ADHD Motivation Tips to Help You Get Inspired and Stay on Track

by ANGELA FINLAY

ADHD and Motivation: Coping With ADHD and a Lack of Motivation

Everyone has trouble motivating themselves now and then, but ADHD and motivation tend to be a perpetual struggle.

If you find that daily obligations are difficult to manage or your work is suffering, you're not alone: with ADHD, there's a tendency to look too far ahead, which winds up interfering with your present abilities.

Luckily, there are several strategies to overcome the stress that makes it so difficult for an ADHD person to start and finish ordinary jobs. Instead of blaming yourself for your shortcomings, begin with a clear understanding of where your motivation (or lack of motivation) is coming from.

Soon enough, you'll be able to sidestep the obstacles to motivation and enjoy a more rewarding life.

ADHD and Motivation Problems: How ADHD Interferes with Motivation

Delaying or abandoning a task may seem lazy and irresponsible, but for those with ADHD, this is a built-in response. ADHD affects certain parts and processes of the brain involving motivation, which can turn seemingly simple obligations into major challenges.

The disorder hampers motivation to start something – and desire to continue – in a few ways:

- **Chemical imbalance**. Dopamine is a neurotransmitter involved in reward (and by extension, motivation), but the ADHD mind has lower levels of dopamine. Additionally, the parts of the brain in charge of executive functioning – that is, mental control, self-regulation, and managing your resources to achieve a goal – are also diminished, which makes it particularly difficult to motivate yourself.
- **Problems with prioritizing.** It's no secret that organizing and prioritizing are two major problems for many people with ADHD. Instead of automatically setting the proper priorities to accomplish a task, they may wonder what the appropriate first step might be, and then the order of steps to follow. In the end, more thought is put into possibilities rather than starting and finishing the task.
- **Short attention span.** Even if you manage to get started, it's often difficult to stay focused on one thing. ADHD people tend to jump from one stimulus to another, especially when the initial interest wears off. Unfortunately, the habit of not finishing something you set out to accomplish develops into a very de-motivating cycle; after a while, you're less inclined to start something, since you doubt you'll finish it, anyway.

Boredom is a particularly problematic hurdle for ADHD people – experts believe it greatly contributes to the inattention, impulsivity, and hyperactivity inherent in the disorder. If you can learn how to overcome boredom, you can learn to stay focused on your task, and motivated to complete it.

ADHD Motivation Tips to Help You Be Proactive and Stay Productive

To a person with ADHD, even a relatively small chore can take on enormous proportions once their mind begins to wander, and big projects can stop them in their tracks.

One way to overcome this problem is to mentally break down and rearrange projects in ways that work well with your ADHD character traits.

Stop Thinking and Start Acting

Frantic thoughts and negative projections tend to plague people with ADHD, especially during demanding times. Thinking about the looming task can make all the steps leading up to it seem a lot steeper.

One easier way to keep things manageable is simply to *start*: instead of waiting for a moment of inspiration or interest, just start doing the task, and motivation to keep on going will often kick in shortly after.

Create a Sense of Urgency

Procrastination is practically a given when ADHD is at play, and it's even more difficult to overcome when you don't have any hard deadlines to meet. One way around this is to pretend you have a deadline or to make one for yourself.

Try waiting to tackle a chore until before your favorite program comes on or you have to leave to meet a friend; knowing that you need to be done in a set amount of time can keep you on task, and the clear reward at the end will leave you more satisfied.

Tailor the Task to Your Personality

A positive attitude will undoubtedly help you stay motivated, and it's easier to stay positive when the task at hand is enjoyable for you.

Of course, this isn't always the case so you need to find ways to make it fun, whether that's finding a better way to organize the job, a more hands-on approach, or even focusing on how good you'll feel at the end of it all.

If all else fails, finish the job because you are physically able to do so; remind yourself that your disability is limited, and be grateful for your capabilities.

Reward Yourself

Since reward is so important for motivation, be sure to give yourself some incentive. Relaxation is one of the best rewards for hard work (since project completion can be so stressful), so consider treating yourself to something like a massage, a warm bath with a new book, or a small stretch of TV time after you get through a particularly daunting set of tasks.

Focus on the Short Term

Almost any task or responsibility can be broken down into a series of small actions, and this can prevent you from becoming overwhelmed.

Allow yourself an escape route by only committing to the very first step – but then add on one more step afterward. Keep pushing towards the next step as far as you are able, and you may find that you've finished the task before you know it.

Whichever motivation approaches you find work best, begin to make them a habit for your work life and your home life.

Above all, try your best to stay optimistic: remember that little steps forward may be small gains, but they’re moving you in the right direction, and that’s what matters most.