

Multidimensional strategies for overcoming time-related challenges of transition-age students with learning and attention disorders

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Background & Introduction

- College students with learning and attention disorders (L/AD) experience obstacles related to time and the management of both time and their invisible disability (1)
- For students with L/AD, cognitive processing difficulties can interfere with temporal understanding, processing speed, and working memory (2)
- These challenges can impact abilities for effectively managing time, daily routines, and social roles related to developmental and occupational performance expectations of being a college student.
- Students must find ways to compensate for these difficulties by creating and utilizing strategies to overcome the multifaceted aspects of time-related challenges.
- Purpose:** To delineate and describe strategies created and used by college students with L/AD to address time-related challenges across the multiple contexts of their everyday lives

Methods

- Participants were 52 undergraduates with L/AD in STEM fields and registered with the campus disability office, enrolled in a larger four year study testing a multi-component model of campus-based L/AD supports
- Undergraduates met as a group monthly; meetings included presentation of educational material and guided discussion which included strategy and experience sharing
- Data are transcripts, field notes and focused questions from 30 group meetings and 15 individual interviews from year one of the study
- A content analysis was done to identify the data pertaining to time-related strategy creation and usage of those strategies by the students
- Structural coding was used initially to identify large amounts of text related to temporal strategies. Process coding was then used to pinpoint more specific strategies used. Lastly, data was categorized into themes and subthemes (3)

Table 1. Symptoms

Symptom/challenge*	Median ratings (IQR)**
Staying focused	75 (62, 94)
Managing time	65 (50, 81)
Extensive writing assignments	65 (31, 85)
Reading comprehension of textbooks or academic publications	64 (50, 81)
Organization	62 (47, 79)
Completing homework	56 (21, 73)
Memorizing and retrieving information from memory	57 (23, 85)
Following multi-step directions [§]	56 (34, 70)
Expressing thoughts or opinions clearly	53 (22, 71)
Following others when they speak in conversation	50 (21, 73)
Applying different approaches to one problem	38 (18, 56)
Initiating activities, tasks, or independent ideas	34 (18, 63)

*n = 51
** Ratings reported using a digital analog scale from 0 (never) to 100 (always).
§ n = 50

Table 2. Strategies

Strategy Category	Definition	Strategy sub-types
Habits & routines	Strategies that students used to organize and plan their time (e.g., day, week, semester, distant future)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highly structured & productive morning routine Planning systems Prioritization Reminder systems
Reframing	Strategies used to redefine disability-related challenges to increase personal understanding which can be used to explain L/AD-related challenges to others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-evaluation of: (1) strengths & challenges, (2) learning style, (3) goals Reframing for self & others
Symptom-specific strategies	Strategies used to cope with specific LD/AD-related symptoms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning activity breaks Activity switching Environmental cues Creating low-level stress

Conclusion & Discussion

- Study findings identified patterns in the strategies created and used by college students with L/AD to overcome time-related challenges and support performance in current and anticipated upcoming situations.
- Findings expand understanding of the range and multi-dimensional nature of strategies needed by college students with L/AD to overcome disability-related activity and participation challenges associated with temporal concerns.
- Understanding strategies for addressing time-related challenges is important for advancing interventions that support occupational performance of individuals from this population.

Results

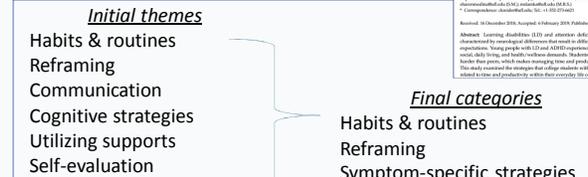
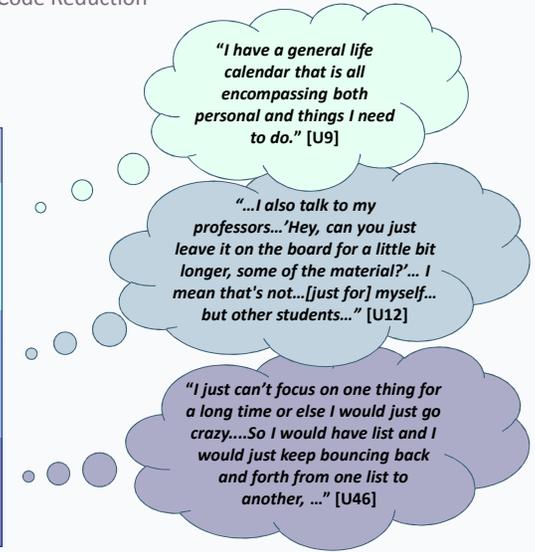


Figure 1. Code Reduction



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