

# **The ADHD Trifecta: Creating Motivation to Action**

Casey Dixon  
PCC, BCC, SCAC, M.S.Ed.  
Dixon Life Coaching, LLC

Chester County / Main Line CHADD  
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# Dixon Life Coaching

Casey Dixon, PCC, BCC, SCAC, M.S.Ed.



## Casey Dixon

Casey Dixon is an ADHD Coach uniquely focused on high-achieving lawyers and professors, who are super-smart and can easily get familiar with the paradox of competence and accomplishment. And, after ten years of coaching ADHD clients, she knows what works. Casey is mixing it up and spreading things around a bit with Coaching Groups, and ramped up speaking and writing on Facebook for a running stream of ADHD tips, research, and more.

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## CERTIFICATION

Professional Certified Coach (PCC), International Coach Federation  
 International Coach Federation Certified Mentor Coach  
 Board Certified Coach (BCC), Center for Credentialing & Education  
 Senior Certified ADHD Coach (SCAC), Institute for the Development of Emotional Intelligence  
 Certified Coach, Coach Training Alliance (CTACC)



## Casey Dixon

@DixonLifeCoach

ADHD Coach | Science-based innovative tactics for attorneys, professors, & demand-ridden professionals at [DixonLifeCoaching.com](http://DixonLifeCoaching.com) & [MindfullyADD.com](http://MindfullyADD.com)  
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Casey Dixon @DixonLifeCoach · 37m  
 Coaching led to positive thoughts & behaviors, goal-attainment, emotions, & expectations! #ADHD #ADHDWorthyRead [bit.ly/2eMdZ...](http://bit.ly/2eMdZ...)

Casey Dixon @DixonLifeCoach · 2h  
 My clients are visualizing what...

# Meet John

53 years old. Lawyer in family run law practice. Married with two kids. Self-diagnosed with ADHD after his daughter was diagnosed last year. Not getting things done at work and feeling like a failure.



# What John says about himself

*“I feel like an imposter at work and know I could be a lot better if I could get a grip on how I work. I spend way too much time checking stocks, playing fantasy football, and being interrupted to get much done at the office. I end up working late into the night to get depositions completed. When I go to trial, I wish I was better prepared every time. I don’t get enough sleep and don’t have any energy left for my family.”*



# John's problem

Giant To-Do List



# So, what is going on with John?

“ADHD is a developmental syndrome of impaired self-regulatory processes that underlie the common symptoms and functional problems ... adults with ADHD report chronic difficulties executing their intended plans despite recognizing the negative consequences for doing so.”

~Ramsay, “Turning Intentions Into Actions”

“People with ADHD know what to do but can't do what they know.”

~Barkley, Adult ADD

# A tiny bit of Neurobiology

The Brain's Prefrontal Cortex



The Prefrontal Cortex regulates attention and behavior – also called **“executive function.”**

The Prefrontal Cortex regulates attention and behavior.

Brains with ADHD have smaller and thinner areas of the brain (decreased cortical volume) and inefficient neurotransmitter (chemicals) pathways.

Norepinephrine ([attention/alertness](#) helper)

Serotonin ([feel-good](#) helper)

Gaba ([calming](#) helper)

Dopamine ([motivation/interest](#) helper)

**Warning and Disclaimer:** This is a gross overgeneralization of complex brain functioning and I AM NOT a neurologist! I include it here to solely to illustrate the neurological/biochemical nature of motivation.

# Dang Dopamine

## What is *Dopamine*?

It's a **neurochemical** that signals to our brain when something important is going on.

## What does it do?

It goes into the prefrontal cortex to help it to make plans and do stuff in an organized way (executive functions).

## What else does it do?

It also goes into other brain regions to check in on how something feels and whether or not it will be rewarding. If something seems rewarding, then more dopamine is released.

In ADHD, the dopamine-reward pathway is “disrupted” and this leads to lower motivation.

~Volkow, Motivation Deficit in ADHD



# Dopamine pathways, rewards, and motivation in ADHD

- Leads to inability to take motivated action, even in the presence of rewards.
- Especially hard with tasks that are inherently boring, repetitive, less interesting, or perceived as too difficult.
- This problem leads to/exacerbates poor time-management, procrastination, poor organization, and feelings of overwhelm.
- Rewards are less rewarding and have to be stronger.
- Preference for smaller, more immediate rewards over larger, later rewards.
- Rewards have to be consistent (not partial).

“ADHD is actually a motivation disorder, not an attention disorder.”

~Sarkis, Natural Relief for Adult ADHD

# Ways to increase dopamine

## ADHD medication

Methylphenidate:

- “Increases motivation and interest in a cognitive task in proportion to the drug-induced DA (dopamine).”
- Meaning that the meds create more dopamine, and the dopamine creates more motivation.

~Volkow, Motivation Deficit in ADHD

## Non-medication

- Exercise
- Sleep
- Mindfulness and meditation

“...it is essential to be able to manufacture motivation, just enough of it, in order to be able to shift out of avoidance...”

~Ramsay & Rostain, The Adult ADHD Toolkit

# The ADHD Trifecta

## HIGH INTEREST

“...when a person is faced with a task in which he has strong and immediate personal interest, ... the chemistry of the brain is instantly altered and mobilized.”

~Brown, Smart But Stuck, p.24

“...adults with ADHD are able to implement and follow through on plans when performing a task that happens to be more naturally reinforcing, ... about a topic of interest...”

~Ramsay, “Turning Intentions into Actions”, p.3

# The ADHD Trifecta

## LOOMING DISASTER

People with ADHD “often feel unable to make themselves initiate the actions needed until they are in a ‘Mayday’ situation.”

~Brown, Attention Deficit Disorder, p.24

Deadline pressure “provides the emotional impetus (motivation) to start.”

~Ramsay, “Turning Intentions into Actions”, p.4

# The ADHD Trifecta

## OTHER PEOPLE

“...bringing another person into the mix....adds even more motivational fuel to our inner fires to get things done.”

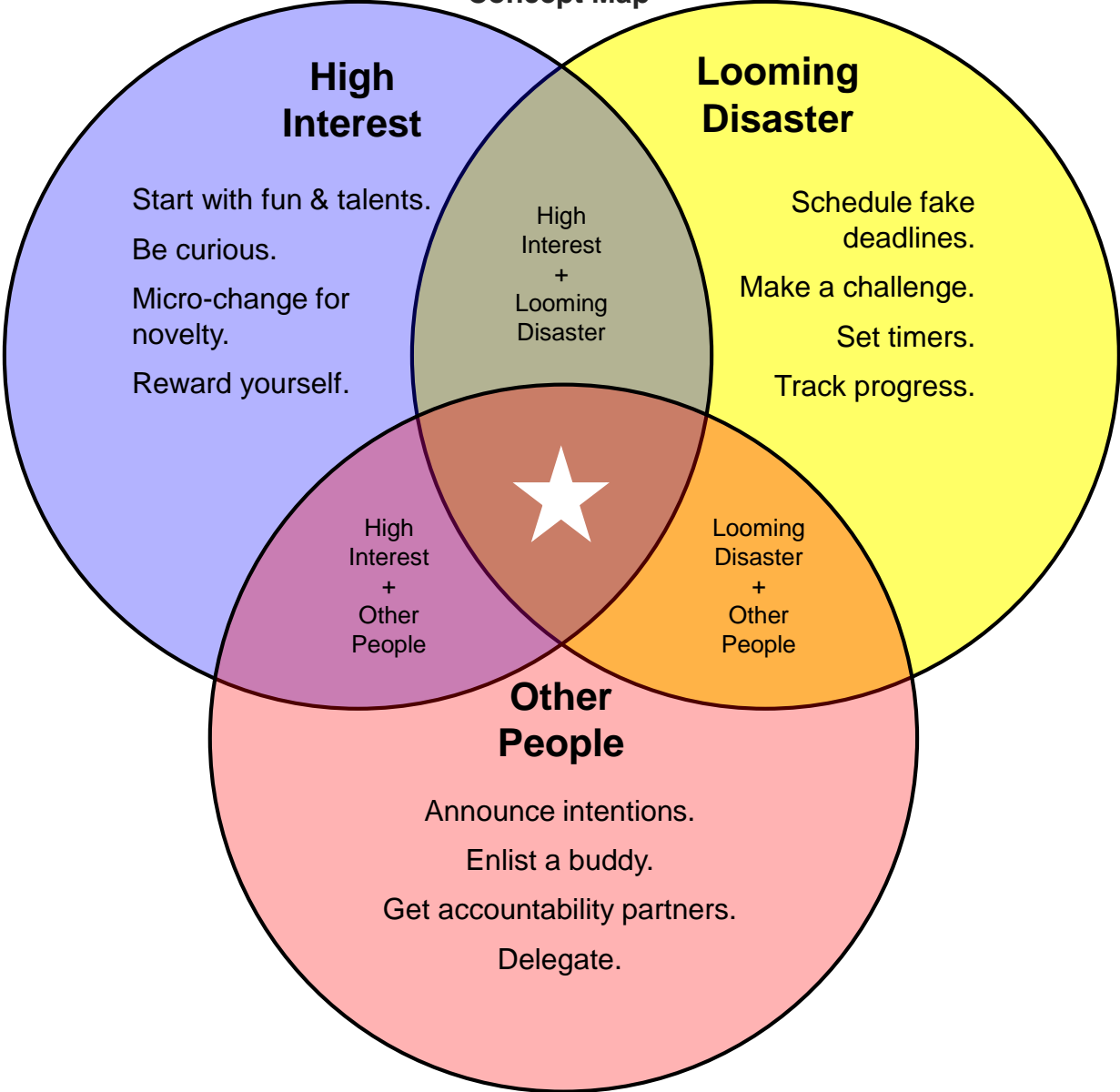
~Barkley, Taking Charge of Adult ADHD, p.179

“Sharing one’s task plan with someone else increases the likelihood of task engagement.”

~Ramsay, “Turning Intentions into Actions”, p.11

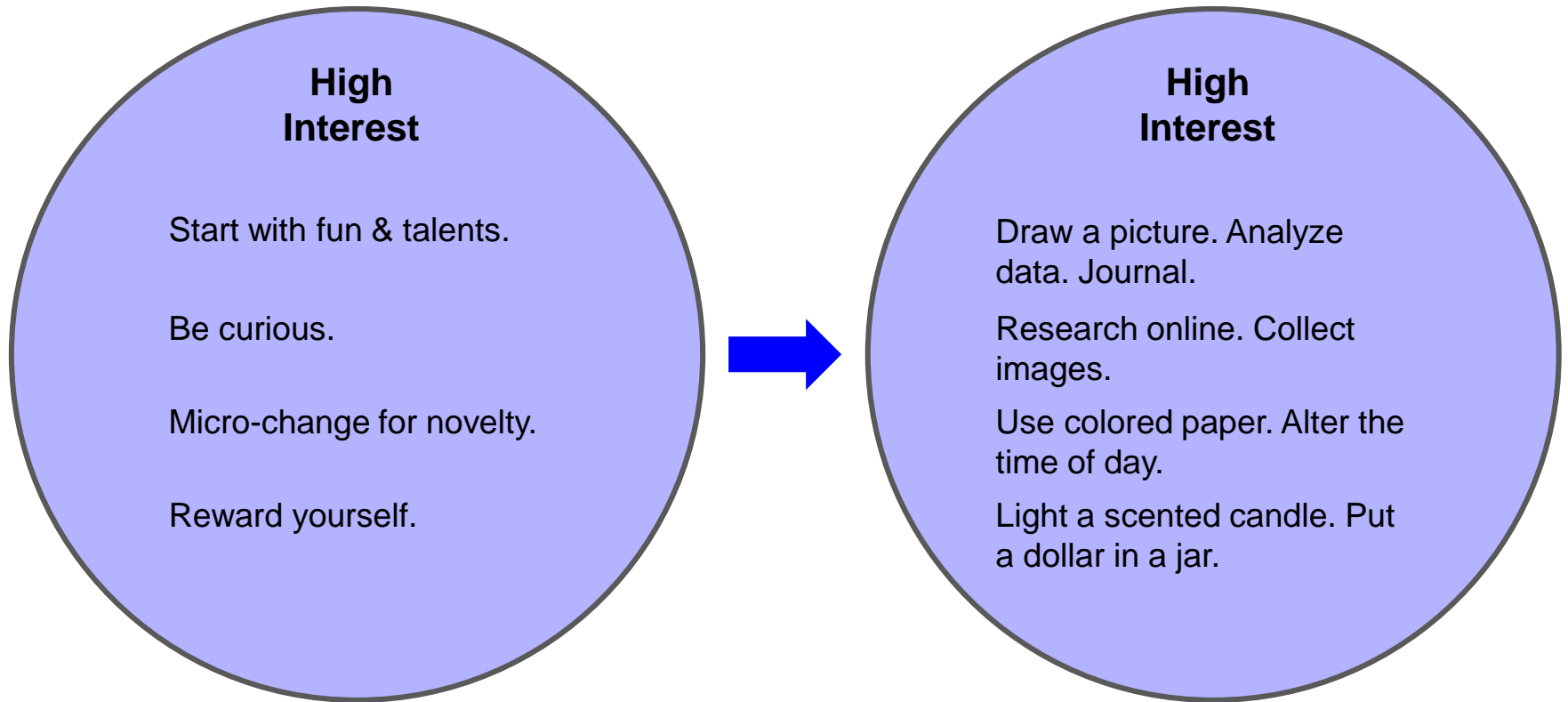
# The ADHD Trifecta

Concept Map



# The ADHD Trifecta

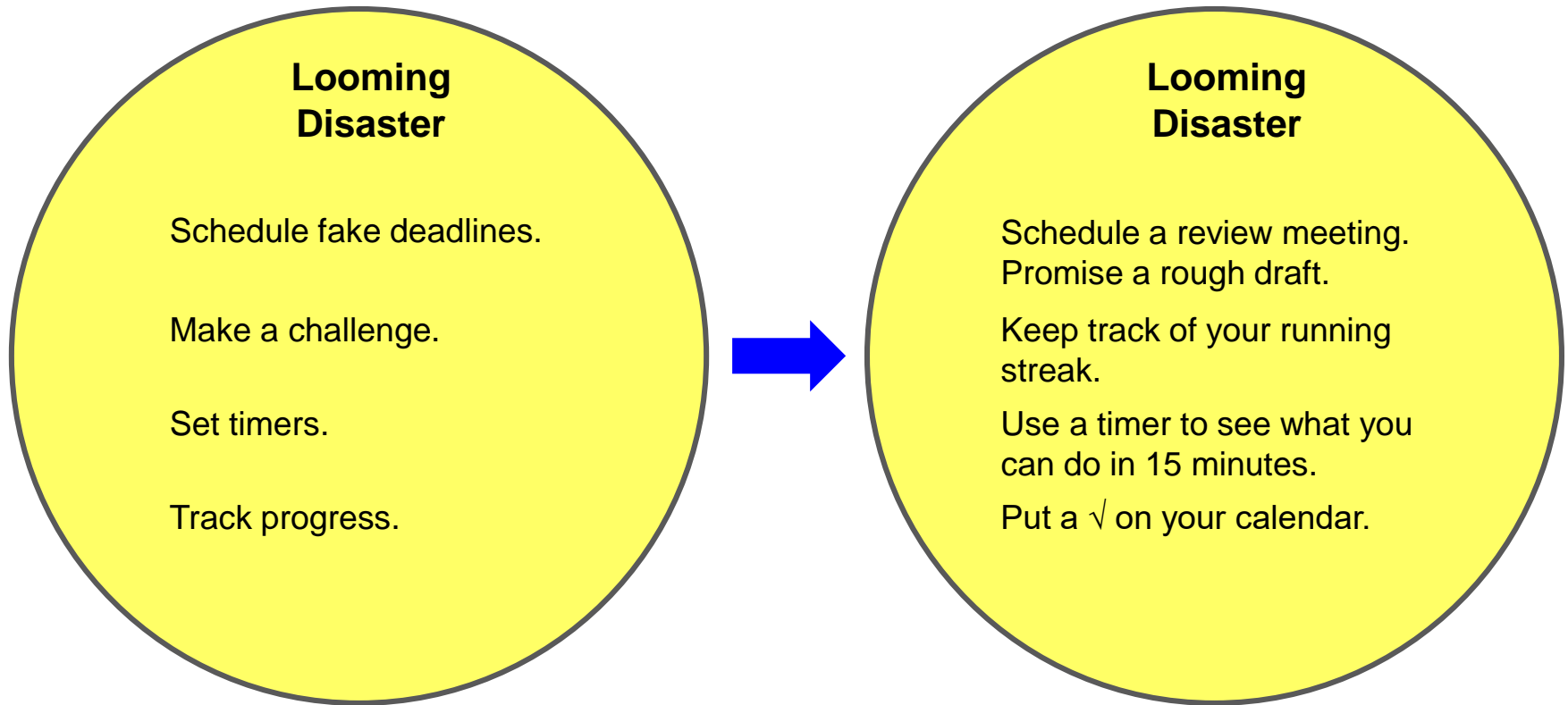
Concept → Examples



What can I do to make this more interesting?

# The ADHD Trifecta

## Concept Map

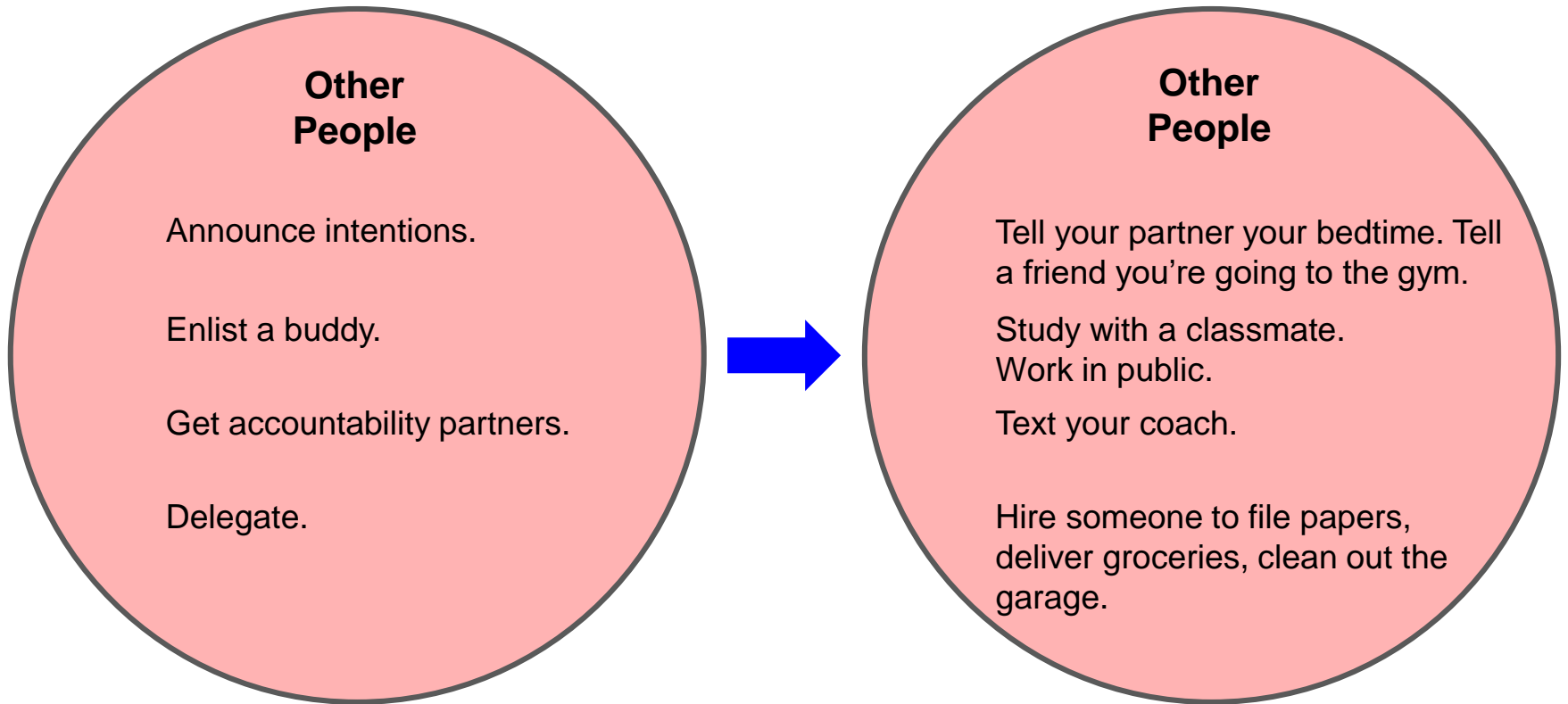


What can I do to make this feel more urgent?



# The ADHD Trifecta

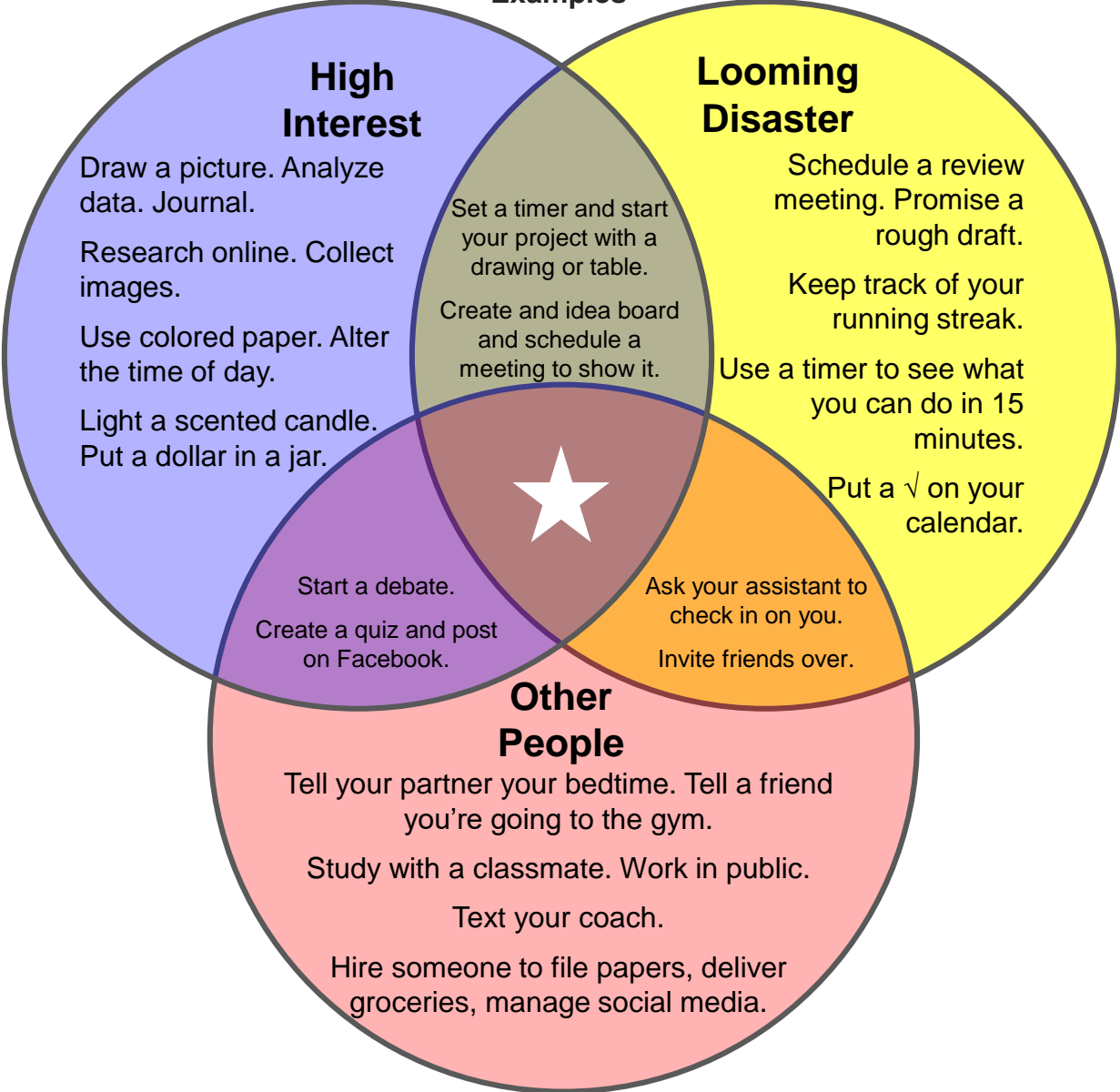
## Concept Map



What can I do to include other people?

# The ADHD Trifecta

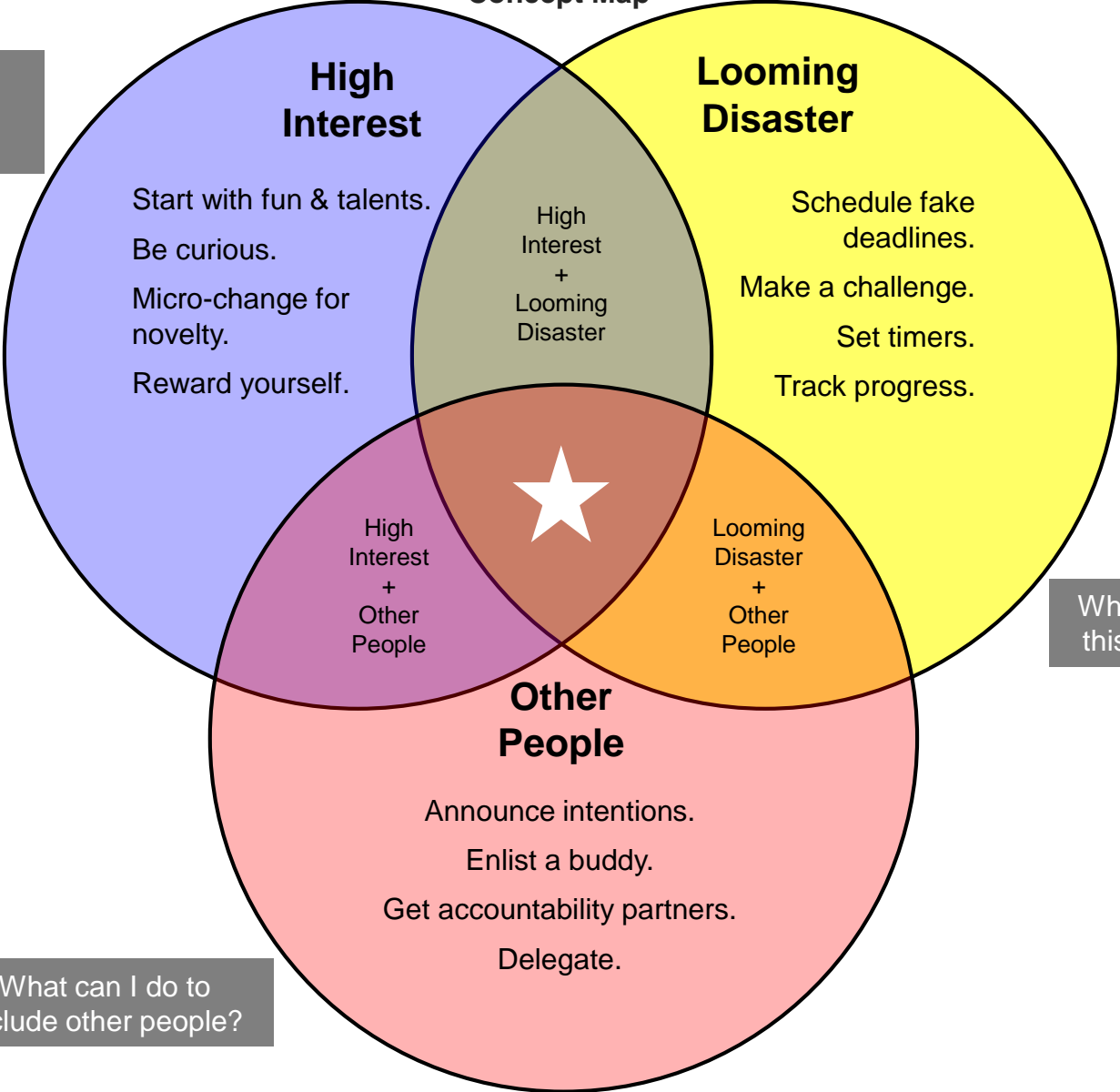
Examples



# The ADHD Trifecta

Concept Map

What can I do to make this more interesting?



What can I do to make this feel more urgent?

What can I do to include other people?

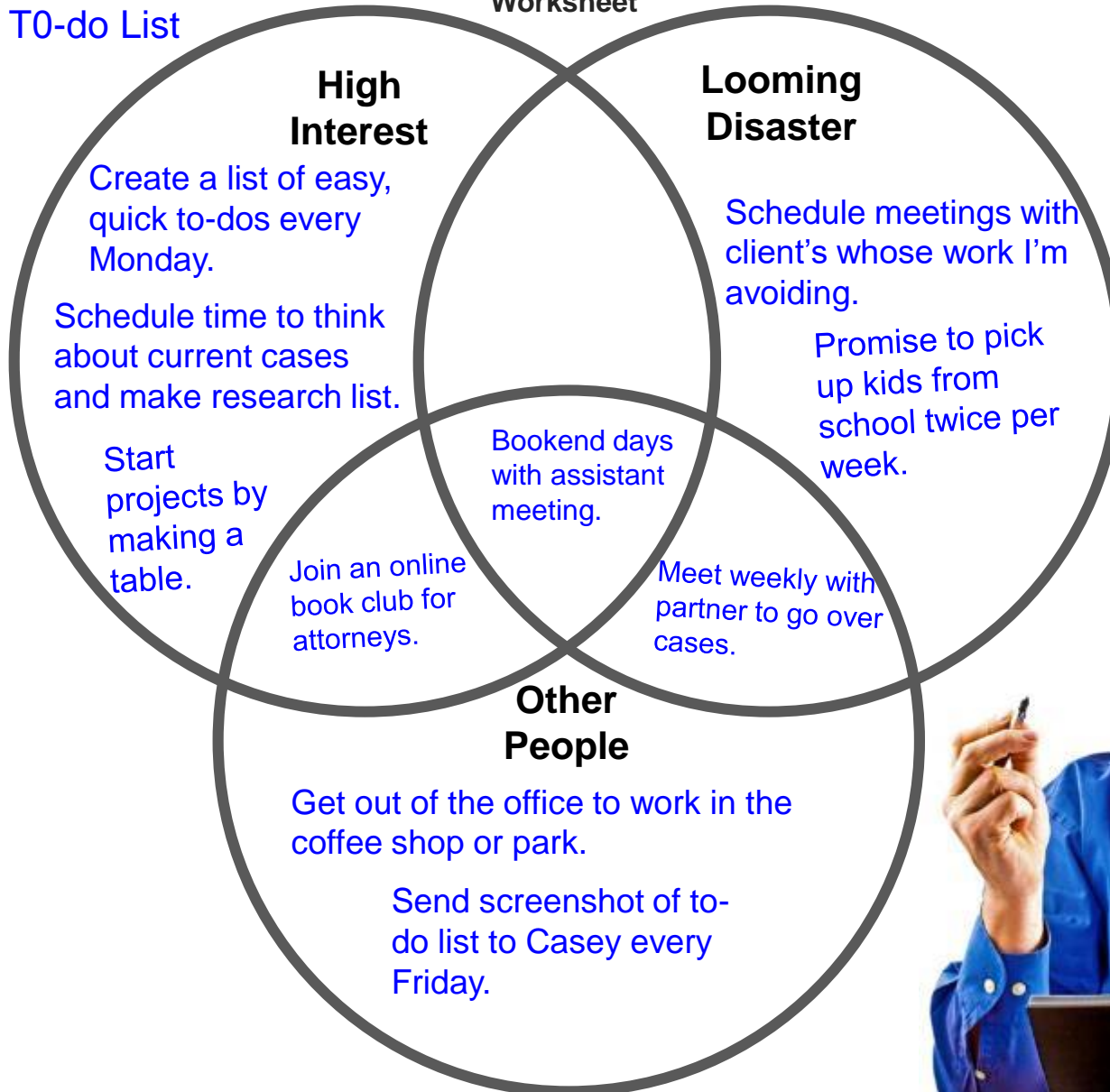
# But what about John?



# The ADHD Trifecta

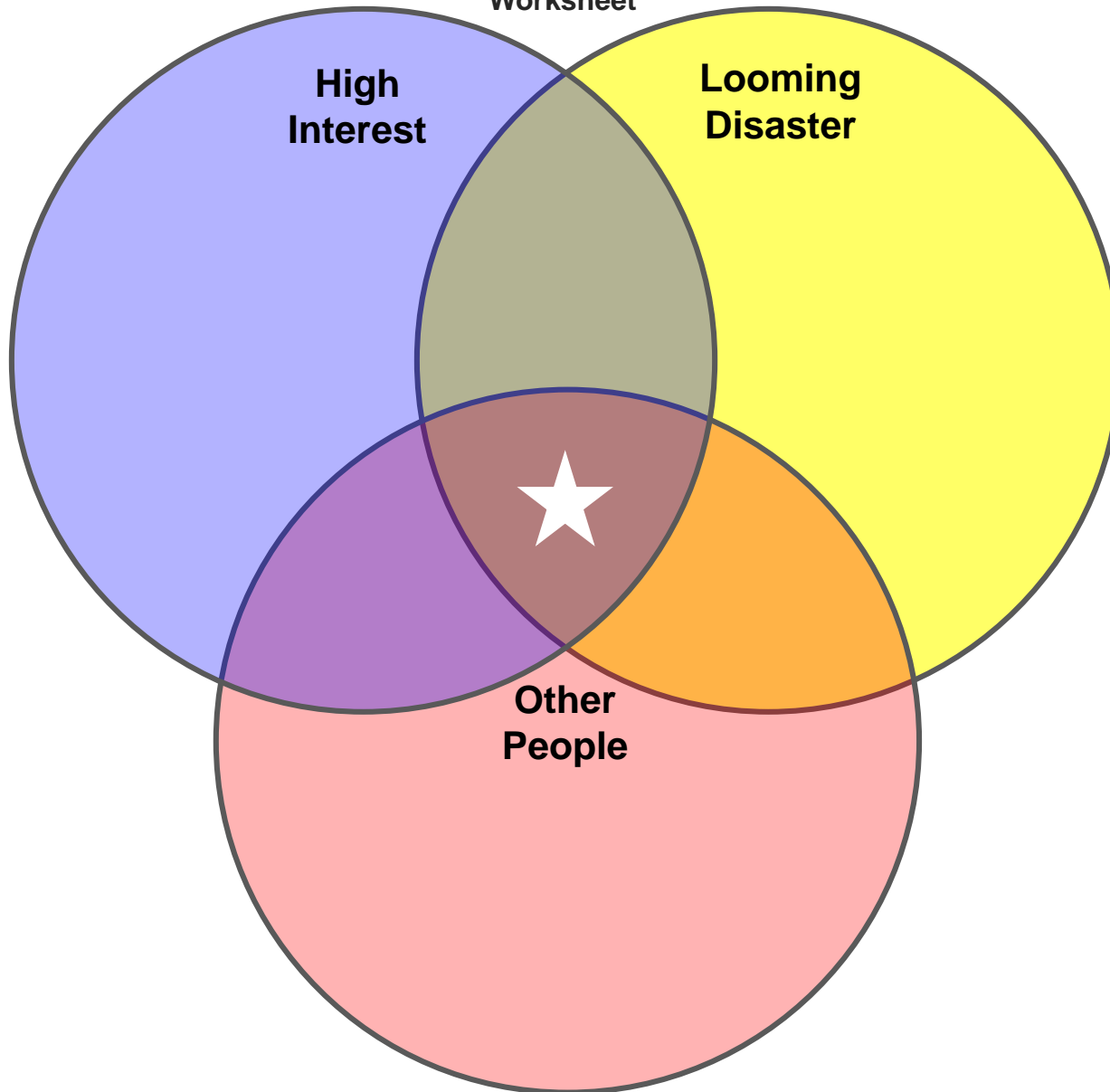
Worksheet

Client Project:  
John's Giant T0-do List



# The ADHD Trifecta

Worksheet



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# The ADHD Trifecta: Keeping Yourself in the Game of Life

Casey Dixon  
PCC, BCC, SCAC, M.S.Ed.  
Dixon Life Coaching, LLC

Chester County / Main Line CHADD  
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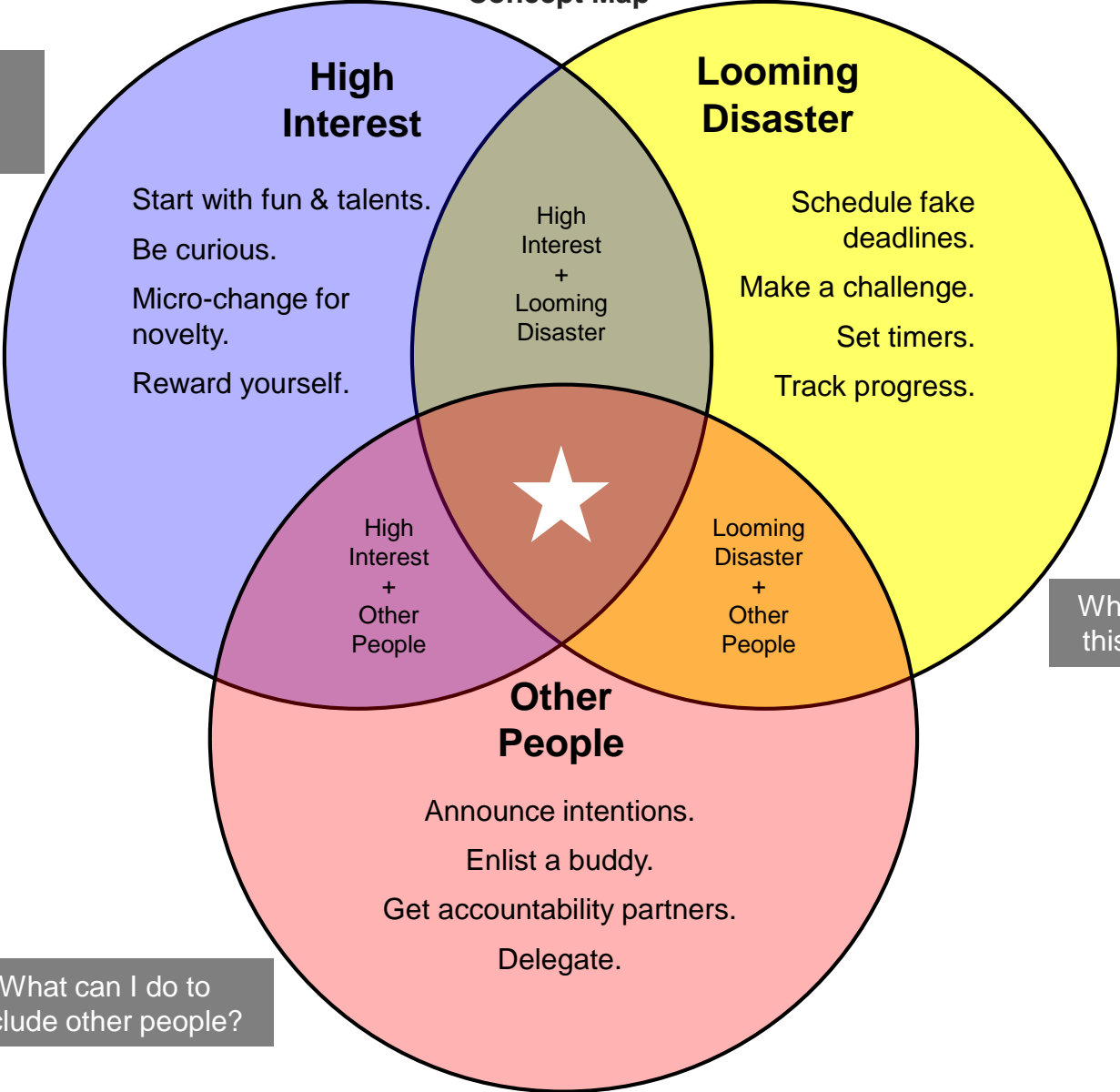
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<https://www.linkedin.com/in/caseydixon>

# The ADHD Trifecta

Concept Map

What can I do to make this more interesting?



What can I do to make this feel more urgent?

What can I do to include other people?