

Creative Fix

CREATIVE PRACTICE BUILDER

**For
neurodivergent
creatives**



HELLO



My name's Allegra Chapman. I'm an author, columnist, creative wellbeing practitioner and creativity coach.

I'm also an AuDHD mum of two, who is absolutely sick of traditional creativity and productivity guidance that's designed by and for neurotypical people who have someone to handle all their childcare and life admin!

Typical advice is for typical brains - and you and I, my friend, are not typical people!

There's nothing wrong with you. Your brain just works different. Creativity is about originality, so why would you want to be like anyone else? I'm here to help you embrace your unique strengths and find a process that works, joyfully, for you.



WHAT'S THE TROUBLE?

Ok, let's sort this out – select your main challenge, and head to the relevant page to collect your weapons against it!

Getting started



—————
If you have loads of ideas but struggle to get any of them started, head to **page 4**.

Finishing things



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Got lots of half-finished projects but not many completed? Go to **page 6**.

Staying focused



—————
If you sit down to work on creative projects and then get distracted, go to **page 8**.

Finding time



—————
If you know what you want to do but can't seem to find the time to do it, head to **page 10**.

GETTING STARTED

Neurodivergent brains can find getting going on a task tricky. We have so many thoughts in our head that we struggle to zero in on one single starting point; or we're so fixated on getting the small details right that we're worried about doing anything at all.

Here are a few ways you can get over that start line:

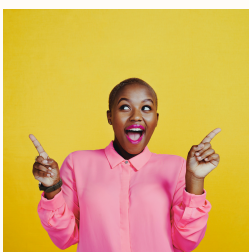


Find your “why”

Neurodivergent brains rebel against work that feels empty. Even work that we know, logically, is a stepping stone towards our dreams. It's not even enough for the overall project to light us up - this specific part of it that you're trying to work on *right now* needs to feel meaningful.

Actions:

- Think about why this specific piece of work matters
- Visualise the end result of this specific piece of work and what that will mean for you (and the overall project)



Make it fun

Just as we must have meaning, we must have joy! As much as possible, inject some fun into your creative work (and, in fact, all tasks) as much as possible. Whether it's the location, the materials you use, music, snacks, wearing a superhero costume... Whatever fun means to you!

Actions:

- Experiment with different locations and methods, mixing it up from time to time
- Use the nice stationery, colour-code everything, get out big pieces of paper and coloured pens... allow yourself to play
- Gamify your tasks - set yourself challenges, see if you can beat previous results

GETTING STARTED



Break it down

Starting a big task – like “write a book” or “paint a canvas” can feel overwhelming. Break the overall project down into small chunks – and I mean *really* small. Never mind writing a book; task 1 is to write the date at the top of your page. Task 2 is to write 100 words, or write for 10 minutes. And so on.

Actions:

- Start with your end goal, and work backwards – what steps need to be completed to reach that goal?
- Break each of those steps into its smallest component parts



Build a runway

Some of us need a run-up to getting going. When I start work in the mornings, I need 30 minutes to make a coffee, check emails, realise my coffee’s gone cold, make another, and mess around on Substack, Slack and WhatsApp before I get stuck in. So that time is blocked out in my diary.

Actions:

- Schedule in some “faff time” as part of your planning – when you put time aside for your creative work, allow for time to ease yourself into it
- See that time as necessary – don’t try to fit other things into it

Want to know how to do all this in practice?

The **Divergent Creatives** programme talks you through these techniques and more, as well as many other elements of building a sustainable practice. We’ll identify and release any limiting beliefs, find a rhythm and approach that works for you, and set realistic goals. [Find out more here.](#)

FINISHING THINGS

There are many reasons why completing projects can be tricky, from planning fatigue to demand avoidance to self-esteem, but here are a few approaches you can take:

Ditch the planner

For many neurodivergent people, once we've planned a piece of work, we feel as though we've completed it. So asking our brains to complete the work *again* (seemingly) is painful and draining. Sometimes it's better to wing it!

Action:

- Be playful with your projects – experiment, and explore different angles

Visual reminders

If you're someone who forgets about something as soon as it's out of sight (raises hand!), then having post-it notes, project boards or other visual reminders of your progress somewhere prominent where you'll see them often can help to bring you back to the work regularly enough to get it done.

Action:

- Put a visual reminder of progress on a project somewhere you can't miss it

Reward system

You might have heard that extrinsic rewards are actually demotivating... Not for neurodivergent people, my friend! Sticker charts and reward systems work really well for us. Yes, even when you're in your 40s!

Action:

- Give yourself a sticker or a treat every time you make progress on a project

FINISHING THINGS

The Big Ideas board

Shiny Thing Syndrome is a condition that impacts around 1 in 3 neurodivergent people (I totally made that number up, but it feels plausible) whereby we're regularly distracted by new ideas. People who suffer from this syndrome have brains that crave novelty, and little impulse control. We're not great at parking an idea for later - we have to do it NOW!! The Big Ideas board is a space to note down your shiny new idea, so your brain feels satisfied that it's been actioned in some way, and you have a record to refer back to. It also gives you an opportunity to reflect on whether it's *really* as amazing an idea as it seemed in the moment, or whether the gloss has faded over time.

Action:

- Get a large sheet of paper / card or a space on a wall, and a supply of post-its - when you have a new idea, put it on a post-it and add it to the paper/card/wall

Let go of the outcome

One of the major reasons for not finishing a project is overthinking the outcome. Worrying about whether it's going to be successful, if people will like it, if it will be good enough, if your dad will approve... all of this can be overwhelming. We can also get in our heads about the individual components - how are we going to be able to do that bit, can we move on if that's not right, do we need more research, how will it all fit together...? Although, to get started, we thought about why we want to do this work, once we get going we have to let go of the outcome and do the work for its own sake. The process is the point - just show up, and allow it to become what it wants to be.

Action:

- Instead of focusing on project goals (like "write a book"), concentrate on process goals (like "write every Sunday") - focus on the process over the outcome

STAYING FOCUSED

Where are my fellow easily distracted ADHDers at?!

Our brains are complicated mixes of internet browsers with too many tabs open (and where is that singing coming from?!) and so much intense hyperfocus that we forget to go to the loo. Striking a balance between those two parts of ourselves and harnessing our focus effectively is not easy.



Design your space

If you have a dedicated workspace – or if you’re just using a space temporarily, like a cafe or library – try to set it up to give you the best chance of keeping on track. That means minimising distractions, and having everything you need to hand – including snacks, coffee, water, all the essentials!

Actions:

- Put your phone on airplane mode, block internet on your computer and avoid sensory distractions (noise, smells, bright lights, etc.)
- Think about what you’ll need ahead of time and get it all ready before you start



Set timers

The sense that *hours* of effort are stretching before you can make you feel fidgety. Conversely, getting too carried away in hyperfocus for ages can leave you with nothing left in the tank. Set timers for a section of focused time, then for a break to stretch, move around, and pee!

Actions:

- Consider what a good stretch of time is for you to get some work done but not wear yourself out
- Set timers for those blocks – say, 45 minutes of work, then a 15 minute break

STAYING FOCUSED

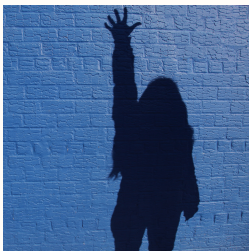


Move your body

When you take those breaks – you really do need those breaks – move your body. Stretch, walk around, shake. You need to be energised and physically regulated to be able to focus. If possible, schedule some time outside, even if it's just a quick walk round the block or brief sit in the garden.

Actions:

- Take movement breaks while you're working
 - Spend time outside
-



Body double

It's easy to procrastinate when you're the only person involved. Another person changes the game. Someone sitting with you to work on their own project while you work on yours gives you accountability – you'll be amazed by how much more you do when someone's watching.

Action:

- Ask someone to be with you while you work on your project
-



Overestimate time needed

We're often very good at being extremely optimistic about how much we can achieve within a set amount of time. As a result, we plan too much and then get overwhelmed by how much we're supposed to be getting done, and then disheartened by how little we got through.

Action:

- Overestimate how much time each part of a task will take you, and plan to do far less with your time than you normally would, so your goals are more achievable

FINDING TIME

When you have a busy life and limited energy, it can feel like there's no time available for creativity. That's where we have to get smart about how we plan our time.

Know your rhythm

Trying to write at 5am when all the gurus say to is no good if you're not a morning person. Map your personal energy levels and track what impacts them so you can identify good times to block out for creating.

Action:

- Spend a month tracking your energy levels and what boosts / drains you

Guard your time fiercely

Stop trying to fit your creative time in around the edges. This is time that is vital to your wellbeing and your joy. Schedule it in and protect that time. Treat it like a meeting or an appointment - it cannot be cancelled.

Action:

- Schedule your creative time in and make it non-negotiable

Recruit help

Yes, it can feel icky, but wherever you can, call in help. Find someone to watch your kids, get your partner or mum to cook you dinner, pay someone to clean your house if you can. It's not failure, it's sensible project management.

Action:

- Ask. For. Help.

FINDING TIME

Go gently with yourself

Be kind. That means to you too.

You don't have to write every day. You don't have to finish a painting a week. You don't have to release a Substack post on a schedule. You are not a machine. Let go of any ideas that "proper" artists show up with a certain regularity, because that's all just a story. Maybe that one famous author writes every day, but you're not them. You're making different art in a different way. Having unrealistic expectations of how much time you *should* be finding is going to make it harder to find *any* time, and make you discouraged. Work with what you've got – you'll be fabulous with it.

Actions:

- Have realistic expectations of what you can fit in
- Be kind to yourself

Join a group programme

Yep, it's plug time!

If any of this has resonated with you, we'll be going into much more depth with these concepts and many more on the **Divergent Creatives** programme.

The advantage of a group programme is that you get expert advice and guidance (from a professional divergent creative like myself), as well as a network of support from other creatives. You can let go of limiting beliefs, gain a better understanding of your strengths, and find an approach that works for you so you can get shit done in a joyful way. Plus you'll be able to chat to others on a similar journey and share experiences. Join us!

Action:

- Sign up to the **Divergent Creatives programme**



Creative Fix

Divergent Creatives

The creativity programme for people who don't fit the "standard" mould

See more at creativefix.net

DIVERGENT CREATIVES

The three-month online programme to support neurodivergent people in building a regular and productive creative practice.

- Weekly email prompts or exercises for you to work on in your own time
- Monthly group coaching Zoom calls
- A private chat space to share challenges and solutions, and to support one another

Registration closes on 31st January 2025.

[Click here to find out more](https://creativefix.net), or email allegra@creativefix.net



Creative Fix

creativetix.net

alleggra@creativetix.net

