and harder for those with ADHD to solve problems (in-mind). Emotionally, they escape the discomfort of problem-solving to something cognitively easier.

Those in the ADHD community are paying attention to the wrong thing. They focus on tips, tricks, apps, tools, and strategies that claim to support thinking and problem-solving. supposedly are used to help them think (solve problems). Effectively, many have been lulled into thinking that these tools will do the work for them, but that simply isn't true. Effectively, it is thinking that the shovel does the digging, but it doesn't.

Cognitive Ergonomics From the Inside Out® (Cog-Erg for short) makes the case for oral conversation to help these individuals organize their thoughts to produce a blog or to problem-solve what's in front of them. Most take issue with this, not realizing language was derived for the purposes of solving shared problems thousands of years ago.

Direct oral communication is the most basic form of problem-solving. Given that ADHD is an executive function impairment, we can reasonably view it is a legitimate ADHD accommodation. Neurotypical individuals use this accommodation as well; however, because they don't share the same impairment, they simply don't need to rely on it to the extent as do those with ADHD.

The notion that direct oral conversation is an adaptive accommodation is revolutionary. We are moving away from compensatory accommodations that actually increase the time to suffer without alleviating the impairment.

The point here is to focus on getting help with problem-solving, and you may be surprised how your strategies and plans begin to work.