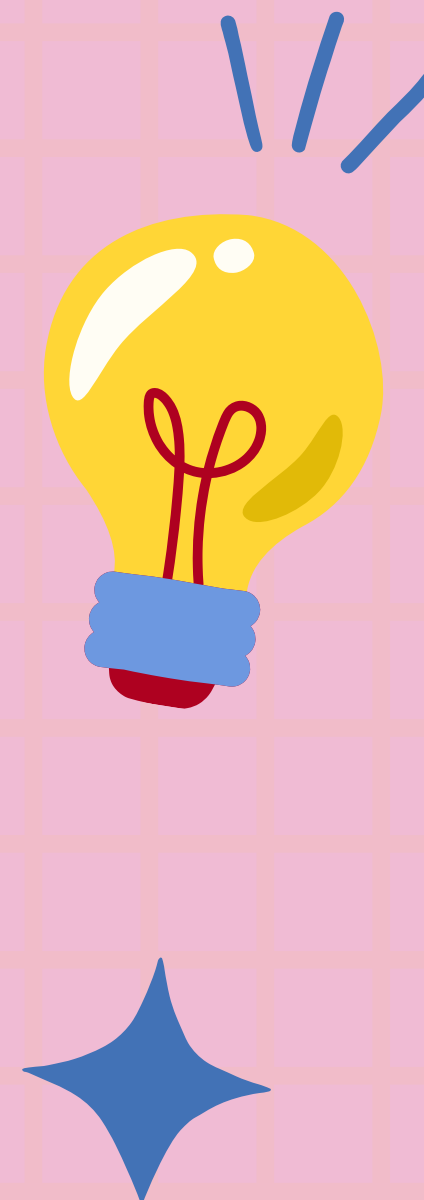


# THE FAMOUS ADHD HANDBOOK

For those that like to go beyond surface-level



Resources			
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# WHAT IS ADHD?

It's not just struggling with attention.  
It's about how attention works in different situations.



It's the **challenge of directing focus toward things that don't naturally pull it in.**



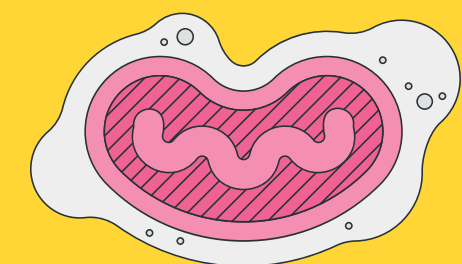
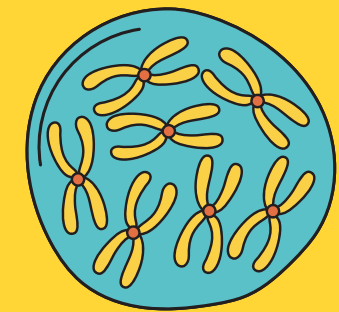
It's also about **regulating energy and tension through movement** and stimulation.

# IS IT GENETIC?

Yes and no

There is **no “ADHD gene,”** but nearly all people with ADHD are **born with a highly sensitive temperament.** This means you **feel things deeply**, pick up on emotional climates easily, and can experience the world with big and intense emotions.

However, not all highly sensitive people have ADHD. For ADHD-like wiring to develop, certain environmental conditions must be present during early brain development. These conditions affect how executive function skills form, shaping how attention and regulation work.





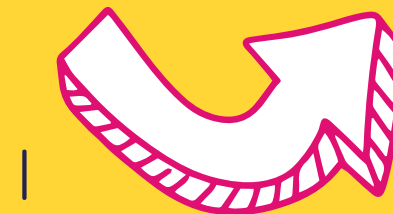
# AWARENESS VS ATTENTION



**Awareness is like a room –**  
Whatever is in the room, you are aware of at any given moment



**Attention is like a spotlight –**  
Wherever you shine the spotlight, that's what enters your awareness (room).



# TWO MODES OF ATTENTION

## 1

### Reactive Attention (Involuntary & Automatic)

- The **default** attention system we're born with.
- **Reacts to the environment**—like turning toward a loud bang.
- Naturally **orients toward PINCH** stimuli:



**Passion & Play** – Enjoyable, motivating activities

**Interest** – Things that are personally fascinating

**Novelty** – New, exciting, or unexpected experiences

**Competition (or Challenge)** – Turning tasks into a game

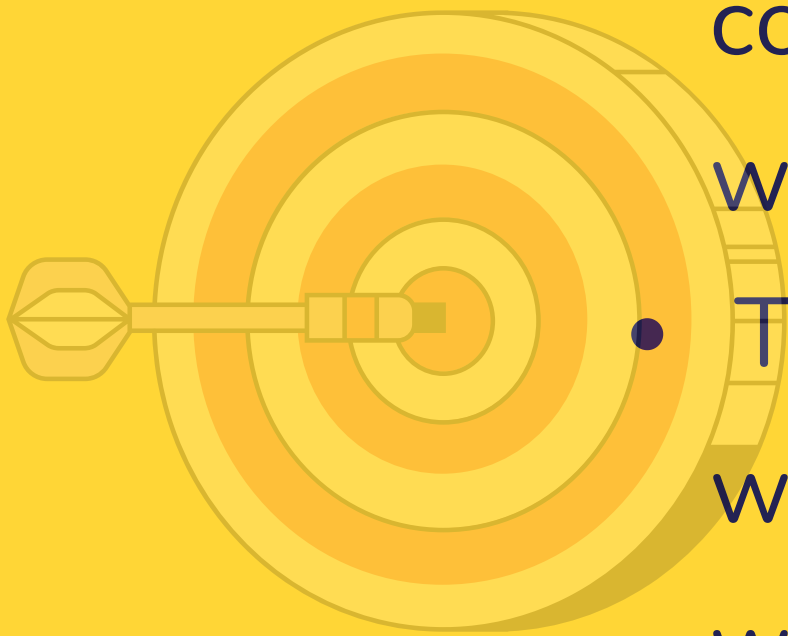
**Hurry (Urgency)** – Time pressure to create focus

# TWO MODES OF ATTENTION

2

## Voluntary Attention (Intentional & Effortful)

- **Learnt** during childhood and develops over time.
- Allows us to **intentionally direct focus**
- **Foundation for executive function** skills: impulse control, organisation, flexible thinking, task initiation, and working memory.
- This is the type of attention people with ADHD struggle with — directing focus when something isn't PINCH-worthy



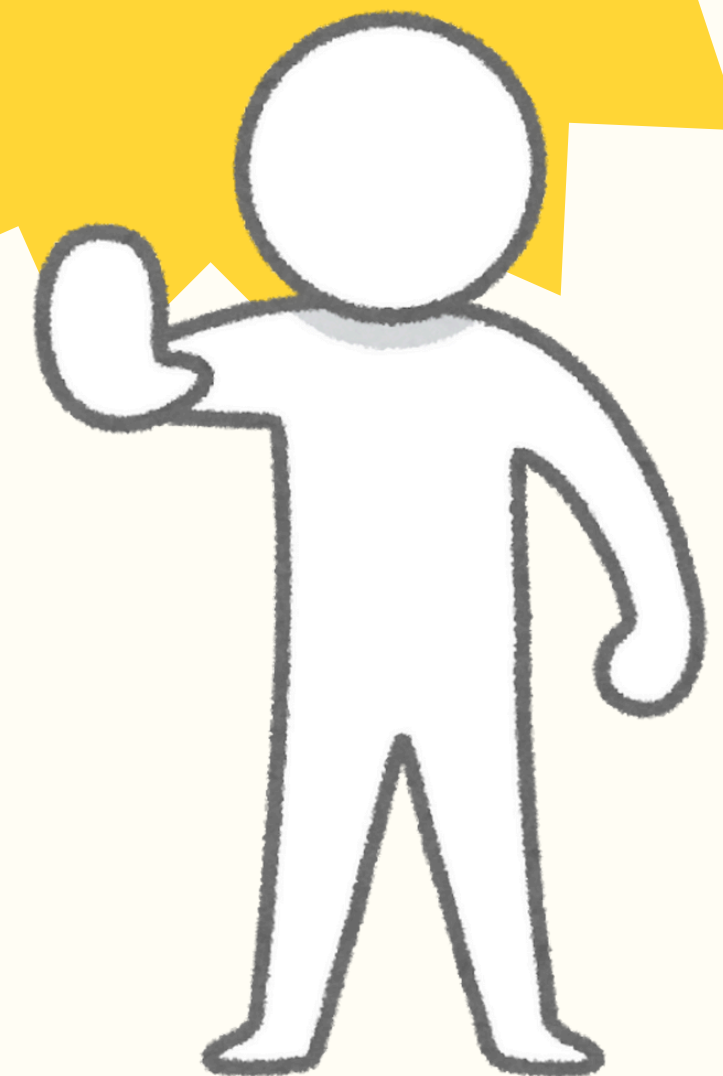
# WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT?



If something isn't PINCHy, focusing on it feels nearly impossible.

What counts as “**interesting**” is **different for everyone!** Some people love spreadsheets, others can't stand them.

**Low-stimulation  
= No-go**



# RESOURCE



## Chores at home

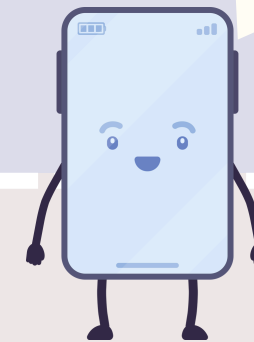
- Turn it into a game (race against a timer)
- Internally narrate what you are doing, as you do it, so you don't lose focus (e.g. "emptying dishwasher, emptying dishwasher, emptying dishwasher")
- Cleaning parties - divvy up chores and agree a time limit (e.g. 1 hour), put the music up and everyone go to town cleaning for one hour
- Listen to podcasts or audiobooks at the same time



## At work

- Fidget toys!
- Use ChatGPT
- Go for walks and take voice notes when nutting out key ideas
- Get curious! If you understand the wider context (and feel invested in it) you're more likely to focus on the task
- Listen to high energy music when trying to focus on a task
- Create urgency, "What can I get done in 20 minutes? In an hour?"

## Make tasks more PINCHy



## Helpful apps

- *Habitica* | turns tasks into a role-playing game
- *Streaks* | visual habit tracker
- *Beeminder* | motivates with financial penalties
- *Flipd* | locks distracting apps while keeping a social leaderboard
- *Coffitivity* | ambient café sounds for background noise
- *Pomodone* | combines Pomodoro with task lists
- *Forest* | gamifies focus by growing virtual trees
- *Time Timer* | visual countdown for time awareness

# WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT?

Holding information in your mind requires intentional effort. Therefore, if something more PINCH-worthy comes along, you may find that piece of information slips away instantly.



**Crap working  
memory**

## **Especially challenging...**

- Conversations – Forgetting what you were about to say mid-sentence.
- Items - You get distracted and don't encode where you left your keys, wallet etc
- Discussions – Losing track of the topic when multiple ideas are being explored.
- Multi-step tasks – Struggling to hold onto each step in sequence
- Reading – Re-reading the same line because your mind drifted.



# RESOURCE



## Externalise your memory

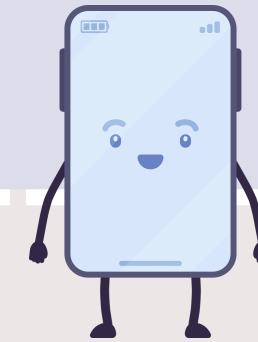
- Alarms & timers (Pomodoro technique, time-blocking)
- Sticky notes & reminders (place them in visible locations)
- Use phone calendars for appointments and set reminders so its ok if you forget
- Break down task into smaller and smaller steps until it feels manageable.
- Get smart tags for important items commonly lost e.g. car keys
- Put need to remember items in front of the door so have to step over them to get out



## Reduce clutter

- One-task rule. Keep only one active task on screen at a time. Hide other tabs, notes and distractions
- Narrate to yourself what you are doing
- Use visual task boards (Trello, Notion, physical whiteboards)
- Put important documents in an expandable briefcase

## Outsource working memory



## Helpful apps

- *Trello* | customizable kanban boards
- *Notion* | powerful databases & to-do lists
- *Todoist* | task manager with reminders
- *Google Keep* | simple sticky notes with checklists
- *Otter.ai* | speech-to-text for verbal task processing
- *Dragon Anywhere* | voice dictation software
- *TurboScribe* | transcribe voice files

# WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT?

Yes PINCH = Yes  
Hyperfocus



When something meets PINCH criteria, focusing becomes effortless — even too much!

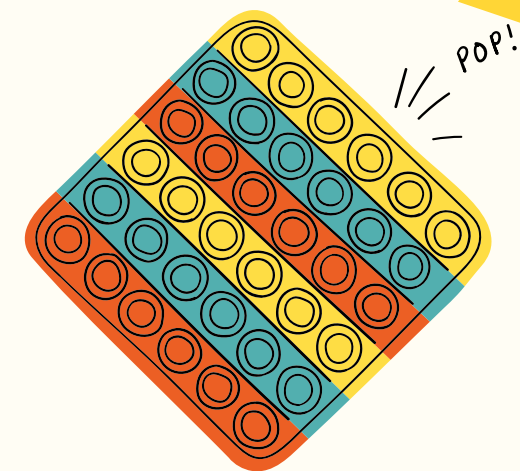
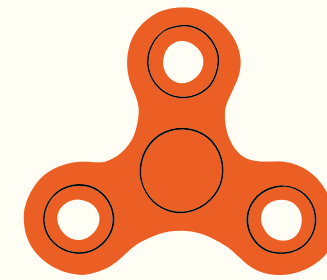
When attention is drawn by PINCH, the **spotlight of attention becomes so focused it loses awareness of everything else** outside of it.

# WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT?

Some people feel calm in low-stimulation environments, but likely for you, **too little stimulation can feel uncomfortable**, tense, even unbearable.

## Why?

- ADHD systems thrive on stimulation—it helps focus, motivation, and energy flow.
- When the environment is too quiet, the brain seeks stimulation to create balance.
- Instead of zoning out, adding movement, sound, or engagement can help regulate focus.



**Different  
regulation zones**



(Save Our Stimulation!)



# WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT?

Burnout happens easily because you may...

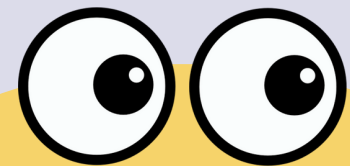
- Have **difficulty sensing inner sensations** such as fatigue, hunger or depletion (especially during hyperfocus)
- Not want to stop because **something is too PINCHy**
- Have **internalised capitalism cultural beliefs** (e.g. worthiness = what I can produce, rest is “being lazy”)
- Often **be in rush-mode** due to urgency needed (AKA stimulation) for task initiation, then not creating recovery space afterward
- Spend extra energy **masking**
- **Be expending energy wrestling your spotlight** of attention
- Experience day-to-day tension of listening to a ‘**busy brain**’
- **Not be refueling energy** requirements adequately with sustainable forms of nutrition and sleep



**Vulnerable to  
burnout**



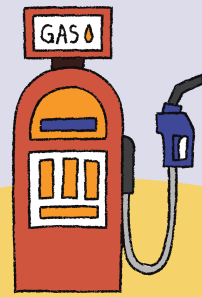
# RESOURCE



## Look out for warning signs

- Struggling to make simple decisions.
- Suddenly feeling irritable or overwhelmed.
- Spacing out more than usual.
- Forgetting to eat or hydrate.

When these show up—pause and recharge, even if you don't feel exhausted yet



## Create external reminders to refuel

- Set alarms for food, hydration, and breaks.
- Have snacks nearby (even if you can't eat a full meal).
- Schedule “nothing time” just like you would for work or activities.



## ‘Active relaxation’

- Movement-based rest (walking, stretching, light exercise).
- Creative rest (doodling, playing music, building something).
- Social rest (relaxing with a friend without pressure to “do” anything).

## Breaking the burnout cycle

### Energy levels aren't a personal failing

Feeling exhausted does not mean you're lazy or broken.

Energy is just feedback from your system—listen to it without judgment





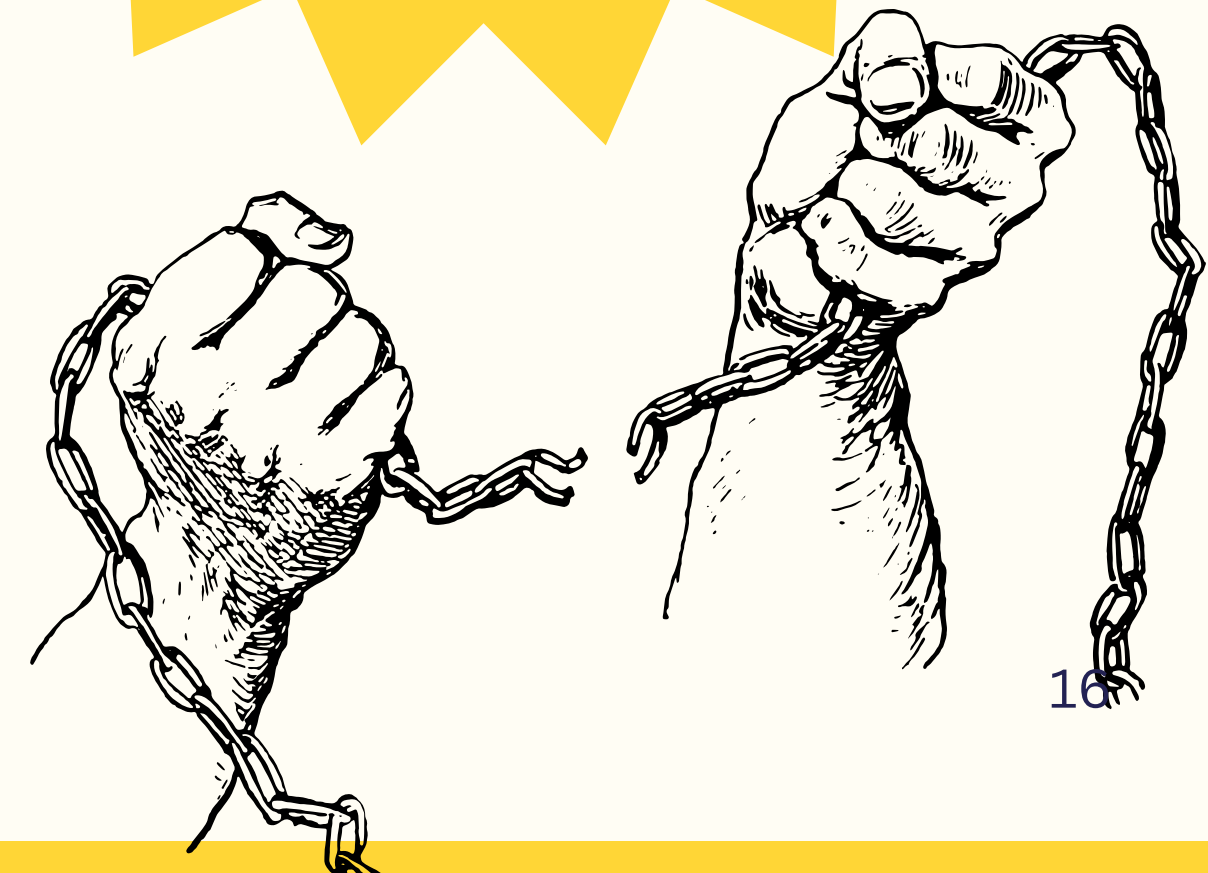
# WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT?

A common ADHD experience is being sensitive to feeling like your agency isn't being respected.

## Why?

- When someone dictates a task, it removes choice and creativity, making it feel low-stimulation—which makes it then harder to do.
- You highly value your time and often feel like your time isn't your own. It's constantly being interrupted or disrupted by outside factors.
- As a deeply feeling person, no choice can feel like you are being forced to do something (an experience humans naturally resist)

**Sensitivity to  
feeling  
controlled**





# WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT?

You're probably notorious for being late. There's a reason for that!

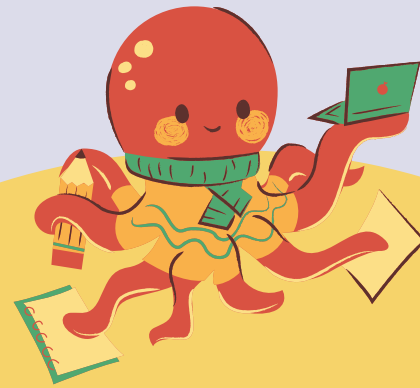
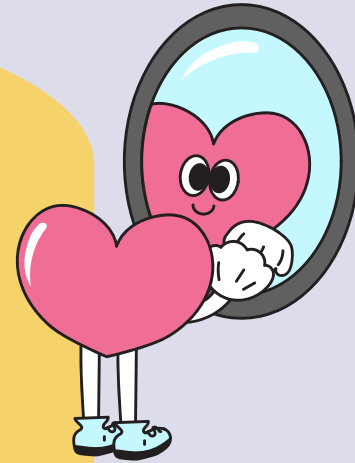
- When something is PINCHy, everything else (including sense of time) fades out of awareness.
- You might set optimistic “hoped-for” deadlines to create urgency, but then struggle to meet them realistically



# RESOURCE

## “Future You” Strategy

- Leave physical reminders of unfinished work in sight
- Write “future me” notes with next steps (avoid restarting from scratch)
- Set up preloaded tabs/tools before taking a break



## Helping task transitions

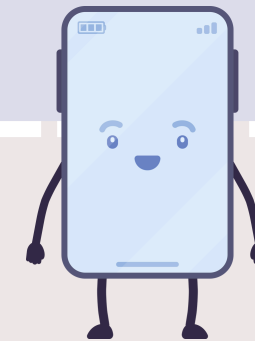
- Use a buffer activity between tasks (2-minute stretching, quick walk)
- Set a countdown timer before switching tasks (e.g., “I have 3 minutes left”)
- Label next steps aloud to shift mental gears (“Now I’m going to switch to emails.”)



## Increasing time awareness

- Use visual timers (Time Timer app, sand timers) to externalize time
- Set a “Go/No-Go” alarm (one to start, one to stop)

## Managing time



## Helpful apps

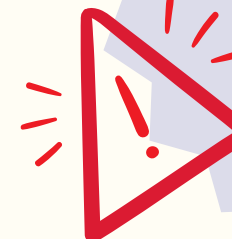
- *Clockify* | time tracking & reports
- *Sorted<sup>3</sup>* | auto-schedules tasks by priority
- *Google Calendar + Tasks* | integrated scheduling
- *Routinery* | helps establish daily routines
- *Structured* | visual timeline for planning the day

# WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT?


As your spotlight of attention is often roving, injuries can occur as your system might not sense where it (and other things are!) in space.




Walking into door frames, hitting your head on things.




Traffic accidents - not noticing things in the environment



May be a 'risk-taker' - drawn to dangerous activities because of the higher stimulation



Not sensing muscle fatigue



Head knocks and concussions (can make ADHD symptoms worse)



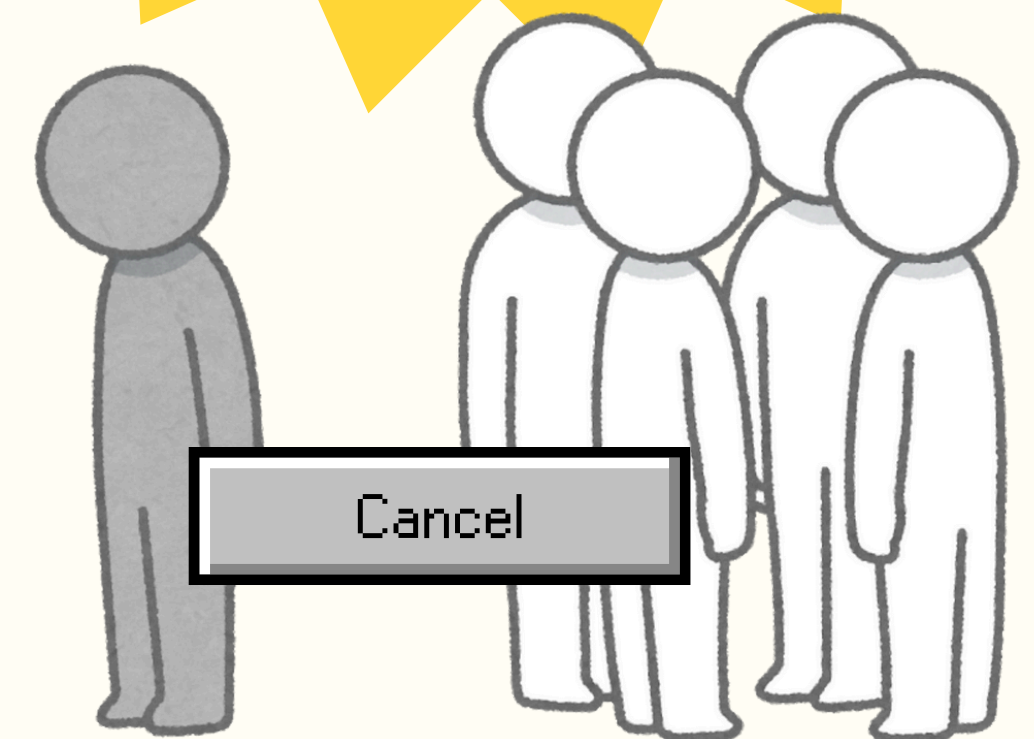
**“Accident-prone”**

# WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT?

RSD is **intense emotional pain in response to perceived rejection**. While no one enjoys rejection, people with RSD experience it more intensely and react more strongly—even to minor or unintended slights.

RSD is commonly associated with ADHD because **ADHD-wired systems tend to be highly sensitive to social feedback**. This means even a neutral comment, a delayed text, or a change in someone's tone can feel like outright rejection, triggering a deep emotional response.

**Rejection  
Sensitivity  
Dysphoria (RSD)**



# WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT?

Many ADHDers have highly sensitive temperaments, meaning they **take in more and feel more**—both emotionally and sensory-wise.

This makes **overstimulation more likely**, which can lead to:

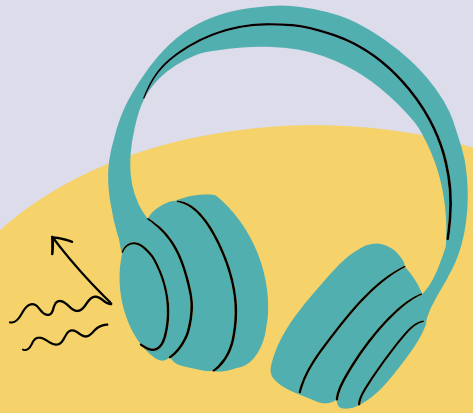
- Shutdown (zoning out, feeling numb, unable to engage).
- Irritability (snapping at people, feeling overwhelmed).
- Sensory overload (difficulty in loud spaces, bright lights, strong smells).

**Sensory  
sensitivity &  
emotional  
overload**



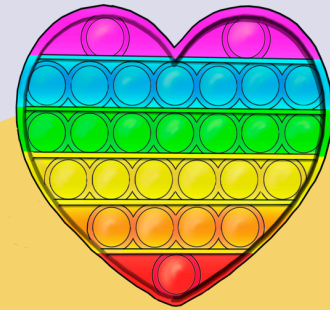


# RESOURCE



## Noise-canceling headphones

- Block out background distractions.
- Loop ear plugs can also help



## Sensory-friendly environments

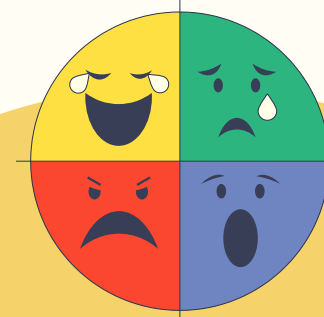
- Adjust lighting, temperature, reduce clutter, and create calm spaces.
- Weighted blankets
- Use fidget toys to feel more at ease



## Structured decompression time

Build in quiet moments to reset after stimulating events.

## Calm the farm



## Name it to tame it

- Use parts language to narrate to yourself how you are feeling
- *“A large part of me feels overwhelmed, a part of me feels frustrated I’m feeling this way, a part feels sad this is happening again”*



# RESOURCE



## Differentiate past from present

- If an emotional reaction is tied to an old experience, say to yourself: “That was then, this is now.”
- Identify differences between the contexts e.g. “I was 10 years old; now I am 32.”, “I was at school, now I’m at my job”
- Helps separate past triggers from current reality.



## Re-orient yourself

- Take a slow look around the space you’re in, as if seeing it for the first time.
- Name out loud what you see: ‘There is a bookshelf. A blue chair. A window with sunlight.’



## “I am safe. This is not an emergency”

- When emotions surge, remind yourself: ‘I am safe. This is not an emergency.’
- Helps deactivate the brain’s threat response.

## Calm the farm



## Notice physical sensations

- Focus on something tangible, like the sensation of the ground beneath your feet or the pressure of your seat.

# WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT?

You probably struggle with **delayed sleep cycles**—often feeling most awake at night.

## Why?

- Overactive mind – Racing thoughts make it hard to wind down.
- Revenge bedtime procrastination – Staying up late to reclaim personal time.
- Dopamine-seeking at night – Scrolling, gaming, or watching TV to self-soothe

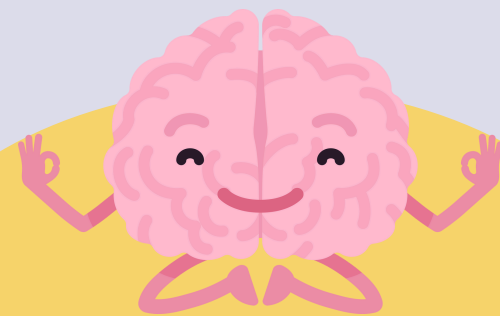


# RESOURCE



## **Movement before bed**

- Light stretching or walking to release extra energy



## **Guided meditations or white noise**

- Helps quiet racing thoughts.



## **Sensory-based wind-down routines**

- Dim lights, weighted blankets, or calming scents.

## **Improve sleep**



## **Have a coffee**

- As it's a stimulant, caffeine may help quiet mental restlessness
- It helps some people fall asleep faster, for others it disrupts sleep.
- Try a small amount of caffeine before bed and track how you feel

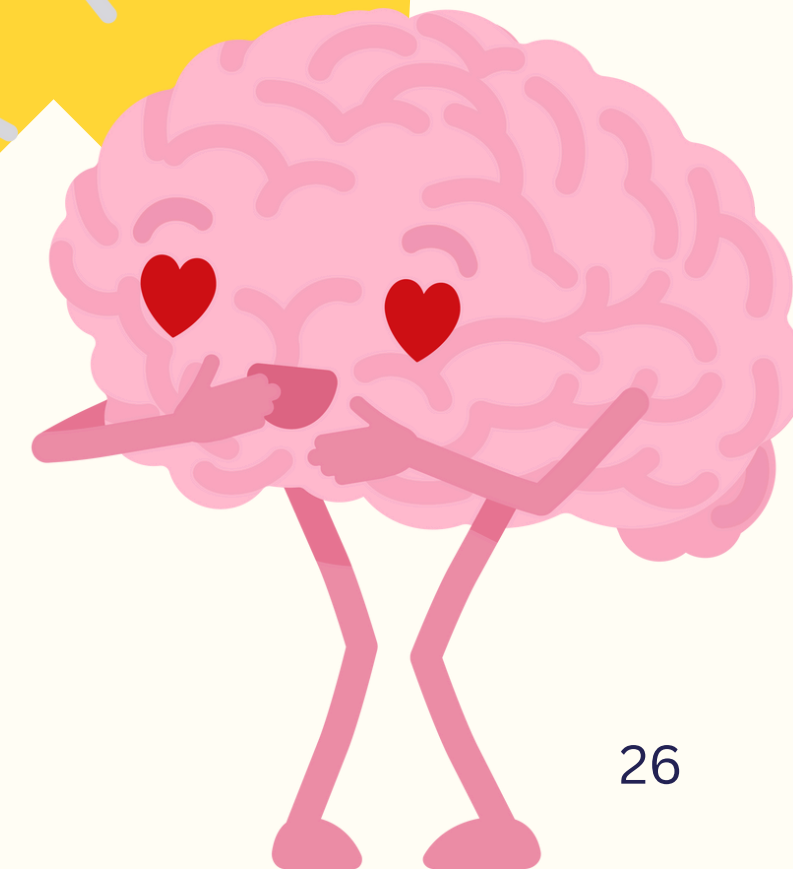
# WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT?

You have probably noticed you don't dwell on some decisions for long and take action quickly - sometimes before you have even realised! This has implications for money management, turn-taking in conversation and disrupting others.

## Why?

- Dysregulation in low-stimulation environments lead us to feel urgency to make decisions to get out of it
- When something is PINCHy it dominates our thoughts, building desire until we can't stand it
- Our voluntary attention (which is required to inhibit impulses) is offline in the face of something especially PINCHy

**Impulsivity**



# RESOURCE



## Engage with the body first (Use senses)



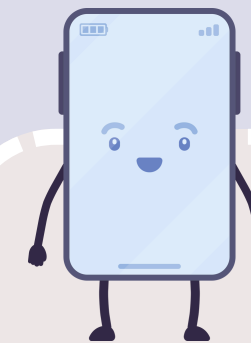
- Cold exposure
  - Cold shower, splash of cold water on face)
  - Activates prefrontal control over the amygdala
- 5-4-3-2-1 grounding
  - Name 5 things you see, 4 things you touch, 3 things you hear, 2 things you smell, 1 thing you taste
  - Engages the anterior cingulate cortex (ACC) to redirect focus
- Expose yourself to some calming or soothing scents (smells directly affects amygdala activation)
- Ask the question, “Where am I?” then look around the room as if you are seeing and noticing it for the first time



## Waiting it out

- Use the 10-minute rule
  - Wait 10 minutes before acting on an impulse
- Say “I’ll decide tomorrow” for purchases & emotional emails
- Physically remove yourself from a trigger situation for at least 2 minutes

## Delay action



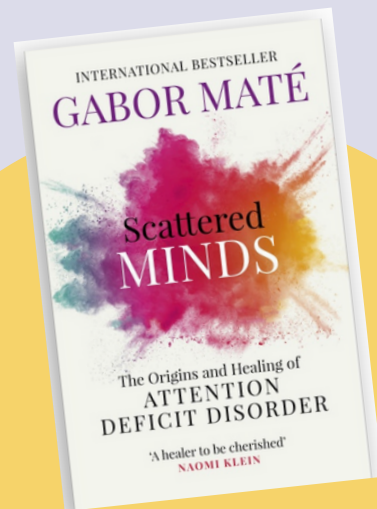
## Helpful apps

- *Cold Turkey Blocker* (blocks distracting websites)
- *Freedom* (blocks apps & sites across devices)
- *Done* (habit tracker with streaks)
- *Insight Timer* (guided mindfulness for ADHD)



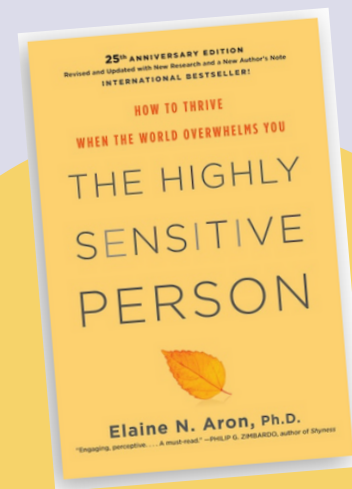
# RESOURCE

## Helpful books



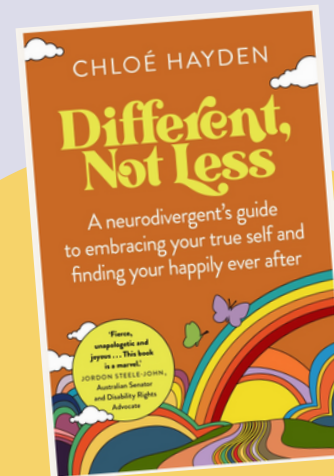
### Scattered Minds by Gabor Mate

- Comprehensive explanation of how and why ADHD develops
- Trauma-informed



### The Highly Sensitive Person by Elaine Aron

- All about what being 'highly sensitive' means
- Not just about ADHD, includes other sensory aspects



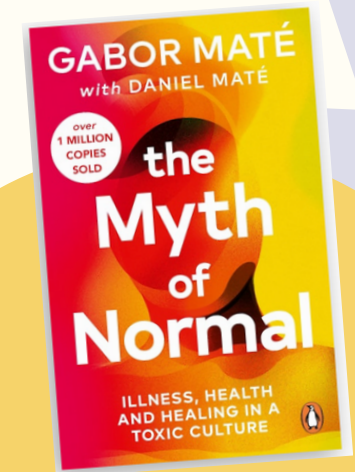
### Different not Less by Chloe Hayden

- First-person guide and perspective on living with neurodivergence
- Includes autism too



### No Bad Parts by Richard Schwartz

- Explains why we have conflicting feelings
- Address inner-critics and increase self-compassion



### The Myth of Normal by Gabor and Daniel Mate

- Macro-level explanations of how how cultural ideas affect physiology and health



# RESOURCE

## Helpful accounts



### How to ADHD

Videos about nuances of ADHD life and resources to help organisation

<https://www.youtube.com/@HowtoADHD>

The logo for ADDITUDE, featuring the word "ADDITUDE" in bold red capital letters on a white background, tilted slightly to the right.

### Additudemag.com

Comprehensive web resource with blogs and articles on different aspects of ADHD life



### ADHD experts podcast

Interviews with experts with links to resources on ADDitude mag



### @authenticallyadhd

Empowering content with practical advice for navigating life with ADHD

This resource was created by

Kelly Lawrence

Clinical Psychologist

Meeting with Minds

[meetingwithminds.co.nz](http://meetingwithminds.co.nz)