

# TASK PARALYSIS

# AND ADHD

A GUIDE FOR ADULTS LIKE YOU

It's not laziness. It's your brain.

Your brain gets overwhelmed, stuck, or flooded—and starting feels harder than it should. You're not broken. You just need strategies that work with your brain, not against it.

I want to do the thing... I just can't start.



## 1 WHAT IS TASK PARALYSIS?



It's when you want or need to do something, but your brain gets stuck and you just can't start.

It's not about not caring—it's overwhelm, blocked motivation, or executive dysfunction working against you.

## 2 WHY IT HAPPENS

- Too much to think about at once
- Big tasks feel overwhelming
- Low motivation or low dopamine
- Fear of doing it wrong or not finishing
- Perfectionism or overthinking
- Mental or physical fatigue
- Too many options or decisions

## 3 HOW IT FEELS

- Stuck, frozen, or mentally foggy
- Anxious, guilty, or frustrated
- Restless but unable to move forward
- Time disappears (doomscrolling, gaming, YouTube, etc.)
- You know what to do, but starting feels impossible

## 4 HOW TO BREAK THE FREEZE

Try these small steps to get unstuck:

- 1 Lower the bar**  
It doesn't have to be perfect. "Good enough" is enough.
- 2 Shrink the task**  
What's the tiniest next step? Make it so small it feels easy.
- 3 Use a timer**  
Try 5 minutes. Just start. You can stop after 5 minutes. 05:00
- 4 Change your environment**  
New location, stand up, go outside, move your body.
- 5 Body double or accountability**  
Work alongside someone (in person or virtually).
- 6 Externalise your brain**  
Write it all out. Brain dump, mind map, or voice note.
- 7 Make it easier to start**  
Prepare in advance. Set things up so future-you wins.
- 8 Celebrate starting**  
Starting is the hardest part—give yourself credit!

## 5 TOOLS THAT CAN HELP

- Task managers** (Todoist, TickTick, Things, ClickUp)
- Habit stacking**  
Anchor tasks to something you already do
- Timers** (Pomodoru, Time Timer, Focus Keeper)
- Visual reminders**  
Sticky notes, whiteboards, phone widgets
- Focus apps** (Forest, Flora, Freedom)
- Rewards & dopamine**  
Bribe your brain (within reason). You deserve it.

## 6 WHAT NOT TO TELL YOURSELF

- ✗ I'm so lazy
- ✗ I should just be able to do this
- ✗ I'm not trying hard enough
- ✗ Other people can do it, why can't I?
- ✗ I'll never get this done



These thoughts keep you stuck. Talk to yourself like a teammate, not a tyrant.

## 7 WHAT TO SAY INSTEAD

- ✓ My brain is overwhelmed right now—and that's okay.
- ✓ I only need to do the next small step.
- ✓ I don't have to do it all today.
- ✓ Starting is enough.
- ✓ I can pause and come back. Progress isn't linear.



## EXAMPLE: TURNING OVERWHELM INTO ACTION

OVERWHELMED THOUGHT	ADHD-FRIENDLY REFRAME
"I need to clean the whole house."	"I'll just clear the table."
"I have so much work to do."	"I'll open the doc and write one line."
"I need to get my life together."	"I'll do one thing that future me will thank me for."



## THE MOST IMPORTANT MESSAGE

Task paralysis is not a personal failure. It's your brain asking for support, structure, and self-compassion—not shame. You're not behind. You're not broken. You're a human with ADHD in a world not built for your brain.



## NEED EXTRA SUPPORT?

You don't have to figure it out alone. Talk to a therapist, ADHD coach, or trusted person in your life. Support makes everything easier.