

Small Experiments for ADHD Brains

This isn't homework. There's no schedule. No order. No guilt if you abandon it for three weeks and come back.

Pick whatever matches your energy right now. Set a timer. Try it once. That counts.

Before you start: check your brain

Energy: Empty / Low / Medium / High / Wired

Focus: Scattered / Foggy / Okay / Locked in

Motivation: None / Low / Curious / Let's go

If you're...	Try...
Empty + Scattered + None	Experiment 6 (Find Your Reset) or 7 (Shrink the Task)
Low + Foggy + Low	Experiment 3 (Environment Reset) or 5 (Stress Signal Check)
Medium + Okay + Curious	Experiment 1 (Energy Pattern) or 2 (Hyperfocus Log)
High + Locked In + Let's go	Experiment 4 (Time Estimation) or 9 (Decision Batching)
Emotionally activated	Experiment 8 (RSD Pause)
Feeling alone in it	Experiment 10 or 11

Experiment 1: Find Your Energy Pattern

Time: 2 min/day for one week • Energy needed: Low

Set three phone alarms — morning, midday, evening. When they go off, rate your energy 1–10. That's it. After a week, look at the numbers. Most ADHD brains have 2–3 reliable high windows and 1–2 predictable crashes.

The point: Stop scheduling hard things during crash windows. Stop judging yourself for being low when your brain is always low at that time.

Done when: You can name your best 2 energy windows.

Experiment 2: Hyperfocus Trigger Log

Time: 5 min setup + one week • Energy needed: Low-Medium

When you catch yourself hyperfocused, jot down: what you were doing, what started it, how long it lasted.

The point: Hyperfocus isn't random. There are triggers – novelty, urgency, emotional stakes. Once you know yours, you can use them on purpose.

Done when: You've logged 3 episodes and spotted a pattern.

Experiment 3: The Environment Reset

Time: 10 minutes, once • Energy needed: Low-Medium

Pick one space where you need to focus. Remove distractions – phone in another room, close extra tabs, clear visual clutter. Add one thing that helps – specific music, different lighting, a particular drink.

The point: ADHD brains are extremely environment-dependent. Small changes can do more than hours of 'trying harder.'

Done when: You notice even a small difference in how long you stayed focused.

Experiment 4: Time Estimation Game

Time: One day • Energy needed: Medium

Before you start 3 different tasks today, guess how long they'll take. Write it down. Time yourself. Compare.

The point: Most ADHD brains underestimate everything by 30–50%. Seeing the gap in black and white is the first step to building realistic buffers.

Done when: You have real data on how far off your estimates are.

Experiment 5: The Stress Signal Check

Time: 2 min, 3x/day for a week • Energy needed: Low

Set three alarms. Quick body scan: Physical (restless, tense, tired, wired, fine?), Mental (scattered, overwhelmed, clear, foggy?), Emotional (anxious, frustrated, calm, numb?).

The point: ADHD stress builds up without warning signs you recognize – until you learn what your specific signals are.

Done when: You can name your top 3 stress signals before they snowball.

Experiment 6: Find Your Reset

Time: 2–5 min each • Energy needed: Any

Movement reset: Walk, stretch, jumping jacks – 2 minutes. Stimulation reset: Change music, lighting, location. Dopamine reset: Do one small easy thing you can finish.

The point: Different resets work for different states. Movement for stuck. Stimulation for bored. Dopamine for motivation holes.

Done when: You know which reset works best for which state.

Experiment 7: Shrink the Task

Time: 5 minutes • Energy needed: Low

Pick something you've been avoiding. Make it stupidly small. 'Clean the kitchen' → wash 3 dishes. 'Reply to emails' → reply to 1. Do only the tiny version.

The point: ADHD brains freeze on big tasks. The secret isn't motivation – it's making the start so small your brain doesn't resist it.

Done when: You did the tiny version of something you've been avoiding.

Experiment 8: The 24-Hour RSD Pause

Time: Real-time, when triggered • Energy needed: Any

Next time your brain tells you someone is mad at you or thinks you're stupid — don't act on it. Don't send the text. Don't quit. Wait 24 hours. Then check: was it real?

The point: RSD is intense but fast. Training yourself to pause before reacting is one of the highest-leverage ADHD skills there is.

Done when: You successfully ride out one RSD wave without acting on it.

Experiment 9: Decision Batching

Time: One day • Energy needed: Medium

Instead of making decisions as they come up, collect them. Write them down. Then pick one 20-minute window and make them all at once.

The point: Scattered decisions drain your battery all day. Batched decisions drain it once. You'll have more energy left for things that actually matter.

Done when: You batch one day's decisions and notice the difference.

Experiment 10: Unmask One Thing

Time: One conversation • Energy needed: Medium-High

Pick one person who feels safe. Tell them one specific thing that's hard for you. Not the whole story. Just one thing. 'I have a hard time with transitions.' 'I'm not great at estimating time.'

The point: Masking costs energy you don't have to spare. Letting one person see one real thing can free up more than you expect.

Done when: You said the thing. That's it. That's the experiment.

Experiment 11: Run One with Someone Else

Time: 2 min to invite • Energy needed: Medium

Pick any experiment you've tried or want to try. Send this text: 'I'm trying this thing where I [name the experiment]. Want to try it with me and compare notes at the end of the week?'

The point: ADHD in isolation breeds shame. ADHD with a witness becomes data. Having someone else running the same experiment turns self-improvement into connection.

Done when: You sent the text, you both tried the experiment, and you had one check-in.

The Rules

- Follow your energy, not a schedule.
 - Set timers for everything.
 - Skip what doesn't fit.
 - Restart anytime without shame.
 - Doing one experiment counts.
-

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

© 2026 Tiffany Paiva
The ADHD Diary Project