



Taming the ADHD Optimist: From Big Ideas to Doable Plans

Eliza Barach ([00:00](#)):

Hi, welcome to TADD Talks with ADDA. I'm Dr. Eliza Barach, a cognitive psychologist and ADHD coach joining you from my practice, Neural Revolution. I'm really excited that ADDA invited me to speak with you guys today. And in this short talk, I want to share a powerful but very simple framework that I use with my clients to help 'em plan more realistically without squashing their creativity, their excitement, and their aspirations. So, have you ever been working on a plan and you come up with the best plan ever? You decide, you know, I'm going to read every single day for two hours and get that book knocked out of the park, and I'm gonna take all the notes I need to take on it too and get those processed every single day. So you set out to do this plan the first day that you try to do it, something comes up and you're like, oh, I'll do it tomorrow.

Eliza Barach ([00:53](#)):

And then this becomes a pattern and you're continuously kicking it to tomorrow, and then by the time it's Friday, you haven't read a single page or a single sentence from any of the books that you set out to read. And this brings up that all too familiar shame spiral where you know, we never do the things that we set out to do, and it's really hard for us to ever stay true to an intention that we set as an ADHD or myself and someone who works with high performing ADHDers. I see this pattern all the time, and again, I see this with myself too, with ADHD, like we, we like to set big badass goals. We're very aspirational, and this is one of the things that makes us awesome as visionaries, as creatives, but it sometimes can be a bit troublesome because we don't always enact those plans.

Eliza Barach ([01:43](#)):

We kind of struggle with coming up with realistic actions that we could take, and that's where we start to fall apart a bit. The ADHD brain tends to lead toward possibility. We are creatives, we are visionaries, and this is a strength of ours, but it sometimes can be taken too far. Because of this ability, we tend to overestimate how much we can do. We often underestimate how long it will take. And I like to call this the time optimist. And it's very rare that we pause to ask ourselves, Hey, is this actually realistic for me? Or if we do ask that question, we're very quick to say no. Like we have to do it this way. And this is because we don't just have one internal voice, we have at least three, and it's often the case, only one of them dominates center stage. And this is where I want to introduce



the three Voices framework that I use with my ADHD clients to help them with realistic planning. This framework has three voices. The first is the optimist voice, and this is my favorite voice. It's the loudest voice for many of us. It's bold, it's creative, and it's full of energy. Again, this is one of our strengths. This is one of the things that makes

Eliza Barach ([02:58](#)):

Us unique. We're really good at coming up with incredible ideas, but this voice be, besides being creative, it's the one that's always kind of in our ears saying, yes, you can totally do all of this. This is totally possible. This is the best plan ever. It's the source of inspiration, but it's also why we tend to commit to plans that are not possible. The next voice is the realist voice. This voice is a bit quieter whispering from behind the curtains, and it's that hiccup in your body that often starts to chime in. When the optimist voice is on center stage, it gently whispers in your ear, you know, this might not actually be the best plan, and you might not actually wanna do that at like 6:00 AM after five hours of sleep. Or, you know, after spending all night trying to get your kid down.

Eliza Barach ([03:49](#)):

So this voice doesn't kill the idea. It just nudges you to really think if it's something you'll actually do, or if it's something you even really want to do. And the goal isn't to silent silence the optimist, but instead give the realist more stage time. The realist is the one that's, you know, more likely to give us an actionable plan. It sometimes may feel like a bus kill, but the reality is it's there to help you actually hold that intention and make it happen for yourself. The last voice I call the pessimist, which can really be thought of as the gremlin. This one kicks in after the plan fails. It's the one that says, see, you always do this. You can't follow through. You never actually do. And so this voice thrives in the aftermath of our unrealistic expectations, and it's why so many of us stop trusting ourselves because this voice tends to dominate when we've had so many times where we couldn't hold that intention.

Eliza Barach ([04:49](#)):

So now that we have these three voices, how do we actually use the framework? So the next time that your brain tosses out a big idea, let's try this first. Let the optimist speak. Put that big badass idea out there. Let it flow. This voice is so good at brainstorming. Then as you are doing this, listen to your body for the realist and rope it in. Ask yourself, what am I actually going to do? Not just what do you think you should do, or what do you think you want to do? Last, acknowledge the pessimists when it arises. Don't let it



set the tone, but just kind of give it a listen for where it might be hiding. Shame or fear. Fear of failure. There's data in this voice because we might be running into a challenge that we faced before. So just give it a listen. Don't let it dominate. This quick inner check-in of optimist, realist, and pessimist helps you make plans that are executable without sacrificing the excitement. Because with A DHD, we need both.

Eliza Barach ([05:57](#)):

We need to have the practical, but we also have to have that emotional connection. It's really the only way we can do it. Thanks so much for joining me today for this brief talk on planning with an A DHD Brain. I'm Dr. Eliza Barach founder of Neural Revolution and the creator of the Dream Goal Setting Framework, A Science-Based Alternative to Smart Goals, designed specifically for ADHD Brains. If you wanna learn more, visit me at www.neural-revolution.com or reach out at neural.rev@gmail.com. Thanks so much for listening, and happy ADHD Awareness Month.