

Is Your ADHD Making You a DOOM Piler?

The link between executive function deficits and organizational skills.

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THE BASICS

- [What Is ADHD?](#)
- [Take our ADHD Test](#)
- [Find counselling to overcome ADHD](#)

Key points

- Organizational skills are affected by working memory deficits in ADHD.
- Individuals with ADHD often "organize" by making DOOM piles. DOOM stands for Didn't Organize, Only Moved.
- Strategies like setting a due date or breaking a task down can help manage DOOM piles.

My son recently came home after completing his freshman year of college. A few days before his arrival I spent time cleaning and tidying his room so he would come home to an organized and calming environment. My son, who has [ADHD](#), lives in a state of constant chaos, so his room didn't stay neat for long. The familiar bags of random stuff materialized when he was no longer able to focus on unpacking. This has always been his way of "organizing", throwing various objects into plastic bags or cardboard boxes to be sorted and put away later.

The DOOM pile

Not long ago I came across an article on DOOM piles. I laughed at the acronym, "Didn't Organize, Only Moved", and suddenly understood there was a method to my son's organizing, or lack thereof.

DOOM piles are a cleaning tactic and a way of reducing visual clutter. Essentially, it's stashing random items that need to be organized in one place, to be dealt with later. We all have DOOM piles — a junk drawer or a place where we put piles of clutter before guests visit. There can be DOOM piles, DOOM bags, DOOM boxes, or one of my son's favorites, a DOOM desk.

What's the link between DOOM piles and ADHD?

DOOM piles and ADHD have been a focus on TikTok and other [social media](#) sites. The Urban Dictionary describes DOOM piles as "the one and only" way someone with ADHD organizes.

The struggle with organization for children and adults with ADHD stems from their executive function deficits. [Executive functioning](#) is a neurological process that is important for planning and initiating tasks, [time management](#), organization, and [emotional control](#).

Working [memory](#) is an executive function that allows us to store information in our brains to be used later. It has been described as a "[mental scratchpad](#)" that contains all the information we need for everyday tasks. Working memory helps us to pay [attention](#), follow instructions, recall directions or phone numbers, and stay [organized](#). Children and adults with ADHD tax their working memory by overloading their scratchpad since they must work harder at tasks that come easily to neurotypicals, like focusing and organizing.

In addition, individuals with ADHD immediately respond to every new stimulus around them, which leads to their attention shifting from something less desirable (organizing everything you brought home from college) to a more enjoyable activity (gaming online with friends), resulting in items being tossed onto piles instead of being put away. Moreover, mental fatigue and feeling overwhelmed can also lead to DOOM piling. Interior designer Lenore Brooks [says](#) of her ADHD clients, "It's almost like decision fatigue all the time. 'I can't decide what to do with it, so I'm just not going to do anything with it.' "

My son is the master of a DOOM pile desk, tossing random objects alongside piles of papers. Sometimes I wonder how he has room to move his computer mouse even an inch. At times his DOOM pile of papers has been knocked to the floor, covering his carpet in a snow-white blanket, often revealing some misplaced important paper, like instructions for a school assignment.

How do you tame all the DOOM piles?

Creating and maintaining an organizational system requires planning, initiating the task and knowing what needs to be organized, and finding a place for something based on how often it is used, all complex processes that require working memory. [According to](#) ADHD expert Dr. Edward Hallowell, the ADHD brain doesn't have enough filing cabinets so you have to establish a filing system outside the brain. Ways to help working memory can include writing down reminders for what needs to be done, giving a to-do item a deadline by writing it on a calendar, breaking down a large task into several smaller ones, and setting a certain amount of time to focus on completing a task.

After several failed attempts to help my son tackle his DOOM piles, I realized I needed to enlist his help to find a solution that works for him and not one that works for me. I accepted that my son didn't need to clean from start to finish, it was OK if it took a few days, as long as he was making progress. Helping my son to break down his task of going through, and organizing, a DOOM pile and allowing him to set a time limit made my son accountable and more likely to complete the task. Although my son will argue that he knows what's in a given DOOM pile and can find something if needed (he often can), the other day I noticed a previously stuffed plastic bag was empty on the floor of his bedroom.

About the Author



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