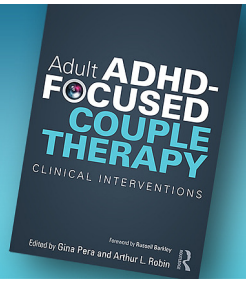
Adult ADHD-Focused Couple Therapy: Clinical Interventions

With Gina Pera and Arthur L. Robin, PhD



Dear Reader,

The paper below is provided as a resource to *Adult ADHD-Focused Couple Therapy: Clinical Interventions*, by Gina Pera and Arthur L. Robin, PhD (Routledge, 2016).

Adult ADHD-Focused Couple Therapy

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Table 2.1 Two Models of Executive Function
By Arthur L. Robin, PhD

No consensus model exists for Executive Functioning (EF). Research is mounting, however, and excellent books by two leading ADHD experts offer two models.

With a great deal of supporting evidence, Barkley (1997, 2012) hypothesizes that poor behavioral inhibition (e.g. poor impulse control) is the central EF deficit for individuals with ADHD; deficits in other Executive Functions follow from poor behavioral inhibition. In essence, this model holds that the ADHD adult reacts on an impulse, without stopping to think so as to guide behavior; unless thinking can guide behavior, no other Executive Functions can help the individual cope with the situation. As such, each EF (as listed below) is a type of self-regulating and self-directed action—that is, an action you direct at yourself in order to change behavior so as to alter a future consequence or likelihood of attaining a goal

- Self-restraint: Inhibition (the primary function, which greatly affects all others)
- Self-directed attention: Self-awareness; self-monitoring ("the mind's mirror")
- Self-speech: Verbal working memory ("the mind's voice")
- Self-sensing and self-imagery: Nonverbal working memory; hindsight and foresight ("the mind's eyes and ears")
- Self-control of emotion and motivation: Managing reactions ("the mind's heart")
- Self-directed play: Innovation ("the mind's problem solver")

Brown (2009, 2013) postulates that six clusters of Executive Functions are equally important; if any of the six are not working efficiently, the individual runs into problems carrying out the tasks of daily living.

- Activation: organizing, prioritizing, and activating to work
- Focus: Focusing, sustaining, and shifting attention to task
- Effort: Regulating alertness, sustaining effort, and processing speed
- Emotion: Managing frustration and modulating emotions
- Memory: Utilizing working memory and accessing recall
- Action: Monitoring and self-regulating action

At present, there is more research support for Barkley's model. Pragmatically, one model might "fit" or resonate for certain couples better than the other model. Clinically speaking, the goal is to use whichever model is helpful.