

Is This Your Brain Too?

This isn't a quiz. There's no score. Just a list of things that might sound familiar.

The Disappearing Hours

You sat down to do one thing and three hours vanished.

You didn't notice. You didn't eat. You didn't check your phone. But the thing you actually needed to do? Still untouched.

People call it 'getting distracted.' But it doesn't feel like distraction. It feels like your brain chose for you — and chose wrong.

You can focus. That was never the problem. You just can't always aim it.

If you've built an entire career around pretending this doesn't happen to you — you're not alone in that either.

The Impossible Start

The task is simple. You know how to do it. It might take fifteen minutes.

You've been thinking about it for three days.

You've moved it from one list to another. You've opened the document and closed it. You've told yourself you'll do it after lunch, after this episode, after you clean the kitchen.

It's not laziness. Your body knows the difference between *can't* and *won't* — even if no one else does.

The report you haven't finished. The appointment you haven't made. The email you've rewritten in your head fourteen times. You know exactly which task this is about.

The Two Versions of You

Some days you're unstoppable. Ideas are flowing. You're sharp, funny, on top of everything.

Other days you can't remember why you walked into a room.

People see the first version and set their expectations there. Then the second version shows up and you feel like a fraud.

You're not a fraud. You're someone with a brain that runs in waves, not straight lines.

Your team saw you handle a crisis perfectly on Monday. By Thursday you couldn't return a phone call. You spent the weekend wondering if you're cut out for this.

The Noise Inside

Your brain is never quiet.

There are tabs open you didn't choose. Songs playing on loop. Conversations from six years ago replaying. A thought about something you need to do next week crashing into a thought about something you forgot to do yesterday.

People say 'just focus.'

As if you haven't been trying to do exactly that your entire life.

The Shame Closet

You have a pile. Maybe it's mail. Maybe it's emails. Maybe it's texts you haven't returned.

You know it's there. You think about it constantly. But the longer you avoid it, the heavier it gets, and the heavier it gets, the harder it is to start.

So you don't.

And then you feel like a terrible person for not doing something that 'everyone else' seems to handle without thinking.

The inbox with 847 unread. The insurance claim you never submitted. The friend you ghosted because you waited too long and now it's weird. You know your pile.

The Emotional Volume Knob

Yours doesn't work like other people's.

A small criticism doesn't sting — it burns. A friend's short reply doesn't just feel off — it feels like proof they hate you. A mistake at work doesn't just feel bad — it feels like confirmation that you're fundamentally broken.

People say you're 'too sensitive.'

You're not too sensitive. Your nervous system just registers impact differently.

A coworker's offhand comment. A partner's sigh. A friend who didn't say hi first. Your brain turned each one into a full investigation of your worth as a human being.

The Brilliant Idea Graveyard

You've started so many things.

Journals. Projects. Routines. Hobbies. Plans that felt life-changing at 2am.

Most of them live in a drawer now. Or a folder. Or a notes app full of things that excited you once and make you feel guilty now.

The ideas weren't bad. Your brain just moved on before your hands could finish.

The Masking Exhaustion

You've learned how to look like you have it together.

You show up on time (barely). You smile through the overwhelm. You nod along in meetings while your brain is somewhere else entirely. You've built an entire performance around appearing normal.

And no one knows how tired you are from the performance itself.

The work isn't what's exhausting you. Pretending your brain works like everyone else's — that's what's draining the tank.

You're not burned out from your job. You're burned out from performing a version of yourself that can do your job without anyone noticing how hard it actually is.

The Time Blindness

Five minutes and forty-five minutes feel the same.

You're always almost late or weirdly early. You can't estimate how long anything takes. 'I'll be ready in ten minutes' is a lie you believe every time you say it.

It's not poor planning. Your brain genuinely doesn't process time the way other people's do.

The 'Why Can't I Just' Loop

Why can't I just pay the bill. Why can't I just call them back. Why can't I just go to sleep. Why can't I just start. Why can't I just be normal.

This loop is the most exhausting part.

Not the ADHD itself – the constant judgment you carry about having it.

If a lot of this sounded like you

You don't need a score to validate what you already feel.

If you read this and your chest got tight – if you thought 'how does this person know my life' – that's information worth paying attention to.

This isn't a diagnosis. Only a professional can do that. But recognition is the first step, and you just took it.

You're not lazy. Executive dysfunction is real and neurological.

You're not too much. Your brain just processes the world at a different volume.

You're not behind. You're on a nonlinear path. And nonlinear doesn't mean wrong.

Where to go from here

7 Things Nobody Told You About Your ADHD Brain – The science behind every section you just read.

Small Experiments for ADHD Brains – 10 micro-experiments that match your energy level.

20 Minutes of Honesty – Journal prompts for the stuff you just felt but aren't ready to say out loud yet.

The ADHD Cheat Sheet for People Who Work With Me – A one-page guide to hand your coworker, boss, or partner.

You're not the only brain that works like this. I see you.

This guide is for personal use only. Please do not reproduce or distribute without permission.

© 2026 Tiffany Paiva
The ADHD Diary Project