

## MY WEIRD PROMPTS

Podcast Transcript

EPISODE #344

# Beyond the Pill: Navigating Life with Adult ADHD

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## EPISODE SYNOPSIS

In this episode, Herman and Corn Poppleberry tackle the "what comes next" phase of an ADHD diagnosis, moving beyond medication to explore the practical systems of executive function. They break down the critical differences between Occupational Therapists, who restructure your physical environment, and certified ADHD Coaches, who provide the accountability and neurobiological insight needed to maintain momentum. From using AI as an "extended mind" to the science of "idea parking lots," this discussion offers a comprehensive roadmap for anyone looking to bridge the gap between having focus and knowing where to aim it. Whether you are navigating workplace hurdles or seeking personal organization, learn how to build the external systems that allow a neurodivergent brain to thrive in a neurotypical world.

## DANIEL'S PROMPT

### Daniel

I was diagnosed with ADHD as an adult and, while medication has provided a reliable baseline of focus, I still struggle with overload, prioritizing, scheduling, and time management. I've experimented with using AI and whiteboards to help organize my life, but I'm looking for more professional, non-medical support. Who should I go to for a structured process of self-improvement in these areas? Are occupational therapists (OTs) a good option, or should I look into life coaches, and how do I find someone legitimate and certified?



# TRANSCRIPT

## Corn

Hey everyone, welcome back to My Weird Prompts. I am Corn, and I am joined as always by my brother.

## Herman

Herman Poppleberry, at your service. And today we are diving into a topic that hits quite close to home for us. Our housemate Daniel sent us a really thoughtful prompt about navigating life with adult ADHD. He has been on a journey with medication, which we actually touched on a bit back in a previous episode when we talked about the bureaucracy of healthcare, but today we are looking at what comes after the prescription.

## Corn

Right, because as Daniel pointed out, the medication can provide that baseline of focus, it is like finally getting the engine to start, but it does not necessarily teach you how to drive the car, especially when the dashboard is blinking with a thousand different alerts. He is struggling with overload, prioritizing, and time management, and he is looking for professional, non-medical support.

## Herman

It is such a common hurdle. There is this misconception that once you have the right dosage of something like Vyvanse or the newer generic formulations that became available around 2023-2024, the rest of your life just falls into place. But the reality is that ADHD is a disorder of executive function. You can have all the focus in the world, but if you do not have the systems to direct that focus, you just end up focusing very intensely on the wrong things. It is like having a high-powered laser but no one aiming it.

## Corn

Exactly. Daniel mentioned using AI and whiteboards, which are great tools, but he is looking for a structured process of self-improvement. He asked specifically about occupational therapists versus life coaches and how to tell who is actually legitimate.

## Herman

That is a brilliant question because the landscape of ADHD support has exploded recently, especially with the rise of telehealth, and it can definitely feel like the Wild West out there. Let us start with occupational therapists, or OTs, because I think they are one of the most under-utilized resources for adults with ADHD.

## Corn

When I think of an OT, I usually think of someone helping people recover from a physical injury or working with kids on motor skills. How does that translate to an adult who just can't seem to organize their Tuesday afternoon?

## Herman

It is all about the word occupation. In the world of OT, an occupation is anything you do that occupies your time. That includes work, self-care, and even leisure. Occupational therapists are trained to look at the intersection of the person, the environment, and the task. For someone with ADHD, an OT focuses on functional cognition. They are not looking at your childhood trauma or your deep-seated emotions like a traditional therapist might. They are looking at how you actually move through your day. They often use something called the CO-OP approach, which stands for Cognitive Orientation to daily Occupational Performance. It is a very structured, problem-solving strategy where you learn to talk yourself through tasks.

## Corn

So, it is more about the mechanics of living?

## Herman

Precisely. If Daniel went to an OT, they would likely start with a functional assessment. They might literally look at his workspace or his kitchen and say, okay, where is the friction happening? They use a top-down approach. Instead of trying to fix the brain directly, they modify the environment and the task to fit the brain. For example, if you struggle with time blindness, an OT might help you set up a system of visual timers or environmental cues that anchor you in time. They are very big on habit stacking and sensory regulation. If Daniel gets overwhelmed by noise, an OT might even look at his sensory profile to see if that is what is triggering his executive function collapse.

## Corn

That sounds very practical. But are they easy to find for adults?

## Herman

It is getting easier, but you have to look for OTs who specifically mention executive function or adult neurodivergence. In the United States and many other places, OTs are regulated medical professionals. They have to have a master's or a doctorate and be licensed by a state board. So, in terms of legitimacy, they are at the top of the list. You know exactly what kind of training they have. You can search the American Occupational Therapy Association database specifically for practitioners who focus on mental health or cognitive rehabilitation.

## Corn

Okay, so that is the OT side. Very structured, very environmental. Now, Daniel also mentioned life coaches or ADHD coaches. That feels like a much broader category. How do you separate the professionals from someone who just read a book and decided to start a website?

## Herman

This is where it gets tricky, but also where some of the most specialized help lives. A certified ADHD coach is different from a general life coach. A general life coach might tell you to just manifest your goals or try harder, which is the last thing someone with ADHD needs to hear. But a professional ADHD coach understands the neurobiology. They know that your prefrontal cortex is struggling with the chemical signaling required to initiate a task. They understand that for an ADHD brain, the importance of a task is less motivating than the novelty or the urgency of it.

## Corn

So, how do we find the legitimate ones? Daniel was worried about finding someone certified.

### Herman

There are two main gold standards for certification. The first is the International Coaching Federation, or ICF. They are the global governing body for all types of coaching. If a coach has an ICF credential, it means they have hundreds of hours of supervised training and have passed a rigorous exam. The second, and perhaps more relevant for Daniel, is the Professional Association for ADHD Coaches, or PAAC.

### Corn

PAAC. I like the acronym.

### Herman

It is very fitting. PAAC-certified coaches have specific training in the ADHD brain. They understand the nuances of things like rejection sensitive dysphoria or the dopamine-seeking nature of procrastination. When you are looking at a coach's website, you want to see those letters: ACC, PCC, or MCC from the ICF, or CACP, which stands for Certified ADHD Coach Professional, from the PAAC. If they do not have those, you are essentially taking a gamble on their personal experience versus professional training.

### Corn

That is a great distinction. It seems like the OT is focused on the environment and the physical systems, while the coach is focused more on the partnership and the accountability. Does that sound right?

### Herman

That is a good way to frame it. I often think of it as the OT builds the tracks, and the coach helps you keep the train running. A coach is going to be more about the weekly check-ins, the goal setting, and the mindset shifts. They help you navigate the emotional fallout of ADHD, like the shame that comes when you miss a deadline, while still keeping you focused on the practical steps to move forward. They are your accountability partner who actually understands why you didn't do the thing you said you were going to do.

## Corn

Daniel mentioned something interesting in his prompt. He talked about using AI as a sort of assistant to help prioritize his life. He records a voice memo of everything going on and asks the AI to give him a priority list. I'm curious, Herman, from a technical perspective, why does that work so well for an ADHD brain?

## Herman

It is essentially an externalized prefrontal cortex. One of the biggest issues with ADHD is working memory. You can only hold a few pieces of information in your head at once. When Daniel has ten different tasks, his brain tries to process all of them simultaneously, which leads to that overload he mentioned. By speaking them into a recorder and having an AI sort them, he is offloading the cognitive load of prioritization. The AI doesn't get overwhelmed. It doesn't have an emotional reaction to the list. It just applies logic. And with the multimodal AI we have now in twenty-twenty-six, he can even show the AI a photo of his messy whiteboard and ask it to transcribe and categorize the notes. It is a game changer for reducing the barrier to entry for organization.

## Corn

It is like having a clear mirror.

## Herman

Exactly. And the act of externalizing is key. Whether it is a whiteboard, which Daniel also mentioned, or an AI, the goal is to get the information out of the biological brain and into the environment. There is a concept in cognitive science called the extended mind, proposed by Andy Clark and David Chalmers. It suggests that our tools are not just helpers, they are actually part of our thinking process. For someone with ADHD, the extended mind is not a luxury, it is a necessity.

## Corn

I love that. The extended mind. It makes the whiteboard feel a lot more scientific. Daniel also mentioned this idea of parking. He gets a great idea in the middle of a task, and instead of chasing it, he writes it down on the whiteboard to deal with later.

### Herman

That is a top-tier executive function strategy. In the ADHD world, we call that a brain dump or an idea parking lot. The reason it is so effective is that it addresses the fear of forgetting. The ADHD brain often chases a new idea immediately because it knows that if it doesn't, that idea might be gone forever. By parking it on a physical surface like a whiteboard, you are sending a signal to your brain that the information is safe. You don't have to use energy to hold onto it anymore.

### Corn

It is like closing a tab on your browser but knowing it is in your bookmarks.

### Herman

Perfect analogy. But here is the catch, and this is where a professional like an OT or a coach comes in. You have to actually check the parking lot. Many people with ADHD have notebooks filled with parked ideas that they never look at again. A coach helps you build the ritual of reviewing those lists. They help you decide which of those parked ideas are actually worth pursuing and which ones were just dopamine-seeking distractions.

### Corn

So, if Daniel is trying to choose between an OT and a coach, how should he decide? Is it one or the other, or can they work together?

### Herman

They can absolutely work together, but it depends on where his biggest pain points are. If he feels like his physical environment is the problem, like he can't find his keys, his office is a mess, or he doesn't know how to structure his physical day, an OT is the way to go. If he feels like he has the tools but he just can't get himself to use them, or if he struggles with the long-term planning and the emotional side of productivity, a coach might be better. Also, check your workplace benefits. Some forward-thinking companies in twenty-twenty-six are offering neurodiversity coaching as part of their employee assistance programs.

### Corn

What about the cost? I imagine OTs might be covered by insurance in some cases, whereas a life coach probably isn't.

### Herman

That is a very practical point. In many countries, if you have a formal diagnosis of ADHD, occupational therapy can be billed as a medical necessity. You might need a referral from your primary care doctor or psychiatrist. Coaching, on the other hand, is almost never covered by insurance. It is an out-of-pocket investment. However, many coaches offer sliding scales, and because they are not tied to the medical system, they can sometimes be more flexible with their scheduling and how they work with you. Some people even use their Health Savings Accounts or Flexible Spending Accounts for coaching if the coach is certified and it is for a diagnosed condition.

### Corn

That makes sense. Let's talk about the legitimacy aspect one more time. Daniel mentioned he is worried about finding someone who is not just a glorified cheerleader. What are some red flags to look for when interviewing a potential coach or OT?

### Herman

Red flag number one: if they promise a cure. ADHD is a neurodevelopmental difference. You don't cure it, you manage it. If someone says they can make your ADHD go away in six weeks, run. Red flag number two: if they are overly reliant on one specific system. A good professional knows that ADHD is highly individual. What works for one person might be a disaster for another. If they insist you must use a specific paper planner or a specific app, that is a sign they might not be as well-trained as they claim. And red flag number three: if they are an influencer first and a professional second. Be wary of people selling expensive pre-recorded courses without any individual interaction or recognized credentials like the ones we mentioned.

### Corn

And I imagine a good professional should be able to explain the why behind their suggestions.

### Herman

Absolutely. They should be able to say, we are doing this because it reduces the load on your working memory, or we are using this visual cue to address time blindness. They should have a foundational understanding of the neuroscience. Another thing to look for is how they handle failure. A legitimate ADHD professional expects you to fail. They expect you to forget the system or lose the planner. Their job isn't to judge you for that, it is to help you analyze why it happened and adjust the system.

### Corn

That is such a huge point. The shame cycle is so real with ADHD. You try a new system, it works for three days, you forget it on the fourth day, and then you feel like a failure and give up on systems entirely.

### Herman

That is exactly what a coach is there to interrupt. They help you see that the fourth day wasn't a failure, it was data. It told you that the system was perhaps too complex or didn't have enough of an external trigger.

### Corn

I want to go back to the idea of the structured process of self-improvement. If someone like Daniel wants to start this journey, what does the first month usually look like with a professional?

### Herman

It usually starts with an audit. You can't improve what you haven't measured. An OT or a coach will likely ask you to track your time or your energy for a week. Not to judge you, but to see where the leaks are. They will look for patterns. Do you hit a wall at two in the afternoon? Do you get distracted by email first thing in the morning? From there, you pick one small, high-impact area to work on. Just one.

### Corn

Only one? That sounds counterintuitive when you feel like your whole life is disorganized.

### Herman

It is the most important rule of ADHD management. If you try to change everything at once, you will change nothing. You pick one thing, like, for example, the morning routine or the way you handle incoming emails. You build a system for that one thing, you pressure-test it for a few weeks, and only once it feels relatively automatic do you move on to the next thing. This is where the structure comes in. It is a slow, iterative process. It is about building sustainable scaffolding, not just a temporary patch.

### Corn

It sounds like building a muscle.

### Herman

It is exactly like building a muscle. You are literally strengthening the neural pathways associated with executive function. And just like the gym, you need a trainer who knows how to spot you so you don't drop the weights on your toes.

### Corn

That is a great image. I'm also thinking about the role of technology here. We mentioned AI and whiteboards. How do these professionals view these tools? Are they supportive of using AI as a crutch?

### Herman

Most modern ADHD professionals love these tools, but they don't call them crutches. They call them ramps. If you use a ramp to get into a building because you are in a wheelchair, nobody calls that a crutch. It is an accessibility tool. For an ADHD brain, AI is an accessibility tool for the cognitive world. An OT might help Daniel refine how he uses that AI. Instead of just saying, give me a priority list, they might help him develop specific prompts that categorize tasks by energy level or urgency. They might even help him set up an AI agent that proactively nudges him when he has been on a single task for too long.

### Corn

So, instead of just a list, it might be, here are the three things you should do while your medication is at its peak, and here are the two things you can do when you are starting to wind down.

### Herman

Exactly. That is a sophisticated use of the tool. And for the whiteboard, an OT might suggest where to place it so it is always in his line of sight. There is a saying in the ADHD community: out of sight, out of mind. If the whiteboard is behind a door, it doesn't exist. It has to be in the path of his natural movement. They call this point of performance support. You need the reminder at the exact moment and place where you need to take the action.

### Corn

It is amazing how much the physical environment matters. I think we often forget that we are biological creatures living in a physical world. We think we should be able to just think our way out of these problems.

### Herman

That is the trap. We think focus is a moral failing or a lack of willpower. But willpower is a finite resource. For someone with ADHD, they are often using up their entire day's worth of willpower just to stay in their chair. By the time they actually have to do the work, the tank is empty. The goal of all these professional supports is to reduce the amount of willpower required to function.

### Corn

That is a powerful way to put it. Reducing the friction so the willpower can be used for the actual creative or professional work.

### Herman

Right. Daniel is clearly a high-functioning guy. He is using AI, he is using whiteboards, he is managing his medication. He has the raw materials. He just needs the blueprint to put them together in a way that doesn't leave him feeling overloaded at the end of every day.

### Corn

So, for Daniel and anyone else listening who is in this position, the first step is probably to decide: do I want to fix my environment or my habits first?

### Herman

And then do your homework. If you go the OT route, look for someone with a background in neurodiversity or cognitive rehab. If you go the coaching route, look for those ICF or PAAC credentials. And don't be afraid to interview two or three people. Most professionals offer a free fifteen-minute discovery call. Use that time to ask them, how do you handle it when a client completely falls off the wagon? Their answer will tell you everything you need to know. If they sound surprised or judgmental, they are not the right fit.

### Corn

That is a great interview question. I'm going to remember that one. Herman, this has been really illuminating. I think there is so much hope in this middle ground between medication and just struggling on your own.

### Herman

There really is. It is about moving from a state of constant reaction to a state of intentional action. It takes time, and it takes help, but it is absolutely possible. And I have to say, I'm really glad Daniel sent this in. It is a conversation that needs to happen more often.

### Corn

It really does. And hey, for everyone listening, if you have found this helpful, or if you have your own strategies for managing ADHD, we would love to hear about them. You can always get in touch with us through the form on our website at [myweirdprompts.com](https://myweirdprompts.com).

### Herman

And while you are there, you can find our full archive of episodes. We have covered everything from military bases to North Korean tech, and we are always looking for new rabbit holes to go down.

### Corn

Also, a quick favor to ask. If you are enjoying the show, please leave us a review on your podcast app or on Spotify. It genuinely helps other curious people find us, and it means a lot to us and to Daniel, even if he is just the one sending us these prompts from the other room.

**Herman**

He is probably in there right now recording his next priority list with the AI.

**Corn**

Most likely. Alright, I think that's a good place to wrap up. This has been My Weird Prompts. I'm Corn.

**Herman**

And I'm Herman Poppleberry.

**Corn**

Thanks for listening, and we will talk to you next week.

**Herman**

See ya!