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One On One with Dr. Ned Hallowell

By Nick Nanton, Esq.

Dr. Hallowell: I'm tugging on this thing trying to make it go faster and I get mad at the phone. After my conversation about the ballgame, I hang up and say to myself, 'What has happened to you? You're at Lake Doolittle and you're getting angry at a telephone.' I drove back and I time how long it took to dial the number and it was 11 seconds. For those 11 seconds it put me 'into a snit.' There was no reason to hurry. It just showed me how my nervous system, my physiology, had been rewired. I was like a little rat in an experiment. I'd been behaviorally conditioned to respond with anger to anything that was slow. I said, gosh, if this happened to me, its happening to many, many millions of other people. We've allowed ourselves to be reconditioned and reprogrammed in a way that we really don't want, and that we really never intended.

Nick: Absolutely. We just heard the story that Dr. H told us about what made him start writing the book *Crazy Busy*, and just to mention, he likes to be called Ned. Again, he's a child and adult psychiatrist, New York Times best-selling author, world-renowned speaker, and a leading authority in the field of ADHD. He is a graduate of Harvard College and Tulane Medical School and a faculty member at Harvard Medical School for more than 20 years. He is also the founder of the Hallowell Centers in New York and Boston, and has been on Oprah as well as other shows many times, so we're glad to have him on the line.

We just heard the story of getting angry at a rotary phone for making us wait 11 seconds to dial a number, which certainly, man, I have been there. It wasn't a rotary phone, I haven't seen one of those in a while, but there's so many things that we just get so accustomed to doing, whether it's speed dialing or anything else, and it is amazing the amount of technology that we have. As you discussed in your book, *Crazy Busy*, there's a lot of things that we do that just become habitual. We don't really stop and think, and that's a big part I love about your book as well. You have many terms, and we'll call them Nedism's in this book, which are lots of fun. In order to make sure people understand some of the stuff, let's go through the vocabulary there,— you have a chapter about 'rush and gush.' Why don't you talk a little bit about your theory on that?

Dr. H: Well, sure. There are two defining characteristics of our modern era; (defining the modern era as the era dominated by electronic communications technology). They are first of all speed, what I call 'the rush.' Everything is just going faster because it can. We're living at the speed of light and that's part of what we've conditioned ourselves to expect. The most frequently changed part on an elevator is the 'door close' button. You get onto the elevator and you start pounding 'door close,' even if you're not in a hurry. You just don't want to wait. My idea of hell is to be at the supermarket and I get in line with someone who's paying with a check, because it takes so long to bring out all the ID and all that, and I think, why can't they just have a credit card. We just really demand speed, this rush. The second characteristic is just the incredible volume of information, what I call 'the gush.'

We live one keystroke away from everything that's ever been known or thought in human history and it's staggering. What even a generation ago you had to go to the library to look up, or go to a bookstore to look up, you can get in a second. That's wonderful, but the downside of it is information is coming at you in this gush, this torrent, and it's very hard to separate out what you are really interested in, what's important, from what's just part of the dust storm. If you're not careful you just get swept up in it, in the gush, and you're asking your brain to process exponentially more data points every day, every minute than ever before – by factors of 10. When you have those two combined, just the speed at which everything is going and then the multiplicity, the volume, the gush, you get this 'rush and gush'

and what happens is, if you're not careful, everything becomes totally superficial, ...if not frantic, or if not frenetic. You just know any topic only on its surface. You know the sound bite. You know the elevator pitch. As a result, you don't go deep into much of anything. You see this more and more, the superficialization of life, and the disappearance of deep thinking. This is solvable but I just point out the obstacles.

Nick: Absolutely. So, we tend to basically run around in a frenzy looking for the next high; that is essentially what is happening.

Dr. H: Exactly, exactly.

Nick: I love in the book you talk an awful lot about 'the state of overwhelmed' and the 'F' state and the 'C' state. Would you mind talking about what those mean? Then we'll go into those a little bit.

Dr. H: Sure. Well, 'F' state, again, is a term I made up. It describes a state of mind and the adjectives that describe it begin with the letter F. So, you have frantic, frenetic, frazzled, frustrated, forgetful, frenzied. You're in 'F' state. You're just frantic, you're frustrated, you're forgetful, you're just in a bad way. Whereas, what you want to be is in 'C' state, adjectives that begin with the letter C. ...Cool, calm, collected, careful, convivial, curious, concentrated, careful, creative. Words that begin with the C, and that's where your brain is operating at its best. That's where your brain is doing what it does best and machines really can't do. As it goes into 'F' state, and modern life conspires to drive it into 'F' state, you lose your advantage. You become a grumpy, irritable, impatient, impetuous, impulsive person – and that's where you make mistakes that get you into trouble.

Nick: Absolutely. The whole point being that a lot of times in life, just because of all of the things surrounding us and because of the fact that we let ourselves get over-busy, overcommitted, and all these things, we get in this 'F' state and it really becomes counterproductive. I guess what the real question is that people want to know, and you answer it in the book, is a few of the ways to get back out of 'F' state back into 'C' state.

Dr. H: Sure. Well, the trick is to take back control. Modern life, without meaning to, induces us to give away control. We make ourselves too available, we don't have any boundaries. The mail used to come once or twice a day, now it comes once or twice a second. So, you need to have a different policy around it. You can't read it every time it comes in. You have to reconstruct boundaries according to your own devices and desires. You have to prioritize in a way that you never needed to before. You have to make sure you get done what you need to get done and don't let someone else define your agenda for you. You have to be very intentional about this because modern life is subtle and the next thing you know, without meaning to, you're getting angry at a telephone. You're getting angry at people. You're not getting done what you need to get done, so you become frustrated with yourself and your life, but the good news here is this is a solvable problem. It's not easy to solve, though, because it does require a lot of discipline and a lot of self-control and a lot of resisting of temptation.

These devices are brain candy and you can spend the whole day on your iPhone, on your iPad, on your... and really, just think. Is that productive? Now, sometimes it is, sometimes it is. I hope what we're doing right now, which is electronically-mediated, I hope this is productive to your listeners. I'm not saying get rid of it all, but I am saying put yourself in charge of it so it's not in charge of you. Right

now, if you're on this call, you decided to be on the call. Now, as I'm asking you to think about some things, you may get a little frustrated and hang up, which is what people do when they're grappling with states that are difficult for them. They just hang up and go do something else. If you've paid attention this long, you've paid attention longer than most people do to anything during a day. As you persist in it, you'll find that you actually make progress, that you can actually think, 'Well here is an area where I can change my behavior. Here is an area where I can change my policy. Maybe I need to have an email policy. Maybe I need to have a policy for when I do hard work, ...when I do easy work – these kinds of decisions. If you don't have those kinds of policies and boundaries and expectations of yourself, other people set the agenda for you. You allow the world too much access to you, and you become overloaded and your capacity to perform declines.

Nick: You essentially become a drone, which is the one thing that we would all say that we fight against, but it's so easy to fall into the trap of just doing what you've always done. You get more and more of it. As you create your first email account, my son is 7 and I created an email account for him so he could email me sometimes when I'm on a trip, or he could email his grandparents ... It's funny. When I went in the other day, because he told me he didn't remember his password, I had to reset it on his iPod touch®. I don't know, like 50 emails came up. Thank God none of them really had any urgency... I set him up a Skype account just so we could talk on his iPod touch®, but he's getting emails from Skype, he's getting junk emails. He has zero business interest in anything but he's got 50 emails to read, right?

Dr. H: Right, right, right.

Nick: It's funny. The more you start, the more it just happens. Certainly for people his age and even younger, I can only imagine what that amount of data is going to feel like when he gets to be 18 or 20. It's crazy.

Dr. H: Right. I think the task now, one that the whole world is dealing with, is how do we learn to manage it so it doesn't manage us. Any new technology is greeted initially by pain and suffering. There's stories of the first train: the first years of the trains, people said, 'Oh, these trains are going to damage your brain by their swaying movement' and all this. There's a lot of fear and misunderstanding that accompanies the advent of any technology. We're going through that phase now.

We're learning how to use it so it doesn't use us. It's a major task. I've seen marriages break up over someone's inability to log off. I've seen people... I wrote a paper for the Harvard Business Review called, Overloaded Circuits: Why Smart People Underperform. It's a major problem in the workplace – where people are just wasting their brain power in trivial tasks and not getting done what they need to get done.

Nick: Let's talk about this for a second, because from everything I can find, you're absolutely the top expert in the world on ADD, ADHD. You're a psychiatrist. Not only are you an author and you get into research, but you also do a lot of treatment. Can you help us define a little bit what true ADD or ADHD is, as opposed to the learned symptoms of just being quick to change your mind about something or quick to look to the next thing, because we grew up with the MTV generation, or even worse now, the Twitter generation. For MTV, our attention span used to be 3 minutes, because a music video was 3 minutes. Now I've heard it said it's 2.7 seconds, the amount of time to read a Tweet. Can you talk a little bit about the clinical differences as opposed to just learned behavior?

Dr. H: Sure. The true ADD is a terrible term. It's not a deficit and it's not a disorder, it's a trait. By the way, a trait very common among entrepreneurs. I think it should be renamed 'the entrepreneurs trait.' True ADD, it's a trait that you're born with and you continue to have it for the rest of your life, whereas the acquired syndrome is environmentally induced. You take someone with acquired, or what I call pseudo-ADD, and you put them on a farm in Vermont. Come back in a couple of weeks and they'll be quietly plowing the fields. You take someone with the true ADD and you put them on that farm in Vermont and the next thing you know they've turned the farm into an amusement park. One is created by the environment, the other is influenced by the environment.

Nick: Okay. Very good. I heard you discuss in another interview that I heard that it wasn't totally medically defined, but there's some difference in, or lack of, dopamine. Some people need more excitement in order to do, they just need more excitement in a day, which leads them to addictiveness. I forget exactly how you worded it, but I was fascinated by the way you discussed that.

Dr. H: Some people are simply born with their pleasure level set lower than other people, so they have to resort to extraordinary means to get ordinary pleasure. These are people who, in order to get ordinary pleasure, they have to go vertical skiing or they have to drive down the vertical, they have to drive down the highway going 150 MPH. They have to take ridiculous risks and they don't realize the reason they're doing it is really neurological. They're otherwise bored. To feel really engaged, to feel really alive, they have to resort to extraordinary means and that can be adaptive. You can become a wonderful entrepreneur, a wheeler-dealer, or it can be maladaptive. You can become an addict or someone who takes terrible risks all the time or someone who just can't be anywhere, unable to do intimacy. It can be very impairing if you're not able to manage it, if you allow it to manage you.

Nick: Great. I love that concept. Also, I love how you talk a little bit about, to borrow the famous quote, even though we're more and more connected, a lot of people still end up living lives of quiet desperation. You talk about *the other Vitamin C*. Would you mind talking about that for a minute?

Dr. H: Sure, sure. I think the modern paradox is as much as we're connected amazingly electronically, like never before in human history, while we've been connecting electronically, busily creating all these methods of being in touch with people via the airwaves, we've been disconnecting interpersonally, allowing friendships to grow weaker, community bonds to grow weaker, family bonds to grow weaker. We haven't done it on purpose, but it's just happened that the interpersonal connections have grown weaker as the electronic connections have grown stronger. Now, it's fine to have robust electronic connection, you have to these days, but you also ought to make a point of preserving the important interpersonal connections.

If you don't, you get a deficiency of what I call *the other Vitamin C*. **Vitamin Connect.** Human connection is as important for health, well-being, success and longevity as the regular vitamin C, ascorbic acid, and, in fact, studies show that social isolation is as dangerous a risk factor for early death as cigarette smoking. This is proven. It's a major risk factor. Not just for death but for the signs of the deficiency of Vitamin Connect, you just don't operate at your best. You're not as happy as you should be. You're not as dynamic. You're not as charismatic. You're not as in the game and you can still do your job, you don't die, but you just don't do it with the kind of enthusiasm that you ought to do it. You're not as happy in your life as you should be, and, by the way, you're not as healthy. It depresses immune function. So, this other Vitamin C is as essential for healthy life as ascorbic acid and yet people

are not aware of that, and they allow themselves to develop *the other Vitamin C* deficiency.

Nick: Yeah. I heard you, again in another interview, I heard you talk about the fear or the medical effects of the fear of isolation. Do you mind addressing that for a second?

Dr. H: Sure. Not the fear of isolation, the medical effects of isolation. Social isolation is really bad for you. It makes you depressed, it makes you sick. Like I say, it depresses immune function. It really puts you at risk for self-medication with drugs, alcohol, online addictions to gambling, sex, shopping, all ways of self-soothing using the Internet, and because you're looking for something and you don't realize that what you're looking for is readily available and infinite in supply – namely human connection. If you don't get it, you're not going to thrive. There's these people just careening through life because they can't tolerate or they don't seek and find what they really need, which are stabilizing connections.

Nick: Absolutely. Also, in the book you talk about the two keys to the best of the modern life – emotion and rhythm. Can you address those for a minute?

Dr. H: Sure. Once again, emotion, people don't realize how powerful that is in terms of peak performance. Emotion is really the on/off switch for everything else that happens whatever you're doing. If you're in a negative state emotionally, like right now, on this phone call. If you're preoccupied, if you're grumpy, if you're in a negative place emotionally, you're going to get a fraction of what you otherwise would get. You're going to hear a little bit of what I have to say but you're going to miss most of what I have to say, and what you do get you'll probably discount because you're grumpy to begin with. It's not that what I'm saying is stupid, it's just that if you're grumpy to begin with, you'll take anything as stupid. That negative state of mind really, really makes it impossible for you to function at your best, whereas a positive state of mind (and that doesn't mean you have to say everything is hunky-dory), it just has to mean you're in 'C' state. You're feeling calm, you're feeling clear, you're feeling concentrated. You're ready to listen. You're in a positive state of mind. You don't have emotional toxins blocking the way.

When you're in that 'C' state, the positive state of mind, you will get so much more out of this call, for example, or whatever it is you're doing. Whatever conversation you're having, whatever book you're reading, whatever project you're working on will be much more useful to you if you're in 'C' state, if you're in the positive emotional state. That's critical. Most people don't take it seriously. They're in whatever mood they're in and as a result they gunk up their day with a lot of time spent in 'F' space.

Then, rhythm is simply a matter of operating on your natural emotional, cognitive, physical rhythms. You can't be at your peak all day long. You have to, you tend to get logy after lunch, for example, and that would be a good time to take a nap or do some automatic work. You want to take advantage of when you're most clear. For many people, it's in the morning. I call that your morning burst. Don't waste that on something unimportant or trivial. Learn your rhythms and plan your work, your life accordingly. All of these are simple, but if you don't take heed of them, you won't be operating at your best.

Nick: Absolutely. Dr. Ned has 20 books on all sorts of subjects that really cover how to deal with these sorts of things, including books on parenting. I'm currently reading a book called Superparenting for ADD which he wrote, which, as I said, I'm to blame for my kids having ADD and you quickly reminded me that I'm to thank. Your overall, your overriding philosophy that I love is how you talk about not

using a typical pathology-based approach to diagnosing a condition, what's wrong with you, and then figuring out how to fix it, but instead trying to find your strengths and trying to maximize what those can do for you. Can you talk a little bit about that? Because that's a very different approach than most anyone here probably has ever heard – if they've ever been to any doctor to talk about anything related to ADD.

Dr. H: I tell people I don't treat disabilities, I help people unwrap their gifts. That shift in emphasis makes all the difference in the world to the people who come to see me. They're not coming in looking downcast and looking at the floor, saying, 'Okay, here. I'm ready to have my disability treated.' Who would want that? You don't do it with much enthusiasm. It's like going to the dentist. You don't say, 'Oh, boy! I'm going to the dentist today.' You do it, but you don't do it with much gusto or enthusiasm, whereas, the way I want people to come see me, I want them to say, 'Yeah. I want to go see this guy to help him unwrap my gifts.' Now, you do that with enthusiasm. You say, 'Yeah. I've got a lot of talent and I'm using some of it but I want to use more of it and he'll help show me how to unwrap my gifts.'

That approach gets so much better results because most entrepreneurs, most folks operating in the world of business today, aren't using their full potential. They're not using their full brain, and most of the time it has to do with attitudes or not knowing certain strategies that would help them work even better. Most of the strategies are very simple. The things we've been talking about on this call are very simple, which is why they get ignored. People only trust high-tech or complicated-sounding solutions. That's sad because the most powerful solutions we've got are really the very simplest, with connection being right at the top of the list. To lead a positively connected life, and then to operate in what I call your sweet spot. Do what you're good at and what you like to do, and what someone will pay you to do. That's your sweet spot, where those three overlap. The rest you should delegate if you possibly can. Then, just take care of your brain by getting enough sleep, getting enough exercise, eating right, meditation is a good idea if you can do that or prayer, either one. These basic simple steps, if you just do what I just said, get a lot of Vitamin Connect every day, operate in your sweet spot, take care of your brain, you'll suddenly find you're achieving at a quantum level higher than you had been before. People waste so much of their productive energy in 'F' state, in disputes, in regrets, in trying to overpower a problem by fighting their way through it. By suing people or being sued, just spending time in conflict and struggle... and most of the time that's not productive, not helpful, and really draining.

Nick: Absolutely. As you say, some of the things that we had, some of the solutions to this are really simple, and knowing, again, whether it's clinical as I call it, it might not be right, ADD or just learned behaviors. All of it can be helped by simple behavior changes or rules for yourself or whatever it might be. It's funny, one of the other guys, a very good friend of mine, I interviewed a few months back, Dave Austen. He's a top coach to high-performing athletes in the world. I loved something he said on the call, which really resonated to what you just said. The things that are the simplest to do are also simplest not to do.

Dr. H: Yes. That's so true.

Nick: We commonly find ourselves not doing things because they're too simple. I make the infomercial analogy. It's so funny because there's so many times when I hear so many people just ripping apart products you see on infomercials. Some of them are crap, let's be honest, but some of them really do work. But it's just that you get excited and revved up by the infomercial, you buy the

product, and you don't use it because it's too easy. It's like, 'Oh, I could have just done this without this.' Then you complain that the product didn't do what it was supposed to do and it's really just because it was so easy you're not doing it. So, I find that interesting.

Dr. H: Exactly. That's a very good point. How do we make the simple, important stuff interesting enough for people to do it. A perfect example is exercise. Well, one way to make that interesting is just to exercise with someone so you have to show up, and you get the benefit of Vitamin Connect at the same time that you're exercising.

Nick: Absolutely. I am looking at some of your terms here, and I don't even know if I can say all these correctly, but I think these are entertaining and informative at the same time. *Gimmelsmerch*, is that how you say it?

Dr. H: Yeah, *gimmelsmerch*. That's just my word for the force of distraction. It's just a totally made-up word because we don't have one. It didn't used to be as ubiquitous, but it is so common, the force of distraction in modern life is everywhere. We're trying to deal with it all the time, so try to rid your environment as much as you can of *gimmelsmerch*.

Nick: That's it. It's like the monster of distraction, huh?

Dr. H: Exactly, exactly.

Nick: Awesome. Okay, *screensucking*. What's *screensucking*?

Dr. H: *Screensucking* is one of my favorite terms because it's... when someone tells me they don't have enough time to do what they need to do, my first question is how much time do you spend *screensucking*, and they say, 'What is that?' and I say, 'That's when you're just mindlessly online.' You say, 'Okay. I'm just going to check my email.' Then an hour later you're still there, or you just, you sit just fiddling with your iPhone and you're not doing anything productive, you're just *screensucking*. Sure, it's a fun toy, but, while fun is great, too much is not great. You could be using that time more productively. These interactive screens are unbelievably seductive.

You can, without knowing it, not even being dimly aware of it, spend two or three hours a day *screensucking*, that with a little bit more discipline and self-awareness you could reclaim and use productively, even if you spent that time sleeping. I'm not saying you have to be working, but I am saying ... that *screensucking* is a low-grade drain on your brain power anyway. It's also, it's not rejuvenating and replenishing, it tends to tire you out, again without giving you anything back in return.

Nick: Absolutely. I know, obviously, we're all guilty of doing these things, some of us more than others. That one, that one grabs me because I have gotten so used to having 500 emails a day. Up until recently I was checking them all and responding to them all myself. Now I have an assistant who is helping me do some of those. I found myself, before, just in a typical habit of checking my iPhone every 30 seconds. Once I ran out of emails to check I started checking the news. I'm like, 'What am I doing?'

Dr. H: Right, right. Exactly.

Nick: This is routine for some businesspeople.

Dr. H: Exactly. The news has become a total form of entertainment. People, they check the news just to be entertained. We don't need news every hour. We barely need it every day or every week but it's become a form of entertainment so people, people become news junkies.

Nick: It all gets talked about an awful lot on the surface.

Dr. H: Yeah, exactly. Exactly. Again, I don't mean to sound negative, because I love the technology, and my message, in fact, is very positive. It's saying if you exert a certain amount of discipline and control you can take back the time, reclaim the time, ...that you've given away without meaning to.

Nick: That is the whole point. That's the reason, obviously, behind your book, *CRAZY BUSY: Overstretched, Overbooked, and About to Snap, Strategies for Coping in a World gone ADD*. Again, yeah, the overwhelming message here is that it's not that these things are bad and that we shouldn't use these things and enjoy them, but when we start to feel that 'overwhelm,' and when we start to feel that we're overbooked and that basically our life is not in our control, there's a few things, a few simple things you can do to help you get back on track so that you don't feel that way. Because obviously that's a very unhealthy state to be in, but we've all been there. It's that state where you just feel like you're spinning. There's nothing you can do.

Dr. H: Exactly, exactly. Yet, there is so much you can do. You can, if you just become a little bit more intentional about it, you really can take back the control you've given away. This is the great challenge of the modern world. If you're listening to this and saying, 'Sounds like me. What can I do about it?' Just take it to the next step. Just take back that control. Just don't give your time away so easily and don't let the Internet take your time away so easily. Put an egg timer next to your desk and log off after 15 minutes. You'll get more done in your day. Then, if you really want to *screensuck*, do it at night before you go to bed, but then the problem with that is you won't get enough sleep.

Nick: Or spend enough time with your spouse or those you love.

Dr. H: Exactly, exactly. I have a female patient who calls her husband's laptop his plastic mistress.

Nick: (Laughs.) Nice. My wife would say something similar about my iPhone, but I'm working on that. So, one of the interesting things that I've always found growing up, and I think it's just because I learned to adjust, like I think we all do based on what my attention span is. I've always found that the more, like as a kid, the more sports I've played, the more activities I got involved in, that I really enjoyed—not just to do it, the less time I had for my homework actually, the better I did on homework because I didn't have seven hours to mindlessly just sit there and do it, much like many of us do at work. We're supposed to have an eight-hour workday but how many of us really are productive, thinking and working, for eight hours? We tend to do so many of these rote tasks of emails and everything else, but again, something like setting an egg timer to answer emails is pretty amazing. We all know that when we have somewhere to get to, another appointment to get to, or something really important to do, it's amazing how productive we become.

Dr. H: Absolutely. That's the beauty of deadlines because what you're using is nature's own Ritalin, which is adrenalin. When you get all pumped up you tend to be more focused. That's why people with

ADD do so well in crisis situations, and why they get totally spazzed out when they're relaxing on vacation. They need the adrenaline rush of the crisis, of the deadline. The next thing you know, they become totally focused and get a lot done.

Nick: That makes so much sense. I've been living like that for years. Okay, how about 'leeches and lilies.' I love this concept. Tell us a little bit about these.

Dr. H: Well, leeches, leeches is my word for people or projects that waste your time. They're just not worth the time you put into them. Most people have quite a few leeches. Now, some of them you can't get rid of. If your mother is a leech you're kind of stuck with her. If you have a colleague who's there to say, you can't fire him or her, you're stuck with them, but, on the other hand, there are many leeches you can get rid of. What you need to do is identify those and, however you do it, get rid of them, because they're insidiously draining you of not only time, but energy, and they drain you all day even if you're not working on them. They're there having their negative effect. So, think of a few, think of a few leeches as we're talking right now and just resolve to get rid of them, ...which will really give you a shot in the arm, give you a lot more energy. Same time, it will give you more time for lilies. Lilies is my word for people or projects that are worth it. They may take an inordinate amount of time and a lot of energy, my children are my favorite example of lilies, but they're really worth it. They're really worth it. You want to cultivate lilies. Now, be careful, because with a lot of highly successful people, their problem is they have too many lilies, and then when you have too many lilies no matter what you do you, you won't give them all justice. You won't do justice to every lily. So, cultivate lilies, get rid of leeches.

Nick: Got it. Yeah, the leeches will multiply. Much like kudzu, I love how you use that term as well. Talk about that.

Dr. H: Yeah, kudzu, Kudzu was a plant imported from Southeast Asia and it took over Atlanta. It's this nasty weed that sends down these hideously long, ugly roots. It was thought to be a wonderful groundcover. Well, it covered too much ground and you can't get rid of it now, kudzu. You drive through Atlanta you'll see all this kudzu. Well, that's sort of my metaphor for the stuff of modern life, from material things to messages to obligations – they can just spread like kudzu. You can feel every day like you just try to hack away and pull this damn weed out by its roots, but the root is so deep you can't get rid of it, and it just keeps coming at you like some kind of horror movie. You're just getting strangled by kudzu. Well, thank God, you do have more control over the metaphorical kudzu than the actual kudzu if you simply learn some basic techniques.

I like The Rule of CDE: Curtail, Delegate, Eliminate. If you simply curtail, delegate, eliminate, you can start freeing up a path so you don't feel strangled and choked out. Now, be careful as I say this, if you're listening, because a lot of times when I present this to people they say, 'I can't do it. It sounds nice but I have no control. I'm hostage to my boss, my lifestyle, my spouse, my children, my colleagues, my customers, my clients...' That's a self-imposed prison. If you take that attitude, you're right. You can't do anything about it, but if you say, 'Okay. I resolve to fix this problem,' you can. You can learn to curtail. You can learn to delegate. You can learn to eliminate. You can learn to say no. You can learn to create boundaries. You can learn to get enough connection. You can learn to take care of yourself so that you have enough energy. You can learn to operate in your sweet spot, where you're doing what you're good at, what you like to do, what someone will pay you to do. You begin

to adopt these basic strategies and the next thing you know, you're feeling better, getting more done, and not feeling like you're living your life in 'F' state. It begins with a willingness to say, 'Okay. I got to make some changes.' The AA people have a great phrase. They say, 'If nothing changes, nothing changes.' So, as you're listening to this call say, 'Okay. What, out of all he said, what is one change I could make? Is there one leech I could get rid of? Is there one person I could see more often to get more of *the other Vitamin C*? Is there one activity I could delegate or curtail or eliminate? Is there one strategy I could take to cut down on my screensucking? If it's an egg timer next to my computer, or moving my computer so I don't have such easy access to it, or turning off my iPhone when I'm in a meeting. You name it. When you start thinking about it, your own creativity will come up with plenty of solutions, and as you do that, oh, my gosh! You'll feel so good. It's like having 1-800-GOT-JUNK come to your house and just cart away a big truckload of crap. As you say goodbye to it you feel so good. You say, 'Oh, my goodness. I feel more light, I feel more happy, I feel more energized,' instead of letting yourself be weighed down by all this stuff. You begin to take charge of your life again. You begin to lay claim to what you've given away. We've given away our attention. We're really defined by our attention, so take it back. You don't have to keep giving it away. That's my central message here. Unlike many big problems, this is one where you really have the power, even if not to solve, at least to really make a major dent in it – so that you're not held hostage by modern life.

Nick: Absolutely. I've found that, due to having great people around me who recognize my distractions... My partners encourage me to leave my iPhone in another office when we go to the boardroom to have a meeting, or at dinner now. I tried not to check it at dinner, but if the vibrator goes off you just go, 'Man, I want to make sure there's no emergency.' That's my excuse, right? Oh, I got to make sure there's no emergency. Then, you know what I found? By just leaving it in another room so I just can't even hear that, I don't even know it's happening. It's so freeing, but it's just so funny. We get so used to just having these things stuck to us at all times.

Dr. H: Exactly. Exactly, but, good news. You can unstick them.

Nick: Amen to that.

Dr. H: It's really just a habit.

Nick: When they start implanting them we're going to have a problem with that, but we'll get to that.

Dr. H: (Laughs.) That's when we'll have a problem, but as of now they haven't implanted them yet, so we don't have to be 'the night of the living dead' yet.

Nick: Exactly. All right, cool. A couple more and then I want to see if we can't take a couple questions from some of the listeners. Taildogging. I like this one a lot, too. Taildogging is just essentially the tail wagging the dog.

Dr. H: Oh, yeah. When you don't have your priorities straight. When you let something you don't think is that important start dictating what you're going to do next.

Nick: Yup. Then there's doomdarts. We'll finish on doomdarts.

Dr. H: Well, that's when you're driving along and life is good and you're happy, and then suddenly,

like a dart out of doom, you suddenly remember something that you hadn't done and your whole world seems to collapse. Your whole bubble gets burst. You go from 'C' state to 'F' state in a heartbeat. You feel despair because you thought at last you'd mastered everything and then this one thing that you'd conveniently forgotten, suddenly, like a dart from doom, brings you down.

Again, that's simply a function of having more to do than time to do it. So, if you have a system whereby someone else is helping you and you're delegating and you have fail-safes, that won't happen. When it does happen, when the dart does arrive, follow my first rule of dealing with problems, which is never worry alone. Talk to someone you trust. Talk to someone who can help you. You get into trouble when you worry alone. That's when you make bad decisions. When you do have a doomdart, talk to somebody and you'll fix it in a minute.

Nick: It's so funny, because that term is just so illustrative to me. That's like vacation syndrome. You're getting ready, you got all the kids in the car, you're getting ready to take that drive or catch that airplane and all of a sudden just phoom! Out of nowhere. It just goes.

Dr. H: Exactly. Exactly, and you think, 'Oh, my God. Now I can't enjoy my vacation.'

Nick: Yup. Something's going to go wrong or whatever, but, that's awesome. These are all awesome strategies. Obviously you've got a ton of great books on this. Let's see if anyone on the line would like to raise their hand. You got a top expert in the world here on ADD, ADHD, and then obviously you got a book on 'worry.' You can pretty much cover any topic I'm sure. If you have a question, dial Star 2. Again, make sure you check out this book, *Crazy Busy*. It's an amazing book. Again, I don't read many parenting books and I encourage my wife not to either because I remind her that I'm an author. You really need to check people's backgrounds before you read their books.

Dr. H: (Laughs.)

Nick: I really have enjoyed your books, and *Superparenting for ADD*, I'm about halfway through. It's an easy read but just so instructive because it reminds me of all the things that I did when I was a kid that I just forget, that I now see my son doing. It's so easy when, when I'm the CEO of a company, I'm managing 20 employees or whatever. When you tell someone to get something done they more or less just go get it done.

Dr. H: Right.

Nick: So I just can't fundamentally remember or understand why it takes 30 times to get my son to brush his teeth in the morning. A very helpful book.

Dr. H: Right, right.

Nick: Okay, we've got a question here from someone near us in Winter Park, Florida. Who do I have on the line?

Caller: It's me, Andy.

Nick: Hey, Andy. How are you?

Caller: I'm awesome. How are you?

Nick: Doing good. What can Dr. Ned answer for you?

Caller: At what point does an adult entrepreneur look into the medical solutions for ADHD? Because I know I have friends that have gotten on Ritalin and stuff and see a huge improvement. At what point do we consider that?

Dr. H: You know, most people think of medication as a last ditch intervention and that's because the press has done such a good job of scaring people and such a rotten job of reporting the medical facts. The fact is, stimulant medication is safer than aspirin. It has fewer side effects and works better than caffeine, and everybody goes to Starbucks or Dunkin Donuts. So, not to try it, unless it's against your religion, makes no sense. People say, 'Well, shouldn't I try a year of non-medical approaches first?' That's like saying shouldn't I try a year of squinting before I try eyeglasses. It just makes no sense. These meds are so well researched. They've been around since 1937. That's 70 years of experience. Nothing lasts that long unless it's safe and it works. Most entrepreneurs have ADD. I think it should be renamed the entrepreneur's trait. I would suggest you go see a doctor and go see someone who knows what he's doing or what she's doing, because there's a lot of so-called experts out there who just really don't understand adult ADD at all. You need to learn about it. You could read my book, *Delivered From Distraction*, and you probably will see yourself there. Then, give it a try, and, honest-to-goodness, it makes everything you do so much more effective. When these meds work they're as safe and as effective as eyeglasses. They're dramatic and it's a very legitimate way of enhancing your performance just as eyeglasses are a very legitimate way of enhancing your performance.

Nick: We'll call it entrepreneur's doping.

Dr. H: Entrepreneur's doping. Yeah, yeah. They'll always find a way of talking about it in a negative way, but it's a very good news story. The, the vast majority of people who have this trait in adults don't get diagnosed and don't get treated, and if they do get treated they get treated for the wrong thing. They get treated for depression or anxiety or substance use or something like that, and the real issue is none of those. It's untreated adult ADD or, like I said, the entrepreneur's trait. When the meds work, they're amazingly effective. I'm not a pill-pusher at all. My big thing is Connection, but with the exception of stimulant medication. It's an amazing intervention and so I would urge you to check it out.

Caller: Okay. Thank you.

Nick: Thanks for calling in, Andy. Appreciate it. From what I understand, too, dosage is just so important. I know a lot of people give up too early, I have heard, on finding the right dosage that makes them feel right. You got any comments on that?

Dr. H: Correct. Yes, absolutely. It's really a matter of continuing to increase the dose until you get target symptom improvement or side effects. A lot of people just stop at a very minor dose and they get no benefit and they think, 'Well, it doesn't work.' Chances are your dose was simply not high enough.

Nick: Excellent. Well, we really are out of time today. I appreciate those of you who called in. Sorry that we did not get to all the questions. Ned, how can people find more of your books, more about you? Where can they go?

Dr. H: Well, my website is drhallowell.com. My books you can see on the website or you can certainly get them on Amazon and for ADD the one I'd recommend is *Delivered From Distraction*. For the crazy busy world it's the book called *Crazy Busy*. For raising children, *Superparenting*, if you're raising someone with ADD, or for children in general, *The Childhood Roots of Adult Happiness*.

Nick: Excellent. We're thrilled to have you on. I really appreciate you taking your time. I know you've got a new book you're working on, too, *Hocus Focus*, that I can't wait to interview you about when that comes out as well.

Dr. H: Yup. Well, thank you so much. You're a wonderful interviewer and I enjoyed talking to you. I hope your customers and clients enjoyed it, too.

Nick: I'm sure they all did. Thanks, everybody, and everybody have a great day!

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