

A Productive Mindset that Keeps Showing Up

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Quick fixes fail quickly.

Meaningful improvement takes effort and time.

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Work It From Every Angle

- Performance is multi-determined
 - What exactly is getting in your way—in *this* situation?
 - Pull as many levers as you can—it all adds up
 - Some improvement is probably helpful, but how much do you need?
- Manage the social impacts of whatever remains
 - How much of the problem is others' expectations or interpretations?
- Goal is to strengthen agency and self-esteem

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JUST BITE THE BULLET ON
THINGS YOU HATE

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Do What You Hate

- It's tempting to conveniently avoid what you don't want to do
 - ADHD makes the boring stuff feel even more painful
 - This tempts trouble—and guarantees a guilty conscience
- Make it a regular habit to do these dreaded tasks—actually plan where and when
 - It's more likely to happen if you plan it for earlier in the day
 - What small reward might tilt the odds?
 - Take a moment to give yourself credit—and counteract the old guilt

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It Gets Subtle

- If ambivalent (or worse) about a task, we may not put it in our schedule or set an alarm in the first place
 - Motivated forgetfulness?
 - Avoidance masquerading as procrastination?
 - Not actually a time management or memory problem
- Accept the fact that people with interesting lives need to sometimes do the boring stuff
 - Remind yourself of all the benefits (not just the removal of negatives)

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Don't Suffer More Than You Have To

- Don't burn extra mental energy (and make it feel worse) by complaining about how boring it is
 - Doing it may not be optional, but suffering is
 - Remind yourself of how good it will feel to know you did it
- Break up the task by time or by accomplishment
- Add other fun things
 - Music, podcast, videos, call a friend, new location, some variation

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Put It to Work

- What boring tasks are you kind of avoiding? What price are you paying for that?
- Write out how your life is better when these dreaded tasks are done. Remind yourself of this when you don't want to do them.
- Identify how you can set yourself up to get to those dreaded tasks.

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THE LOVE AND HATE OF DEADLINES

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Life Needs Deadlines

- Folks with ADHD tend to be more driven by close deadlines
 - Or less by internally generated motivation beforehand
- Externally-imposed deadlines can evoke resistance
 - And so can self-imposed deadlines
- Ultimately no one can make us do anything
 - We prefer the benefits of doing the task over the cost of not—that's agency and self-determination

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Honor the (Real) Deadline

- Soft deadlines are demotivating—especially with ADHD
 - Do you preemptively let yourself off the hook by intentionally leaving a deadline soft?
 - Or do you not invest the cognitive effort to determine the real deadline—and whether it's possible?
- If it's someone else's deadline, clarify the real time
 - If you don't believe it or can't do it, then talk about it (soon)

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Feel the Deadline Earlier

- Big jobs with far off deadlines are demotivating
- Create interim deadlines to bring the future closer
 - And probably schedule in times to work on it
- Use social pressure by telling others what you will do by when
 - Set up check-ins with colleagues, boss, romantic partner, or friend
 - Make it more interesting by making a silly bet

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Put It to Work

- Notice how soft deadlines lead to lots of creep
 - What is the final price paid?
- Pick a long-term project and break it into interim deadlines. How can you motivate yourself to hold to them?
- List some fun bets you can make, if you need the motivation boost.

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OVERWHELM: BREAK DOWN BIG TASKS

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Wrap Your Brain Around It

- Some tasks feel too big to fit into your brain
 - Or are too vague, confusing, complicated, frustrating. . .
- Cognitive overload leads to emotional overwhelm
 - Get me out of here!
- Start with a few deep breaths (or push-ups)
 - Then invest the cognitive effort to start breaking it down
 - Commit to do five minutes—then see how you feel

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Start by Starting

- Do you need to clarify others' expectations or requirements?
 - Or pull someone in for input or advice?
- Does it matter where you start?
 - If so, figure out the first step
 - If not, just start somewhere
- Have faith in the process
 - You will get feedback along the way to finetune your next decisions

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Start at the End

- Do you know where to end up?
 - Why am I doing this?
 - What problem does this solve or purpose does it serve?
 - Why does this matter?
 - What's the problem if I don't do it?
 - . . . Invest the time to figure out the endpoint then work back
- Maybe breaking it down into steps/phases is the first step
 - Even if they are kind of arbitrary

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Make the Job Easier

- Do you need to just make some choices to constrain your (excessive) options?
 - Too many similar options is too hard to sort out
 - Which criteria get the most weight?
- Externalize all the moving parts to free up some working memory
 - Then move them around, scribble notes, highlight, color code, etc.
 - Ideally everything is in sight at one time (unless it's better hidden)

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Put It to Work

- Think of a project that started overwhelming, but you figured it out. What lessons can you remind yourself of for future overwhelming projects?
- Identify a current large project that feels overwhelming. How can you break it into more manageable parts?
- Identify how you could externalize information for upcoming large projects.

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AMBIGUITY: WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO BE DOING HERE?

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Ambiguity is Uncomfortable

- Ambiguity drives procrastination
 - What needs to be done?
 - How does it need to be done?
 - What's the purpose or desired endpoint?
 - When does it need to be done and how long should it take?
- Not knowing is uncomfortable, so it's tempting to avoid dealing with it
 - Especially if you feel *you* somehow missed something

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Clarify the Unclear

- Sometimes job one is to figure out what the job is
 - Need to invest the cognitive effort to figure it out
 - And maybe the emotional effort to tolerate the discomfort—go towards it, not away
- Why are you trying to accomplish this?
 - Tangible: the benefits from completing the task
 - Intangible: feeling good about yourself for a job well done
 - These are your motivation to do the work

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Keep Clarifying the Unclear

- Do ask, do tell
 - If you're not sure what to do, who can you ask?
 - Will it save you more time than figuring it out yourself?
 - And will your not knowing even be a secret if you don't ask?
- Be willing to flounder around and have faith in the process
 - Perhaps with something of an intentional plan—or not
 - Bite the bullet on some choice point decisions
 - Accept the cognitive and emotional work

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Put It to Work

- Identify what feelings or insecurities ambiguity brings up for you. How do you tend to respond? How else could you?
- Create a list of things to tell yourself when you're tempted to avoid clarifying ambiguity.
- Identify one current task or project where ambiguity is holding you back. What next step can get you moving?

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Just keep showing up.

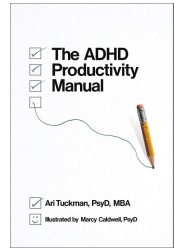
Make today a good day, regardless of what happened yesterday.

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