Linda Roggli:

It's October 2020, and even in the midst of a crazy year, it's still ADHD Awareness Month. And we're still here with TADD Talks from ADDA, the Attention Deficit Disorder Association, nine minutes short, pithy soundbites on living with adult ADHD. Stay tuned, here it comes.

Nathalie Pedicelli:

Hello and welcome to TADD Talks with ADDA. I'm Nathalie Pedicelli, and I'm an organizer coach at Organize. Thrive. Monetize. An organizer coach is a professional organizer, a coach, and an ADHD expert all in one. At Organize. Thrive. Monetize., we help adults with ADHD organize their life from A-DHD to Z. I'd like to spend a little time today talking about the topic I'll be presenting at the 2020 International Conference on ADHD, "How to Choose or Build a Perfect Planner for Your Brain." Four years ago, I started working with a client who was an avid crafter. During one of our sessions, we discovered a stash of planners, most of whom had never been used. She explained that she'd been on the hunt for the perfect planner for several years in the hopes of finally getting organized, but none of the planners had seemed to work for her. She was stuck in a holding pattern, barely getting the daily chores done.

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I didn't want her to use the lack of a planner as the crutch to stay inactive. I asked her what was missing from all those planners, and I offered to design her a custom planner. After a few tweaks, we had found the winning combination. With some ADHD-friendly time management strategies under her belt and her perfect planner in hand, she was now able to move into action. Well, that experience planted the seed for me to design a planner that had an ADHD brain in mind and to recognize what was missing in those regular planners. That planner will be launched later this month. So, what are the things to consider in selecting a planner? Whether you're buying a ready-made planner or designing your own, here's my three-point recommendation plan to make sure you're choosing the planner that is right for you. First, let's start with the basic considerations: style, layout, and spacing.

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What style of planner do you prefer? Structured with pre-printed and dated pages like the Planner Pad? Or a more free-form planner like the Bullet Journal that is simply blank pages you use as the need comes? Structured planners offer simplicity in usage. All your days and weekly plans are clustered together and it's easy to schedule action items to a later date because everything's pre-dated. A free-form style planner allows you to write things where you want. If you don't mind that things are written in no specific order, where daily to-dos are fitting between lists and notes, then this might be the layout for you. When it comes to layout, most planners use either a page per day or have a week on two pages. When your planner has a full week layout over two pages, you get a better idea of what's coming up in the next few days.

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A page per day layout has the advantage of leaving a lot of room to write, so if you're a big-time note taker, this might be a better option for you. Spacing is also important. Most planners tend to take one of two approaches: blank spaces with no appointment times or most of the spaces dedicated to writing in appointments. Appointment-driven planners have the advantage of letting you see where you have openings to schedule your tasks around your appointments. On the other hand, planners with no appointment times are probably better for students who have a set schedule or someone who doesn't have many meetings or appointments. The second thing to consider are the added features that some planners might splurge on: size, binding, and accessories. Planners usually come in two sizes. A 6 x 9 inch planner, when closed, makes it easy to fit in most purses. The 9 x 12 inch option gives you way more space to write, especially if you're opting for a weekly layout.

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The binding on planners are either book style or held together with a spiral binding. Book bindings are sturdier, but it can be more difficult to write close to the middle of the pages, so make sure it stays flat when it's open. Spiral bindings are useful because you can flip it to the page you need, and you can tuck the cover and other pages underneath so it makes it easier for you to write on when you don't have a generous work surface around you. Accessories are the useful gadgets that make your planner easy to use. Rulers that clip onto the spiral binding can also act as a place marker so you can quickly turn to the right page. Tear-off corners are great for letting you know when your tasks have been done for a given day or week, and you can transfer them forward in time.

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Pockets are useful for holding things like receipts that you don't want to lose. They can be glued to the inside covers or attached to the binding. The final things that you need to look at is what's missing in neurotypical planners - those features that can keep the ADHD brain engaged, motivated, and active. It's that secret sauce that can make the difference between a planner being used or not. First of all, visuals. Color can help set the tone for energy and it can also make more important things stand out. Images or icons can be easier for some people to remember than words. Trackers. Most planners only track water intake or exercise. With ADHD it takes us a lot longer to change a behavior into a habit, and it's harder to stay motivated, so we need to keep track of things most neurotypical people don't need to worry about.

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Sometimes, we simply need to track things like our mood and sleep and see if there's any correlation between the two that might explain why we had a bad day. Long-term planning. Most planners help you plan your week or your day. Some make you look at your month, but few planners help you walk you through the seasonal or annual planning. When you have this in place, it's much easier to zoom in on your day when you previously had the opportunity to zoom out to the bigger picture of your next 90 days, season, or year. Now that you know what to consider when choosing a planner, you might opt to design one for yourself. Canva or PowerPoint are useful tools to help you design your pages at no cost, as they offer some ready-made templates and icons. Your local office supply store can help you bind it together.

Nathalie Pedicelli:

By now, you've probably listened to some other TADD Talks and are now ready to start changing some of your behaviors. To help you out, you can download your free copy of the monthly tracker that I designed by going to my website, organizethrivemonetize.com/TADD2020 - that's T-A-D-D two zero two zero. And while you're there, why not take the time to download the most complete list of famous people thriving with ADHD? I've created a list of the who's who in the ADHD world and organized it by profession. You can discover those game-changers and movers and shakers who helped shape the world we live in today. And that's today's TADD Talk about "How to Choose or Build a Perfect Planner for Your Brain." I hope you enjoyed it and found it useful. I'm Nathalie Pedicelli, your ADHD organizer coach, helping you organize your life from A-DHD to Z. It's been great being with you today. I hope to see you at my session during the 2020 Annual International Conference on ADHD that's happening online from November 5th to 7th. If you want more information about how we can work together, you can find me online at www.organizethrivemonetize.com or email me at nat@organizethrivemonetize.com. Thank you for your attention.

Linda Roggli:

Okay. That's today's ADHD wisdom. Much more to come. And why not join us for the Virtual 2020 International ADHD Conference coming up in November? Details at ADD.org. And while you're at it, why not join ADDA? It's a great investment in your ADHD line.