**Why I Built FocusBuddy: Fighting ADHD with Automation**

**Introduction**

For as long as I can remember, I’ve struggled with focus. I’d sit down to study or write code, only to find myself lost in tabs, distracted by messages, or just overwhelmed by the thought of where to begin. After years of trying different productivity methods, timers, and apps, I realized something: most tools are built for neurotypical brains. They expect you to organize, choose, schedule, and track your progress—all while you’re already trying to do the actual work.

That’s a lot to ask, especially for someone with ADHD.

So I built **FocusBuddy**—a terminal-based, automated focus cycle assistant designed to take those mental burdens away. This blog post is about the *why* behind the project. Not the code, not the features—just the personal pain points, the struggles I’ve faced, and the guiding principles that shaped its creation.

**Understanding the ADHD Struggle**

ADHD isn’t just about being easily distracted. It’s about time blindness, executive dysfunction, emotional regulation, memory lapses, and sometimes, sheer mental exhaustion. Productivity systems that work for others—like detailed planners, kanban boards, and calendar apps—can often overwhelm people with ADHD. These tools often add pressure instead of removing it.

Here’s how ADHD manifests in my daily life:

* I often lose track of time completely.
* I forget what task I was supposed to be doing.
* I struggle to transition between activities.
* I get paralyzed by having to choose what to work on.
* I rarely track my progress, which leads to frustration.

All of these things made productivity feel like an uphill battle, every single day. So I asked myself: what would a tool look like if it was built *for someone like me*?

**The Birth of FocusBuddy**

I was already familiar with the Pomodoro Technique—a method that breaks work into 25-minute focus sessions followed by 5-minute breaks. It’s simple and effective, but even setting a timer and remembering to log tasks often felt like too many steps. That’s where the idea for FocusBuddy came in: what if I could automate the *entire* process?

FocusBuddy needed to be:

* Effortless to launch
* Prompt-based (so I don’t have to think)
* Log my activity automatically
* Remind me to take breaks
* Live in my terminal where I already work

And that’s what I built.

**Designing with ADHD in Mind**

ADHD-friendly tools need to reduce cognitive load. Every additional step—opening a window, making a choice, remembering to save—adds resistance. FocusBuddy was built with the opposite philosophy: *get out of the user’s way*.

Here are the core principles I used:

**1.**

**Low Friction**

One command: ./focusbuddy.sh. That’s all. No setup screens, no configurations. You run it, and it walks you through everything. This is critical for days when starting is the hardest part.

**2.**

**Guided Flow**

FocusBuddy prompts you to choose a task from a list or write a new one. This takes away the mental burden of choosing randomly or writing out a to-do list before starting.

**3.**

**Structured Timing**

It handles the timer automatically. You don’t need to remember when to stop or start. It gives you a 25-minute session, then a 5-minute break with optional reminders.

**4.**

**Automated Logging**

At the end of each session, it logs your task, start and end time, and status to a CSV file. It also appends completed tasks to a daily done.txt file. This way, you build a record of what you’ve accomplished.

**5.**

**Kind Nudges**

Instead of blaring alarms, FocusBuddy uses figlet, cowsay, or lolcat to display friendly reminders and break messages. It’s more human and less stressful.

**The Problem with Existing Tools**

I’ve tried dozens of productivity apps, from Trello to Notion to Pomofocus. Many are great—but not for someone with ADHD. Common issues include:

* Too many features and buttons
* Difficult to start quickly
* Notifications that feel punishing
* Lack of transparency (no logs)
* No terminal support

FocusBuddy solves these problems by being extremely simple, fully transparent (you can read the script yourself), and completely under your control. You’re not locked into an ecosystem or app.

**Real Benefits I’ve Experienced**

Since using FocusBuddy, I’ve:

* Started tasks more easily
* Stopped procrastinating less often
* Been more consistent with breaks
* Felt less guilty at the end of the day
* Built a visible log of progress

It’s made me feel like I have a system that works *with* me, not against me.

Here’s an example log entry from my sessions.csv file:

Task,Start Time,End Time,Duration

"Write blog draft",14:00,14:25,25m

Seeing a list of completed sessions at the end of the day helps combat the “I did nothing today” feeling that often comes with ADHD.

**Why I Used Bash**

Bash is perfect for this project:

* It’s fast, minimal, and everywhere
* It integrates with tools I already use (sleep, read, date, etc.)
* It works on any Linux-based system, no installs required
* I wanted to get better at shell scripting and this was a fun way to practice

It also helped me understand the philosophy of Unix: “Do one thing and do it well.”

**Where FocusBuddy Fits In My Life**

FocusBuddy is now a key part of my workflow. I start my day with a session to plan, then do two or three focus sessions in a row depending on the task. I run it in a split terminal alongside code or writing.

Sometimes I even schedule it with cron to prompt me every morning.

0 10 \* \* \* /home/salman/focusbuddy.sh

The more I use it, the more ideas I get for how to improve it—which I’ll cover in a future blog post.

**Closing Thoughts**

FocusBuddy wasn’t built to impress anyone. It was built to help me start. To help me finish. To help me stop being overwhelmed by tasks and time. It’s the tool I needed when everything else was too much.

If you also struggle with getting started, staying on task, or remembering what you’ve accomplished, I encourage you to try building your own automation—even a small one. It might just change how you see productivity.

In the next blog, I’ll walk through exactly how FocusBuddy works—from task prompts to CSV logging—and how I wrote it in under 100 lines of Bash.

Thanks for reading, and stay kind to your brain.