

Tim's Top Tips: ideas for adults

Tim Collins is an adult who was recently diagnosed with PDA. Along with sharing his story with us ([please see his case study](#)) he has kindly created a list of Top Tips designed to help adults navigate their way through life.

Daily life

- 1) Keep a **notepad and pencil** handy at all times to jot down your thoughts. This reduces the pressure to remember everything and you can review your ideas at a time to suit you.

Make a daily **list of tasks** then categorise them as important (e.g. making appointments or shopping) or 'nice to have' (non-essentials such as baking a cake or taking the dog for an extra walk).

Select **only three tasks** from the list that you will carry out and cross the rest out. If there are too many important tasks to carry out then the 'nice to have' items can be saved for another day.

- 2) Make time for '**normalising activities**' which allow you to de-stress and empty your personal 'capability tank'. I like to listen to music, go for a peaceful walk or cycle and even vacuum the house! Schedule gaps between meetings at work to allow for this mental re-charging time.
- 3) Practice mindfulness- I prioritise 30 minutes recovery time at the end of the day when I return home from work. Listening to long rock songs works for me as it allows my head to empty and for me to 'drift off'.
- 4) Phone a friend. I call one of my male friends each day for a chat about 'rubbish'. It's a low-demand conversation and afterwards I feel happier and more positive.

Friends

- 1) Don't even try to be part of the '**cool gang**'. I tried and it didn't work. You need friends who you trust implicitly not to expose your weaknesses and 'set you up'. Pick **geeky friends**; being uncool is absolutely OK and frequently good fun. These friends (your '**tribe**') will probably stay with you for life.

- 2) Learn about and accept each other's traits so you can find ways to support each other.
- 3) Find a hobby that consumes your time and thoughts. Along with solo interests consider team sports; these don't always work for younger people though.
- 4) Go out! Break the structure of your day and meet friends outside or in the pub.

Education

- 1) Focus on your strengths and the subjects that interest and engage you.
- 2) A mentor can be a huge support both practically and emotionally. My science teacher recognised my potential and acted as my advocate within school.
- 3) Find out how you learn and the best way to apply this to different settings:
 - Classroom- practical sessions worked best for me as they gave me more time to process information
 - Homework – break subjects and topics down into chunks. I'd read something then leave it for a few hours before re-reading it and making notes. I'd then simplify these notes again creating more manageable pieces of information.
 - Project work – I used to write a plan then cut it up into pieces. I'd re-arrange the tasks until the order made sense and I could see how to progress through the work. This is much easier on a spreadsheet nowadays!
- 4) Find a 'geeky' **buddy** for each subject and make the most of each other's strengths and weaknesses.
- 5) Get help to develop a **good exam technique**. I'd condense concepts and information into 3 x 3 matrices of acronyms then re-produce these at the start of the exam.
- 6) **Be prepared** for the next stage whether it's moving to a new class, school or onto university. Speak to people who have already experienced these changes so you can prepare for the differences to learning styles and pace.

Working life

- 1) Consider a career that exploits your **academic strengths**. Often something unusual or **niche** will be less pressurised than mainstream, target-driven, professional environments.
- 2) Choose an organisation that is people focussed and has a nurturing, supportive culture. Quality of life should be a priority. Many Scandinavian organisations have a more holistic approach to supporting their employees.
- 3) It's less demanding to choose roles where steady progress is made rather than aim for big career jumps.
- 4) AVOID
 - Political systems; politics, local government, civil service –logical thinkers might struggle!
 - Psychic prisons- anywhere with an autocratic, bullying system of management.
 - Instruments of domination- companies that force impossible targets upon their employees e.g. the NHS.

Tricky situations

Handling tricky situations in life isn't easy; confidence and logical thinking are both needed to navigate them. The following helped me to gain in confidence and cope with many situations:

- Training in public speaking
- Spending some time with an amateur dramatics society
- Volunteering on hospital radio
- Asking for time to consider my position and planning my response
- Being with the right 'tribe' of people
- Participating in a team sport
- Spending time with different groups of friends therefore maximising my exposure to a wide range of social experiences