



TASK PARALYSIS

and ADHD

A GUIDE FOR ADULTS LIKE YOU



It's not a character flaw. It's your brain feeling overwhelmed. You're not lazy. You're overloaded. Let's work with your brain, not against it.

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, and executive dysfunction working against you.

2 WHY IT HAPPENS

- Too many thoughts, not enough clarity
- Big task feels too overwhelming
- Low dopamine (motivation & reward)
- Fear of messing it up or not finishing
- Perfectionism or all-or-nothing thinking
- Mental or physical exhaustion
- Decision fatigue from too many choices

3 HOW IT FEELS

- Stuck, frozen, or mentally foggy
- Anxious, guilty, or ashamed
- Restless but unable to move forward
- Time disappears (hello, doomscrolling)
- You know what to do, but starting feels impossible

4 HOW TO BREAK THE FREEZE

Try these small steps to get unstuck:

- Lower the bar**
It doesn't have to be perfect. "Good enough" is enough.
- Shrink the task**
What's the tiniest next step? Make it so small it feels silly.
- Use a timer**
Try 5 minutes. Just start. You can stop after 5 minutes.
- Change your environment**
New space, new energy. Even standing up can help.
- Body double or accountability**
Work alongside someone (in person or virtually).
- Externalise your brain**
Write it all out. Brain dump, mind map, or voice note.
- Make it easier to start**
Prepare in advance. Set things up so future-you wins.
- 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 so behind
- ✗ Other people can do it, why can't I?
- ✗ I'll never get this done

These thoughts create shame and more paralysis. You're doing your best with the brain you have.

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. Be kind to yourself. You're not behind. You're becoming.

NEED EXTRA SUPPORT?

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