

title: **Behind at work.**

num_comments: 32

num_up_votes: 79

upvote_ratio: 1.0

Post Text

Has anyone ever communicated that they haven't been productive at work because of adhd struggles? I just haven't been able to do the things. I've switched meds and I feel like they've completely turned my brain off and made me depressed. I'm so behind and I've been struggling to get a fairly simple task done. It's like every time I start my mind goes blank. I get stressed and walk away from my desk. I've usually been able to push through but now I can't. I'm scared I'm going to get fired.

Comments

Unknown_User

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 64

[deleted]

Commenter_2

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 12

I'm right there with you. Occassional bouts of failure to launch projects and or tasks. Its usually something that appears much bigger than it is but due to timing and circumstances of delays it now appears to be much bigger. I often have to do it over a weekend or just shut my door and pretend everything else I do at work doesn't exist. Coming in early or staying late can help.

Commenter_3

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 7

I swear my best time to crank things out is 2am

Commenter_2

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 7

I have started projects midweek at 10pm and finished 14 hours later working non-stop. I try to not do this anymore since my role at work changed a bit. I am more visible and part of the actual operations. Its important to be present and not look hungover even though I dont drink.

Commenter_3

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 6

I totally get this. I don't know if I could go 14, but put it off for ages then get in powerzone mode and blast it out

Commenter_4

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 4

Nearing 4 am here and I finally started getting inspired/motivated/creative at 1 am or thereabouts... I know there's some neurochemical stuff going on late at night making motivation go up but the peace and quiet is awesome. No notifications, no meetings, nothing coming up "soon". I've had so much trouble getting started and now I can actually demo my work tomorrow as planned..! I guess a hard deadline and a sense of impending doom never hurt productivity either, haha.

Commenter_2

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 2

Late night quiet is great for creative programming. It feels good to be in the zone with a little low volume chill hop or instrumental music in the background.

Commenter_5

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

What do you do if the flare-up isn't ending? This has been my life for over a year now I can't stay focused and fall behind, then I get stressed out, then I work late to catch up (or take a vacation day and use that to work)...but then I quickly fall behind again. I'm operating at 50% capacity and I feel terrible.

Unknown_User

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 4

[deleted]

Commenter_5

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 2

Thanks for taking the time to reply! I've been seeing a therapist for almost 3 years, but was only just diagnosed with ADHD in December so I'm still trying out different meds!

I think it actually started with the pandemic because that's when I started wfh and I no longer had the accountability and structure of going into the office everyday. Then my productivity got significantly worse as my depression got worse. I want to work out of a coworking space or something, I just need to wake up earlier than usual

Commenter_3

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

I don't know about you, but the pandemic hasn't helped in recent years

Commenter_3

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 2

Yep. There were days I sat at the desk for 8 hours, but figured I only got 5 hours done, so I'd work late to fill in. Trouble is if they start tracking log in time. It's weird that some companies really have a thing about how *fast* you are not how much you get done before the deadline. Like hey if I'm slow for ADHD or whatever reason, but I'll work extra so it still gets done on time (and am salary) why do you care?

Commenter_6

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 12

I was going to give advice but then realize I'm way behind and standup is in 9 minutes.

Trying to get work done for standup though really helps me though.

(Not to be prescriptive, different things work for different people)

But I find with ADHD something needs to be urgent or stimulating to do it all. Getting something done before standup is that urgency for me. My standup is in the morning, so I actually work earlier than I'd normally dream just so I have a deadline.

The normal paradigm of starting the day with the only semi-deadline you have is just, the opposite of what my ADHD brain needs.

Commenter_7

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 2

Standup is like a group check-in?

Unknown_User

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 2

Basically. In practice it's a daily status meeting in my experience but in the Agile framework it's supposed to be a 15 minute team meeting where you say what you did since last standup, what you plan to do before the next standup, and whether you have any blockers so the team can make a plan for the day and prioritize the most important work.

Commenter_8

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

It's supposed to mainly be so people can find opportunities to collaborate and make sure that things won't clash if e.g. 2 people are working on code in the same file. In practice I find it tends to just be each person says what they're doing and everyone else ignores them until it's their turn to talk... or that could just be me projecting - I just want to focus on what I need to do, and the rest of it is an unwelcome distraction.

Unknown_User

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 7

don't say adhd. say you sre researching or understanding library, looking at code. reviewing something.

don't say adhd

OP

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 6

I don't like lying. I'm not bsing. My brain is really stalling no matter how hard I try. It's stuck in a ditch

Unknown_User

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 10

You can say, my brain is really stalling on this matter. I need some help working through this ticket.

Ask for help.

Commenter_10

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 4

> I don't like lying.

Then tell convenient truth. Like politicians: - Did you receive a bribe? - Why do you, journalists, hate me? Don't you have to do something important? Etc...

Unknown_User

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 4

[deleted]

Commenter_10

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 2

> People should understand, especially during these times

Or not)) Any weakness could be used against you.

I'd speak about "safe" issues, like your mother is ill or you help your brother with his debt, something that is not "permanent" and puts you in a socially responsible perspective.

Telling you drink or played video game all nights long is not an excuse))

Commenter_11

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 6

Take a break/vacation. That sounds like you're heading into burnout. In addition to talking to your coworkers/boss to see if you can get some temporary assistance, I'd recommend take a few days and do nothing related to your job. I've found getting some cleaning/projects done at home helps keep you distracted while getting rid of other stressors.

As far as what to do when you get back, most of the issues I had with ADHD and developing is either boredom from doing the same thing over and over, not being able to keep track of things, and/or feeling overwhelmed as to where to start. Some tricks/techniques I've developed:

- * Comment first/code second: Stub out the program flow with comments before you write any actual code. This has two benefits: You don't have to worry about exact syntax or parameters up front that can bog you down, and if you need to stop working on something and come back to it later you won't need to try to remember what you were doing and possibly miss something

- * Big-ish whiteboard: Digital notes are fine, but sometimes I need to just braindump or have a short-term memory buffer, and physically writing something seems to work better for me than typing. The whiteboard should be small enough to fit at your desk but big enough that you don't feel cramped for writing space when using it.

- * Rapid prototyping: I keep a set of boilerplate project code in every language I'm using just for testing out various new components before I try to integrate them into the actual project I'm working on. I start with the bare minimum setup and test at every change to make sure the result is still working. Don't worry about the code being pretty or efficient or up to standards; just make something that does anything, even if you have to hardcode input parameters and use liberal amounts of print statements. Once you get something that compiles and runs, add more functionality in small chunks and test each chunk until it works, etc, etc. Once you have code that does what it's supposed to, then take it apart and write it properly in your actual codebase.

- * Compartmentalization: Along with rapid prototyping, I try to always structure my code as a set of generic, extendable libraries with a project-specific wrapper around them. For example, if I need to write a JS function that queries a dynamic list of image URLs based on user input and displays them in some fancy way, the code that does the query will be completely independent of the code that displays the images, and the display code allows you to specify parameters that really wouldn't change for the system I'm developing it for, but might for some future use. That way, if I needed to do something similar somewhere else, I can just grab the generic code out and reuse it with the minimum of work. It really doesn't take that much more time to structure it that way from the start, and usually makes it easier to fix issues.

- * Rubber duck debugging: Get a small rubber duckie (or similar small homunculus) to keep at your desk and explain your code to it if you get stuck. Assume it knows nothing about programming...which it doesn't...because it's a duck...and rubber, so it should ask a lot of "Why?" questions. If you start actually hearing it talk, take a break.

- * Walk away: If you get really stuck, and you're able, walk away from your desk for a few minutes. If possible, go to an area that is visually/thematically/environmentally different from your work area, which helps reset short-term memory and clear your head. A short time outside in fresh air always helped me quickly unwind.

- * Ask for help: Yes, it's mildly embarrassing, but really any programmer who ridicules you for asking them

for help is an asshole, and knowing who is and isn't an asshole is useful information, so you're getting something out of it either way. And your coworkers may have beaten their heads against the same problem you have before and know the solution. (Interesting anecdote: Japan started developing a nuclear weapon around the same time America did. The issue was that the engineers assigned to refinement of the uranium didn't know how to do literally the first step. They spent several *years* trying to derive the process themselves instead of asking the chemistry department literally next door. By the time they figured it out, the war was almost over. The American engineers ran into the same problem, called the chemists next door, and got the answer the same day.)

* Scrum: Well, not exactly, but having a short meeting (or even just by yourself) first thing in the morning where I stated, in one minute or less, what I had done yesterday, what I plan to do today, and anything standing in my way really helped me stay on task. It broke things up into manageable chunks and made it so I could focus on just one thing instead of trying to juggle everything.

* Regex: Learn regex. Most IDEs have a regex search/replace option with references. The amount of time you save by being able to do complex searches, replacements, etc, when dealing with a large codebase is ridiculous.

There's probably more I could list, but I think those are the major ones.

Commenter_12

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 2

Thank you so much for these tips. If only I knew them when I was working AND that I was suffering with ADHD which was detected ONLY this year at the age of 51, I wouldn't have done a burn-out/bore-in and be today in invalidity for severe nervous breakdown since decades now... :(

Commenter_11

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

I was headed into burnout, and knew it because I'd had friends burnout and recognized the symptoms. Talking with my (now ex-) wife, who was a teacher and trained in recognizing learning disabilities, and she immediately flagged ADHD. I did some research, talked to a specialist to get diagnosed, and coping strategies/medication turned it right around. If only I had known *before* I nearly failed out of college several times.

Commenter_13

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

I've been through this exact same thing over the past few months. To a small degree, I was able to disguise it a bit b/c I WFH full-time, yet the guilt was getting to me and I was getting more overwhelmed by the day. I also suffer from SAD in the winter, so that certainly hasn't worked out in my favor.

I really didn't know how I was going to get out of this rut. I tried incorporating some small changes in my routine (which I never do) and, through trial and error, found a few that worked.

Examples:

>>Taking my ADHD medication earlier or later. (Sometimes I'll wake earlier than usual, pop the pill, and go back to bed).

>>Eating breakfast more regularly (and finding the best time to eat it — especially in conjunction with my meds).

>>Adjusting my work hours (usually by 1 hour) — and learning when my focus is best.

>>Adjusting wake/sleep times.

Best wishes to you... It's challenging.

Commenter_14

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 2

This is great advice. Spot on with my experience figuring out which meds worked for me, and before I was medicated.

Diet and sleep schedules are **vastly** underrated with regards to ADHD. I notice that even though my ADHD symptoms are there kinda no matter what, they're way less **manageable** if I'm poorly nourished, or exhausted. I got so behind on my sleep schedule a week or two ago that I was out sick basically sleeping for 3 days because I just couldn't focus or do work during the day.

​

So along with adjusting wake/sleep times and eating breakfast regularly, I'd say taking a look at if you're getting enough sleep and that you're getting what you need out of food are two that go in conjunction.

Commenter_15

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 2

If you want to tell someone about it, make sure they're the right person. It is likely your manager so make sure they're not going to tell anyone else who might affect you negatively. If you want to disclose that, I would recommend being clear that you want to talk about having some leniency while you are switching meds and/or looking for more robust accommodations (maybe not directly from your manager but this could even be something like having them pay for therapy or an ADHD coach). good luck, I am super glad I can be open with my boss about this and it has been great for my working style to be honest. not everyone is understanding, though, and I've seen managers online be extremely rude about having to make accommodations for their employees with disabilities.

Commenter_14

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 2

So...while ADHD does make it more difficult (and makes it so you have to compensate certain ways to succeed in ways others don't), the real issue is that it's just taking more time for you to do a certain task or set of tasks. So for me, to break out of that cycle of being behind, I make myself figure out what I'm struggling to do. Like write out a list of everything. Then look at that and ask what's challenging about those things so that I know what my blockers are. Rather than communicate my blockers, I communicate 1) what I'm working on (specific parts of a story that I'm working on for instance), and 2) that I'm working on making a list of questions to ask someone when I reach out to them for help. The first can sometimes be broken down or delegated in a way I hadn't considered, and sometimes people will be like "Hey I'm high bandwidth right now, I can help out with y z while you're doing x" and I'm like "Oh that's fantastic, I hadn't thought of that", and the second lets them know I'm making a conscious effort to not just get on a call and say "I dunno know what I'm doing". Because that is super unhelpful if I actually DO know what I'm doing, I'm just struggling with certain points of it.

​

That said, my boss is really supportive and sometimes if I'm having a lot of ADHD days, I'll just tell him in a 1 on 1 "My ADHD is really bogging me down lately" and he'll ask what I'm struggling with, and if I don't know how to fix it, he offers some suggestions. But I know I'm in the minority on supportive boss/work culture so you know that situation for yourself way better than any of us.

​

Lists, friend. Lists changed my life. It let me see what I'm struggling with, give myself a break from stressing over things, and break stuff down into smaller chunks.

Commenter_8

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 2

I'm about to start communicating it, since I only just found out after decades of struggling. Not sure how it is going to go but the people at my company tend to be fairly patient and understanding.

What I've found can help a lot with the situation where I'm stressed and spend hours at my desk without getting anything done is to break down tasks smaller, sometimes ridiculously small, and only have the tiny task I need to start with visible (I use workflowy to be able to focus in on a sub-sub-sub-subtask without seeing the rest of the stuff). Sometimes it has to be laughably small pieces so that the laughter can displace the anxiety and I can start working through things.

Commenter_16

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

Let them know you haven't been feeling well and could use time off to recuperate since you're not 100% at the moment. You don't need to specify ADHD or give any excuse, it's not their business to know what personal reason you have.

Ask your teammates and/or manager for help. Let them know that you're behind and could use help with prioritizing the work and possibly taking some off your plate.

And of course, reach out to your doctor and let them know how your new medication is affecting you so you can change meds.

Commenter_17

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

You should ask for help with your task after 45 minutes or so if you can't figure it out. In your stand ups mention issues you're having. Sometimes it's hard to get started on a task but you can figure it out with some help to get you rolling! Your team is there to help!

Commenter_18

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

I often don't make my 40 hours but some weeks I play catch up, I use an hour or two of vacation, and at the end of the year if I'm behind I just work a week or whatever without pay. My company is pretty awesome so I don't really get any crap for it.

We're hiring remote (US only) PHP devs btw, and it's a phenomenal company, if I haven't made that clear. Shoot me a PM with some code samples if anyone is interested.

Commenter_3

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

I think I lost a job I loved from something like this. I don't blame you

Commenter_19

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

i feel just like you. i have been recently given a bad review because I ask too many questions and i need help. (yes my ADHD got me blurting questions).

I also had trouble starting up projects and planning them, and unfortunately it caused me delays i regret. my communication skills also can be bad if my brain is racing , sometimes i talk too fast.

i did try coping with it with doing journaling, and there is an app on PlayStore called Edison that can actually help you time block your day and even help you set daily and weekly goals. it helped me a lot.

also , taking a break helps. it happens with me when I was so tired this week. i took a day off and it definitely helps.

Notion is also another Desktop app you can try that can save up any knowledge you want.

hope things work out better for you. I also recommend listening to ADHD podcasts like 'Taking Control with ADHD'.