

"I CAN'T FIND IT"

By Judi Jerome, LICSW, LADC



When I was a girl, my mother used to send me to the 'pantry' in our basement to get can goods for dinner. This pantry was actually an enormous set of shelves that my dad made that stood ceiling to floor and was 5 feet across. I would stand in front of it for what seemed like hours, trying to find a can of spinach (my favorite). I never could. I'd go back upstairs and tell my mother that we didn't have any spinach. Mom would tell me that she had just bought five cans on sale and that they were all lined up down there on the 3rd shelf. I would repeat my first desperate efforts and still could not find it. After many empty handed efforts, Mom would have to turn off all of the burners on the stove and bring me downstairs. She would go straight to the can of spinach that would be 'staring' right at me in plain sight. Mom and I would repeat this ritual over and over again, year after year.

Some things never change.

The art of finding what I wanted when I wanted it continued to elude me for decades. My eventual diagnosis with ADHD and the subsequent treatment with medication, education, mindfulness meditation classes, and daily meditation were all a blessing. But there were still too many times when I could not find what was right in front of my face. I was very frustrated.

Some things still never change.

In the mid 90's, I had the good fortune to work with an amazing woman named Sandi K., who ran the office smoothly and efficiently. Daily, I would go into the file cabinet next to her desk to get my client files for that day. Inevitably, there would always be at least one file that was missing. Mind you, not that *I* couldn't find, it was just always 'missing'. Sandi would tell me it was there and to keep looking. Eventually, she would stand up, go right to the file and pull it out. One day, I made the mistake of telling her the *spinach story*. After that, every time I told her that I couldn't find a file, she would just look at me and say, "spinach." I was on my own. I no longer had her keen, non-ADHD eyes to find it for me. That was a tough, but helpful, 'true-life' mindfulness lesson.

Some things could change.

Why is it that some people with ADHD are unable to see what is right in front of their face? Focus is such an illusive word. I can give you the medical explanation and

show you diagrams based on research, and share you what I've read over and over again is the bio-chemical cause; but would all of that change the fact that what is in really right in front of us just doesn't seem to exist. I don't think so!

Over time, I have learned that "WHY does something happen?" is a question that leads us down an endless road, going backwards, keeping us stuck on the problem. "WHAT do I want to do about it?" is the empowering question that helps us move forward by focusing on the solution.

Some things begin to change.

I can not in good conscience tell you that I never again 'lost' things. However, after I left that job when something I was looking for was 'missing', I began the ritual of: 1. stopping and saying "spinach" out loud, 2. taking a deep breath and a moment, and 3. with a half-smile, calmly looking for the missing object. Problem was, I continued, albeit less and less, to have 'missing things.'

Some things change.

And then came coaching. Getting rid of your clutter and extraneous belongings, so that you can have a place for everything, does an amazing thing for your visual traffic jam; it cuts down on the static-interference and allows you to see so clearly that you'll think that you've cleaned your eyeglasses! Combine that with a working system created by you and your coach, add in increased mindfulness and willingness, and you begin to put your finger on the file or object *almost* every time. Hey, nobody's perfect!

A TIP

When you are about to look for something start by closing your eyes and visualizing where it is. See it sitting there in between its 'neighbors'. Take a slow, deep breath, let it out, and with a smile on your face, proceed to look for it in the place where you *know* that it is (you know because not only did you visualize it, but your system allowed you to put it away where it belonged). If you can't find it, take a break, continue to do a breathing exercise, and then calmly look again.

And a confession...

Get serious, this whole article was a confession! Just remember that 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. Her motto - Empowerment, growth and maintenance for positive life changes.

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