



A practical life guide for adults with ADHD

A little more room

No perfect mornings required.

Tools for tasks, time, and everyday life.
Space to try them in your own way.



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 Your first 10 minutes

Start here. Just here.

You do not have to organize your entire life before lunch.

Get a notebook or open one notes list. Write the three things most likely to cause trouble in the next 48 hours. Check your calendar. Choose one concrete action: make the call, locate the form, or confirm the ride. Put a reminder where you will actually encounter it.

Three things most likely to cause trouble in the next 48 hours

One concrete next action

When and where I will see the reminder

Permission slip

Read one page, try one action, stop. A half-used system that helps is more useful than a beautiful system you avoid.

Two ways in

Find the page you need

Read one page, try one action, stop. You do not need to finish this book in order.

Start with what is happening

"I cannot get started."	15-16
"I keep leaving late."	13-14
"Everything is in my head."	11-12
"My system stopped working."	33-34

Or follow the guide

01	Build your system	4-19
02	Everyday life	20-34
03	Pages to reuse	35-39
04	Evidence & next steps	40-42

Use this guide in three passes

First: set up your basic system on pages 7-18. Next: choose the one life domain causing the most friction on pages 21-32. Later: add another domain only when the first change feels usable. Worksheets on pages 35-39 are reusable, not mandatory homework.

Click a section, use the PDF bookmarks, or choose Contents in any footer. Reusable pages can be printed as often as you need.

The approach

Build a life that fits your brain

Reliable support beats repeated promises to “try harder.”

Understand the problem without becoming the problem

ADHD can affect attention, impulsivity, organization, and follow-through across settings. It is not a measure of intelligence or care. Treatment can include medication and psychological interventions; other conditions can also affect concentration. [1] A useful question is: “What support would make this action easier to notice and do?”

Make remembering visible

Give appointments a calendar, tasks a list, and belongings an easy-to-reach home. Put cues where the action happens. Choose fewer categories, fewer steps, and clear stopping points. Environmental changes and structured ADHD-focused psychological support are part of established care. [2]

Define “well organized” for your actual life

You can find essentials, see approaching obligations, keep basic needs covered, and recover after disruption. Your home need not resemble a furniture showroom. Poverty, discrimination, disability, grief, shift work, and caregiving create real burdens. A better planner cannot manufacture time, money, or fair treatment. Reduce demands and seek support where possible.

Care belongs in the plan

If symptoms still impair daily life, bring specific examples to a qualified clinician. Ask about ADHD-focused therapy, treatment review, sleep, and co-occurring anxiety or depression. This guide is educational support, not an assessment or a treatment program.

Capture

Give tasks a home.

Choose

Make the next step clear.

Return

Build a gentle review rhythm.

Try this

Finish this sentence: “Life would feel easier if I could reliably ____.”

 Your six-week route

Build slowly. Keep what works.

A suggested pace, not a deadline. Repeat a week whenever needed.

- 1 Choose your tools (7-10), capture tasks (11), and enter the next two weeks of appointments (13). Practice opening the system after one daily cue.
- 2 Choose one daily priority and add a brief weekly review (15-18). Do not import every old list yet.
- 3 Fix one physical bottleneck: keys, meals, laundry, or paperwork (21-24). Make the smallest version repeatable.
- 4 Add one work or digital boundary and one health support (25-27). If changes are piling up, pause here.
- 5 Clarify shared responsibilities and make room for connection and rest (28-31).
- 6 Practice your restart plan (33). Review what actually helped. Keep useful supports; remove features that require more attention than they save.

Your success measure

Once a week, ask: Did I miss fewer important things? Was one routine easier? How burdensome was the system itself? Track one useful measure, such as late departures, rather than grading your entire personality.

Put one 15-minute setup session on your calendar. Stop when it ends.

Step 01 / take stock

Find the loudest source of friction

Start where relief would matter most, not where organizing looks prettiest.

1 Scan your life in five minutes

Consider home; food and laundry; money; paperwork; work or study; digital life; health; relationships and caregiving; emotions; rest and meaning; transportation and transitions. Mark each: steady / needs support / urgent. Page 38 gives you a reusable domain map.

2 Pick one recurring problem

Choose something frequent and costly in time, money, stress, or conflict. Write what happens, when it happens, and the missing support. “I lose my keys at departure because they land in three places” is actionable. “I am a disaster” is an insult pretending to be a project.

3 Decide what enough looks like

Choose an observable target you can influence: “Keys go in the bowl when I enter,” or “I review bills before payday.” Then name a two-minute start. Handle genuinely urgent health, housing, food, or safety needs before optional organization projects; ask for help with those needs when necessary.

Worked example

Friction: scrambling for dinner four evenings a week. Enough: ingredients for two repeat meals plus one backup. First move: write three meals we actually eat. Support: a shared grocery list. Review: after one week, were evenings easier?

Try this Choose one domain and name the recurring snag.

My first domain

The recurring snag

Step 02 / pick your tools

Choose one simple toolkit

No shopping expedition required. Your existing tools may be enough.

Three jobs, not three competing systems

- Calendar: appointments, real deadlines, and selected work sessions.
- Task home: captured requests and next actions.
- Reference home: information you may need again, such as documents and notes. A task can link to a document; the document itself is not your reminder.

Pick the route you will open

- Paper (page 8): best if screens pull you away and you like seeing the week. You must carry and check it.
- Digital (page 10): useful for alerts, search, and access across devices. Test notifications.
- Hybrid: digital calendar and master task list, plus one paper card showing today’s priority. Reconcile the card at shutdown.

Add only what solves a real problem

Start with one notebook, a calendar, a pen, and a timer you already own, or their digital equivalents. Add a physical inbox for mail if needed. A shared calendar is optional. Keep confidential work information in approved work systems, even if that means a separate work list. Review both at a set time without copying private details.

The two-week trial

Use the same setup for two weeks unless it is inaccessible or clearly unsuitable. Ask whether capture is easy, reminders arrive, and review actually happens. Change one weak part before replacing everything. Your planner does not need a cinematic universe.

Try this Name the three homes you will actually use.

Calendar	Task home	Reference home

Step 03a / paper route

Set up a paper system

A plain notebook can do this. Matching stationery is a recreational activity.

1 Make four simple places

Use a weekly calendar or planner for appointments. In a notebook, mark pages Inbox, Next actions, Waiting, and Later. Clip the current page so you can find it. Use a folder labeled Action papers for forms and bills. Keep reference papers separately.

2 Use a tiny notation system

A square means an action. A tick means completed. An arrow means moved to a new date or list; write the destination. Keep the original visible until the move is made. Under Waiting, record who owes the next move and when you will check back. Cross out canceled items rather than carrying them forever.

3 Give paper a place and a cue

Keep the notebook with your keys or work bag. Open it after breakfast or at the start of your shift. Check appointments again before leaving. During shutdown, transfer loose notes and select tomorrow's first action. If you need timed prompts, pair paper with a watch or phone alarm; paper cannot shout from another room.

A filled-in paper day

Calendar: 11:00 dentist; 10:15 get ready; 10:30 leave.

Next: send the address confirmation email.

Waiting: Sam to send repair estimate; check Friday.

Later: investigate a new bookshelf. The bookshelf is not today's emergency.

Try this

Create the four notebook headings. Add one appointment and one task.

See it work

A notebook with a job to do

A filled-in example. Use these headings in a notebook you already own.

- Inbox
 - Car inspection
 - Ask about the referral
 -
- Next actions
 - Send the address confirmation email
 -
- Waiting
 - Sam: repair estimate
 - Check Friday
 -
- Later
 - Investigate a new bookshelf
 -
 -

Keep it findable

Clip the current page. Put the notebook where your day starts.

Make Waiting useful

Record the person and the next check date, not just the topic.

Give Later permission

The bookshelf is not today’s emergency.

Your first entry + the heading where it belongs

Step 03b / digital route

Set up a digital system

Choose the ecosystem you already use. These are examples, not clinical rankings.

1 Choose one calendar and one task app

Apple: Calendar + Reminders. Reminders supports lists and subtasks; scheduled reminders can appear in Calendar on supported versions. [7]

Google: Calendar + Tasks. Dated tasks appear in Calendar; date-and-time tasks can notify you. [8]

Microsoft: Outlook calendar + To Do. To Do supports lists, steps, due dates, and reminders. [9]

2 Make the first screen useful

Create Inbox, Next, Waiting, and Later lists, or equivalent headings. Pin the task app where you will see it. Add one recurring review reminder. Enter an appointment with preparation and departure prompts. Set a test reminder a few minutes ahead; check sound, notification permissions, and focus settings.

3 Keep dates honest and data private

Use due dates for real deadlines; use planned sessions for intended work. Avoid assigning today to the whole backlog. Put a follow-up date on Waiting items. Turn off optional badges or alerts that add noise. Use a locked device and account protection; share household logistics only with consent. Work accounts may restrict features or data sharing.

Before you buy another app

Ask: What specific failure would this fix? Can my current tools do it? Who will maintain it? Features differ by device, account, and version. Official setup links are on page 41; no paid app is required for this guide.

Try this

Create one list and one test reminder. Verify that you notice the alert.

Step 04 / capture & clarify

Give incoming things a destination

Capture quickly. Decide later at a planned review, not never.

1 Catch it in one reliable place

When a request, idea, or obligation appears, write a short note in your Inbox. Include enough context to recognize it: "Call clinic about referral" beats "clinic." If you capture by voice, check that it saved correctly. Put physical mail in one tray; photograph temporary notes only if you will process the photo.

2 Ask what kind of thing it is

Appointment? Put it on the calendar.

Action? Write a verb and visible result in Next.

Several actions? Create a project note plus one next action.

Someone else's turn? Put it in Waiting with a follow-up.

Useful information? File it in Reference.

Maybe someday? Later. No value? Delete or recycle.

3 Close the loop once daily

At your daily review, process the new items you can. Preserve source details or attach a link so you can act without hunting. For anything time-sensitive, record its true deadline. Optional tiny tasks can be done immediately only if doing them will not derail your current priority. Capturing is not consenting to every request.

In real life

"Car inspection" enters Inbox. At review: check the actual deadline, put it on the calendar, add "book inspection" to Next, and keep the required documents in the car folder. Once booked, mark the booking task done. Add the appointment and preparation times; keep the real deadline visible.

Try this Process three Inbox items. Three is a useful number. All is optional.

See it work

One request, three homes

An illustrative example: “The car inspection is due next month.”

Capture first

Car inspection

A short note is enough for now. At your review, check the real deadline and decide what needs to happen.

Calendar

The real deadline

Inspection due on the verified date. Add preparation and travel when booked.

Next actions

The next visible move

Book the car inspection. Keep the starting action here, where you will see it.

Reference

The supporting information

Keep the required documents in the car folder. A document is not a reminder.

Mark the booking task done. Add the appointment and preparation times; keep the real deadline visible.

Your incoming thing

Next action	True date, if any	Reference home

Step 05 / calendar

Make time visible and believable

A calendar is a map of capacity, not a place to store optimism.

1 Enter commitments before tasks

Add appointments, shifts, caregiving, classes, and real due dates. Include locations and links. Show necessary travel, preparation, and recovery time. If your work and personal calendars must stay separate, review them together before accepting a commitment.

2 Plan backward from arrival

For a 9:00 appointment: arrival 8:50, travel 25 minutes, departure 8:25, preparation 20 minutes, start getting ready 8:05. Adjust for your route and mobility. Set action-labeled reminders, such as "8:05: dress and pack folder," not just "appointment." Check transport details ahead of time.

3 Learn your real timing

Time a few familiar tasks, including setup and cleanup, and compare with your guesses. Add a buffer based on what you learn. Leave some open space for interruptions. If the day does not fit, shorten, delegate, move, or decline something before promising it. When you move a task, check its deadline and anyone depending on it.

Use time blocks gently

Reserve a short window for one defined action, such as 10:00-10:20 to outline a report. A block is a plan, not proof the task will be finished. Review unfinished work and choose the next slot. Do not fill every available square simply because it exists.

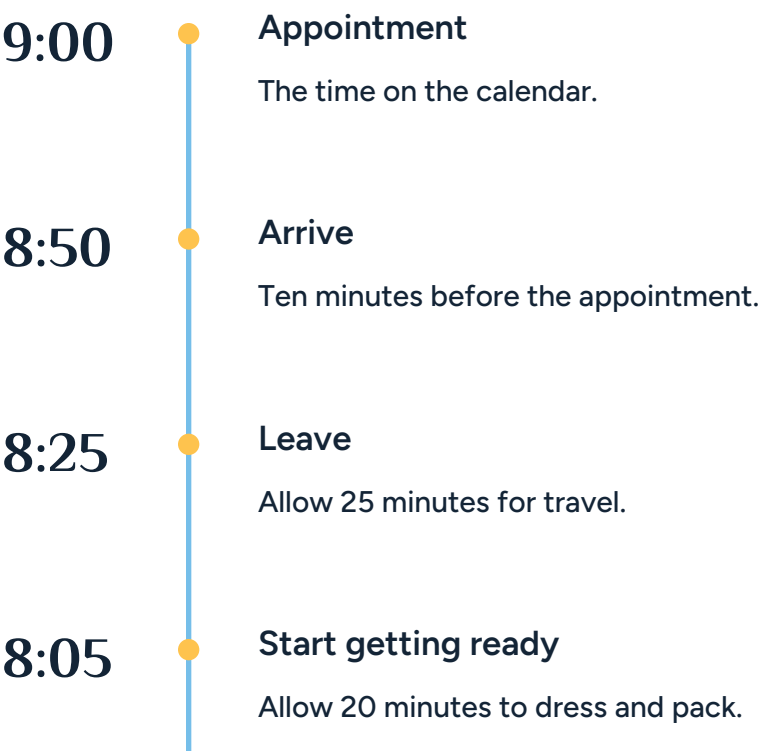
Try this Add preparation and travel time to your next appointment.

See it work

Leave time for getting there

Start with arrival. Work backward through travel and preparation.

Illustrative example / 9:00 appointment



Adjust for your route, mobility, and what you learn from real trips. Put preparation and departure prompts in the calendar.

Your next appointment

Appointment	Arrive	Leave	Get ready

Step 06 / next steps

Turn projects into actions

"Get my life together" is several tasks wearing a trench coat.

1 Define the finish line

Write the visible result: "The insurance claim is submitted with all requested documents." Work backward to milestones: documents attached; form completed; required information gathered. List dependencies and waiting time. Page 37 gives you space to map this.

2 Make the next action unmistakable

Use a verb, an object, and a stopping point: "Open the insurer's email and list the requested documents." If you still cannot start, make it smaller or identify what you do not know. Put only the next actionable step in Next, with the larger plan in Reference. Several steps can proceed together if they do not depend on each other.

3 Limit what is active

Choose one priority for the day, plus a small number of optional tasks that fit your time and energy. Keep future projects in Later. For each active project, identify an owner, next action, and review date. When another person is involved, agree on the handoff and record it in Waiting.

A complete mini-plan

Goal: invite friends for dinner next Saturday.

Before done: food ready → ingredients bought → menu and guest needs known.

Next action: send two friends an invitation today.

Waiting: replies; check Thursday. Backup: move the date if needed.

Try this Rewrite one vague task as a two-minute starting action.

Try it alongside an example

A task you can actually start

Make one vague project small enough to begin. You can stop after the first field.

Illustrative example

The vague task

"Sort out the insurance claim."

The visible finish line

The claim is submitted with all requested documents.

The next physical action

Open the insurer's email and list the requested documents.

When and where

After breakfast, at the kitchen table, with the email open.

A clear stopping point

Stop once the requested documents are listed. Choose the next action at review.

Your version

The vague task

The visible finish line

The next physical action

When and where

A clear stopping point

If the first move still feels too big, make it smaller or name the information you need.

Step 07 / daily rhythm

Give your day three anchors

Attach routines to events that happen, not an imaginary perfect morning.

1 Opening anchor | about 5 minutes

After a reliable event, such as breakfast or arriving at work: open the calendar, check the next 24 hours, and choose one priority. Check necessary supplies, meals, and travel. Put the first action where you can see it. Use “after I wake” if you work changing shifts.

2 Midday anchor | about 2 minutes

After lunch or another natural pause: check your body’s needs, appointments, and remaining capacity. Ask, “What matters now?” If the plan has changed, update it. Rescheduling thoughtfully is part of using a system; silently letting everything roll forward is how lists become haunted.

3 Closing anchor | about 5 minutes

Before leaving work or beginning your evening wind-down: capture loose tasks, record what is waiting, and choose tomorrow’s first move. Prepare essentials at your launch pad. Name what is finished. Close the notebook or app and give the day a stopping point. Rest does not require an empty list.

Make a cue you can see

Write: “After I put my breakfast dish down, I open my calendar.” Place the notebook by that spot. If the cue fails, try another location or an alarm. The suggested minutes are adjustable starting points, not a prescribed dose.

Try this

Choose one anchor today. Add the other two only when useful.

Step 08 / weekly review

Have a short meeting with your life

Same cue, same checklist. Start with 15 minutes and adjust.

1 Gather and look ahead | about 5 minutes

Bring your calendar, task list, action papers, and any shared obligations. Review the past week for unfinished promises. Look ahead two weeks for appointments, deadlines, refills, birthdays, travel, and preparation. Scan incoming items for urgent needs before sorting everything else.

2 Decide what can fit | about 5 minutes

Process the most important captured items. Check Waiting. Choose up to three outcomes for the coming week, fewer if capacity is low. Break them into actions and place the first ones in realistic slots. Check meals, money, transport, and caregiving. Say no, negotiate, or ask for help where the week is overfull.

3 Make next week easier | about 5 minutes

Choose one friction fix: pack a bag, order a needed item, or confirm an appointment. Schedule one restorative or connecting activity. Clear completed tasks and move nonessential projects to Later. Finish by naming the first action for the next day. Page 36 is the repeatable review sheet.

If the review is too much

Do the five-minute version: check the next 48 hours, choose one essential task, and prepare one thing for tomorrow. Set a new time for the remaining review only if it is needed. You do not owe the planner a full staff meeting.

Try this

Choose your review cue: "After _____ on _____, I review my week."

The focus toolbox

Help yourself start and stay

Use one tool at a time. Notice which part of the task is getting stuck.

1 Before starting: lower the entry cost

Open the needed document and write the first small action on a card. Set out supplies. Remove one predictable distraction. Try a short timed sprint, such as 10 minutes, followed by a brief break. Adjust the interval; no specific timer ratio is required. Shorter focus periods and environmental adjustments are recognized supports. [2]

2 During work: protect the thread

Keep a parking-lot note for unrelated ideas. Write them down and return to the task. If you need stimulation, experiment with quiet movement or background sound that does not compete with the task. When interrupted, leave a restart sentence: "Next, compare the last two entries." Set a return cue before breaks.

3 When stuck: match the support

Unclear? Ask for an example or define "done."

Boring? Pair completion of a small step with something enjoyable.

Lonely or drifting? Try a quiet work partner. Agree on a task, time limit, and check-in; protect confidential information.

Overloaded? Reduce scope, take a needed break, or ask for help.

Body doubling: an experiment

Working alongside someone is often called body doubling. Direct research is still emerging; treat it as a practical experiment, not a proven ADHD treatment. Keep it only if it helps. See this [2026 research roadmap \(preprint\)](#) for questions researchers are investigating.

Try this Choose one task, one support, and one stopping point.

A map for real life

Start where life is snagging

Choose one domain. Add another only when the first change feels usable.

Home	Find essentials and make a small zone usable.	21
Food & laundry	Keep the recurring basics within reach.	22
Money	See obligations and confirm payments.	23
Paperwork	Separate action from storage.	24
Work & learning	Make assignments and handoffs concrete.	25
Digital life	Give screens and messages a workflow.	26
Health	Build supports around chosen care.	27
Relationships & care	Agree who owns what.	28
Anxiety & emotions	Choose one useful action or carry uncertainty.	30
Rest, identity & meaning	Make room for the life you want.	31
Travel & transitions	Prepare for different days.	32

If the system has gone quiet, go straight to the restart on pages 33-34.

Make your home easier to use

Start with access and function. Aesthetic perfection can wait indefinitely.

1 Fix the point where things land

Put a bowl, hook, or bag near the entry for keys and daily essentials. Put a hamper where clothes actually accumulate. Store frequently used items where you use them, at an accessible height. Choose visible labels or clear containers if hidden storage makes things disappear from awareness.

2 Reset one small zone

Choose a chair, a patch of counter, or the sink. Collect trash, gather dishes, put laundry in its container, and return a few items to their homes. Place undecided items in one limited “decide later” box with a review date. Do not empty an entire closet unless you have capacity to finish or safely contain it.

3 Give maintenance a stopping point

Define enough: clear walking path, usable food-preparation surface, and needed clothes available. Attach a five-minute reset to an existing evening cue. Keep cleaning supplies convenient and safely stored. Shared spaces need shared agreements; one adult should not silently become the household’s unpaid reminder service.

If storage is limited

Use one portable basket or bag for daily essentials and one folder for papers. Reuse containers you already own. If you share housing, negotiate a small personal zone. If clutter creates hazards or discarding is intensely distressing, ask for practical and professional support.

Try this Choose a permanent home for the item you lose most often.

Item I often lose	Its permanent home	My return cue

Feed yourself. Find clean clothes

The recurring basics deserve a system that survives a tiring Tuesday.

1 Build a short meal rotation

List five easy meals you actually like and can access, adapted for allergies, cultural preferences, budget, and health needs. Select a few for this week. Keep one realistic backup meal. Store one grocery list where you can add items as they run low. Check what you already have before shopping.

2 Plan the hard part in advance

Choose a shopping cue and one small preparation task, such as washing fruit or portioning ingredients. Convenience foods can be a useful support. Keep a visible “use first” area for food nearing its safe-use limit; follow food-safety guidance. If shopping or cooking access is limited, prioritize reliable food access over elaborate meal plans.

3 Complete the laundry loop

Match load size to what you can finish. Set a transfer reminder when the wash starts and another if needed for drying. Define finished as dry, accessible clothes; simple bins may work better than folding everything. Separate a small essentials load when capacity is low. Make shared laundry times and responsibilities explicit.

A low-energy menu

Examples to adapt: eggs or beans with toast; rice with frozen vegetables and a preferred protein; soup with a sandwich. Repeating meals is allowed. Your dinner is not auditioning for a cooking show. Keep a written backup option where you plan meals.

Try this Write two repeat meals, one backup, and the next grocery-list check.

Repeat meal 1	Repeat meal 2	Backup meal

Next grocery-list check: _____

Give money a regular check-in

Make obligations visible before they become surprises.

1 Make a bill map

List each bill, typical amount or range, due date, payment method, and where to verify it. Put actual due dates and a review cue on the calendar. Store account access securely, not in this workbook. If a payment is already overdue, identify the provider and the next contact action.

2 Choose automation carefully

Automatic payments may reduce missed payments, but insufficient funds can still lead to fees. [6] Use them only with a plan to monitor the account and upcoming withdrawals. Set balance alerts if available. If cash flow varies, a scheduled manual payment review may be more workable. Confirm payments posted rather than assuming a reminder or automation completed them.

3 Add a pause before optional spending

Create a “consider later” list for nonessential purchases and review it at a chosen time. Remove saved payment details or promotional notifications if they encourage impulse spending. During the weekly check, compare available money with upcoming essentials and review subscriptions. Agree on shared-spending boundaries without surveillance or shame.

When the numbers do not fit

Choose one practical step: gather the statement, ask a provider about payment options, or seek qualified financial or nonprofit counseling support. This page organizes tasks; it does not determine which debt, tax, or investment decision is right for you.

Try this List the next three bills and how you will confirm each is paid.

Next bill	Due date	How I will confirm payment

Tame mail, forms, and life admin

“Somewhere safe” is not a searchable filing category.

1 Separate action from storage

Give incoming papers one tray. At review, identify urgent dates and move actionable papers to an Action folder. Record the next step in your task home. File useful reference documents by a few broad categories: home, money, health, work, and personal. Keep originals when required; do not destroy records just because you scanned them.

2 Make a repeatable admin session

Reserve a short weekly window for calls, forms, claims, and renewals. Gather required details before calling. Write the date, contact, and next step after each interaction. Put unresolved items in Waiting with a follow-up date. Schedule a preparation reminder well before a renewal or application deadline.

3 Reduce the search

Use a consistent digital filename, such as “2026-09-insurance-claim-status.” Keep sensitive files in protected storage with backup. Use a password manager appropriate to your needs and enable additional account protection. Keep an accessible emergency contact list; share necessary access with a trusted person only by agreement.

Worked example: a medical bill

Capture “review clinic bill.” Gather the bill and insurance statement. Ask the billing office to explain the item you do not understand. Record the answer and promised next step. Add a follow-up date. File the resolved record according to your recordkeeping needs.

Try this Label one Action folder. Put the most time-sensitive paper in it.

Action paper	Next step	Follow-up cue

Make work and study more concrete

Clarity at the beginning prevents a surprising amount of cleanup later.

1 Get the assignment into usable form

Ask: What is the deliverable? When is it due? What matters most? What does acceptable work look like? Record the answer in an approved system. Turn a broad assignment into milestones and a first action. Ask for written instructions or a brief recap when verbal requests are hard to retain.

2 Design the work period

Use a visible agenda, a short focus interval, and a clear stopping point. Reduce competing tabs or interruptions when possible. Capture meeting decisions as action / owner / due date. For study, choose a small learning target and test what you can recall before deciding what to review again. Keep the next session’s starting point visible.

3 Communicate before the deadline

When you are stuck, send a specific update: “I have completed X. Y is blocked by Z. Can we decide between A and B?” If support is needed, ask the appropriate workplace or school contact about available adjustments and its process. Examples to discuss include quieter space, written priorities, or scheduled check-ins. Availability depends on the setting.

A script for competing priorities

“I can finish A by Thursday or B by Thursday at the current scope. Which should come first?” This makes capacity discussable. Keep patient, client, student, and employer information out of personal apps unless your organization explicitly permits it.

Try this Clarify one deliverable and write its next visible action.

Deliverable	What counts as enough	Next action

Make your screens less demanding

Every notification should have to explain why it is interrupting you.

1 Keep the front door simple

Place calendar and task capture where they are easy to reach. Move distracting apps away from the first screen. Disable nonessential alerts in a short session, while preserving necessary work, caregiving, and emergency communication. Test focus settings so important people can still reach you when needed.

2 Give messages a workflow

Choose realistic times to process email and messages, adjusted for your responsibilities. For each important message: reply, create a task with a link, schedule a follow-up, or archive it. Do not rely only on “unread” as your reminder system. Tell collaborators when to expect responses and how to reach you for genuine urgency.

3 Close open loops without a purge

At shutdown, save needed links to the relevant project note, then close extra tabs. Clear one small download pile rather than sorting your entire digital history. Use app limits or website blocks as optional experiments. If you repeatedly bypass them, reconsider the cue, task difficulty, or need the browsing is meeting.

Before you share with AI

AI can help turn a nonconfidential goal into a draft checklist. Verify its steps, dates, and assumptions. Avoid entering identifying health, financial, or work information into unapproved tools. AI does not know that the bus changed routes or that your child needs a ride unless the plan accounts for it.

Try this Turn off three unnecessary notifications and pin your calendar.

Keep alerts for	Turn off these	Check messages after

Make health care easier to follow

Build supports around care you and your clinicians have chosen.

1 Put care logistics in the system

Keep appointments, clinician contacts, medication names, and questions in a secure place. Schedule reminders for booking, preparation, transportation, and follow-up. Before a visit, write two or three examples of what is still difficult and what has improved. Ask how to track benefit and side effects. [1]

2 Make medication routines safer

If prescribed medication, follow its directions and use a consistent reminder and dose record. Ask a pharmacist whether an organizer or alternate packaging is appropriate; retain required labeling and safe storage. Arrange refill planning according to your prescriber’s process. If unsure whether you took a dose, check the record and seek pharmacist or prescriber advice rather than guessing or doubling.

3 Support basic daily rhythms

Choose a workable sleep opportunity, regular access to food and water, and movement suited to your health and ability. These support general well-being; they do not replace ADHD treatment. Keep supplies easy to reach. Discuss persistent sleep trouble, exhaustion, anxiety, substance use, or changing symptoms with a clinician. A planner cannot diagnose their cause.

Care without a new full-time job

Track only what will inform a decision: perhaps missed doses, sleep timing, or one functional difficulty. Ask the clinician what information is useful. For shift work, chronic illness, or disability, build routines around your actual energy and care needs.

Try this Write the next health-care action and one question for your clinician.

Next care action

One question for my clinician

Share the load and protect connection

A reminder system works better when it is not secretly another person.

1 Make responsibilities explicit

For each shared task, name one owner, what “done” means, the timing, and a backup if needed. Ownership includes noticing and planning, not only execution. Agree on a shared calendar, list, or visible board. Review it together briefly each week. Include partners, roommates, relatives, or chosen family as relevant; responsibilities are not assigned by gender.

2 Make repair specific

Try: “I missed what we agreed to, and it affected you. I’m going to put a reminder at the point where I need it. Can we check whether that helps next week?” ADHD can explain a difficulty without erasing its impact. Agree on how reminders are offered. Avoid parent-child roles between adult partners.

3 Plan care and connection

For children, elders, pets, or other dependents, keep essential schedules and contacts accessible to agreed caregivers. Confirm handoffs rather than assuming them. Add a small contact cue for friends or family. Make some time together free of logistics. Ask directly for help: “Can you sit with me while I make this call?”

A ten-minute household check-in

What is coming this week? Who owns each task? What needs a backup? What can we drop? What would help us feel connected? If you live alone, adapt this to a trusted friend or support person. Shared tools should support consent and autonomy, not monitoring or control.

Try this Clarify the owner and finish line for one recurring shared task.

Shared task	Owner to agree with	What done means

Try it alongside an example

A handoff both people can see

Ownership includes noticing and planning. Use this with a partner, roommate, relative, or chosen family.

Illustrative shared-household example

Task + owner

Grocery list: Alex keeps it current.

What done means

List checked against supplies and ready before the shopping trip.

Timing

Thursday evening, after dinner.

Backup / handoff

If Alex cannot do it, ask Morgan before Thursday afternoon.

Your agreement

Task + owner

What done means

Timing

Backup / handoff

How we will check that this is working

Shared tools should support consent and autonomy. Agree how reminders are offered.

Give worry a smaller role

Less preventable chaos can help. Anxiety may also need care of its own.

1 Pause before solving everything

When overwhelmed, stop adding tasks for a moment. Notice your surroundings, relax a tense muscle if comfortable, and name the feeling: "I'm anxious about forgetting." Check immediate physical needs. You do not have to become completely calm before choosing a small useful action.

2 Separate a problem from a prediction

Write the concern. Ask whether there is an action within your control. If yes, record one step and when to take it. If not, acknowledge uncertainty and return to the current activity. A brief scheduled worry period can help some people contain repeated worry; it is not an instruction to suppress thoughts. [5]

3 Avoid organizing as endless reassurance

A useful check has a purpose and a stopping rule: review the appointment, confirm the location, then close the calendar. Repeatedly checking until you feel perfectly certain can become another burden. If planning increases compulsive checking, avoidance, panic, or distress, discuss it with a clinician rather than adding more tracking.

Try a kinder, more accurate thought

"I always ruin everything" → "I missed this task. I can repair part of it and change the cue." If anxiety keeps disrupting sleep, relationships, or daily functioning, seek assessment and treatment. This guide cannot promise a low-anxiety life for everyone.

Try this Write one worry, then check one option below.

☐ One action I can take

☐ Uncertainty to carry

Life domain / rest, identity & meaning

Leave room for the life you want

Organization should make space for being a person.

1 Name what the system is serving

Choose two or three values in your own words: presence, curiosity, faith, justice, creativity, friendship, steadiness. Ask what one small action would express a value this week. “Be present” might mean a phone-away walk with someone you love. Your worth is not the number of boxes checked.

2 Protect rest and enjoyment

Choose a realistic place for unstructured rest, a hobby, movement, or connection. Keep supplies for a valued activity easy to access. Create a gentle stopping cue if an absorbing hobby crowds out sleep or obligations. Enjoyment and basic care are not prizes you must earn by finishing the list.

3 Let support shape identity gently

Repeated experiences of asking for help, following through on a small promise, and repairing a miss can support a more trustworthy relationship with yourself. Try “I am learning to return” rather than “I must become perfectly consistent.” If meaningful to you, include prayer, reflection, worship, or community practice; choose freely and adapt to your tradition or worldview.

A week with some life in it

One necessary task. One nourishing activity. One human connection. Start small enough that these can coexist. If a routine leaves no room for culture, family, spirituality, disability needs, or joy, revise the routine.

Try this What do I want this system to make room for?

Make room for	One small expression	When / with whom

Prepare for the unusual days

Different days need a different plan, not a failed version of the usual one.

1 Make a reusable departure checklist

List identification, keys, phone, essential supplies, required documents, transport, and destination details. Adapt it for work, appointments, or travel. Keep one version in your bag or task app. For medication, follow travel and storage requirements from your clinician, pharmacist, and carrier as applicable.

2 Reduce decisions before moving

Pack at a planned cue, check the route, and allow preparation time. Before driving, set navigation and put the phone away; handle messages when safely parked. Confirm care handoffs, home responsibilities, and appointments affected by the trip. Use a visible return checklist for borrowed items, receipts, and follow-ups.

3 Rebuild after a change

For a move, new job, school term, illness, loss, or caregiving change, identify which old cues disappeared. Keep a portable minimum: calendar, capture place, medication/care plan if relevant, and essentials bag. Add routines to the new environment one at a time. Leave room for grief, learning, and extra rest.

Your first day back

Check the next 48 hours. Confirm essential care and bills. Put travel items away only to the level needed for function. Review captured tasks and choose one priority. You do not have to process a week of messages before you are allowed to eat lunch.

Try this Save a five-item departure checklist for your most common outing.

1

2

3

4

5

 When life gets messy

Restart without a rescue montage

The system is useful if it helps you return, not only if you never leave.

1 Switch to the minimum day

Cover immediate health, food, safety, and dependent-care needs. Check the next 24-48 hours for essential commitments. Choose one consequential next action. Tell affected people if a commitment needs to change. Everything else can wait for a deliberate review rather than competing for attention now.

2 Contain the backlog

Put loose tasks in one place. Scan for real deadlines before hiding or archiving anything. Separate urgent obligations from optional ideas. Move nonessential old items to a clearly labeled Later list with a review date, or delete them deliberately. Do not re-date every item to today. That is a backlog in a party hat.

3 Fix one failure point

Forgot to look? Move the cue.

Saw it but avoided it? Make the task smaller or address the fear.

Too many tasks? Reduce commitments or ask for help.

Alerts became noise? Keep only actionable ones.

Still struggling across settings? Revisit treatment and supports with a clinician.

The restart script

"The routine stopped working during a hard week. Today I will check tomorrow's calendar and put my essentials in one place. I do not have to catch up on everything to begin again." If you cannot meet basic needs, ask a trusted person or care team for hands-on help.

Try this

My minimum: one calendar check, one necessary action, one basic-care step.

Try it alongside an example

A smaller day still counts

When energy or time is limited, choose the essentials before sorting the backlog.

Illustrative example / after a shift	Your minimum today
Immediate basic care Eat the backup meal. Follow the care plan already chosen with my clinician.	Immediate basic care
The next 24-48 hours Check tomorrow’s appointment and confirm the ride.	The next 24-48 hours
One consequential action Call to confirm the appointment before the office closes.	One consequential action
Everything else Capture loose tasks in one list. Review them after sleep.	Everything else

If a commitment needs to change, who needs to know?

If you cannot meet basic needs, ask a trusted person or care team for hands-on help.

Print & reuse

A day that can fit

Use one page for today. Leave optional tasks optional.

Date _____

Capacity today

☐ Low

☐ Medium

☐ Higher

One priority

What counts as enough?

First small action + when / where

Fixed commitments

Get ready / leave

Basic care + connection

Food, rest, care, or one person.

Optional, if there is room

A short list, not a second shift.

Closing check

Capture loose ends. Check tomorrow. Write the next starting point.

Quick mental check: What helped today? What can be smaller tomorrow?

 Print & reuse

The weekly reset

Use with page 18. Finish the essentials before polishing the plan.

Week of: _____ Review cue: _____

What is coming in the next two weeks?

Deadlines, care, preparation, travel, and shared commitments.

Up to three outcomes that fit this week

Waiting / who + next check date

Drop, delegate, or renegotiate

One friction fix + one restorative activity

Check: Calendar / Inbox / Meals / Money / Care / Connection

My next action: _____

 Print & reuse

Walk backward. Start small.

Use with page 15. Add steps or copy this page for a larger project.

Visible finish line + real deadline, if any

1

Just before done

Needed action / input / person / waiting time:

2

Before that

Needed action / input / person / waiting time:

3

First actionable milestone

Needed action / input / person / waiting time:

Next physical action + time / place

If I get stuck, I will: _____

Review date: _____ Support person, if useful: _____

 Print & reuse

A map, not a report card

Mark S = steady, N = needs support, U = urgent. Act on one domain at a time.

Domain	S/N/U	Next small action	Review / cue
Home & belongings			
Food & laundry			
Money & bills			
Paperwork & admin			
Work or study			
Digital life			
Health & care			
Relationships & care			
Anxiety & emotions			
Rest, identity & meaning			
Travel & transitions			

Choose one support to try

Domain: _____ Cue: _____

Small action: _____

After one week: easier / unchanged / harder. Keep, change, or drop: _____

 Print & reuse

Keep what actually helps

One support, one week, one useful measure. You are testing the tool, not grading yourself.

The recurring snag I want to make easier

The small support I will try

A cue, a smaller task, a clear home for an item, or help from a person.

What I will notice

Choose something observable, such as late departures or easier meal preparation.

Review date: _____

☐ Easier

☐ Unchanged

☐ Harder

Keep, change, or drop? What is the next adjustment?

Why these tools / how to use the evidence

Evidence, with the fine print

Established treatment principles. Practical adaptations. Honest limits.

What has stronger support

ADHD-focused cognitive behavioral therapy and structured skills interventions have research support. In an 88-adult randomized trial, Solanto and colleagues found that a 12-week group program emphasizing planning, organization, and time management improved ADHD outcomes more than supportive therapy. [3] Safren and colleagues studied 86 medication-treated adults with persistent symptoms and found benefit from a structured CBT program compared with relaxation and educational support. [4]

What those studies do not establish

These were clinician-delivered, multi-component treatments. They do not prove that an isolated planner, timer interval, laundry basket, or app treats ADHD. The six-week route, scripts, household routines, and worksheets here are original practical adaptations, not a validated treatment protocol. General anxiety guidance and financial or software instructions answer different questions from ADHD clinical trials.

How to use this guide responsibly

Use the steps as experiments alongside appropriate care. Choose one meaningful functional target and review whether a support helps. Adapt for culture, access, disability, sensory needs, family structure, and work demands. Seek additional assessment or treatment when difficulties persist. A reduced burden and easier recovery matter more than perfect adherence.

What this guide is trying to do

Help you notice obligations, reduce unnecessary decisions, make actions easier to begin, and return after interruptions. Organization can reduce some practical stressors; it cannot guarantee low anxiety or remove structural pressures.

[Read more](#) Source numbers link the clinical and tool claims to the references on page 41.

 Clickable reading & setup links

Sources and useful links

Clinical foundations and official instructions. Reviewed September 2026.

[1] NIMH

[ADHD in Adults: 4 Things to Know](#)

Adult symptoms, assessment, and treatment; pages 4 and 27.

[2] NICE NG87

[Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder: diagnosis and management](#)

Clinical guidance on environmental modifications and adult psychological support; pages 4 and 19. UK guidance, not a US legal standard.

[3] Solanto et al. (2010)

[Efficacy of meta-cognitive therapy for adult ADHD](#)

Randomized trial of a structured group intervention targeting time management, organization, and planning. Am J Psychiatry, 167, 958-968.

[4] Safren et al. (2010)

[Cognitive behavioral therapy vs relaxation with educational support](#)

Randomized trial in medication-treated adults with persistent ADHD symptoms. JAMA, 304, 875-880. Supports structured CBT, not this workbook as a tested package.

[5] NHS Every Mind Matters

[Tackling your worries](#)

General worry-management guidance; page 30. Not an ADHD-specific treatment trial.

[6] Consumer Financial Protection Bureau

[How do automatic payments from a bank account work?](#)

Payment mechanics and the need to monitor funds; page 23.

[7] Apple Support

[Use Reminders on your iPhone, iPad, or iPod touch](#)

Official Reminders setup and Calendar integration; page 10.

[8] Google Calendar Help

[Create and manage tasks in Google Calendar](#)

Official dated-task and notification instructions; page 10.

[9] Microsoft Support

[Welcome to Microsoft To Do](#)

Official task lists, steps, reminders, and due dates; page 10.

 Take one thing with you

Make room for what matters

The point is a life you can use. A system is allowed to be small.

You can come back at any point.

Choose one support from these pages. Try it in your actual day. Notice what helps, and let the rest wait until it has a job to do.

The one thing I want to keep using

What I want it to make room for

When more support would help

If difficulties keep getting in the way of daily life, bring specific examples to a qualified clinician. This guide is educational support, not an assessment or treatment program.

Learn about Ballast Behavioral Health Group at ballastbh.com.