

Effectively Completing Projects: Turning “NOT NOW into Now

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It's Thursday night and your son or daughter is working feverishly on a school project. As midnight approaches you ask the obvious question, “Are you almost finished?” Very quickly you receive the reply “No!” You then ask them when the project was assigned. Not surprisingly, you are told that it was assigned two weeks ago.

Pulling an “all-nighter” is extremely common for children with ADHD. The simple fact is that in your child's mind there are only two times that matter – Now and Not Now. Unfortunately for many students NOW only occurs within twenty-four hours of a deadline.

Parents constantly ask me if there is any way that they can help their children complete their projects in a timely manner and avoid the dreaded “all-nighter”. The answer is “yes”.

The first step is to have your child or your child's teacher inform you that a project has been assigned and when it's due. The next step is to go over the project with your child and break it down into manageable steps or “chunks”. You then assign a due date for the completion of each step. Purchase an accordion folder or a set of coloured folders and clearly indicate the due dates for each step. Then write a description for each of the steps and place them in the associated folders. As your child completes each step, move everything into the next folder. Once all the steps are completed you then amalgamate everything to produce the final product. This final step should be done, if possible, two days prior to the due date. This enables you and your child to review the project the day before and make any last minute changes.

By organizing the work in this manner you set a series of due dates. As each of these dates arrive, the project step assigned to that date is “NOW” due.

This method of organization is fairly straight forward and very effective. It eliminates your child from being overwhelmed by the amount of work required and helps him or her to focus on each part of the project. Overall, the level of stress and frustration is greatly reduced and the quality of final project is greatly improved.

