

Time Blindness, Starting Tasks & Procrastination

Why getting going can feel so hard, even when you really do care

Starting is a skill, not a moral test.

Progress
not
perfection.

1 What is time blindness?

Time blindness means that time can feel slippery. It can be hard to estimate how long things will take, to notice how much time has passed, or to feel when it's time to switch from one activity to another.

This isn't about not caring. It's a real difference in how the brain senses, tracks and experiences time.



2 Why starting feels hard

Getting started can be challenging for many reasons, especially with ADHD and executive functioning differences. Tasks might feel:



Too big
"It feels overwhelming."



Boring
"It doesn't give me a dopamine boost."



Unclear
"I'm not sure where to start or what the next step is."



Emotionally loaded
"It brings up feelings like anxiety, perfectionism or fear of judgment."

When a task feels hard, the brain often chooses safety over stress. So we avoid it, even when we want to do it.

3 Common experiences

These are just a few of the many ways time blindness, starting challenges and procrastination can show up. You're not alone!



Waiting until the last minute

"I do my best work under pressure, but it also creates a lot of stress."



Doom scrolling

"I get pulled into my phone or other distractions, and time disappears quickly."



Freezing at the first step

"I know what I need to do, but I just can't seem to start."



Underestimating time

"I think it will only take a few minutes, but it ends up taking much longer."



Struggling with transitions

"It's hard to stop what I'm doing and switch to something else."



Feeling guilty but still stuck

"I care about getting things done, but I often feel bad about procrastinating even when I can't help it."

4 Tools that help you start

There's no one-size-fits-all solution. Try a few of these strategies and see what works for you!



Make the first step tiny

Make it so small it feels easy. Open the document. Tidy one item. Write one sentence.



Use a timer

Try 5 or 10 minutes. A short timer can reduce overwhelm and help you build momentum.



Body doubling

Work alongside someone else (in person or virtually). It can increase focus and make starting feel easier.



Use a visual countdown

Give yourself a 3-2-1 and go! Count it out, take a breath, and start before your brain can talk you out of it.



Create a start ritual

Do the same small thing each time, like make a drink, play a favourite song, or clear your space. Rituals signal to your brain that it's time.



Link to something already established

Try "After I do ___, I will ___." For example: "After my morning coffee, I'll open my to-do list."



Use momentum, not motivation

Don't wait to feel motivated. Action can create motivation. Starting often helps you feel more engaged once you're in it.

5 A kinder reframe

Procrastination is often a sign of overwhelm, activation or regulation challenges, not laziness. It's usually your brain's way of protecting you from discomfort.

"You're not lazy. You're human. And you can learn new ways to start."

Small steps still count.