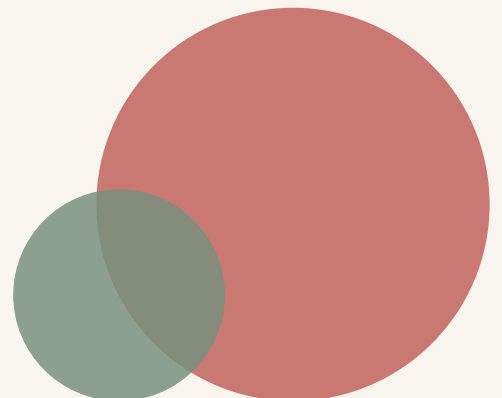


Overcoming ADHD Paralysis

A short, practical guide for the moments you know exactly what you need to do — and still can't make yourself start.

A free resource from Bloom Mind Counselling
ADHD & anxiety counselling for adults · www.bloommind.com.au · mosinskis@gmail.com



What ADHD paralysis actually is

If you've ever sat staring at a task you know is simple, know is important, and still cannot make yourself begin — that's not laziness, and it's not a discipline problem. It's a recognised experience for many adults with ADHD, sometimes called task paralysis or ADHD paralysis.

It tends to show up in three overlapping forms:

- **Task paralysis** — a task feels too big, too vague, or too boring to locate a starting point, so nothing happens at all.
- **Mental paralysis** — too many competing thoughts at once, so decision-making itself stalls out.
- **Choice paralysis** — so many possible next steps that picking any single one feels impossible, so you pick none.

Underneath all three is usually the same mechanism: an executive function system that struggles to prioritise, sequence, and initiate — not a lack of motivation or care.

Why willpower doesn't fix it

Most advice aimed at procrastination assumes the barrier is motivation — "just start," "push through it." For ADHD paralysis, the barrier usually sits earlier, in the brain's ability to initiate a task at all, regardless of how much you want to do it. That's why willpower-based advice tends to leave people feeling worse, not better — it adds shame on top of a system that was already struggling to start.

Five ways to work with it, not against it

These aren't about becoming more disciplined. They're about lowering the barrier to starting, so your brain has less to fight through before it can begin.

01

Shrink the first step until it's almost silly

Not "clean the kitchen" — "put one cup in the sink." The goal of the first step isn't progress, it's motion. Momentum tends to follow once you're moving, even slightly.

02

Make the task visible, not just remembered

ADHD paralysis thrives in your head, where a task has no shape and no edges. Write it on a sticky note, say it out loud, put the object in front of you. Externalising a task gives your brain something concrete to act on instead of something abstract to dread.

03

Borrow someone else's focus (body doubling)

Working alongside another person — in person, on a call, or even a focus livestream — can unstick a task that solo willpower can't touch. You're not asking them to help with the task itself, just to be present while you do it.

04

Remove the decision, not just the task

Paralysis often isn't about the task — it's about the ten micro-decisions hiding inside it (where do I start, what order, which app). Pre-decide one of those in advance, the night before if possible, so future-you has one less choice standing between them and starting.

05

Treat the freeze as information, not failure

When paralysis hits, the least useful response is self-criticism — it adds a second problem (shame) on top of the first (a stuck executive function system). Naming it plainly — "this is a paralysis moment, not a character flaw" — tends to shorten how long it lasts.

Breaking It Down

A worksheet for turning a big, overwhelming project into a first step you can actually take.

Big projects stall for a simple reason: the goal is real, but there's no small enough next step attached to it. This worksheet exists to close that gap. Fill it out loosely — it's a working document, not a test.

01 What's the big goal?

e.g. Launch the new client intake process

02 Why does this matter to you?

The reason underneath the task — this is what you'll come back to when it feels hard

03 Break it into 3–5 milestones

Not tasks yet — just the major chunks the goal is made of.

Milestone 1

Milestone 2

Milestone 3

Milestone 4

04 Turn milestone 1 into next actions

Pick just the first milestone from page one. Break it into steps small enough that you could start one right now, without a warm-up. If a step still feels big, shrink it again.

Milestone 1 (copy from page one)

Next action 1

Next action 2

Next action 3

05 When will you check in on progress?

A specific day, not "soon"

06 What's making it hard to start?

Tick anything that fits — there may be more than one

- ☐ It feels too big
- ☐ I don't know where to start
- ☐ There are too many choices
- ☐ It's boring / not stimulating
- ☐ I'm worried about doing it wrong
- ☐ I feel overwhelmed
- ☐ Something else:

07 What could make starting easier?

Tick anything worth trying today

- ☐ Body doubling / someone nearby
- ☐ Remove one distraction
- ☐ Put what I need in front of me
- ☐ Decide the first step in advance
- ☐ Set a timer
- ☐ Something else:

08 After I started, what happened?

Did the task feel different once you were moving? What helped? What would you change next time?

If you fill this out and still feel stuck, that's worth exploring together — not a sign you did it wrong.

When this keeps happening

Strategies like these can help in the moment. But if ADHD paralysis is a weekly — or daily — part of your life, it may be helpful to look further upstream: your patterns of overwhelm, the expectations you place on yourself, the routines and environments that support you, and the shame that can build after years of hearing “just try harder.”

Life doesn't have to feel like constant damage control. Counselling can give you space to understand what is happening underneath the stuck moments and develop strategies that fit your actual life — rather than trying to force yourself into another productivity system.

Ready to talk it through?

Book a free 15-minute call — no pressure, just a conversation about whether working together makes sense.

www.bloommind.com.au · mosinskis@gmail.com · 0422 145 601

This guide is general information, not a substitute for professional support. If you're in crisis, please contact Lifeline on 13 11 14, or 000 in an emergency.