

title: **I can't stop myself from thinking about coding after I get off work, especially if I am stuck, it haunts me**  
back home and causes me a lot of stress. Any advice?

id: chwwhi

url: [here](https://www.reddit.com/r/ADHD_Programmers/comments/chwwhi/i_cant_stop_myself_from_thinking_about_coding/): [https://www.reddit.com/r/ADHD\\_Programmers/comments/chwwhi/i\\_cant\\_stop\\_myself\\_from\\_thinking\\_about\\_coding/](https://www.reddit.com/r/ADHD_Programmers/comments/chwwhi/i_cant_stop_myself_from_thinking_about_coding/)

num\_comments: 11

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#### #### Post Text ####

I have posted this in /r/cscareerquestions but I think this sub is more relevant as this might be caused by ADHD(?) I am working in my first job out of school in a big financial firm, everything here is very laid back and my boss is never pushy, in fact I was more pushy asking for more work to do. I have this problem though, if I am stuck and can't solve or debug the problem before the day is done I would be very frustrated the entire day at home and cannot get myself to stop thinking about the code. It is a mixture of being anxious, scared, guilty and depressed. I already have a history of depression and anxiety, and add ADHD to the mix (thanks dad for all the abuse, I appreciate it). Typically if I am able to debug my code and have a clear plan of where I am going I am absolutely fine and feel very motivated after work, the opposite is true though. Today for example I was working on some JS + HTML and I was getting very frustrated, for the life of me I could not accomplish what I wanted to do even though (I think) what I am trying to accomplish is not complicated. but I am using new technologies for the first time (Thymeleaf) and I had some stupid and somewhat strict requirements that is not very common, meaning it isn't something you can easily find on stackoverflow or google and I am not allowed to use external libraries. whenever I have a day like this I start doubting my skills and start feeling really bad. I feel like I don't deserve the job and that everyone in my team secretly hates me and I am disappointing everyone. This follows me home after I am done working, which also causes some insomnia and physical stress. I have only been working for 4 months and I am worried things are not gonna get better. I feel like I am very vulnerable and just can't stop myself from overthinking about work while I should be relaxing at home. ./ anyone deals with similar problems? I used to be like that in school too but it was way worse, I studied Computer Engineering and it was a nightmare, literally a nightmare. I have had many complex and stressful classes (almost %40 of my degree was electrical engineering). I think all of the stress I had in school really fucked me up, it was just scary. And still to this day I feel like school is going to suck me back in and I will be stressed all over again. I was recently diagnosed with ADHD (would have helped if I was also medicated in school), I have been mainly on Vyvanse(50mg) but most of the time I don't feel any benefits, there are days where I can absolutely tell it is working, but mostly I don't notice much help. Whenever I start coding I always do everything in the most complex ways. 99% of my problems are overthinking the problem, I jump too deep and start fixing some really deep stuff that doesn't need any fixing and I end up frying my brain within 2 hours. Many times when I ask for help I realize it is something very small and stupid that I was missing, and things could have been done in a much simpler way. Anyone with similar issues? and would that get better as I get more experience? This is all very related to my personality as a whole, I am very negative and always expecting the worst outcome, I am also a paranoid person as a result of very long years of abuse and mistreatment, my mind always goes for the over-analyzed hypothesis first instead of choosing the simple obvious one. sorry for the rant. would appreciate any comments/feedback.

#### #### Comments ####

##### Commenter\_2

ID: euz5u41, Upvotes: 8

This is one of those things you need to learn. Taking "work" home like that is not good. That is bad stress. You need to tell yourself you'll leave the problem at work and pick it up the next day. Then put it out of your mind....go out, hang with friends, work out. Do things to take your mind off the problem. Working out is a great stress reliever and will help with sleep. You'll be too exhausted to think about work.

That takes care of home, now for work. If you're constantly fucking up, and getting in trouble with mgt, you need to get out of there. That job isn't for you. Find a job that interests you you'll do better and fit in more. If you're safe, then you just need to learn to not sweat the small stuff and fight the impulse to "fix" things that don't need fixing. You're probably doing it to make the code "perfect" but it doesn't need to be perfect. The hardest thing to get my head around was to let things go. Everything doesn't have to be perfect so leave it alone and focus on your stuff. Also your code doesn't have to be perfect, it just has to work.

The other shit with spinning your wheels is something I know all too well. That's a lot of pressure not meeting deadlines or missing the obvious issues. I also felt like a fool for not catching the simple stuff. You just need to take more breaks away from your desk when spinning your wheels. Eat and drink to keep hydrated and keep your brain fed especially in the afternoon. Skip the junk snacks and go for fresh fruit. If you don't drink coffee in the afternoon, maybe drink a small cup to be more alert. But don't drink a lot of coffee, that will mess with the adhd drugs. I drink 1/2 a cup of coffee in the AM and not one of those big mugs either. I take a 15 min walk in the afternoon to get the blood going. It's better than coffee. I also look at things differently. I started to look at things as more of a personal challenge. "I'm going to fix this fucking thing by 11:30" then try and do it. We do so much better under the gun. I actually get better as the situation gets worse. It's the reason why I always get promoted to manager/director. It's not that I can program like an expert (I'm not that good) but it's how I tackle issues and find solutions for not only my own crap but for fixing other broken stuff. It's my personal challenge to make things better where I work.

I've been working in tech for almost 30 years. I didn't know I had adhd for more than half of my career (that was a real treat). Now, I hate tech but it pays ok and I have a easy job where I can work from home for a few days. I hope you take my advice because I learned all that on the job. It works if you follow it.

In summary:

Eat right, exercise routinely, get lots of sleep, learn to leave work at **work**, get up and take ALL the breaks you're supposed to and take a break when spinning your wheels, look at your problems, not as problems but as challenges and finally make sure you are always assessing the effectiveness of your medications. You may need a tune up.

Hang in there. Good luck, try and stay positive!!!!

##### Commenter\_3

ID: euyt0wd, Upvotes: 5

I don't have a ton of advice, but I can definitely relate. Sometimes my hyper focus at night is more of a "soothing" flavor, where I actually have an epiphany on how to solve something I'm stuck on, but sometimes it's more similar to as you described, anxious and scared my code is super shitty and there's no way I'll meet a deadline. The one piece of advice I can give is that a job is really just a job, and at the end of the day does not define who you are, or even really how good of a coder you are. I've had two different jobs so far and they've been drastically different — someone who's good at one certainly might not excel at the other and vice versa. Lastly try and find something not coding related as a hobby to hyper focus on at night. For me that's music, others it's reading, video games etc, key is to take the focus off of the job and define a role for yourself outside of your career.

##### Commenter\_4

ID: ev0x254, Upvotes: 2

I agree. And as far as video games go, sandbox games especially tend to be a very good outlet for hyper-focused people since they require creativity and critical thinking skills. For example, Kerbal Space Program, Simple Planes, From the Depths, Besiege, and many more.

##### Commenter\_5

ID: euzxgs7, Upvotes: 3

Try to distract yourself e.g gameing, reading and never take your work laptop home with you. I did that and continued working at home....

##### Commenter\_6

ID: ev0jdtg, Upvotes: 3

Feel you. Advice: Don't ever start doing that stuff self employed. Will take those issues to a next level.

##### Commenter\_7

ID: ev18hvm, Upvotes: 1

Agreed

##### Commenter\_8

ID: euzw4m0, Upvotes: 2

Hmm I don't have any specific advice apart from for me this resolved itself over the years. I was exactly the same, if the work or problem isn't completed in the day then I've failed and it'll bug me till it's completed. Slowly over the years, mainly through realising life is too short to be taking work home with me and worrying about it I've adopted the healthy attitude of leaving work at work. It also helps working in the UK where the attitude isn't work crazy hours, it's do your job and go home when your hours are up. Sometimes however with the really interesting and tricky issues I still find myself sitting at home thinking about how to fix it but that is probably just human nature if you're interested in it.

What I can say is this stage is the best, learning how to fix things and how to do it in the most efficient manner is good fun and the time at work flies. I've been a developer for 8 years now and most issues I've seen before and know how to fix. Concentrating and stopping myself going on the reddit, youtube , news, Facebook loop is a struggle that leaves me drained and concentrating near impossible. Regular breaks every hour where you getup and go somewhere else help as does getting a good amount of sleep (which I never do). Also I've only just been diagnosed so I've spent my career so far untreated which is fun.... but if you get a tricky problem it can be fun enough to keep to engage the hyper focus which is a plus.

Good luck, it'll come to you

##### Commenter\_9

ID: ev0fm5s, Upvotes: 2

I don't have much to say or add, other than to just say I feel your pain. I am the same. It's so hard not to continue to try to solve the problems which had you spinning all day. I'll find myself ignoring my 3 year old because I'm going over things in my brain or on my phone researching the best approach to something.

The best advice I can give you is to try to write down your current thoughts on the topic, and put it down for the night. You don't have to solve everything all in one day, and there's always tomorrow. It's not easy, especially when you're thinking if I just get this one thing, it'll all become clear, but it's necessary for your sanity. There's also something about walking away from a problem that allows you to change perspectives when you come back to it again. No matter how many times I spin on something for hours, finally walk away (likely from a need to urinate or eat), and come back to instantly see the solution, I still won't learn that lesson.

I know there are deadlines and that brings pressure, but it's often not as bad as you think, if you just get ahead of things by setting expectations when you know it's taking longer than you had planned. Estimations are never accurate in software development or any creative process for that matter, and make no mistake, this is a creative process. You're not just following a blueprint to mindlessly piece together a piece of furniture, you're creating the blueprint.

##### Commenter\_7

ID: ev18aij, Upvotes: 1

My 2 cents:

I feel this too. Everything I'm going to say is somewhat common knowledge. I know these are hard tasks for us and I'd be lying if I said I follow it all the time, but I try and I know it helps.

1. Done is better than perfect. I tend to overengineer things too, it somehow makes the job more challenging and less boring, which are things we ADHDers crave, but the way code works is: plan, code, test, refactor. Just write your code, it doesn't matter if it's shit code, it has to run and have no bugs (if possible). Then, if you have time, you refactor it.

2. You must find activities to relax, something that puts your head away from work. It could be reading a nice book, playing games, having a date, going out with friends. Maybe you'll have thoughts and your work, but just let it go, which leads us to next tip.

3. Practice meditation. Really. This shit is magical. Just lay down on the floor, do some soft stretching so you can relax your body and your mind will be ready to go. Then for the next 5 or 10 minutes just focus on your breathing. Take long slow breaths but do not hold it. A lot of intrusive thoughts will come to mind but do not try to get rid of it, just let them pass, that's the key. If you notice you are focusing on the thoughts then remember you have to focus on your breathing. Feel the oxygen entering your lungs and reach every part of your body, then slowly release it.

Hope you get better, man. Best wishes.

##### Unknown\_User

ID: ewc79hn, Upvotes: 1

My approach to this issue is to manage my projects with Kanban boards [Trello works](#) well for my purposes. I agree that it's not healthy to bring work home, but if I don't at least write down my ideas, I will never remember them by the time I get to work. It doesn't have to be a complete or verbose idea, just something to help me remember the problem I'm trying to solve and references to the solution. I can either write whole blocks of code or simply link helpful StackOverflow posts and API docs.

##### Commenter\_10

ID: ex0ao1v, Upvotes: 1

I had an internship a while back and man I had the same issues as you. Worse was, I only had a few weeks, so I really wanted to make the best of it. Every day I stayed overtime, I kept studying at evenings and my girlfriend got really upset at me too. My dog even started looking kinda sad when I passed him by and he loves seeing me.

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I figured, and this is almost a bit sad but.. I wasn't making good progress for myself, since I kept studying/coding way too much. It's like when you workout, except a muscle needs to rest so let's say, you wanna get good at chess.. You won't get good just from playing it nonstop, you still need breaks and coming back after a break, gives you way more improvement to your next day of practice.

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It helped me to think in this way, and also, that I just had to say "now it's time to head home", when it is time to go home, and just leave. It helped me to think of it as a promise to myself because even if I love doing what I do, reality still comes down to more things and I need a healthy life, not an obsessive one.