



*Clearmind*  
Mental Health



# THE ADHD TIME & ORGANIZATION STARTER PACK

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**Small Steps to Create Structure  
Without Losing Flexibility**

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# INTRODUCTION

If you've ever wondered why managing time feels so hard, you're not alone.

ADHD isn't about a lack of willpower or motivation. It's about how your brain processes attention, reward, and time differently.

People with ADHD often struggle to feel time passing. Tasks seem to take either five minutes or five hours. You might underestimate how long something will take, overcommit your schedule, or lose entire afternoons to hyperfocus, only to end up exhausted and frustrated.

Here's what we want you to know: You're not broken. You're not lazy. You just need systems that work the way your brain actually thinks.

This guide is here to help you find balance, not perfection. You'll learn small, realistic ways to bring order into your day while keeping the flexibility your brain needs to thrive.





# UNDERSTANDING TIME BLINDNESS

Time blindness is one of the most common, and most misunderstood, ADHD experiences. It means your brain doesn't naturally track time passing the way other brains do.

What time blindness can look like:

- Being consistently late even when you try hard not to be
- Thinking you have "plenty of time" until suddenly you don't
- Getting lost in a task and realizing hours have passed
- Struggling to estimate how long things actually take
- Feeling like mornings disappear before you've done anything

Tools to try:

1. **Visualize Time** Use a visual timer app (like Time Timer or Forest) so you can actually see time passing. Analog clocks with hands can also help your brain register movement.
2. **Anchor Your Day** Connect habits to existing cues instead of clock times. Example: "After I pour my coffee, I check my calendar" works better than "At 8am I check my calendar."
3. **Use Time Check-Ins** Set gentle alarms throughout the day, not to be productive, but just to notice where you are. Try labeling them: "How's it going?" or "Time check."
4. **Add Buffer Time** Whatever you think something will take, add 50%. Driving somewhere takes 15 minutes? Plan for 22. This builds in grace for the unexpected.

# WORKSHEET

Daily Anchors. Use this chart to connect routines to natural cues in your day:

| Time of Day | Anchor Activity | What I'll Do After |
|-------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| Morning     |                 |                    |
| Midday      |                 |                    |
| Evening     |                 |                    |

Example: Morning → After I brush my teeth  
→ I'll look at my top 3 tasks for the day

# FIND YOUR PLANNING STYLE

Not all planning systems work for all brains. One reason ADHD folks abandon planners? They're using a system designed for someone else's brain.

There are two main planning styles:

**Visual Planners** You think in pictures, colors, and spatial layouts. You need to see your plan.

- Whiteboards or wall calendars
- Color-coded sticky notes
- Digital calendars with color categories
- Mind maps or flowcharts
- Bullet journals with drawings and layouts

**Verbal Planners** You think by talking and hearing. You need to say or hear your plan.

- Voice memos to yourself
- Talking through your day with someone
- Body doubling (working alongside someone)
- Audio reminders instead of written ones
- Planning calls or accountability check-ins

**Quick self-check:** When you're trying to remember something important, do you picture it in your head or hear yourself saying it? That's a clue.

Many people are a mix of both, experiment and notice what actually sticks.

# THE WEEKLY PLANNING RESET

Trying to plan every single day from scratch is exhausting. Instead, choose one calm moment each week for a simple 15-minute planning ritual.

**When to do it:** Pick a time when you're typically relaxed, Sunday evening, Monday morning, or whenever feels like a natural reset for you.

**The 15-Minute Reset:**

**Minutes 1-5: Brain Dump,** Write down everything floating in your head. Tasks, worries, ideas, appointments, get it all out. Don't organize yet.

**Minutes 6-10: Sort Into Categories**

- **Must-Do:** Non-negotiable deadlines or commitments
- **Should-Do:** Important but flexible timing
- **Can-Wait:** Nice to do, but no urgency

**Minutes 11-15: Place Your Must-Dos** Look at your week and assign your Must-Dos to specific days. Be realistic, leave room for the unexpected.

**Remember:** This isn't about creating a perfect week. It's about giving your brain a map so it doesn't have to hold everything at once.

# DECLUTTER YOUR TO-DO LIST

A long to-do list doesn't motivate the ADHD brain, it overwhelms it. When everything feels equally urgent, nothing gets done.

## The 3-Task Rule

Each day, choose only three meaningful tasks to focus on. That's it.

- One task that must happen today
- One task that moves something important forward
- One task that your future self will thank you for

Everything else goes on a "parking lot" list for later.

## Break It Down

Big tasks trigger avoidance. Break them into the smallest possible next step.

Instead of: "Work on taxes" Try: "Find last year's tax folder"

Instead of: "Clean the house" Try: "Put away the dishes on the counter"

## Celebrate Progress

Your brain needs wins to stay motivated. Acknowledge what you did do, not just what's left. Checking off, even one small thing counts.



# BUILD MOTIVATION MOMENTUM

ADHD motivation doesn't work on command. It's fueled by four things:

- Interest – Is this engaging to me?
- Novelty – Is there something new here?
- Urgency – Is there a deadline pushing me?
- Challenge – Is this the right level of hard?

If a task doesn't have any of these, your brain will resist it, that's not a character flaw, it's biology.

Motivation Hacks:

Add Sensory Support Music, background noise, good lighting, a candle, or a change of scenery can shift your brain into "go" mode.

Use Sprints, Work in short bursts (15–25 minutes) with breaks built in. Race yourself. Make it a game.

Pair Boring with Fun, Listen to a podcast while doing dishes. Call a friend while folding laundry. Give your brain something to engage with.

Create Artificial Urgency, Set a timer. Tell someone you'll send them the thing by noon. Book an appointment that forces you to finish beforehand.

Change Your Environment, Can't focus at home? Try a coffee shop, library, or even a different room. Novelty helps.



## PROGRESS, NOT PERFECTION

You don't have to "fix" your ADHD. You just have to learn to work with it.

Structure doesn't have to be rigid. It can be kind, flexible, and built around how your brain actually works.

Some days the system will click. Other days it won't. Both are okay.

Every small adjustment, every anchor, every reset, every moment of self-compassion, is a step toward clarity.

You deserve systems that support you, not shame you.

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I'm a Licensed Clinical Social Worker with 9 years of experience helping adults navigate ADHD, substance use recovery, and life transitions. My approach is supportive, nonjudgmental, and practical, focused on building real strategies that fit your actual life. I got my start at the VA, where I developed a passion for helping people rebuild and move forward. I offer secure online therapy throughout Maryland and Delaware.

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