



The Internal Pharmacy Prescription Checklist

Monica Hassall ([00:00](#)):

Hello and welcome to TADD Talks with ADDA. I'm Monica from Connect ADHD coaching, joining you from Brisbane, Australia. I'm truly excited that the team from ADDA invited me to speak with you today. I have a really key concept that I'd love to speak with you about that I talked to my amazing adults about also with ADHD, and this is my tool called the Internal Pharmacy. Yes, we all have an internal pharmacy and that's a collection of body and brain chemicals such as neurotransmitters and hormones. And we have what I call agency over our body and brain chemicals. Many people with ADHD may be prescribed medication to help with their ADHD, and that is a really useful and clinically proven tool, but sometimes people choose not to use medications and while medications work for approximately 80% of people with ADHD, unfortunately it doesn't work for everyone.

Monica Hassall ([00:57](#)):

And for this reason, I really wanted people to be aware that they have some other things that they can do that can work alongside medications and some of those behaviors that are internal pharmacy might even make your medications work better. So what do I mean by an internal pharmacy and what's an external pharmacy? Well, the external pharmacy, this is where you get your prescribed ADHD medication from. And like I said, it can be really very helpful for many people, but what I notice is sometimes people might not be using their medications in the best possible way. For example, I once had a client who would stay up until 2:00 AM in the morning on screens and gaming and then have to wake up at six o'clock in the morning to get to work. His solution was to take extra of his prescribed medications to wake up in the mornings.

Monica Hassall ([01:44](#)):

But this is not a great idea. That's not what those medications are for. And the result of this strategy would be that he would run out of his medications before he was able to collect his new round of medications. This meant he didn't have access to medications for nearly a week every month. This was not helpful. I figured out that what he really needed was more sleep, because sleep helps our body and brain chemistry. So what I have created for my clients and anyone listening to this TADD Talk is what I call my internal pharmacy a script pad. So I've created a visual tool, which is great as it helps people's working memory, which is part of ADHD to begin with. And on this visual tool I have created it to look like a combination of a script pad and a checklist. So I've created the checklist and sort of rank order of importance of the simple things that we need to do to help our body and brain chemistry work so that we can have the best days possible. The first entry on the internal pharmacies about nutrition and hydration. One thing I know about my wonderful people is that they might often forget to stop and have



a drink break or keep water by them, or maybe they live on coffee without actually remembering that plain old

Monica Hassall ([02:58](#)):

Water is really important for our brains. They might also work through their lunch break or not have a simple plan for a nutritious meal at the end of the day. So let's keep it simple. My internal pharmacy just guides people to remember to have protein twice a day and maybe three or four different colors of nutritious fruit or veggies every day. This important thing is to keep it easy. The next item on the internal pharmacy is sleep. And I know that this can be very hard for people with ADHD. I even had one client say, sleep can be like a nightmare. There are some strategies that we can put in place such as reminders to get to bed and also remembering how important sleep can be. This can be a big motivator if you're not a shift worker. It's a great idea and try and have a regular sleep time if you're able.

Monica Hassall ([03:49](#)):

But as an old nurse, I know this isn't always possible, but if we aim for somewhere between six and eight hours of regular sleep, our brains will thank us for it. Next on the internal pharmacy is exercise. So if we're not sleeping, then exercise is really hard to do. So you can see how these concepts all build on each other. A great strategy that can help with your sleep and exercises to get some early sunshine in the morning. So if you're able to walk outdoors, maybe for a quick walk, you're already ticking a couple of items on your internal pharmacy and if you take a bottle of water with you, you've already ticked off the top three items of the pharmacy. Well done. Next on the pharmacy is breath work. Our human body is pretty amazing and we're gonna breathe anyway, but we also have control over our breathing, which can be really helpful if we're starting to feel overwhelmed or a bit worried about things.

Monica Hassall ([04:42](#)):

If we can control our breathing, then often we can control our thinking. I'll share a little secret with you. I'm a person that used to have anxiety attacks. They are not fun. Eventually I learned that if I could control my breathing and take calm deep breaths, I could actually control my thinking and my thinking was the underlying cause of my panic. It was a hard but great lesson to learn. Sometimes I still get worried about things, but now if I can feel panic coming on that, oh, familiar of the can't breathe properly, or your brain gets the wobbles, I know exactly what to do. I take control of my breathing. Next item on the internal pharmacy is mindfulness. And mindfulness and breathing work. Overlap as well. When I'm talking about mindfulness, I'm not talking about sitting down and meditating in the lotus position for 20 minutes.

Monica Hassall ([05:34](#)):

My version of mindfulness is bringing my attention to the current moment in a meaningful way, observing my thoughts and not getting caught up in them. But mindfulness can look a lot of ways. One of my internal pharmacy suggestions I do is that if you can do between one and three minutes of mindfulness every day, that's great. It's that calm space where you can check in with yourself and check



in with your thoughts and that internal voice and that you're in the right direction. It's a simple tool. It doesn't even cost us anything. We take it everywhere we go. The next thing on the list is about engaging with some social and physical connection. I know that ADDA is great with this and ADDA is a wonderful organization that helps with that social connection. So you guys are in a great place. Physical connection can also have a part on its list.

Monica Hassall ([06:23](#)):

This can be as simple as having a six second hug with someone that you trust, but always check in if it's appropriate though first. But what a six second hug can do is to stimulate some oxytocin, which is that bonding chemical that makes us feel really calm and connected. Next on the list is stress adaptation and self-reflection. Something like stress adaptation might be if you're starting to feel overwhelmed in your workday, for example, go and have a look outside the window or outdoors and see if you can see a horizon view. It's a great way of reducing that stress hormone cortisol. It's very calming to look into the distance and take some deep breaths. Self-Reflection can be as easy as noticing daily three things you're grateful for. Gratitude can be like a power tool for our brain, so use it. You can also feel more optimistic, and when we are optimistic, we can have more dopamine available to us.

Monica Hassall ([07:17](#)):

This is great for our brain chemistry, and it also helps with engaging our serotonin systems in our brain too. If there's one thing I know about people with ADHD is that they often have a great sense of humor. The good news is I have humor as one of the items on the list. When things are feeling pretty drastic and someone says something fun or funny to break the ice, it can really change our brain chemistry and break that tension. Who doesn't love a good comedy? It can be great for our brain and even our body as well. It can tighten and tone up those tummy muscles. Music and sound can help our body and brain chemistry too. It's new to the list, but it can help us get motivated if we are having to start a hard task or it can calm us down, think of singing a lullaby to and how lovely that is for a baby.

Monica Hassall ([08:06](#)):

These attributes can really help with our internal pharmacy. Last but not least definitely is understanding the role of executive functioning in ADHD. But that's a big story, but it's really important that you understand how your executive functions work. When our executive functions get the wobbles, this can be a bit overwhelming. So it's a really important conversation. One of my clients said about the internal pharmacy. If you do most of these things most days, you can't help but feel better. So that's my roundup of the internal pharmacy. I invite you to go to our website and connect. I'll send you your own digital copy of the internal pharmacy. I'm so glad you joined me for this brief TED Talk today. For more information about adults with ADHD, go to connectadhd.com. Thanks for listening. Bye for now and take care.