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The Best ADHD Tools: Alarm Clocks

An ordinary alarm clock may not be enough for attention deficit adults. We pick the best of the best ADHD tools!

by Michael Sandler

Like many other adults with attention deficit disorder (ADD/ADHD), I struggle to wake up in the morning. My alarm clock buzzes, chortles, and even vibrates, but I have an amazing talent for turning it off and going back to sleep.

My clients (I'm an ADD coach) are equally talented. Despite their best efforts to get out of bed on time, many are late to rise on a daily basis. I've had them try setting multiple alarm clocks, positioning their alarm clocks across the room, even placing alarm clocks inside their pillows. All to no avail. *Surely* there's an ADHD tool that will help them rise and shine. Right?

I began my quest at ADD-oriented sites like eadhd.com and addwarehouse.com. I found great timers, but little in the way of a surefire alarm clock.

The closest I found was the **Shake Awake** (\$34.95 from epill.com). Unfortunately, this vibrating, tuck-inside-your-pillow device didn't create enough of a ruckus for sleepyheads like my clients and me. We need a foghorn.

Then it occurred to me: adults with ADD aren't the only folks who have trouble waking. How about people who are seeing- or hearing-impaired? A few mouse clicks later, and voila! I discovered that "adaptive technology" retailers carry lots of industrial-strength alarm clocks.

At maxiAids.com, I came across two possibilities, including the **Motivator**. This \$14.95 vibrating device attaches to your existing alarm clock and goes under your mattress or inside your pillow to shake you out of bed. Or, if you've ever wondered what it's like to be a deer in the headlights, there's the \$19.95 **Hi-Power Strobe Light**. Then there's the \$54.95 **Sonic Boom** from sonicalert.com. In addition to shaking your bed and flashing lights, it generates a 113-decibel shriek.

Not loud enough? **The Screaming Meanie** (\$29.95 from nfss.com) clocks in at an ear-popping 120 decibels. (For inquiring minds, that's louder than a jet airplane.)

For many of us, the challenge is not waking us up but keeping us up. At latestbuy.com, I came across the ingenious \$49.95 **Jigsaw Puzzle Clock**, which shuts off only after you complete a puzzle, and the \$49.95 **Kuku Alarm Clock**, which shuts off only after you collect the plastic eggs it just scattered across the floor. Both clocks require you to be physically *and* mentally awake to stop the racket.

During my research, I met a woman who swore by the **Progression Wake Up Clock (3)**, which I found for \$49.95 at hammacher.com. Over a 30-minute period, it gradually wakens you with light, nature sounds, and aromatherapy. Something soothing to start the day, kind of makes you go *ahhhhhhh*.

My friend Cali, a notorious insomniac with a flair for feng-shui, suggested the **Zen Alarm Clock** (\$109.95 from now-zen.com). Since I'm always looking for ways to calm the ADD mind, this sounded appealing. It turns out that Now & Zen's headquarters is just a few miles from my house. I went over to sneak a peek, returning with their \$139.95 **Zen Timepiece (4)**. The literature claims that this clock can "awaken the soul," and, as I discovered the next morning, that's not far from the truth. First once, then with increasing frequency, it sounded the gentle, soothing chimes that one associates with mountain monasteries. After 10 minutes, it coaxed me out of bed. I felt calm and refreshed.

Only one hitch: The effect was so relaxing that I just *had* to try it again. So I reset the alarm and crawled back into bed.