title: **Failing at work**
num_comments: 28
num_up_votes: 40
upvote_ratio: 0.99

Post Text

Hey guys. Recently I started working as a software developer trainee. I'm 2 months in and I already feel
like a big failure and I'm scared I'm going to lose this job. I barely can focus. Only when I exactly know
what to do, I can keep doing it without losing interest. Unfortunately, my knowledge is very limited and I
only can gain more of it by asking other people for help. And here's where it gets funny. Besides being
afraid to not to understand what's being explained to me as well as not feeling like asking for help because
it requires my attention, I also struggle(d) with social phobia so really the last thing I want to do is
interrupt my colleagues' work and ask a silly question. I can't use any stack overflow or github because we
work with a programming tool created by the company. I already fall behind other people who have started in
the same time as me. I feel useless and stupid. During a work day, maybe 2h out of 8 I'm really focused.
Does anyone have any tips to overcome the fear and to focus better? I'm really struggling and I don't want
to lose this job because it's been my dream to work as a programmer. Tldr: can't focus during work & too
anxy to as questions, asking for tips. Edit: Thank you very much guys for all the tips. You are amazing! I
wrote down some of them on a paper and I'm going to take it to work tomorrow. Hopefully I can apply them as
soon as possible :) Here's a photo of it, maybe it can help some of you: https://imgur.com/a/86nkxS1

Comments

Unknown_User
ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 16
[removed]

Commenter_2
ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 3
This entire comment is amazing. My codong teacher said hed go to his own teacher and ask questions on
how to do this or that. I dont knw if it was just me cuz im a socially awkward, genfluid and adhd mind
muddled mess. But the way he taight always telling us to google and not to rely on each other or ask
each other any questions almost ever. Made me to terrified to ask for help from anyone. And talkig to
him abt coding was nerve wracking anf anxiety inducimg. The way he taught also made half the pther
students 10 person class. Either quit to business studies or quit the program until it was a 6person
class.

Thennthe was the A team who i swear must be NTs or have no focus issues or coding is their obsession
(3ppl)
And the B team who sucked, barely tried etc (2 ppl)
I kept floating between the two. Working hard and doing enof to get noriced as an A team but my adhd
holdin me back in the B team most of the time.

The A team never rlly helped and one kid was actively im pretty sure now sexually harassing, creepy
and an all around know it all asshole (which didnt help tht he actually alsp knew coding the best in
the group and was the youngest) and made me feel like a horrible person every timr we spoke. Or every
time i asked a question of something i already learned. Or the teaxher berating me for tsking notes
and not always able to pay attention bcuz i was taking notes. Not realizing if i didnt take notes i
would lose even more information and i didnt knw how to tell him that. Or tell anyone tht my head just
doesnt keep it

IF PPL DO THIS. FUCK THEM. DOMT LISTEN. THEY ARE ASSHOLES. Make ppl aware ur head works a bit

different or you need notes etc. Note takign is very very helpful for me. If they do try and make u
feel bad for learning theyre assholes and clearly are just trying to put u down.

In fact IT WAS ONLY MY GROUP WHONWAS LIKE THIS. the ppl in the actual company were qhole heartedly
nice (if oblivious like my manager to some of my issues) EVEN WHEN I ASKED A QUESTION ON SOMETJING I
SHOULD KNW but couldnt rememver for the life of me. The actual vompany workers just gave a smile and
told me and helped (maybe thiught i was a lil odd but they were nice!!)
While my group berated me abd called me dumb for not knwing tht basic info like for example how to
declare a variable (not what it eas, it was a bit more complicated then tht but i forgot what it was)

Which means if anyone does anything or is mean to u. Find a new person to help u! Theres no reason to
subject urself to negativity itll only make u feel worse.

Sorru if all my examples are bad ones but hey i at least learned what NOT TO DO TO PPL EVER.....thts
nice i guess lol.

Unknown_User
ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 6
I've been there, soo many times in my 24 years of programming. Focus is some of your problem, but it also
sounds like this is just normal young developer growing pains.

Here is what I've learned as an ADD programmer for the last 24 years:

1. I overestimate how poorly I'm doing at almost every job, especially if I feel like I am failing. I
suspect that you are doing that too. You won't be able to shut off that voice completely, but it is
important to try to ignore it as much as you can. Three times a day say these words in your head (or write
them or type them): "My self-analysis is likely wrong and I am doing better than I think" - say that to
yourself even if you don't believe it - helps you not to indulge the negative thinking.
2. It takes quite a bit of time and effort to find, hire, and start training a new programmer. Trust me,
your company really, really want you to work out, they will give you the benefit of the doubt even more than
you will yourself. If they fire you, then you were just way too unqualified for that task, don't sweat it
and look for something more your speed.
3. I get the asking for help issue. that sucks. here are some ideas. Go to different people to ask for
help, don't go to the same person over and over. The very first people you should ask are your fellow
newbies, then the next junior employee up to the senior expert guy. New people and younger dev like
answering questions and being the expert.
4. If there is something you don't know, try your very best to find the answer on your own - is there any
documentation you can wade through? Did you look at all the comments in the code? Did you try to understand
the code to get your answer (even if it is too confusing, try). If after a half hour or so you can't sort
it, you MUST ask for help. You cannot just magically know crap. If i have a developer that is ramping up
slowly, i always tell him "dude, you better be asking more questions". Get over the fear - even if they
don't like answering questions ask them anyway. You are paid to learn your software and you are doing the
best you can. Given where you are, you should be asking lots of questions is in the best interest of the
company. You WILL NEVER be fired from a job for asking too many questions. You might frustrate your
coworker, you might get a reputation of a pest, but you WILL NEVER be fired for it, trust me.
5. Focus. Listen, you are doing okay. You are going to be fine and this is just part of the job. Your
problem isn't your adhd, your problem is that programming can be stressful and challenging. Nobody can
focus if they feel so much anxiety and feel they are not doing well. Externalize something positive to do
today. Only one thing. Something like. I'm going to get the app compiling or I am going to understand how
the release project works or I am ... You can only do one thing at a time. Find the next thing that you
should do, write it on a piece of paper, and only do that. Don't worry about losing focus only worry about
trying to focus on OTHER WORK. You only have 1 work item to do, the next one. Figure that out and forget any

other work responsibility of expectation.

6. Your job is to ramp up and program. You are not HR. You are not employed to worry about who works for the company and who doesn't, and that includes your employment status. Stop worrying about if you are going to get fired or not, that is not your responsibility and you are burning energy, brain cycles, and focus on that, stop it.

Commenter_3
ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 4
I second pretty much all of this, but specifically wanted to share my experience with #4. Some of the times I've really found myself in trouble I have avoided asking for help for far too long. I had one instance early in my career where my boss ended up coming to me and apologizing that I had been assigned such a monumental task. I appreciated that sentiment, but the entire slog could have been avoided had I talked more with my teammates.

It takes humility to ask for help. More importantly, it takes self-awareness of your ability, your current level of efficiency, and acceptance that you don't have all of the answers because no one has all of the answers. Sometimes a sounding board is what you need to give you a revelation or get some insight or perspective into the problem that you just couldn't get on your own.

Don't wander in the desert when there's a good chance your teammates have both a vehicle and a map to navigate you out of or through your problem/task.

And OP you're not alone in these feelings. I've got 11 years of experience (six undiagnosed ADD and almost five post diagnosis). I continually beat myself up and worry about losing my job (again) and I continually find that my teammates are encouraged by my progress and really respect the work I'm doing. It's important to keep yourself honest, but it is unnecessary to beat yourself up.

Commenter_4
ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 1
Going off topic, and seeing you're senior in programming I do have one burning question:

I believe I'm a really good engineer (almost 2 years in the field), I can do pretty much anything if someone ask of something (as ADD you know how stubborn and obsessive we can be). But the real question: I'M SO GOD DAMN SLOW. Or at least, I believe so. What's your take? Does it get better?

OP
ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 1
Hey, thanks a lot for these tips. I'll try to apply them :)

Commenter_6
ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 3
I also have big problems on focusing. For me it is extemely difficult to find a solution wich leads to the goal I want to reach with my code. I got 10 different ways in my mind and cant make out wich is the best and how to translate this way into code. What helps is discussing these ways with my Boss and he helps me finding the cleanest, easiest or fastest way and how we could do it (e.g. which patterns I can use). When the goal and the way how to reach it is clear, my hyperfocus is activated and I get the result so fast, it makes up the time I wasted before. Thats good, because then im not slower than others, sometimes even faster. I have to say though that its a small company and all employees are very close. But probably you got a Teamleader or something like that. Communication is key and making a plan together before starting to code can help preventing issius before. I am also aware that this practice is not common in some, probably conservative, businesses.

OP

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 1
My teamleaders are cool and never judgemental, but I never feel confident and comfortable enough to keep asking stuff :(

I'm happy that your colleagues are willing to help you out!

Commenter_7
ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 3
There's a lot of good advice posted already but I want to cover a couple of other areas.

Are you currently being treated for your ADHD? With both pharmaceutic and talk therapy? These should help a lot.

Also, I find it good to break tasks down as much as possible. If your task is small and you can't proceed without asking for help, you pretty much have to ask for help immediately. The good news is once you start asking for help frequently, it often becomes easier to ask for help later.

If they hired you as a trainee or a junior developer, they pretty much expect you to ask for a lot of help, and it's part of the job description of seniors and leads to help you on them. Keep that in mind and it should be easier.

> ###### OP
> ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 2
> I'm still waiting for therapy and I think I'd like to try out meds.
>
> Breaking tasks down into smaller pieces is definitely something I should do. It seems like an obvious thing to do, but I just c a n t, I want to do everything, right now!
>
> >If they hired you as a trainee or a junior developer, they pretty much expect you to ask for a lot of help, and it's part of the job description of seniors and leads to help you on them. Keep that in mind and it should be easier.
>
> This is so true. I really need to realize that asking questions is my ONLY TASK RIGHT NOW.
>
>> ###### Commenter_7
>> ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 1
>> Can you keep in mind that breaking down the tasks is gonna help you to do everything required?
>> As opposed to forgetting something because you're relying on your faulty working memory?
>>
>>> ###### OP
>>> ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 1
>>> I'll do my best! That's gonna be the first thing I'll do tomorrow :) thank you!

Commenter_8
ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 2
I had this problem as well and I still do on some days. What did help was finding 1 person who can mentor/coach me. I set up a recurring meeting with them everyday when I could collect all my questions and work ask them all together instead of pinging them multiple times a day. This helped me with my anxiety because I knew that they were expecting questions from me and that I wasn't bothering them. I also was able to be upfront with them about my anxiety and so it was called out as a judgement free time when I can ask the stupidest questions. But this might not be the case for you and your mentor, but it's worth a shot.
This dedicated time with my mentor also served as a deadline for me to have made some progress or at least have a few options for the next steps. It forced me to think and articulate better, instead of keeping it

all in my head and assuming the worst.

Finally, try to be kind to yourself. I know it's easier said than done, but try practicing self compassion for a few minutes at first and build up to longer durations. This will "feel" like the the end of the world to lose your job, but try to speak louder than your negative voice and make it clear to yourself that it's not the end of the world. Most likely you won't lose your job. Even if you do, there are other opportunities out there and you will be fine.

Lastly, set a slowly increasing target for yourself. It's not possible for even non-ADHD folks to focus enough to do 8 hours of productive coding. Most programmers manage about 5 hours on a good day when there is no crunch-time. The rest of the time is spent of planning, architecture and code reviews. So if you are doing 2 hours now, then try to push it to 3 hours next month and ask your manager/mentor to invite you to more design and architecture meetings, or assign more code review tasks to you. You can also request pair programming or pair code review time where you can absorb more information about the system.

Good luck! Hang in there!

> ###### OP
> ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 2
> That's a great solution, these question-meetings :) I'm happy to hear it helps you a lot. Not very applicable to my situation tho as my questions are not yet that complex and they just keep appearing aaaall the time, but I'll definitely try this out when I'm more advanced :)

Commenter_9
ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 2
I'm not gonna sugar coat this: start asking questions or you will continue to fail and eventually you'll lose the job. It's barely ever annoying to be asked a question, and it's actually surprising if the newbie understands the answer first time. Ask for thorough but simplified steps to achieve the task you are struggling with. It's very humbling and embarrassing at first, but every successful dev has had to do it to get where they are. It gets easier sooner than you expect, but you really have to get over the fear, training new devs is a very important use of time and your co-workers will help you.

Commenter_10
ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 1
This is literally my biggest fear if I get a job in this field. I am very close to start applying for front end dev jobs and am terrified even if I do land a decent job it will fall thru.

I have worked a lot of different kinds of jobs however and know from experience that sometimes the thing that determines whether a new employee will thrive or not is the willingness to help and humility of other employees/bosses.

This fear of asking for help and thus looking stupid could be imagined because you've experienced backlash from asking questions at previous jobs. Or it could be real because perhaps people there have huge egos and really do make you feel stupid. If thats the case, don't waste your time there. Start applying for other dev jobs. It will only hurt your prospect of finding other jobs if you get fired.

Not sure what reason you should give to employers who ask why you want to leave this job but maybe other people on here could answer that. Maybe just say it feels like a toxic work environment or you are not getting the support you need to do your job? I dunno.

Let us know how this turns out!

> ###### OP
> ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 2
> The environment is really chill at my workplace. I've actually never been so pampered at work or school before. Almost everyone is kind and willing to help. I really should cherish it...

Good to hear!

Maybe stick it out a little longer and see what happens?

A another thing you could try to help you focus is try to identify the times you are struggling to focus and identify why its happening and what you could do to help. Are you tired for 6 hours out of the day? Try getting up every 30 mins to stretch. Are you getting enough sleep? Or maybe do some breathing exercises for a few mins if you get nervous or tired?

I'm pretty sure lack of sleep is why I got fired from one of my previous jobs. I stayed up super late almost every weekend and didn't realize this could be why I felt exhausted during the week. I think this contributed to me having a hard time processing what other people would say to me. I'd feel like I was listening to people but would often forget what they said or miss something small but crucial and have to ask again. After a year and a half of this, things really went down hill.

Just using that as an example to help you examine your lifestyle. Maybe there's something you could change that could improve your focus. Whether its eating habits, exercise before or after work, or just taking breaks instead of sitting for hours at a time. Or drinking lots of water.

I dont knw how to help but i feel for u dude.
I was in a trainig program and i managed to do well but only vuz i basically kept forcing forcig myself to do the work. Which only worked cuz this man basically worked us to death with deadlines each morning. Which meant no sleep. Which meant passing out at a keyboard and having so much fuckin stress at the end pf the 6months tht i burnt out HARD during the internship phase. I managex to pass tht but the company didnt keep me on and i felt like a failure. And as i was applying shit hit the fan im 2019 for me and its been a year and now im applyig and trying to learn codinn again but its so hard cuz i feel like its gotta be all work to death or nothing.

DO. NOT. DO THIS. working urself to death and beating urself up for not working likr crzy leads to the insanity i have now of finding it so so so hard to study. ;-;

I learned of a thing called a Pomodoro thing.
Google it!! Its like finding ur perfect tomato timer. Some arricles will say 25minutes working. 5 mins not working but it doesnt have to be exactly tht.
It can be (depending on the task ur trying to do.) 7mins work and 3min break. 30min work and 10min break or for one person i saw they worked 1.5hrs at a time then 30min to hour break. (The last person work from home as a writer)

U say u can focus 2 hours out of 8? Maybe a 1-1.5hr focus and then u can sneakily take a break by looking at coding articles for 15 or so mins and day dream into the white pages. (If ur allowrd to listen to things in ur headfones, put on a podcast ? And a timer) Thts what i did when i desperately could not focus at all. And was to socially anxious to say anything.

If ur also allowed headfones. Depending on ur attention abilities or if what ur doing is hard or easy. Podcasts, or white noise like rain, thunder, simple instrumentals or songs could help u focus.

Also fidget stuff!! Theres plenty of fidget stuff onlinr and if i work outside again im so planning on gettin this baby necklace tht looks like geometric shapes but can be chewed on as i like stuff in my teeth. Or the smooth feel of it in my hand.

U can use it for studying to!! Google is ur best friend as a software dev. And if u wanna study some code we can study together if its a known code all around. U dont need to tell me or anyone the actual code or app in the company. We could just study it in general like if its Java or JS or i could help u googlr stuff to study (i am amazig at googling resources but i never actually get to use them yet >\\\\\\\\>)

And the last thing i wanna say is its okay. We (or at least I) understand u and I know you'll find a way!! (Also google adhd aliens burnout cycle chart and study chart! Adhd aliens website, tumblr and twitter help so much at least in being understand and seein even more how deep this adhd issue apparently goes the burnout cycle and study chart are very helpful to....well do exactly as their titles say lol)

I love u dude/ette !! And whatever happens i still love u <3 (always wanted someone to say this to me so here u go)

Sorey for the long ramble. Obligatory on mobile (and obviously have adhd lmao my brain goes everywhere) i hope described it well enof or anything i said can help u <3 imma make my own post abt my issue soon...eventually ...when i dont feel like ill die if i do

Baiiii

> ###### OP
> ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 2
> >I dont knw how to help but i feel for u dude. I was in a trainig program and i managed to do well but only vuz i basically kept forcing forcig myself to do the work. Which only worked cuz this man basically worked us to death with deadlines each morning. Which meant no sleep. Which meant passing out at a keyboard and having so much fuckin stress at the end pf the 6months tht i burnt out HARD during the internship phase. I managex to pass tht but the company didnt keep me on and i felt like a failure. And as i was applying shit hit the fan im 2019 for me and its been a year and now im applyig and trying to learn codinn again but its so hard cuz i feel like its gotta be all work to death or nothing.
> >
> >DO. NOT. DO THIS. working urself to death and beating urself up for not working likr crzy leads to the insanity i have now of finding it so so so hard to study. ;-;
>
> This sucks a lot and I feel bad that it ever happened to youl. I hope you'll get yourself a nice coding job without toxic assholes!
>
> >I learned of a thing called a Pomodoro thing.
>
> I know this but sometimes it's just too difficult to get yourself to set the damn timer... :'\]
>
> >If ur also allowed headfones. Depending on ur attention abilities or if what ur doing is hard or easy. Podcasts, or white noise like rain, thunder, simple instrumentals or songs could help u focus.
>
> Fortunately no one has a problem with headphones which sometimes is life-saving :) I should definitely try white noises as I usually listen to music :)
>
> >Also fidget stuff!!

I have a fidget cube! It's great!

Also, thank you for kind words. Unfortunately, there's no way for me to learn to code via internet as the programming tool at my company is based on COBOL but still veeery different from its basic form :)

Commenter_2
ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 1
Thanks for replying!! Ur super cool and im glad u can use headfones and fidget cubes.

Music is super helpful but sometimes the words can be distracting so nature sounds. Instrumentals. White noise like rain and thunder can help a looooot

Oh and i also use earplugs along with my headphones its simple swuishy foam anf whatnot and blocks out even more moise with over ear headfones <3

And i badly want a fidget cube :O

Commenter_11
ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 1
>I know this but sometimes it's just too difficult to get yourself to set the damn timer... :'\]

I'm so relieved to see that I'm not the only one! This is how I realized that it's probably not just a focus issue, but also an anxious avoidance issue in my case.

Commenter_12
ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 1
Dude same. Also did the burned myself out the internship barely passing thing as well. That was a whole year ago but I still feel like shit. Mostly cuz I need to reflect on my past experiences to get a full time role as well. I have one year left in school in a nonCS program and I don't like my major and at first I was like nope nope but I realize the importance of completing things even if I don't like it and think it won't help me at all. Also I realized my adhd management skills are non existent and I really need to figure it out

Commenter_2
ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 1
God Yes same. I have like management barely but just staying happy is a struggle and makes everything else harder. Especially as my savings are slowly drained as I'm trying to find a job lol.
I need to develop some study skills as im near scared to try programming cuz i unhealthily learned i either die and pass out working or relax and dont bother ugh.

Commenter_13
ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 1
Tips I'd recommend: Talk to a therapist (obv, but really, it's actually helpful & they can teach you how to handle situations exactly like this). Also medication may be useful for helping you overcome your focus difficulties and/or your social anxiety.

Question: Where on earth do you work that hires someone called a "software developer trainee" because that's the job I need. Having a degree in software development but every place wanting 5+ years of experience & knowledge of 20+ different programming tools/methodologies has me ready to quit.

OP
ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 1

>Tips I'd recommend: Talk to a therapist

I'm definitely going to do this!

>Where on earth do you work that hires someone called a "software developer trainee"

The programming tool that's used in my company is made by the owner and its coleagues so there's no way you could learn it somewhere else. Their only requirement at hiring was that you have some programming experience or technical background. Maybe you could search for small, family companies? :) Also, don't give up. It took me some time to find it too!

Commenter_13
ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 1
Interesting, & yeah that is a good idea. My brain has a tendency to go "Alright, time to check if Google, IBM, Lockheed Martin, Amazon, Texas Instruments, etc. is hiring. Oh they want seasoned developers, not noobs. Welp, at least you tried. Good effort." Smh.

OP
ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 1
Haha, i feel ya. Especially when you have a software dev degree. But hey, you never know, these companies probably hire juniors as well :) just keep searching I guess!