



## Focusmate: Virtual Coworking

**I**MAGINE HAVING ACCESS to a virtual accountability partner, day or night, someone whose job it is to simply be there as a reminder to stay focused on an important task you need to get done. It could be starting or completing a project that's due at work, preparing for an exam, completing an exercise routine, attending to items on a to-do list, or something else you might keep putting off.

If you're willing to repay the favor—serve as your new partner's accountability coach—Focusmate may be for you. The brainchild of Taylor Jacobson, Focusmate provides fifty minutes of virtual access to an accountability partner, someone whose job it is to simply be there to remind you to stay on track and get what you're working on done. The program's tagline is, "Where work gets done, together."

To get started, simply go to the Focusmate website, [focusmate.com](https://focusmate.com), and set up a personal account. There you'll receive directions on how to schedule a fifty-minute session with a partner. Sessions begin with partners asking each other what they plan to accomplish over the next fifty minutes. Each person is also asked to break

their plan into specific tasks and post their plan in the chat area. Partners then get to work, quietly. At the end of the session, partners are asked to check in with each other to see how the session went.

Before beginning a new session, all participants are reminded of Focusmate's community guidelines, intended to create an accepting, inspiring, and productive virtual culture of users. As stated on the website, their vision is "to build the most supportive community on earth." All participants agree to honor the Focusmate Pledge, outlining the following five rules of the road:

- Honor your commitments (always show up on time).
- Be kind (encourage and cheer your partner on).
- Be professional (all Focusmate participants should be seen as important people who are part of a professional community).
- Protect your attention (remove items that could distract you or your partner, avoid side conversations, be sure to help each other stay focused).
- Work with rigor and attention (communicate concrete goals clearly and stay focused on them).

Focusmate provides three fifty-minute sessions per week (twelve sessions per month) at no charge (Basic Plan). The monthly fee for an unlimited number of sessions per week/month (Turbo Plan) is \$5.00. Monthly subscriptions can be cancelled at any time.

Most Focusmate members say they're more productive working with a Focusmate partner, greater than fifty percent more productive, according to Taylor.


Focusmate is enjoying an increasing number of users, not only in the United States, but around the world. As more people become aware of its simple yet effective formula, interest no doubt will continue to grow.

### A new tool in the ADHD toolbox

While not designed specifically for adults affected by ADHD, an increasing number of experts in the field find that Focusmate does help those with attentional and executive function challenges get things done. Among them is Roxanne Fouché, an ADHD coach who serves as chair of the ADHD Awareness Month Coalition, coordinator of San Diego County CHADD, and on the board of directors for the ADHD Coaches Organization.

"My ADHD coaching clients find that Focusmate greatly helps their productivity as it supports them in setting priorities, breaking down a chosen project/goal into what can be accomplished in 50 minutes, committing to a particular task or tasks, and then having needed accountability for working on—and realizing—their goals," says Fouché.

Some of her clients also use Focusmate as a measure of time, estimating beforehand how many Focusmate sessions it will take to finish a particular task. Others may schedule a late Friday or early Monday Focusmate session to make a plan for the week, including the scheduling of sessions to accomplish their goals.

If you're interested in learning more, go to [focusmate.com](https://focusmate.com) to read a number of recent reviews, many of which highlight the program's effectiveness in helping users to get things done. 

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*A clinical and consulting psychologist, **Mark Katz, PhD**, is the director of Learning Development Services, an educational, psychological, and neuropsychological center in San Diego, California. As a contributing editor to Attention magazine, he writes the Promising Practices column and serves on the editorial advisory board. He is also a former member of CHADD's professional advisory board and a recipient of the CHADD Hall of Fame Award.*

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