

title: **Dealing with brain fog**

id: bg4nal

url: [here](https://www.reddit.com/r/ADHD_Programmers/comments/bg4nal/dealing_with_brain_fog/): https://www.reddit.com/r/ADHD_Programmers/comments/bg4nal/dealing_with_brain_fog/

num_comments: 19

num_up_votes: 31

upvote_ratio: 0.98

Post Text

I was fired from my first programming gig in November after about 18 months because I was not productive enough and made too many mistakes. I used the opportunity to travel the country with a friend of mine until January, but since then I have kind of fallen into a pretty deep depression and haven't really felt motivated or improved myself in any way. It's obviously been time for me to bite the bullet, update my resume, and get back on the horse, but there are a few challenges I'm facing. I've had time to get some help with treating my depression which I neglected while I was working, but I'm still dealing with days/hours where it is near impossible for me to keep a coherent line of thought. It blocked out entire days and made me overlook details. It seems to happen randomly. It's a feeling very similar to being behind on sleep, except it happens even when I have been going to bed on time. The lights around me start to dim. I look at the code on my monitor and it's like it's written in a language I don't understand. I'd take short walks outside to try and clear my head. Nothing seemed to work. It was like all I could do was either stall out and hope it passed, or try and push through knowing that I would screw up and forget a test scenario, some detail in the spec, and end up submitting unsatisfactory work. Sometimes I wonder if the stims (which I've been off of since I got back from the road trip) were contributing to poor quality of sleep, or I was drinking too much coffee, or I was just stressed out because I hated the job and felt like I was always up against my own bad reputation. My psych says it's anxiety. But if anything it was the opposite and induced anxiety. I don't know why it happens but it's been defeating me since I graduated. I can remember this feeling all the way back to high school before I was diagnosed but it didn't affect my studies (I was a pretty good student). I found a lot of challenge in university work but everything was so neatly boxed in, just bits of code to read, but compared to working on a complicated business package it was like tying shoes. It felt futile to try and trace through 15 programs with thousands of lines apiece even on my lucid days, and impossible on days where I was half gone. Just wanted to know your thoughts on this. Maybe one of you have dealt with this problem. Even through all of this I still feel like I have an aptitude for this career and don't feel ready to give up on it... but part of me is so exhausted of defeating myself all the time and telling me I should just give up and work at a fucking restaurant or call center. Help me :(

Comments

Commenter_2

ID: eliqnlb, Upvotes: 10

I'd actually get a sleep study and see if there's something deeper underlying. In my own case, I wasn't getting very much stage 4 (restorative) sleep and was able to adjust medication to help with that.

Commenter_3

ID: eljbf8p, Upvotes: 8

I've asked this question over at r/ADHD. I've found out brain fog is usually caused by dehydration. Too much coffee can dehydrate you.

I cut down on my coffee, ate bunches of almonds and drank slurps of water throughout the day. The first day I tried this routine as advised by other redditors, my brain fog almost cleared by afternoon

Also, the ADHD brain requires more protein than the average guy. This means lean white meat, lentils, protein-rich veggies, etc

Commenter_4

ID: elkc6eg, Upvotes: 2

I'll give this a go, now the temperature has risen I'm noticing brain fog like OP's all the more.
Why the almonds?

Commenter_3

ID: elkr7rh, Upvotes: 2

Low glycemic index. I'm trying to cut down on sugars, which will give me a sharp increase of intense energy and I won't be able to sit still.

I'm still jackhammering my legs on the floor for most of the day, but at least I can keep my butt on the chair for a lot longer. I suppose any type of nuts would do

Water is the magic ingredient for me though. I can't believe I never made the association, after all these years of living. My brain fog is so persistent and constant, I thought it's just me.

Until people keep pointing out about dehydration in [my post](https://www.reddit.com/r/ADHD/comments/bb4uqh/who_here_has_to_constantly_deal_with_brain_fog) and I'm like fiiiine. And then I'm like *what sorcery is this* the next day

Commenter_5

ID: elq74vq, Upvotes: 2

Be careful with nuts. They're great but too many and they'll throw your Omega 6 / Omega 3 ratio so far out of whack you won't be able to keep up.

Commenter_3

ID: elqm6do, Upvotes: 1

TIL. I munch about 20g of almonds a day. Please tell me I'm not gonna die

Commenter_5

ID: elsio0f, Upvotes: 1

Don't worry, most people's Omega 6 / Omega 3 ratios are out of whack :)

Commenter_4

ID: elktddi, Upvotes: 1

I know that feel with the water haha

I can attest that lowering sugar is really good for focus and lessening the hyperactivity.

If I eat something sweet, I end up making myself so tense in order to remain still that I end up with painful muscles!

Commenter_3

ID: elktrgq, Upvotes: 1

>>painful muscles

Yes. People don't understand this. Is it like your muscles turning into wriggling worms for you? Because that's what it felt like for me. Freaking unbearable if I don't stretch and move

Commenter_4

ID: ellsyg1, Upvotes: 1

Sometimes, it can depend on the muscle tbh. A lot of the time it feels like I've been carved out of blocks of stone and attempting to move or relax those blocks is acutely painful

Commenter_6

ID: ell1ptc, Upvotes: 1

Isn't jackhammering a sign of insufficient meds?

Commenter_3

ID: ella3tl, Upvotes: 1

Is it? I only do that at a faster rate when I'm *on* my meds, as nervousness happen to be a side effect of mine.

I'm on ritalin 10mg

Commenter_6

ID: ellatsa, Upvotes: 1

Hmm I don't know I guess...meds reduce it for me, I'm on dex.

When I asked my doc about how he thought things were going, he said "good, you're a lot less agitated", so I took it to mean I was shaking my legs less.

Commenter_3

ID: ellbhn0, Upvotes: 1

I'm probably affected by the burst of Ritalin. I'm more relaxed on Concerta, still gives me a slight nervous flutter in my chest tho.

But due to the nature of my job, short bursts of strong stimulants works better. So I stuck with Ritalin despite the sometimes-nauseating nervousness that comes with it

Commenter_6

ID: eln1ctp, Upvotes: 2

Fair enough...at the end of the day everyone's bodies and needs are different. As long as something is better than before and the side effects are tolerable, it's a win

Commenter_7

ID: elif4yh, Upvotes: 4

Heeeey, same problem. My company declined to renew my contract because of lack of attention and small mistakes, and then I find out I have ADHD. I tuned my resume up, and just applied at a couple places earlier today on lunch. I know it's gonna be super tough getting back in there, but I'm rooting for you! There's help if you reach out. Try the cscareers subreddit for help with your resume!

Unknown_User

ID: elismg4, Upvotes: 1

[deleted]

OP

ID: elity0u, Upvotes: 4

The lion's share of my mistakes were non functional errors in my code that violated code policy. It was really easy to overlook these given how often older programmers got away with these mistakes (and thus they ended up in the live library). My boss was a real stickler for this kind of thing, even more so with me because he was trying to get me to learn I guess. In all the time I worked there I had one mistake go live. It didn't incur any real damage and I took responsibility for it.

Honestly I think my problem, more than anything else, was my inability to realize I was in a losing situation and should give up.

Commenter_9

ID: em5rfjv, Upvotes: 1

I'm surprised your team hasn't implemented a linter to check submissions before merging.

One thing I do to catch dumb mistakes is I look at the diff of my merge request first, line by line. I'll usually find some sloppiness (commented line of code, poorly named variable, missing change), and correct it before asking other devs to review my code.

Essentially, any work I do goes through two phases: 1, generate phase - I write code that solves the problem. 2, refine phase - I go over the code I wrote, review and refactor it. I do this with math or any writing I do as well. If I try to combine both parts, I get stuck, so I just do phase 1, knowing I will make many mistakes, and rely on phase 2 to catch it.

Edit: Refine phase :)

Commenter_10

ID: elq2ybe, Upvotes: 1

In the same boat as you... don't give up.

Something you can try is to find something to do that you're passionate about (side project) and get into it - do something to esteem yourself - not for profit - not for impressing your employers - do something just for you.)

The one thing that might also help is to do small, basic tasks / problems and work your way up. You may have set yourself up with high expectations and are putting too much weight with a loaded calendar schedule, thus exhausting your brain and leading to burnout - try doing small, concentrated tasks, and get a bit better each day to build confidence - just like an engineering problem, apply divide-and-conquer... something must be causing your anxiety, you just have to examine yourself and try just getting a little better/faster each day; it may feel slow, but that's the point! Progress/self-esteem adds up over-time, just gotta keep chipping bit-by-bit away and you'll be back up to speed in $O(n \log n)$ time =).