

THE ZEN OF ADHD, AIRPORTS, AIRPLANES AND HURRICANES

By Judi Jerome, LICSW, LADC



Here I sit still on this tiny plane parked on the runway that was supposed to take off two hours ago. The key word is 'still', continuous yet no motion, both the plane and me. So, I've already missed my connecting flight, and eaten all of my goodies that were supposed to last 7 hours. Now what? How to survive the sitting, the going nowhere, the nothingness, the man behind me loudly tapping his fingers non-stop on the latest hard cover edition of Harry Potter, my parents in their 80's waiting at the other end and worrying, the peace and calm I must achieve to not jump out of my skin and the half consumed tuna wrap feeling like a lead weight in my stomach?

There is something to be said for the fact that I just happened to bring a mindfulness meditation book with me to read on today's trip. Yet, here I sit writing this, instead of reading or meditating and feeling, but struggling, to not absorb all the negative energy around me. Writing this is waking up my mind, juicing my mental and emotional energy, and allowing my brain, if no other part of my body, to be running amok. Oh dear, there is another announcement, another 30+ minutes until we find out if we will be leaving for Newark which apparently is having "weather and congestion". Sounds like my head during allergy season.

If you fly in and out of the airport in Newark, NJ often enough, you spend a lot of time waiting to board 'any minute now' for hours and hours. How does a person with ADHD, whether child or adult, meds or no meds, survive the motionless waiting? It strikes me that even if the body is still, the mind can be very active; just as there have been times I've been in a 'waiting/holding pattern', wandering around the airport, yet just as restless as when I'm stuck sitting still on the plane. My body was moving but my mind was motionless, unchallenged, and just plain bored.

You would think that bringing a book, small, yellow lined pad, PDA, and laptop would be considered 'mindful preparation' deserving of an experienced ADDer. Yet, it comes down to frame of mind and acceptance of the inevitable 'monkey wrench', Murphy's Law, and travel in the 21st century! As the airline told me after they removed us from the plane 4 hours later, with the non-apologetic sledgehammer that I had to try again tomorrow, "We can't control the weather". However, I do believe and experience that we CAN be in charge of our attitude, approach, and psychological, as well as spiritual awareness, of how we want to feel and deal.

A few weeks ago, I had to cancel this same trip due to Hurricane Katrina. I was so restless that weekend that I wrote an article then too. Hmm, there must be a connection. Motion, if not my schedule and body, then my mind and my fingers.

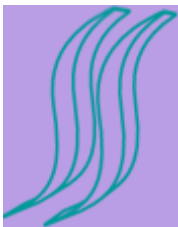
ADHD has its similarities to a hurricane. A whirlwind of thoughts and scattered actions, followed by the calming eye of the storm, only to be whip lashed by the fury of the tail end. Think about it, people with AD/HD come to coaching to place structured boundaries around their goals, get organized, and calm with encouragement and accountability, and then purposefully move forward in a healthy way instead of in chaos. Often times, they try to fly right through the storm that they have created, but get knocked down in the process. Taking the time to breathe, think, plan, and then be in a state of calm acceptance when it all goes awry is such an important spiritual achievement that it will carry us through the storm, through the stuck hours on the plane, and through the long layovers at the airport. Missing my mother's meatloaf is another story.

A TIP

When traveling, one needs to bring something along that will stimulate and energize your mind and emotions (and perhaps your fingers - quietly). This will help you stay peaceful when you are restrained from any physical movement. Journal and letter writing is a wonderfully cathartic activity. And, I do mean writing, not typing. Studies show that the physical movement of handwriting has a more positive effect on reducing stress than typing ones journal or letters on a computer. And remember, children are never too young to begin keeping a journal/diary.

... And A Confession

Never put half an uneaten tuna wrap into your purse, even if you were purposeful, meticulous, and mindful when re-wrapping it in its original plastic wrap. Remember Murphy's Law! That mindful moment will pass, and you will rummage through your bag for your pen, or new flash storage drive, and disrupt the status quo. Always travel with a couple of zip lock storage bags to prevent leaks. Mindfulness Does Matter.



Judi has been in private practice since 1990 working with a variety of issues, and specializing in teens and adults with AD/HD and co-morbid disorders, life cycle transitions, and substance abuse. Judi enjoys coaching teens and adults with AD/HD in all genres of life. She believes that each individual has potential within to achieve success beyond the current limits that problems such as time management, disorganization, morning madness and late night hyper-focusing may be imposing on their lives. Judi coaches people toward accomplishing their dreams as well as their goals.

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JUDI JEROME, LICSW, LADC MINDFULNESS MATTERS COACHING®

Richmond, VT 05477

(802) 651-7503

coachjudi@judijerome.com

www.judijerome.com