

# I Lose Track of Time



David B Sachar MD

# **“I LOSE TRACK OF TIME”**

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

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## “I LOSE TRACK OF TIME”

A distorted perception of time is one of the hallmarks of ADHD. Almost all of us have it, and it means (a) things always take longer than we think they will and (b) we are very often late for appointments. Actually, the two problems are closely linked.

### Simple Rule #1:

*Plan double the time to do a job than you first estimate.*

Really, it's no joke; don't kid yourself. Thirty minutes to shower and get dressed? Figure sixty. Two hours to pay the week's bills? Allow four. Three days to read all the files on a case? Plan six. One week to prepare the tax returns? Fuggeddaboutit; it'll take two.

This rule has a broader corollary, to follow.

### Simple Rule #2:

*Lower your expectations.*

It's not just that those of us with ADHD can't work as fast as we think we can. We can't do most things as smoothly, easily, effortlessly, or efficiently as we wish we could or think we should.

This impairment means that we should never be reluctant to use external aids, just as someone with a gait disorder might need crutches. *We all need crutches.* In fact, one of the goals of this book is to help us find crutches that work.

In previous sections, we've talked about checklists, schedulers, dictating machines, and even phrases to recite to ourselves. Now we're about to suggest one of the simplest crutches of all.

**Simple Rule #3:**

*Set an alarm clock.*

I guarantee you: for those of us with ADHD, an alarm clock is a virtually indispensable survival tool. You think you can't possibly forget that you're supposed to leave for your haircut in ten minutes? Believe me, you'll forget. The important call you promised to make to your client at 2 PM? You'll forget.

Set the darn alarm clock!

**Simple Rule #4:**

*The time you have to do something is **not** the same as the time you have to **get ready** to do it.*

This rule is perhaps the most self-evident of all of them, but it was somehow one of the hardest for me to assimilate and act upon. We have to leave for the restaurant in town at 5:15 PM? Yeah, I know; so what? It's only 5:13 PM. Hey, Dummy; it takes more than two minutes to shut down the computer, put on the coat, find the car keys, and settle the dog.

So here's what needs to be done: (a) establish the time for departure, or whatever it is we have to do; (b) estimate the time it will take to get ready; (c) double the estimate (see Simple Rule #1).

Then set the darn alarm clock.