

Goal Setting and Action Planning

A

Adaptive Goal Framing – Concept: Adjusting goals to match the client’s neurocognitive profile. Related Terms: Goal Alignment, Strength-Based Coaching. Explanation: Coaches rephrase objectives to align with the client’s preferred learning style, energy levels, and attention span, making the goal feel attainable and personally relevant. Example: Instead of “write a 500-word report,” the coach suggests “outline three key points for the report over three short sessions.” Practical Application: Use a brief neuro-profile checklist before goal-setting to identify optimal times of day and preferred formats. Challenges: Clients may resist reframing if they view the original goal as a benchmark of competence.

B

Baseline Assessment – Concept: Initial measurement of current functioning. Related Terms: Initial Evaluation, Data Collection. Explanation: A systematic collection of data on attention, executive function, and daily routines that provides a reference point for tracking progress. Example: Administer the Adult ADHD Self-Report Scale (ASRS) and ask the client to log distractions for a week. Practical Application: Compare baseline scores with post-intervention data to quantify improvement. Challenges: Baseline data may be skewed by client’s mood or situational factors, requiring multiple measurement points.

C

Chunking – Concept: Dividing tasks into smaller, manageable units. Related Terms: Micro-Tasks, Incremental Steps. Explanation: Breaking a larger objective into discrete actions reduces overwhelm and enhances focus for individuals with ADHD. Example: For “organize the home office,” the coach creates chunks: “clear desk surface,” “sort papers into three piles,” “file each pile.” Practical Application: Use a visual board where each chunk is a sticky note that can be moved to “Done.” Challenges: Over-chunking can lead to excessive planning time and may dilute the sense of progress.

D

Deadline Flexibility – Concept: Adjustable time frames that respect variability in attention cycles. Related Terms: Time Buffering, Flexible Scheduling. Explanation: Setting a firm deadline while allowing for adaptive extensions acknowledges the client’s fluctuating productivity. Example: A client aims to submit a project draft by Friday, but the coach builds in a “mid-week check-in” to adjust the deadline if needed. Practical Application: Incorporate a “deadline review” session each week to renegotiate timelines. Challenges: Too much flexibility may erode accountability; coaches must balance compassion with structure.

E

Executive Function Mapping – Concept: Visual representation of planning, organizing, and self-monitoring skills. Related Terms: Cognitive Mapping, Skill Audit. Explanation: Coaches chart a client’s executive function strengths and deficits to tailor goal-setting strategies. Example: A diagram shows strong working memory but weak inhibitory control, prompting the use of “pause-and-plan” prompts before tasks. Practical

Application: Use a simple flowchart during coaching sessions to identify where support is needed.

Challenges: Clients may feel labeled or stigmatized by the mapping process.

F

Feedback Loop – Concept: Ongoing exchange of information about performance. Related Terms: Real-Time Feedback, Iterative Review. Explanation: Timely, specific feedback reinforces desired behaviors and corrects deviations quickly, which is crucial for maintaining motivation in ADHD coaching. Example: After a client completes a micro-task, the coach provides immediate praise and a brief note on what worked. Practical Application: Set up a digital “feedback log” where both coach and client can add comments after each session. Challenges: Inconsistent feedback can lead to confusion; coaches must be disciplined about frequency and tone.

G

Goal Hierarchy – Concept: Structured layering of primary, secondary, and tertiary objectives. Related Terms: Goal Pyramid, Nested Goals. Explanation: Organizing goals from broad to specific helps clients see how daily actions contribute to larger aspirations. Example: Primary Goal: “Improve work performance.” Secondary Goal: “Complete weekly reports on time.” Tertiary Goal: “Draft report outline by Monday morning.” Practical Application: Create a simple table that lists each level and its associated actions. Challenges: Over-complicating the hierarchy can obscure focus; keep it to three levels maximum.

H

Habit Loop Analysis – Concept: Examination of cue-routine-reward cycles. Related Terms: Trigger Identification, Routine Modification. Explanation: Understanding the habit loop allows coaches to redesign routines that support goal achievement. Example: Cue: “Morning coffee.” Routine: “Check email.” Reward: “Sense of productivity.” Coach replaces routine with “review top three tasks.” Practical Application: Have the client record habit loops for a week and identify which loops aid or hinder goals. Challenges: Habit loops may be deeply ingrained; change requires sustained effort and patience.

I

Implementation Intentions – Concept: “If-then” plans that pre-specify actions. Related Terms: Action Scripts, Precommitment. Explanation: By linking a situational cue to a specific behavior, clients reduce reliance on willpower. Example: “If I feel the urge to scroll, then I will set a 5-minute timer and work on my task.” Practical Application: Write implementation intentions on a card that the client carries. Challenges: Clients may create too many if-then statements, leading to cognitive overload.

J

Journaling for Accountability – Concept: Written record of actions, thoughts, and outcomes. Related Terms: Self-Monitoring, Progress Diary. Explanation: Regular journaling reinforces self-awareness and provides data for coaching discussions. Example: A client logs each completed micro-task, notes distractions, and rates satisfaction on a 1-5 scale. Practical Application: Use a simple template with columns for date, task, outcome, and reflection. Challenges: Journaling can feel burdensome; keep entries brief and integrate with existing digital tools.

K

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) – Concept: Measurable metrics that track goal progress. Related Terms: Success Metrics, Outcome Measures. Explanation: Selecting a few relevant KPIs helps clients quantify achievements without overwhelming them with data. Example: KPI for “increase study time” could be “average minutes of focused study per day.” Practical Application: Review KPI trends bi-weekly and adjust action steps accordingly. Challenges: Choosing inappropriate KPIs may misrepresent progress; ensure they are directly linked to the goal.

L
Learning Style Alignment – Concept: Tailoring goal-setting methods to visual, auditory, or kinesthetic preferences. Related Terms: Modality Matching, Sensory Integration. Explanation: Aligning actions with preferred sensory channels improves engagement for ADHD clients. Example: A visual learner uses mind-maps to plan tasks, while an auditory learner records verbal reminders. Practical Application: Conduct a quick learning style inventory at the start of coaching. Challenges: Over-reliance on a single style can limit exposure to complementary strategies.

M
Motivation Mapping – Concept: Identifying intrinsic and extrinsic drivers behind each goal. Related Terms: Drive Analysis, Incentive Structure. Explanation: Understanding what fuels a client’s commitment enables coaches to embed motivating elements into action plans. Example: A client is intrinsically motivated by mastery, so the coach emphasizes skill-building milestones. Practical Application: Use a “Motivation Wheel” worksheet to plot drivers for each goal. Challenges: Motivation can fluctuate; regular re-assessment is needed.

N
Neuro-Timing Optimization – Concept: Scheduling tasks during peak attention periods. Related Terms: Chronotype Matching, Peak-Performance Scheduling. Explanation: ADHD individuals often have distinct times of day when focus is strongest; aligning tasks with these windows boosts efficiency. Example: If a client’s peak is mid-morning, schedule the most demanding work then. Practical Application: Track attention levels across the day for two weeks to identify patterns. Challenges: External obligations may limit flexibility; coaches must negotiate realistic compromises.

O
Outcome Visualization – Concept: Mental imagery of successful goal completion. Related Terms: Future Pacing, Success Imagery. Explanation: Visualizing the end result strengthens commitment and reduces anxiety about the process. Example: A client imagines delivering a presentation confidently, noting the sensations of calm and control. Practical Application: Begin each coaching session with a brief visualization exercise. Challenges: Some clients struggle with vivid imagery; guide them with sensory prompts.

P
Progressive Goal Scaling – Concept: Gradually increasing goal difficulty as competence grows. Related Terms: Staircase Planning, Incremental Challenge. Explanation: Starting with easy wins builds confidence, then the coach raises the bar to sustain growth. Example: First week: “Complete one 10-minute task daily.” Second week: “Two 15-minute tasks.” Practical Application: Use a simple ladder chart to track scaling steps.

Challenges: Scaling too quickly can trigger setbacks; monitor client's self-efficacy closely.

Q

Quality Over Quantity – Concept: Prioritizing depth of effort rather than volume of tasks. Related Terms: Focused Work, Deep Work. Explanation: For ADHD clients, attempting many tasks can dilute attention; concentrating on a few high-impact actions yields better results. Example: Instead of “answer all emails,” the client focuses on “respond to three priority emails.” Practical Application: Define a “quality threshold” for each task (e.g., 80% completeness). Challenges: Clients may fear missing obligations; coach must negotiate acceptable standards.

R

Reward Structuring – Concept: Systematic use of incentives to reinforce behavior. Related Terms: Positive Reinforcement, Token Economy. Explanation: Pairing task completion with immediate, meaningful rewards sustains motivation. Example: After finishing a study session, the client allows a 10-minute video break. Practical Application: Create a reward menu with options ranging from small (coffee) to larger (movie night). Challenges: Over-reliance on external rewards can hinder intrinsic motivation; transition gradually to internal satisfaction.

S

SMART Goal Framework – Concept: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-Bound criteria. Related Terms: Goal-Setting Template, Structured Objectives. Explanation: The SMART model provides a clear scaffold for crafting actionable goals, reducing ambiguity that often hampers ADHD clients. Example: “Increase daily reading time from 5 minutes to 15 minutes by the end of month 1.” Practical Application: Fill out a SMART worksheet during the first coaching session. Challenges: Some clients perceive SMART as overly rigid; adapt language to maintain flexibility while preserving clarity.

T

Task Initiation Cueing – Concept: External prompts that trigger the start of an activity. Related Terms: Prompt Engineering, Start-Signal. Explanation: Using visual or auditory cues helps bypass the activation deficit common in ADHD. Example: A timer set to ring at 9 am signals the start of the work block. Practical Application: Place a sticky note on the monitor that reads “Begin task now.” Challenges: Cues can become background noise; rotate cues to maintain effectiveness.

U

Undoing Procrastination Loops – Concept: Intervening in the cycle of delay and avoidance. Related Terms: Procrastination Break-Down, Delay Disruption. Explanation: Coaches help clients identify the first step they typically avoid and create a micro-action to overcome it. Example: If a client avoids opening a document, the micro-action is “open the file for 10 seconds.” Practical Application: Use a “Procrastination Log” to capture triggers and corresponding micro-actions. Challenges: Clients may experience guilt when confronting avoidance; maintain a non-judgmental stance.

V

Visual Progress Tracker – Concept: Graphic representation of completed versus pending tasks. Related Terms: Kanban Board, Progress Chart. Explanation: Visual trackers provide immediate feedback and reduce

anxiety about task load. Example: A three-column board labeled "To Do," "Doing," "Done" with colored cards for each micro-task. Practical Application: Encourage clients to update the board at the start and end of each day. Challenges: Boards can become cluttered; schedule periodic clean-ups.

W

Weighted Prioritization – Concept: Assigning importance scores to tasks based on impact. Related Terms: Priority Scoring, Impact Rating. Explanation: By rating tasks on a scale (e.g., 1-5), clients focus on high-impact actions first, which aligns with limited attention resources. Example: "Prepare presentation slides" receives a weight of 5, while "organize email folder" receives a weight of 2. Practical Application: Use a simple spreadsheet to record task weights and sort accordingly. Challenges: Weight assignments may be subjective; coach facilitates calibration through discussion.

X

eXternal Accountability Partner – Concept: A designated person who monitors progress and provides encouragement. Related Terms: Buddy System, Peer Check-In. Explanation: External accountability reduces reliance on internal motivation, which can be fluctuating for ADHD clients. Example: A client pairs with a colleague to exchange weekly progress updates. Practical Application: Set up a brief 10-minute check-in call each Friday. Challenges: Finding a reliable partner may be difficult; coach can suggest virtual accountability groups.

Y

Yield Optimization – Concept: Maximizing output relative to effort invested. Related Terms: Efficiency Ratio, Output-to-Input Balance. Explanation: Coaches help clients identify which actions produce the greatest results with minimal cognitive load. Example: Using voice-to-text software to draft reports saves writing time and improves output. Practical Application: Conduct a "Yield Review" after each week to highlight high-yield activities. Challenges: Clients may overvalue low-effort tasks; coach must reinforce the importance of high-yield actions.

Z

Zero-Distraction Workspace – Concept: Physical environment engineered to minimize interruptions. Related Terms: Focus Zone, Distraction-Free Zone. Explanation: Reducing visual and auditory clutter supports sustained attention during goal-related work. Example: A client clears the desk, turns off notifications, and uses noise-cancelling headphones. Practical Application: Guide clients through a "Workspace Audit" checklist. Challenges: External constraints (shared office) may limit control; coach helps develop compensatory strategies like "focus blocks" with timed isolation.

A

Action Plan Template – Concept: Structured document outlining steps, resources, and timelines. Related Terms: Planning Sheet, Implementation Guide. Explanation: Providing a repeatable template reduces cognitive load each time a new goal is set. Example: Columns include "Goal," "Step," "Resource," "Deadline," and "Success Indicator." Practical Application: Coach reviews the completed template with the client in the first session. Challenges: Clients may treat the template as a rigid contract; emphasize flexibility to adapt as needed.

B

Behavioral Activation – Concept: Initiating purposeful activity to counteract inertia. Related Terms: Activity Scheduling, Activation Strategy. Explanation: Structured activation combats the “starting deficit” by scheduling brief, purposeful actions that lead to larger tasks. Example: A client schedules a 5-minute “open email” slot before a 30-minute writing block. Practical Application: Use a daily “activation calendar” with colored blocks for each micro-action. Challenges: Clients may feel forced; ensure activities are aligned with personal values to increase acceptance.

C

Cue-Based Scheduling – Concept: Aligning task timing with environmental or internal cues. Related Terms: Trigger-Driven Planning, Contextual Timing. Explanation: Leveraging predictable cues (e.g., lunch break) helps embed tasks into routine. Example: After lunch, the client spends 15 minutes reviewing the day’s priorities. Practical Application: Identify three daily cues and attach a specific micro-task to each. Challenges: Cues may be disrupted by unexpected events; develop backup cues.

D

Distraction Buffer – Concept: Pre-planned response to inevitable interruptions. Related Terms: Interruption Management, Buffer Strategy. Explanation: Anticipating distractions and allocating short “buffer” periods prevents them from derailing the main task. Example: After each 25-minute focus interval, the client allows a 5-minute buffer to address emails. Practical Application: Incorporate buffer slots into the Pomodoro technique. Challenges: Buffers can become extended “breaks” if not monitored; set a timer to enforce the limit.

E

Energy Management Cycle – Concept: Monitoring and adjusting work based on energy levels. Related Terms: Vitality Loop, Energy-Based Planning. Explanation: Recognizing peaks and troughs enables strategic placement of demanding tasks during high-energy periods. Example: Schedule creative writing in the morning when the client feels most alert. Practical Application: Use a simple “Energy Log” with low, medium, high ratings throughout the day. Challenges: Energy fluctuations may be unpredictable; coach helps develop adaptive contingency plans.

F

Focus Sprint – Concept: Short, intense work intervals followed by brief recovery. Related Terms: Pomodoro, Micro-Sprint. Explanation: Sprinting capitalizes on short bursts of concentration typical of many ADHD individuals. Example: A 20-minute sprint to draft a paragraph, followed by a 3-minute stretch break. Practical Application: Set a timer and a clear sprint goal; review outcome after each sprint. Challenges: Some clients may find the transition between sprint and break jarring; experiment with different interval lengths.

G

Goal Commitment Contract – Concept: Written agreement between coach and client outlining responsibilities. Related Terms: Accountability Contract, Commitment Statement. Explanation: Formalizing commitment increases accountability and clarifies expectations. Example: Both parties sign a contract stating the client will complete three micro-tasks per week. Practical Application: Review the contract

monthly and adjust as needed. Challenges: Contracts may feel punitive; emphasize collaborative nature and flexibility.

H

Habit Stacking – Concept: Linking a new habit to an existing routine. Related Terms: Sequential Habit, Cue-Habit Pairing. Explanation: By attaching a desired action to a well-established habit, the client leverages automaticity. Example: After brushing teeth, the client spends two minutes reviewing tomorrow's top task. Practical Application: Identify a reliable existing habit and pair it with the new action. Challenges: Inconsistent existing habits undermine the stack; select a habit with high reliability.

I

Incremental Review Cycle – Concept: Regular, brief evaluations of progress and obstacles. Related Terms: Check-In Loop, Review Rhythm. Explanation: Frequent reviews keep momentum and allow rapid course correction. Example: A 10-minute end-of-day review to note completed tasks and plan tomorrow's top three. Practical Application: Schedule a recurring calendar event for the review. Challenges: Reviews can become perfunctory; coach must ask probing questions to surface meaningful insights.

J

Joint Goal Negotiation – Concept: Collaborative formulation of goals between coach and client. Related Terms: Co-Creation, Shared Goal-Setting. Explanation: Engaging the client in goal definition enhances ownership and relevance. Example: Coach proposes a goal, client refines wording to reflect personal values. Practical Application: Use a "Goal Dialogue" worksheet to capture input from both parties. Challenges: Power dynamics may inhibit client input; coach must actively solicit and validate client perspectives.

K

Key Habit Identification – Concept: Pinpointing core routines that support larger objectives. Related Terms: Core Routine, Anchor Habit. Explanation: Isolating a few pivotal habits simplifies the action plan and creates leverage points. Example: "Morning planning" becomes the anchor habit that drives daily task selection. Practical Application: Conduct a habit audit and highlight the top two habits with greatest impact. Challenges: Clients may overestimate habit importance; coach provides data-driven feedback.

L

Learning Loop Feedback – Concept: Continuous refinement of strategies based on outcome data. Related Terms: Adaptive Planning, Iterative Learning. Explanation: Each completed action provides information that informs the next step, fostering a growth mindset. Example: After a failed focus session, the client and coach analyze causes and adjust the environment. Practical Application: Document lessons learned in a "Learning Log" after each action. Challenges: Clients may become discouraged by setbacks; emphasize the value of learning over immediate success.

M

Motivational Interviewing (MI) Integration – Concept: Applying MI techniques to enhance goal commitment. Related Terms: Change Talk, Reflective Listening. Explanation: MI helps clients articulate personal reasons for change, strengthening intrinsic motivation. Example: Coach asks, "What would achieving this goal mean for your daily life?" Practical Application: Incorporate brief MI segments into each coaching session. Challenges:

Requires skillful facilitation; coaches need training to avoid leading questions.

N

Neuro-Friendly Goal Language – Concept: Using clear, concise wording that reduces cognitive load. Related Terms: Plain Language, Cognitive Simplicity. Explanation: Avoiding abstract or multi-clause statements helps clients grasp objectives quickly. Example: Replace “enhance professional communication skills” with “send one clear email each day.” Practical Application: Review each goal for word count and complexity; aim for under 10 words. Challenges: Oversimplification may omit nuance; balance clarity with completeness.

O

Outcome-Based Milestones – Concept: Specific achievements that signal progress toward the ultimate goal. Related Terms: Milestone Markers, Success Benchmarks. Explanation: Milestones provide tangible checkpoints that keep clients motivated. Example: “First draft completed” is a milestone toward “publish article.” Practical Application: List 3-5 milestones at the start of the coaching engagement. Challenges: Milestones set too far apart can diminish motivation; ensure they are appropriately spaced.

P

Prioritization Matrix – Concept: Grid that plots tasks by urgency and importance. Related Terms: Eisenhower Box, Decision Grid. Explanation: Visualizing tasks helps ADHD clients allocate focus where it matters most. Example: Quadrant I (urgent & important) contains “client report due tomorrow.” Quadrant III (neither) contains “organize bookshelf.” Practical Application: Draw a simple 2x2 matrix during planning sessions. Challenges: Clients may struggle to assess importance objectively; coach guides the evaluation.

Q

Quick Win Identification – Concept: Spotting low-effort tasks that produce immediate results. Related Terms: Easy Wins, Immediate Gains. Explanation: Quick wins boost confidence and create momentum for larger efforts. Example: “Set up a reminder for medication” is a quick win that supports health goals. Practical Application: List 2-3 quick wins for each new goal. Challenges: Overreliance on quick wins can delay tackling more substantive tasks; maintain balanced focus.

R

Reflective Pause Technique – Concept: Short, intentional break to assess progress before proceeding. Related Terms: Check-In Pause, Mindful Interruption. Explanation: Pausing reduces impulsive continuation of unproductive tasks. Example: After 30 minutes of work, the client stops, notes current status, and decides next step. Practical Application: Use a timer that signals a “pause” and prompts a brief reflection. Challenges: Some clients may view pauses as wasted time; coach reframes them as strategic.

S

Self-Efficacy Boosters – Concept: Strategies that enhance belief in one’s ability to succeed. Related Terms: Confidence Builders, Efficacy Enhancers. Explanation: Strengthening self-efficacy improves persistence on challenging tasks. Example: Celebrate each completed micro-task with a visible “✓” on the tracker. Practical Application: Incorporate a weekly “strengths review” where clients list successes. Challenges: Over-emphasis on praise can feel inauthentic; balance with constructive feedback.

T

Task Batching – Concept: Grouping similar activities to reduce context switching. Related Terms: Batch Processing, Consolidated Work. Explanation: For ADHD clients, batching minimizes the cognitive cost of repeatedly re-orienting attention. Example: Allocate 45 minutes to answer all emails rather than checking sporadically. Practical Application: Identify tasks that can be batched and schedule a dedicated block. Challenges: Unexpected urgent tasks may interrupt batches; have a “protective buffer” to absorb interruptions.

U

Urgency Triage Protocol – Concept: System for quickly categorizing tasks by time sensitivity. Related Terms: Triage System, Priority Filter. Explanation: A rapid triage reduces decision fatigue and ensures critical tasks are addressed first. Example: Use a three-color code: red for due today, amber for this week, green for later. Practical Application: Coach trains client to apply the protocol each morning. Challenges: Color coding may be confusing for some; provide a simple legend.

V

Vision Board Creation – Concept: Visual collage representing long-term aspirations. Related Terms: Goal Visualization, Dream Board. Explanation: A tangible visual reminder keeps the client’s broader purpose in focus. Example: Client assembles images of a desired career, healthy lifestyle, and personal hobbies onto a board. Practical Application: Allocate a session for creating the board and place it in the workspace. Challenges: Some clients may find the activity too artistic; focus on symbolic representation rather than aesthetic perfection.

W

Work-Break Rhythm – Concept: Structured alternation of focused work periods and restorative breaks. Related Terms: Rhythm Scheduling, Rest-Work Cycle. Explanation: Consistent rhythm leverages natural attention cycles and prevents burnout. Example: 45-minute work, 10-minute break, repeat. Practical Application: Use a timer app that automatically switches between work and break phases. Challenges: Breaks may become extended leisure; enforce strict timing.

X

eXtreme Goal Simplification – Concept: Drastically reducing goal complexity to its core essence. Related Terms: Core Goal Reduction, Minimalist Goal-Setting. Explanation: Stripping away nonessential elements makes the goal more approachable for clients with low executive function capacity. Example: Instead of “revamp entire marketing strategy,” simplify to “draft one social media post per week.” Practical Application: Coach asks, “What is the one thing that would move the needle most?” Challenges: Oversimplification can neglect necessary steps; follow up with incremental additions.

Y

Yield-Focused Review – Concept: Assessment centered on output per unit of effort. Related Terms: Efficiency Review, Output Analysis. Explanation: Emphasizing yield helps clients prioritize actions that deliver the greatest return on investment of attention. Example: Compare time spent on drafting versus editing; allocate more time to drafting if it yields higher quality. Practical Application: After each week, calculate

total minutes spent and corresponding deliverables. Challenges: Quantifying yield can be subjective; use both quantitative and qualitative measures.

Z

Zero-Inbox Strategy – Concept: Systematic approach to process incoming information without overload. Related Terms: Inbox Zero, Information Management. Explanation: Regularly clearing the inbox prevents it from becoming a distraction source. Example: Allocate 15 minutes each morning to triage emails, applying the “two-minute rule.” Practical Application: Coach models the workflow and the client adopts a similar routine. Challenges: High email volume may feel unmanageable; introduce filters and auto-archiving to reduce load.