

# GTD<sup>®</sup> and ADHD

The Journey to Relaxed Focus

## AGENDA

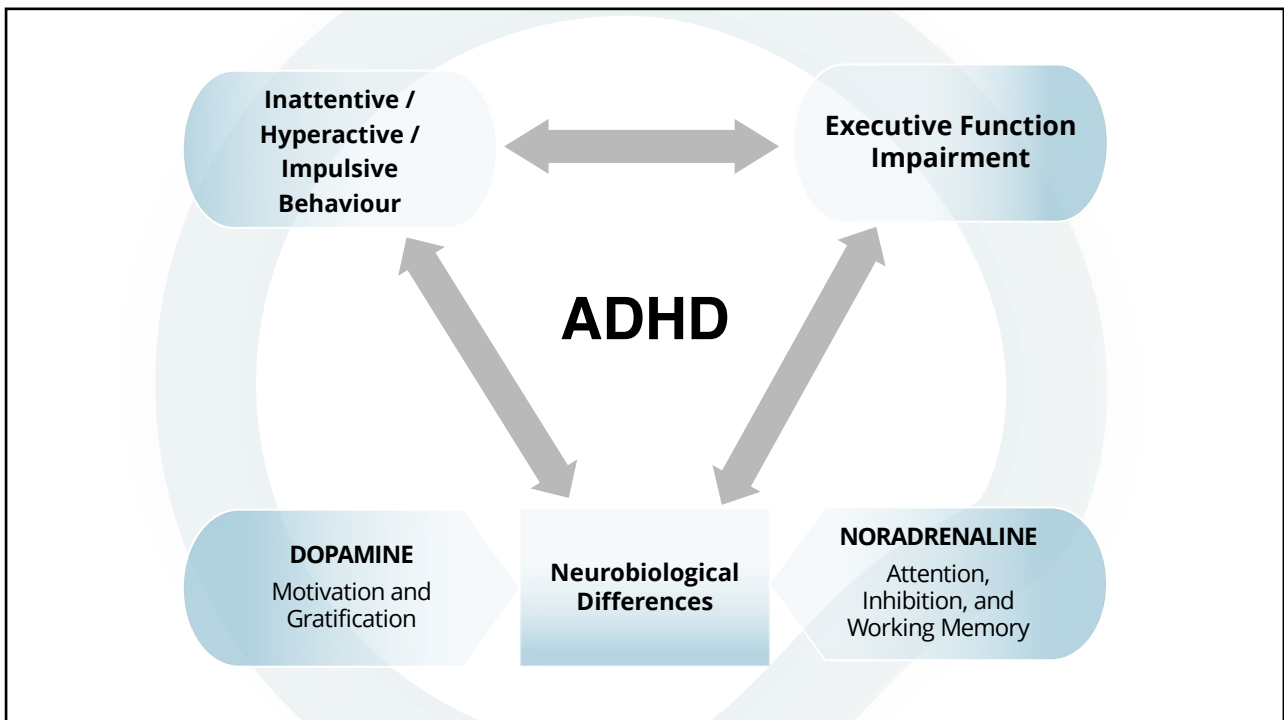
Context and Perspectives on ADHD

Why GTD is Invaluable for ADHD

Best Practices for Adopting GTD with ADHD

# ADHD

Facts, History, and Perspectives

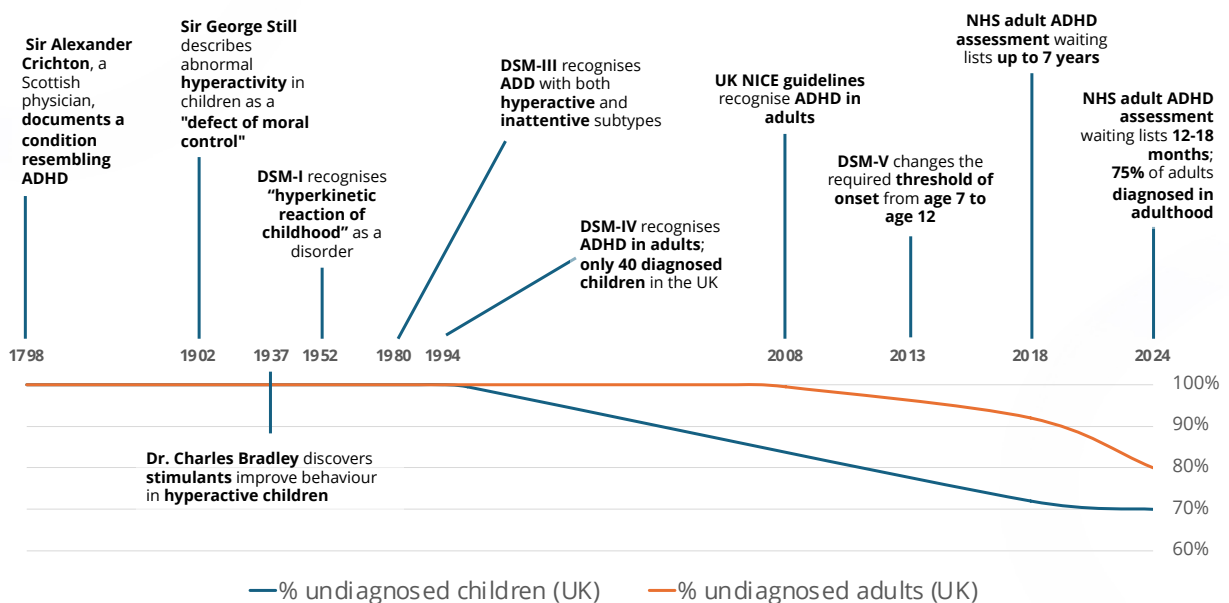


## MISCONCEPTIONS AND FACTS

### ADHD

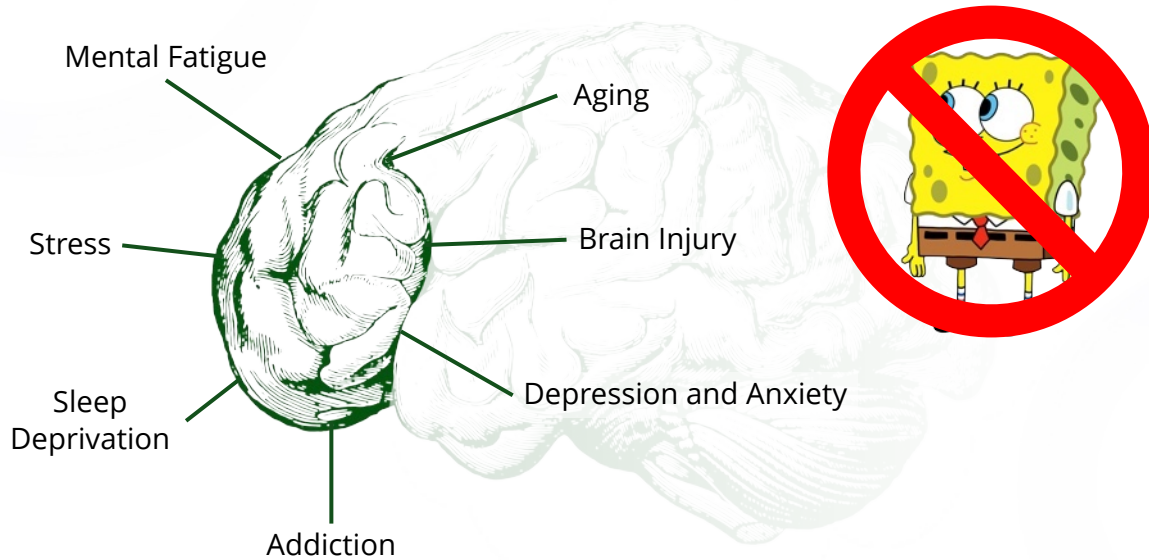
- |                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| X is a modern "first world problem" | ✓ exists globally and historically                 |
| X is something we all have now      | ✓ affects 5% of children, 3-4% of adults in the UK |
| X over-diagnosed these days         | ✓ estimated 70-80% undiagnosed                     |
| X is something children outgrow     | ✓ begins in childhood, less than 10% "outgrow"     |
| X mostly affects males              | ✓ Is underdiagnosed in girls, less so for women    |
| X is about being hyperactive        | ✓ impacts many aspects of executive function       |
| X is caused by parenting or trauma  | ✓ has a strong genetic component (74% heritable)   |
| X is subjectively diagnosed         | ✓ has rigorous DSM-V and NICE guidelines           |
| X Is difficult to treat             | ✓ is among "the most treatable mental disorders"   |

## HISTORY OF ADULT ADHD IN THE UK





## OTHER CAUSES OF EXECUTIVE FUNCTION IMPAIRMENT



## COMMONLY-PERCEIVED STRENGTHS OF ADHD

- ❖ Abiding Contradictions
- ❖ Adaptability
- ❖ Athleticism
- ❖ Compassionate Leadership
- ❖ Creativity
- ❖ Curiosity
- ❖ Divergent Thinking
- ❖ Empathy
- ❖ Entrepreneurship
- ❖ Good in a Crisis
- ❖ High Energy
- ❖ Innovation
- ❖ Intense Focus
- ❖ Intuition
- ❖ Manual Dexterity
- ❖ Neurodiversity Allyship
- ❖ Passion
- ❖ Resilience
- ❖ Sense of Humour
- ❖ Social Justice
- ❖ Spontaneity
- ❖ Thriving Amid Fast Pace
- ❖ Unique Problem Solving
- ❖ Wide-Ranging Interests
- ❖ Willing to Risk Failure
- ❖ Work Ethic

# BENEFITS OF GTD

Complimenting Executive Function  
Improves Effectiveness, Self-Efficacy, and Flow

## OUTCOMES OF GTD PRACTICE

### ADHD



BASIS OF ACTION

EXECUTIVE FUNCTION

OUTCOMES



### GTD

self-efficacy (n.)

belief in one's ability  
to act in ways that are  
necessary to reach  
their goals

“Make it up. Make it happen.”  
-David Allen

**GTD COMPLEMENTS EXECUTIVE FUNCTION**

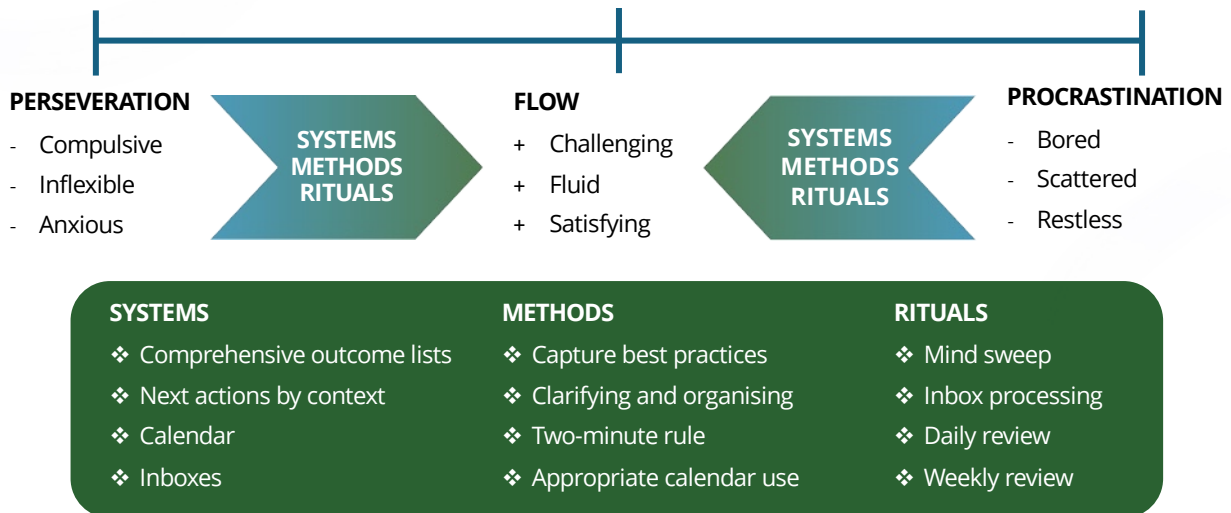
**FEATURE**

- + Self-Awareness
- + Self-Restraint
- + Awareness of Time
- + Working Memory
- + Emotional Regulation
- + Self-Motivation
- + Planning and Organizing
- + Changing Contexts
- + Monitoring Results

**COMPLEMENT**

- ❖ Ubiquitous Capture
- ❖ Inbox Processing
- ❖ Two-Minute Rule
- ❖ Next Action Lists
- ❖ Desired Outcome Lists
- ❖ Appropriate Calendar Use
- ❖ Daily Review
- ❖ Weekly Review
- ❖ Project/Action Support
- ❖ General Reference Filing
- ❖ Threefold Nature of Work

## GTD SYSTEMS, METHODS, AND RITUALS PROMOTE APPROPRIATE ATTENTION

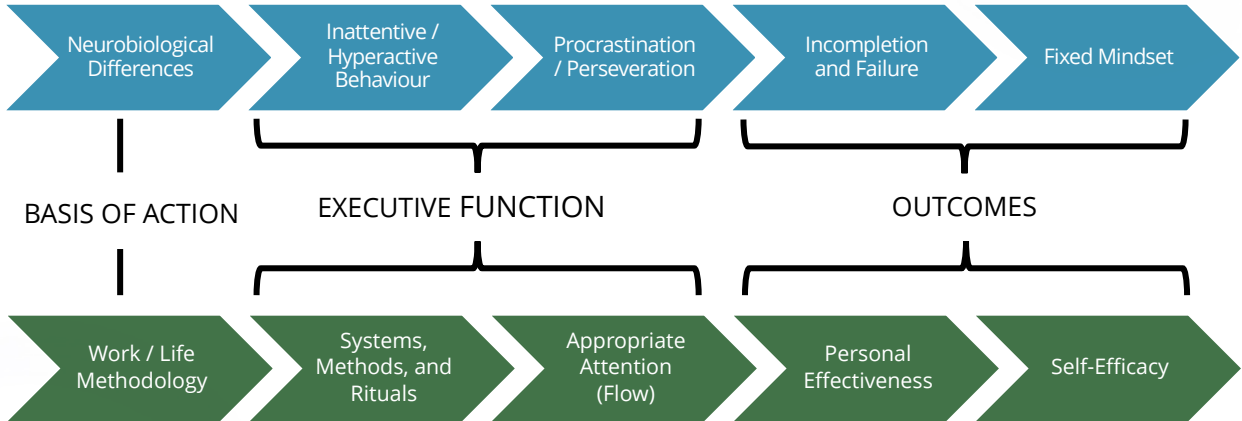


# ADOPTING GTD WITH ADHD

Part I:  
Overcoming Challenges

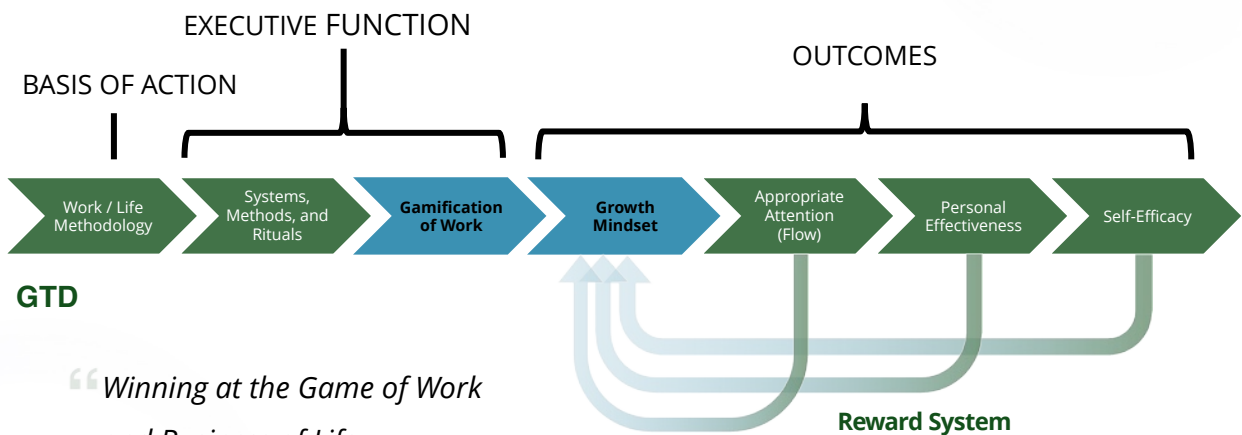
## OUTCOMES OF GTD PRACTICE

### ADHD



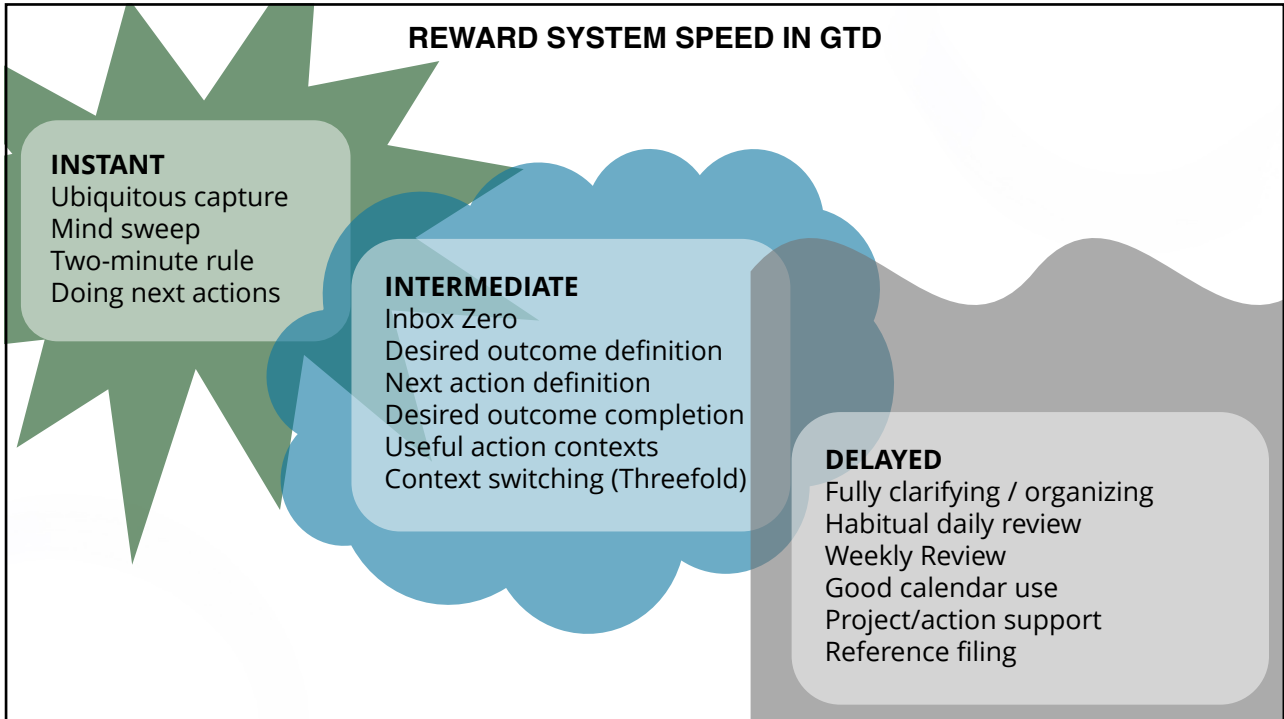
### GT D

## GT D PRACTICE, GAMIFICATION, AND GROWTH MINDSET



“Winning at the Game of Work  
and Business of Life  
-Tagline to *Making It All Work*”

Reward System



- ### GAMIFY SLOW REWARD ASPECTS
- ❖ Make GTD adoption itself a desired outcome with clear milestones
  - ❖ Carve a clear path to inbox zero with progress markers along the way
  - ❖ Clarify/organize in short bursts (timed burst, timed reward)
  - ❖ Focus on holding with clarify/organize until it is “off your mind for now”
  - ❖ Experiment with action contexts, but keep them practical
  - ❖ Make calendar and lists visually and intellectually attractive (consider KANBAN for some projects)
  - ❖ Use time boxing / pomodoro to encourage regrouping around the threefold nature of work model
  - ❖ Pair daily review with immutable daily activity (e.g. coffee)
  - ❖ Get a weekly review buddy, focus on highest-reward aspects first, have a treat
  - ❖ Get a calendar sense-check buddy or assistant for support
  - ❖ Make support material intellectually interesting (consider Notion, Obsidian, etc.) but still functionally fast

# ADOPTING GTD WITH ADHD

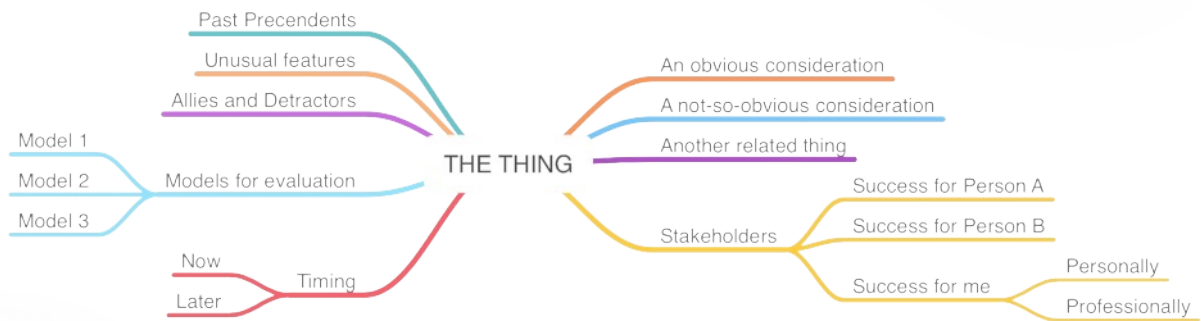
Part II:  
Capitalising on Strengths

“

*Are you committed to an outcome?*

Negotiation, renegotiation, and classification  
of whatever has your attention

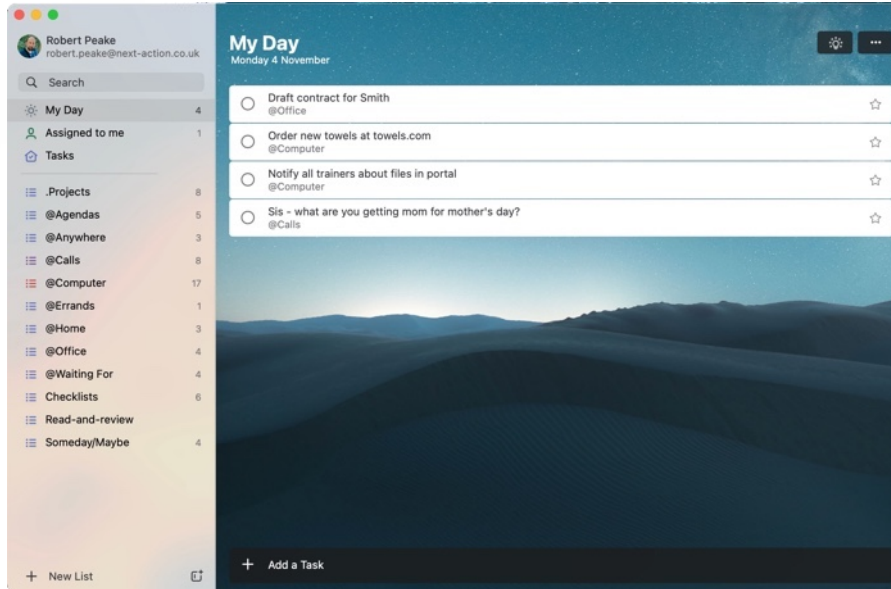
## DIVERGENT BEFORE CONVERGENT THINKING



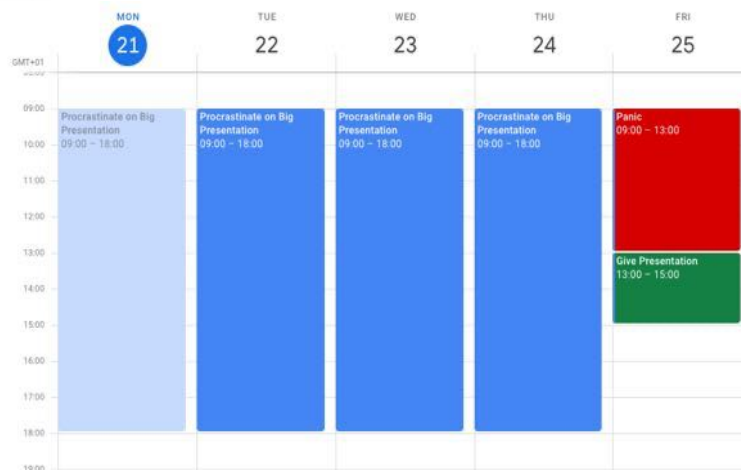
“ *What do you want to be true?*

Putting the desire in “desired outcomes”,  
psyching yourself up instead of psyching yourself out

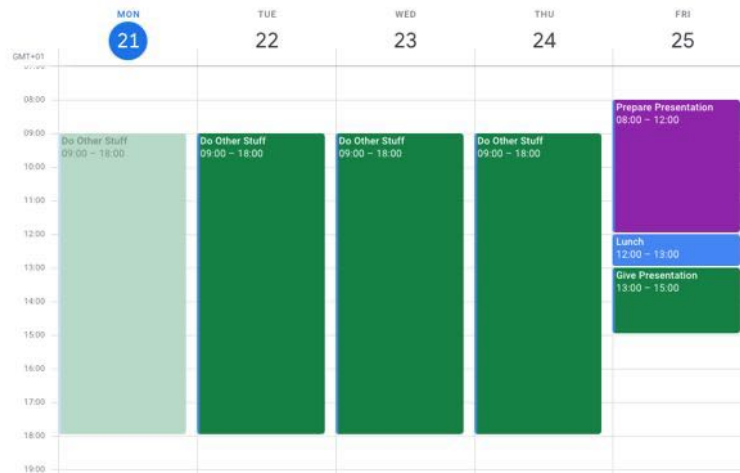
## DAILY REVIEW AND "TODAY" LISTS



## STRESSFUL PROCRASTINATION



## STRATEGIC PROCRASTINATION



“

*The highest reward for a person's toil is not what they get for it, but what they become by it.*

-John Ruskin

Work / Life Methodology

Systems, Methods, and Rituals

Gamification of Work

Growth Mindset

Appropriate Attention (Flow)

Personal Effectiveness

Self-Efficacy

# QUESTIONS & REFLECTIONS

## APPENDIX: COMPARISON OF PERSPECTIVES ON ADHD

Model	Core Premise	Key Concepts	Strengths	Challenges	Other Conditions
<b>Neurodevelopmental Disorder</b>	ADHD as a brain-based developmental condition needing treatment	ADHD arises from delays or deviations in brain development, treated with medication & therapy	Clear diagnostic criteria and effective, evidence-based treatments	Can focus too heavily on deficits and may ignore broader societal and contextual influences	Autism, communication disabilities, language disorders, specific learning disorders, intellectual disability, motor disorders
<b>Neurodivergence / Neurodiversity</b>	ADHD as a natural and historical variation in human cognition	Celebrates ADHD strengths; traits might have been advantageous in ancestral settings	Promotes acceptance, reframes ADHD positively, advocates for societal changes	Can romanticize ADHD, downplaying real struggles; current environments often remain non-adaptive	Autism, dyslexia, dyspraxia, Tourette's syndrome, specific learning difficulties (dys-)
<b>Neurocomplexity</b>	ADHD as a dynamic, context-dependent condition	ADHD varies across individuals and environments, involving genetics, environment, life stage	Emphasizes personalized care and avoids binary thinking	Difficult and resource-intensive to implement personalized, multidisciplinary, holistic care; very broad scope	Any condition with genetic-environmental interplay (e.g., depression, addiction, giftedness)

### APPENDIX: COMPARISON OF ADHD SYMPTOMS AND FLOW

	PERSEVERATION	FLOW	INATTENTION	HYPERACTIVITY / IMPULSIVITY
<b>MOTIVATION</b>	Compulsion	Challenge	Low Motivation	Stimulation-Seeking
<b>INTERNAL STATE</b>	Anxiety/Frustration	Fulfilment	Boredom	Restlessness
<b>SENSE OF TIME</b>	Lose Track	Flies By	Irrelevant	Racing
<b>SWITCHING</b>	Unable	Choose not to	Frequent	Disjointed
<b>ATTENTION</b>	Rigid	Fluid	Scattered	Impulsive
<b>RESULTS</b>	Stuck	Productive	Unfinished	Disrupted

### APPENDIX: GTD PRACTICES AS GAMIFICATION FOR GROWTH MINDSET

GTD PRACTICE	GAME ASPECT	GROWTH MINDSET SKILL
Ubiquitous Capture	Resource grabs	Deferred deployment
Inbox Processing	Progress bar	Incremental progress
Two-Minute Rule	Side-quests	Quick wins, variety
Next Actions	In-level objectives	Task chunking
Desired Outcomes	Level completion	Goal completion
Good Calendar Use	Turn-based strategy	Progressive planning
Daily Review	Load-outs	Resource deployment
Weekly Review	Upgrades / Crafting	Strategic planning
Project/Action Support	Campaign notes	Contextual operation
General Reference Filing	Inventory management	Knowledge organisation
Threefold Nature	Game paths	Refocusing
Mind Sweep	Screen clear	Resetting

# NOTES AND SOURCES

**Role of Dopamine and Noradrenaline in ADHD** – [NIH](#)  
**Rejecting the Dopamine pleasure hypothesis** – [Frazer Mawzon](#)

## ADHD exists globally and historically

- [NCBI – History of ADHD](#) – one of the earliest descriptions of ADHD-like symptoms was Sir Alexander Crichton in 1798
- [NCBI – Global perspective on ADHD](#)

## ADHD prevalence: 5% in children, 3-4% in adults (UK)

- [NHS England update on ADHD](#)
- [Psychiatrist.com](#)

## Under-diagnosis of ADHD

- [ADHD UK – Undiagnosed ADHD](#)
- [NCBI – ADHD under-diagnosis](#)

## Less than 10% of children "outgrow" ADHD

- [NCBI – ADHD in adulthood](#)
- [WebMD – Growing out of ADHD](#)
- [BBC – ADHD in adults recognized in 2008](#)

## Gender split

Girls are often underdiagnosed due to different symptom presentation

- [NCBI – Gender differences in ADHD diagnosis](#)
- [NICE – Commonality of ADHD](#)

## Treatability of ADHD

- [NCBI – ADHD medication effectiveness](#)
- [ADDitude Magazine – Long-term benefits of ADHD medication](#)
- [ADDitude – Myths about ADHD medication](#)
- [Barkley – Complimentary therapies](#)
- [Barkley – among the most treatable mental disorders](#)

## ADHD impacts executive function

- [BMC Psychiatry – Executive function and ADHD](#)
- [Journal of Attention Disorders – EFD and ADHD](#)

## ADHD is 74% heritable

- [NCBI – ADHD heritability](#)
- [PubMed – Environmental influence](#)

## Timeline

- Early History - [Springer](#) and [CDC](#)
- 2018 statistics - [BBC](#)
- 2024 statistics - [BBC](#) and [NIH](#)

# NOTES AND SOURCES

## Neurodevelopmental Disorder Model

- [NIH](#) and [CDC](#)

## Neurodiversity Model

- [add.org](#) and [Psychology Today](#)

## Neurocomplexity Model

- [Method Creative](#)

## Executive Function

- Prefrontal Cortex - [Nature](#)
- No correlation to IQ - [Science Direct](#)
- Alternative Model: Executive Attention - [NIH](#)

## Executive Function Impairments

- Mental fatigue - [NIH](#)
- Stress - [NIH](#)
- Sleep Deprivation - [NIH](#)
- Addiction - [NIH](#)
  - Social Media Addiction in Particular - [NIH](#) and [Science Direct](#)
- Traumatic Brain Injury - [NIH](#)
- Depression and Anxiety - [NIH](#)
- Aging - [Nature](#)

## Perseveration versus Flow - [NIH](#)

### Self-Efficacy

- Theory - [APA](#)
- Predictor of Success - [Nature](#)

### Growth Mindset

- gamification and neuroplasticity - [NIH](#)
- role of dopamine in neuroplasticity - [NIH](#) and [Nature](#)

### Anxiety

- Comorbidity with ADHD - [Science Direct](#)
- Effects of GMT - [NIH](#)

### Goal-setting and execution

- Impact on executive function - [NIH](#)
- Rewarding small steps in goal achievement and connecting goals to self-concept - [NIH](#)

### Impact of self-talk on performance - [NIH](#)

### Productive Procrastination - [Adam Grant](#)

### The Dark Playground - [Wait But Why?](#)