

ADULT ADHD IN DAILY LIFE · 8.1

Working With ADHD: Strategies That Hold Up Past the First Week

Most ADHD productivity advice fails in the second week. The strategies that hold up are designed around what is true about an ADHD brain on a flat day, not what you can manage at peak. Here is what carries weight at work.

FOR

Diagnosed adults with ADHD

AUDIENCE AGE

18+

REVIEWED

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PART OF

The NeuroFX resource library

IN SUMMARY

Working With ADHD: Strategies That Hold Up Past the First Week

What ADHD actually does at work

- **Initiation is harder than execution.** Starting a task often takes much longer than doing it. The longer it sits unstarted, the worse the friction gets. Most of the daily ADHD tax is paid at the start, not in the middle.
- **Working memory is shorter and time blindness is real.** Multi-step verbal handovers leak. The gap between 'feels like an hour' and 'is two minutes' works both ways. Estimating, planning and arriving all draw on the same system.
- **Energy is non-linear.** Most adults with ADHD have one or two genuinely productive windows per day and several flatter windows. Pretending the windows do not exist is the start of most failed systems.

What helps and what does not

- **Make the system smaller than you think you need.** Three lists, one app, one timer. The more components, the more entry points the system has to fail at. A simple, ugly, low-effort system you actually use beats an elegant one you do not.
- **Externalise working memory ruthlessly.** Pinned notes, a single capture place for tasks, a calendar that runs the day, written checklists. Trusting paper or pixel over recall is not a weakness; it is the correct response to your own architecture.
- **Use external structure for initiation.** A meeting on the calendar with another person, body doubling, a clear deadline someone else owns, the first ten minutes broken off as a smaller task, physical placement of materials where you cannot ignore them. The friction reduction is the system.
- **Plan around your energy windows, not against them.** The good window goes to the work that needs the brain. Email, admin and routine work belong in the flat window. Stacking a creative task into the post-lunch dip is a structural design failure.
- **Absorb missed days into the system.** Any system that needs perfect compliance will break inside two weeks. The streak is not the goal; the long-run return to the system is. Build in the missed days from the start.

Where to get help

- **Medication carries weight where indicated.** Under NICE NG87 in the UK, stimulants and non-stimulants are well-evidenced for adult ADHD. The 2018 Cortese network meta-analysis showed effect sizes among the largest in adult psychiatry. Medication does not replace strategies; it makes them workable.
- **Workplace adjustments are a legal duty, not a favour.** ADHD usually qualifies as a disability under the Equality Act 2010 where it has a substantial long-term effect. Reasonable adjustments at work are a legal right; a DSE assessment is the formal route to changing the environment. Access to Work funding can help with kit and coaching.
- **Speak to NeuroFX where assessment or prescribing is the next step.** Private adult ADHD assessment is available where the NHS wait is not workable. Where the diagnosis is already in place, NeuroFX prescribing and shared-care arrangements cover the medication question.

WHEN TO SPEAK TO A PROFESSIONAL

Speak to your GP if work performance is being significantly affected and ADHD has not been formally assessed. Where the NHS adult ADHD wait is not workable, private adult ADHD assessment with a CQC-registered provider is a legitimate parallel route. Where diagnosis is in place and medication is the open question, NeuroFX prescribing and shared care cover the pathway. Seek urgent help via 111, 999 or A&E for any acute mental health crisis or significant safety concern.

SOURCES

NICE NG87; Faraone consensus 2021; Cortese et al. 2018 (Lancet Psychiatry); Barkley 2012; ADHD UK

NEXT STEPS**Speak to NeuroFX**

Private ADHD and autism assessment for adults and children aged 6 and upwards.
CQC-registered. Bedford Consulting Rooms, 4 Goldington Road, Bedford MK40 3NF.

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