

**POSITIVE DISCIPLINE:** One Family's Miracle Experience

# ADDitude

ATTENTION DEFICIT

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Survival Guide**

**10 PERFECT JOBS**  
For People With ADD

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MANAGEMENT**  
For Children and Adults

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**Lawyer**  
Peter W. D. Wright

**Profession:** Trial attorney and author specializing in advocating for children with AD/HD and specific learning disabilities.

**Job Description:** Lawyer for special needs children whose rights have been violated by schools and other institutions. Wright argued cases before the Supreme Court (*Florence County School District Four v. Shannon Carter*, 510 U.S. 7, 1993) and also operates a popular website, [Wrightslaw.com](http://Wrightslaw.com), providing legal information and guidance.

**Route to Job:** Labeled "possibly emotionally disturbed" and "slow learner," as a child, Wright struggled through public school until his parents enrolled him in a private prep school. Diagnosed with AD/HD, Wright repeated 11th grade, finished high school, got his Bachelor's (Psychology) from Randolph-Macon College and Master's (Psychology) from Virginia Commonwealth University. Worked in juvenile training schools and as a juvenile probation officer before enrolling at University of Richmond Law School.

**Job Advantages:** Good trial attorneys are creative, energetic, think "out of the box," and can persevere (hyperfocus?) on legal issues until they find the exact strategies for successful outcomes.

**Do not let "the urgent" crowd out "the important."**

**Job Disadvantages:** Trial preparation involves attention to minute details and adherence to strict timelines. An attorney missing a scheduled legal appointment can wreck a client's case, regardless of its merits.

**Salary Range:** 35K–150K, varies depending on nature of law practice.

**Advice to others:** Do not let "the urgent" crowd out "the important." Constantly remind yourself to stay on task and prioritize, or find someone else to help you do so.



**Psychologist**  
Patricia Mahlstedt, Ed.D., 56

**Profession:** Psychologist specializing in Reproductive Medicine.

**Job Description:** Provides clinical services to adults who have common life problems, with a special interest in infertility issues.

**Route to Job:** Bachelor's degree (English) from Southern Methodist University, Master's degree (educational psychology) from University of Texas. Spent eight years teaching, then worked as market researcher, secretary and travel agent before returning to University of Houston for Ed.D. (equivalent to Ph.D.) in Counseling Psychology.

**"Choose a specialty you'll enjoy, or a more general practice if you need more variety to stay engaged. Limit your hours to prevent "cabin fever." Add variety to your routine with frequent breaks."**

**Job Advantages for People With AD/HD:** **Variety:** Dr. Mahlstedt sees several patients with diverse problems each day. **Structure with some flexibility:** While her workday is structured by the time-limited sessions of her profession, Dr. Mahlstedt is self-employed. She can schedule "downtime" every day to organize her office, visit friends, go shopping, or take care of household and family needs.

**Salary Range:** \$72K – \$100K +

**Advice to others:** "The most difficult part for me was the academics: getting through school — and even now, preparing academic papers for conferences." Choose a specialty you'll enjoy, or a more general practice if you need more variety to stay engaged. Limit your hours to prevent "cabin fever." Add variety to your routine with frequent breaks.



**Freelance Journalist**  
Dana Blankenhorn

**Profession:** Freelance Journalist

**Job Description:** Writes about technology for newspapers and other publications.

**Route to Job:** Bachelor's Degree from Rice University, Master's from Northwestern's Medill School of Journalism. First reported for Houston Business Journal, then for Birmingham Post Herald, which fired him because "I was too impatient to get things exactly right and made a lot of little mistakes." Moved to Atlanta Business Journal; laid off for same reasons. Decided freelancing was a better fit and has done so successfully since 1983.

**Job Advantages for People with AD/HD:** **Control over your environment:** "You don't have to work around people, you can control your environment and, if you're motivated, you can work at your own pace and make a decent living." Blankenhorn works at home in Atlanta.

**Job Disadvantages:** **Lack of external structure.** "I'm disorganized, lose a lot of paper and forget about the more boring aspects of the job like marketing and billing." His ability to hyperfocus prevents distractions related to house and family.

**"Be conservative with your money because the down times will blow you away."**

**Salary Range:** \$18K – 30K+, varies enormously. "In 2000 I cleared six figures but this year I doubt if I'll make \$20,000."

**Advice to others:** "You really have to be motivated and love what you're doing because otherwise you'll fail." It also helps to marry someone with a good job and stable salary to buffer the down times. "Be conservative with your money because the down times will blow you away."