

A blue-tinted photograph of a workspace. A person's hand is visible, holding a pen over a desk. On the desk, there is a laptop, a stack of papers with diagrams, a cup, and other office supplies. The text "The ADHD Trifecta" is overlaid in white.

# The ADHD Trifecta

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The ADHD Trifecta  
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# The ADHD Trifecta

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“...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

# Welcome

I'm Casey Dixon, a Life Coach uniquely focused on high-demand-ridden professionals, highlighting lawyers and professors, who are super-smart and can easily get derailed by ADHD traits.

For the past eleven years, I have been working to help people with ADHD become **unstuck**. During that time, I have learned a lot from my clients about ADHD and what helps them overcome ADHD-related obstacles so that they can take action and move forward with their goals.

## Does this sound familiar to you?

As an ADHD coach, I hear stories nearly every day from my clients about being stuck. They want to plan their week, organize their desk, write a paper draft, or pay their bills, but just can't seem to get themselves to follow through on their own intentions. *But guess what - life doesn't have to be this way.*

Based on current research and my own experiences as a coach, I've identified **3 main motivators** people can focus on to increase their motivation and thus, increase their ability to get things done and meet their goals!

These 3 motivators are:

- ① Make a project or task **High Interest**.
- ② Create a (real or self-imposed) **Looming Disaster**.
- ③ Bring **Other People** into the mix.

I brought these main motivators together into a model that I call the ADHD Trifecta.

# The science behind the ADHD Trifecta

## The science of it all

There's a *ton* of science about neurotransmitters that supports the ADHD Trifecta model... way too much to include in this ebook, so let's just say that it all comes down to *dopamine*.

Dopamine is the main neurotransmitter related to ADHD and is said to be our **motivation helper**. Dopamine signals to our brain when something important is going on, and it releases into our prefrontal cortex to help our brain make plans, organize information and (most importantly) identify what feels rewarding to us! ADHD research has shown that the pathways that dopamine uses to travel throughout our brain are **disrupted**, meaning the neurotransmitter can't function the way it is supposed to.

# What does this mean for ADHD?

What this tells us is that motivation is not an act of will, or a choice: It's part of our biology. Motivation really comes from reward pathways in the brain that help us to evaluate how important something is and how rewarding it will be.

**Because people with ADHD have a less-than-perfect dopamine-reward pathway, they actually feel less rewarded by equal rewards than people without ADHD.**

Basically, rewards are less rewarding for people with ADHD.

Let's break it down... disrupted dopamine pathways with lower dopamine:

- Lead to an inability to take motivated action, even in the presence of rewards.
- Make tasks that are inherently boring, repetitive, less interesting, or perceived as too difficult especially hard.
- This problem leads to poor time-management, procrastination, poor organization, and feelings of overwhelm.

It means that:

- Rewards are less rewarding and have to be stronger.
- We should use smaller, more immediate rewards over larger, later rewards.
- Rewards have to be consistent (not partial). Meaning, every time, not just sometimes.



# Manufacturing motivation

And this is where **the ADHD Trifecta** comes in! In order to be motivated toward action, you do not have to wait until you are in the mood or feel like it. **Motivation does not have to be accidental. You can manufacture it for yourself.**

Motivation isn't just about waiting to feel like doing something; it's about getting that brain chemistry altered and mobilized. Certain activities can help manufacture more dopamine to increase your motivation. Things like physician-prescribed medication, sleep, exercise, and meditation all help. Guess what... so does **the ADHD Trifecta!**





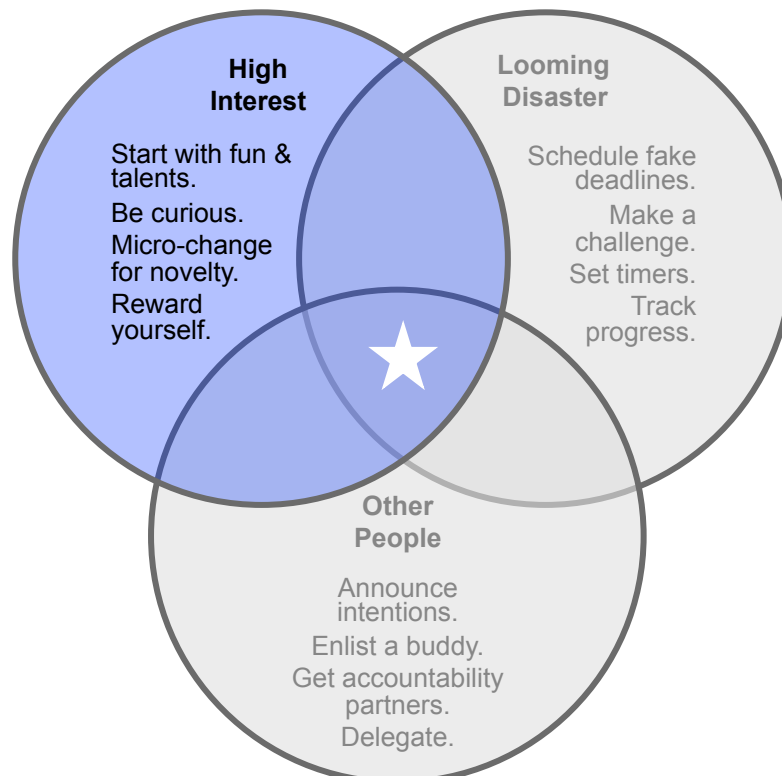
# How the ADHD Trifecta works

The ADHD Trifecta identifies 3 areas you can focus on to manufacture motivation and help you achieve your goals. With each area, you can take concrete steps.

## *High Interest*

Research (and personal experience!) shows that when we're interested in something – when we find it fun and engaging – we're much more likely to do it! So in the interest of making something high-interest:

- ✓ Start with fun & talents – always start with what you enjoy!
- ✓ Be curious - how can you be more curious about a task?
- ✓ Create a micro-change for novelty - people with ADHD love things that are new, or novel. Micro-changing for novelty means asking: What is the smallest possible change I can make to make this seem new again?
- ✓ Reward yourself - remember that rewards need to be stronger, more consistent, and more immediate.

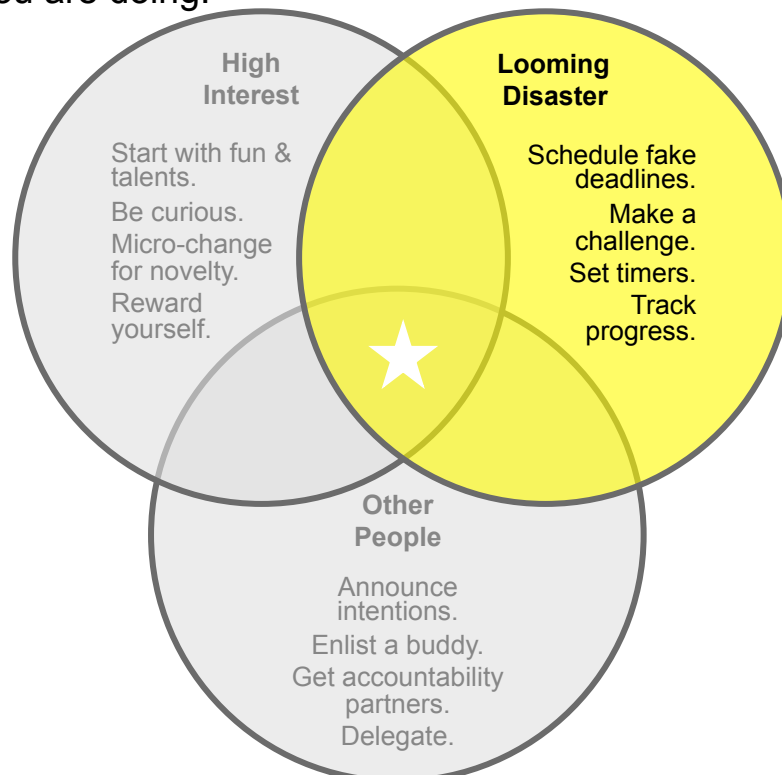


# How the ADHD Trifecta works

## *Looming Disaster*

People with ADHD often do their best work when there's a sense of urgency. When a deadline is approaching, the impending looming disaster floods our brains with activation chemicals and then we really get going. When a task feels more urgent, we automatically become more motivated!

- ✓ Set a face deadline for yourself – tell someone about it to help hold you accountable.
- ✓ Make a challenge – turning a task into a competition has the same effect as a deadline, but it can be way more fun!
- ✓ Set timers – using a timer externalizes time (rather than relying on our internal clocks) and helps you stay on track.
- ✓ Track your progress – keep a log of how often you do a task, measuring your progress toward a goal, and creating something you can look back on to feel positive about what you are doing.



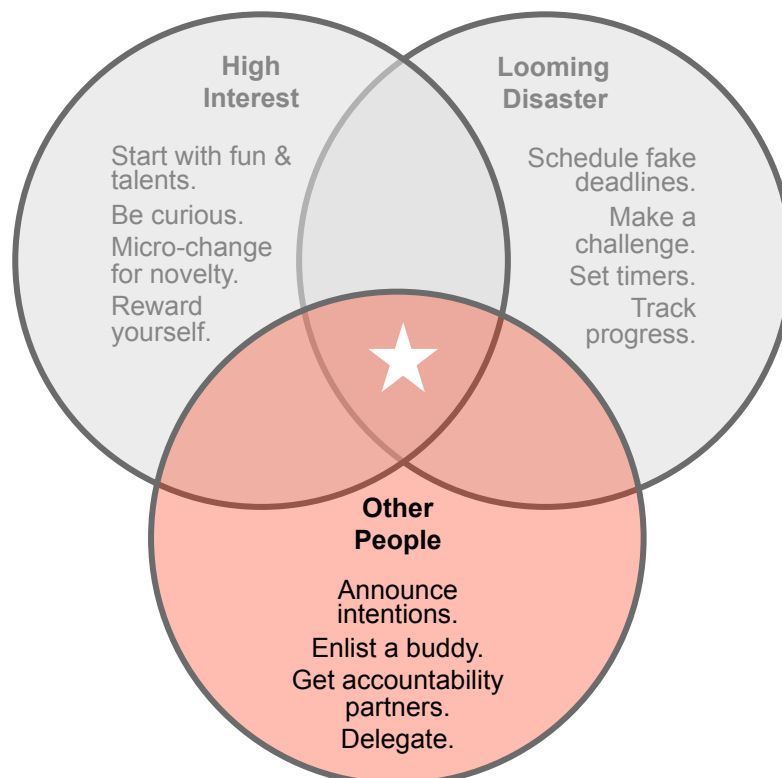
# How the ADHD Trifecta works

## *Other People*

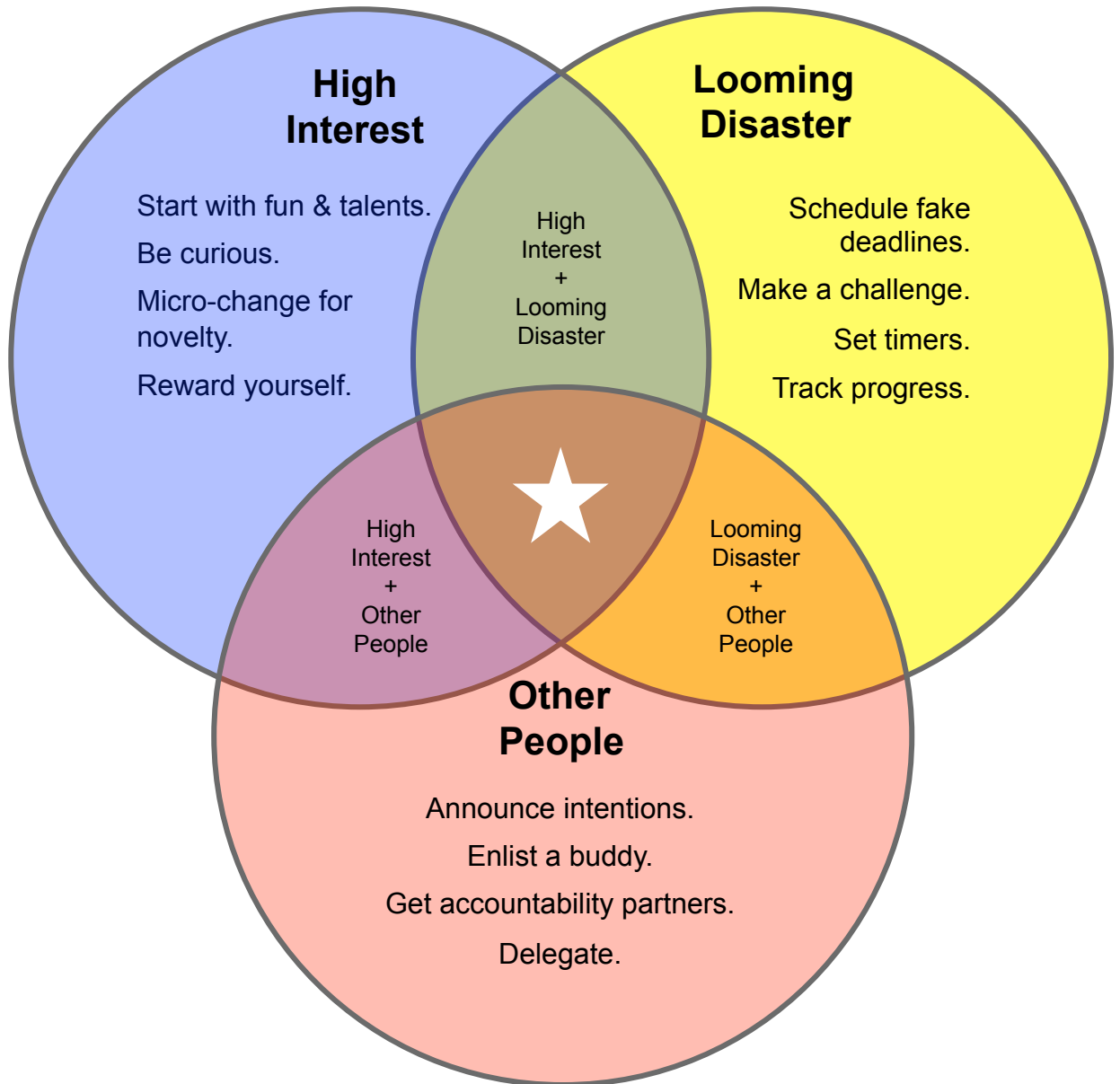
Working with other people – even if it’s just in the same room – ups the ante and our motivation. As Russell Barkley wrote, “bringing another person into the mix...adds even more motivational fuel to our inner fires to get things done.”

- ✓ Announce your intentions – tell them what you’re going to do.
- ✓ Enlist a buddy – find someone to co-work with, either in person or virtually.
- ✓ Get an accountability partner – find someone to be aware of what you are supposed to be doing and follow up with you on your progress.
- ✓ Delegate – see who else can do some of the tasks for you.

Now it’s your turn! The following worksheets will guide you through the Trifecta and help you build your own plan to increase your motivation and achieve your goals!

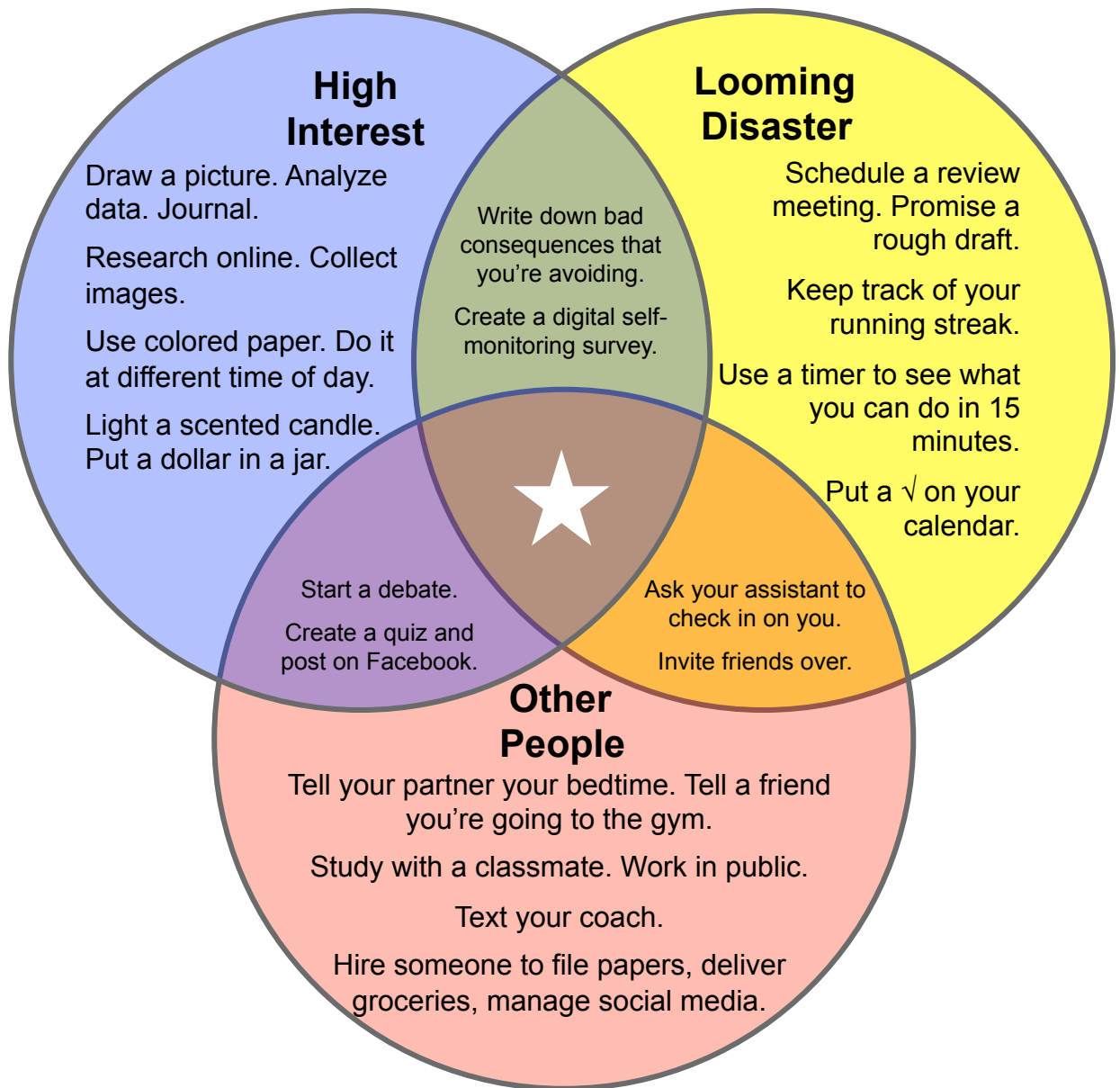


# The ADHD Trifecta Concept Map

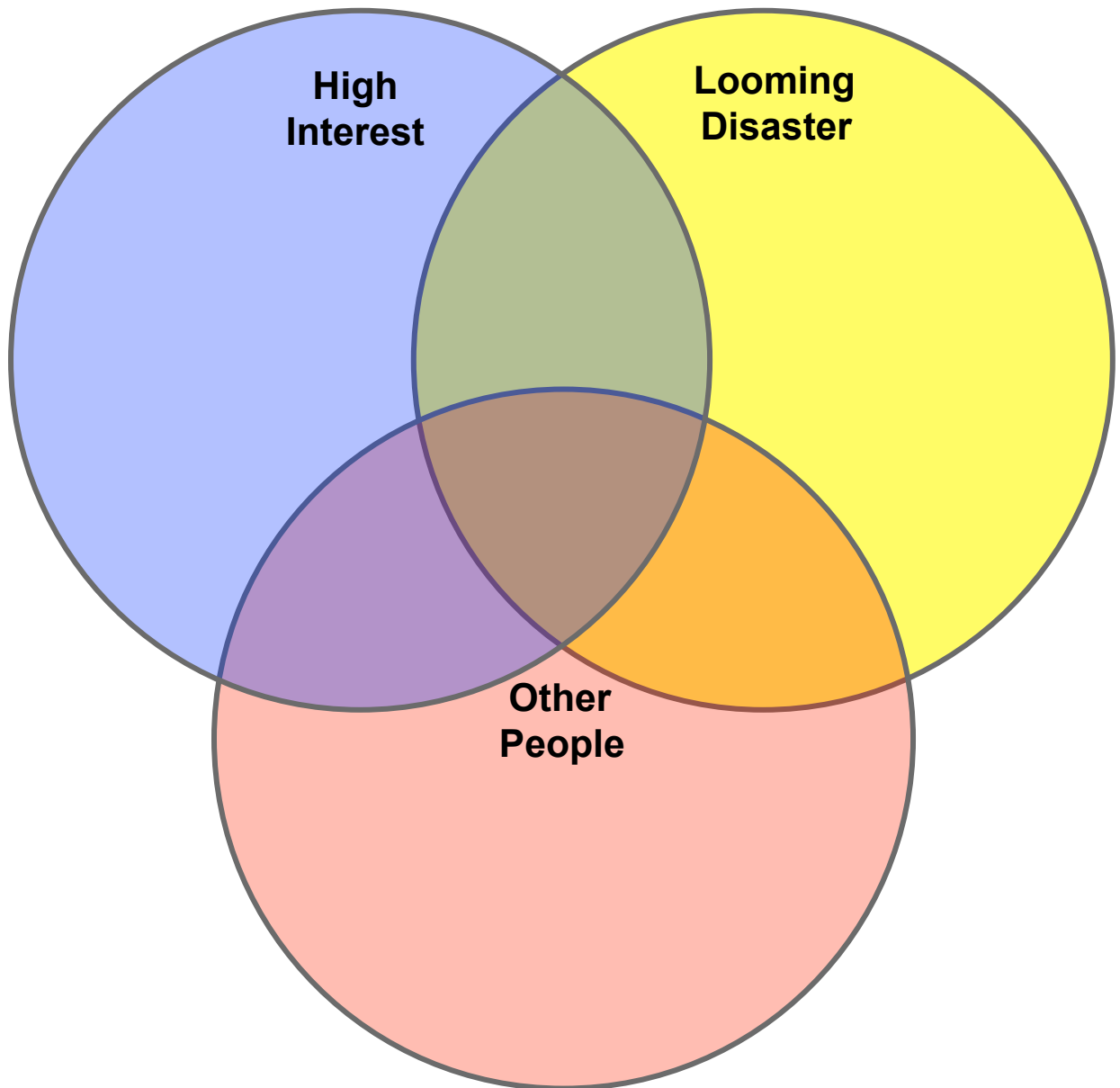


# The ADHD Trifecta

## Examples

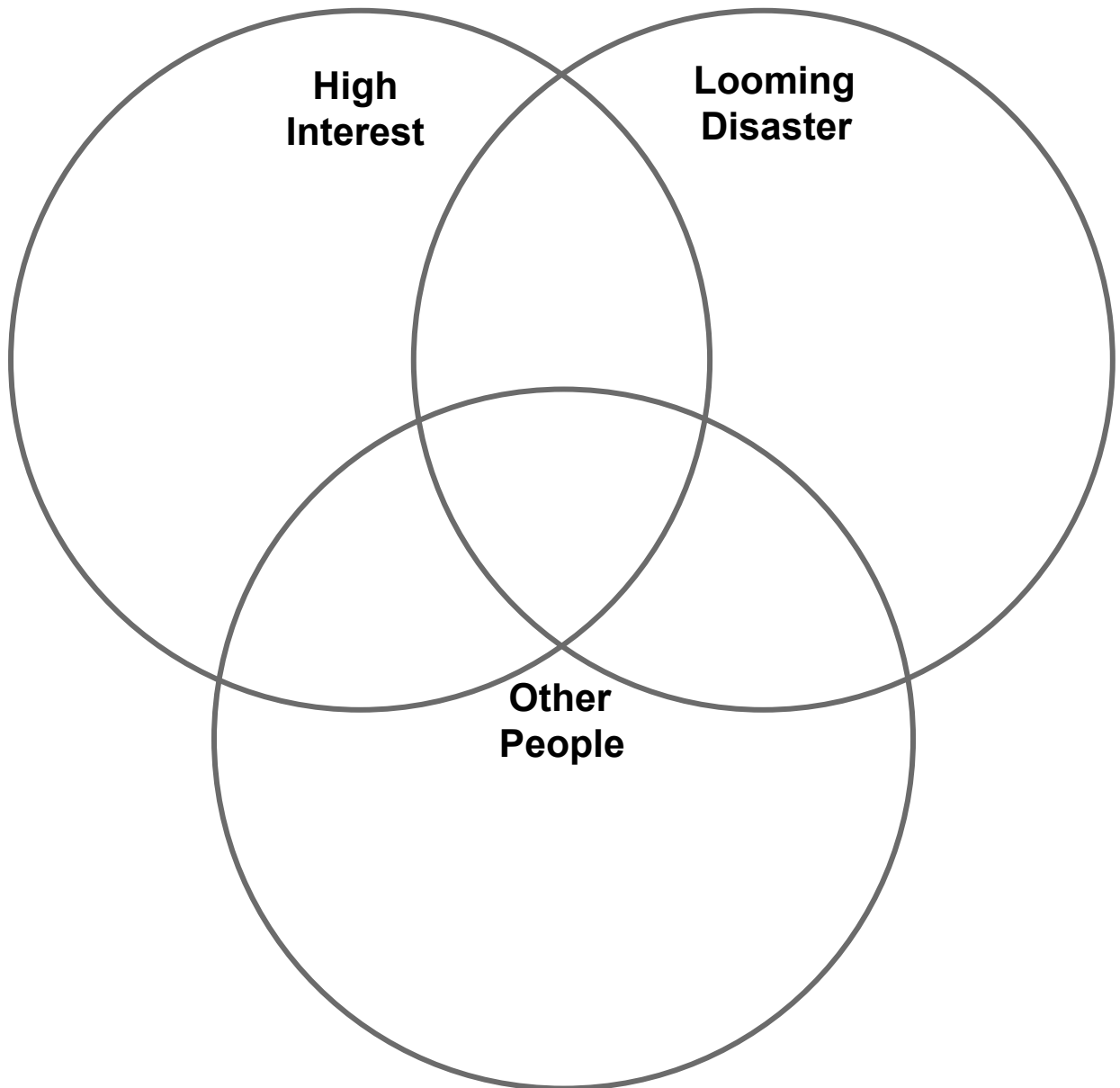


# The ADHD Trifecta Worksheet





# The ADHD Trifecta Worksheet



# The ADHD Trifecta

A woman with blonde hair tied back is sitting at a desk, looking at a laptop. She has a pen in her mouth and is resting her chin on her hand. The background is a blurred office setting with windows.

Casey Dixon founded Dixon Life Coaching in 2005 to help people with ADHD gain clarity, accept where they are, and take control of their lives. In her work with demand-ridden professional clients – attorneys, professors, business owners, and executives – Casey combines advanced coaching skills with her up-to-date understanding of ADHD.

Casey is a Professional Certified Coach (ICF), Senior Certified ADHD Coach (IAAC), and Board Certified Coach (CEC-G), meeting the highest standards of competencies in the industry of ADHD coaching.