

SHIFA WELLNESS • EXECUTIVE FUNCTION SERIES

ADHD Low-Friction Chore Guide

Work with your brain, not against it.
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1. Task Stacking (Anchoring) [1]

Pair chore micro-steps with existing everyday habits.

- "While coffee brews → emptying dishwasher"
- "Before turning on TV → clearing coffee table"

2. The Dopamine Protocol [2]

Set a timer. Complete **ONE** micro-step, then consult your **Dopamine Menu** for a 5-minute break.

THE 3-BOX METHOD (DECLUTTERING WITHOUT OVERWHELM) [3]

1. TRASH

Wrappers, receipts, broken items, obvious garbage.

2. RECYCLE

Paper, mail, cans, plastics, cardboard boxes.

3. KEEP / RELOCATE

Items belonging in another room.

LEVEL 1: LOW ENERGY (5-Minute Micro-Tasks)

Goal: Just 1 Step

✓	Section / Anchor	Micro-Task	Time
🔧 KITCHEN & DINING ZONE			
☐	Morning Beverage	Throw away 5 pieces of obvious trash off counters	2 MIN
☐	Kitchen Entry	Put 3 dirty dishes directly into the sink/dishwasher	2 MIN
☐		-----	__ MIN
🛏️ LIVING & BEDROOM ZONE			
☐	Bedtime Routine	Gather dirty clothes on floor into hamper	3 MIN
☐		-----	__ MIN

☕ **STOP & RECHARGE:** Finished a Level 1 task? Take a 5-minute break! Pick a quick item from your *Dopamine Menu* before continuing.

LEVEL 2: MEDIUM ENERGY (10-15 Minute Sprints)

Goal: Set Timer

✓	Section / Anchor	Micro-Task Focus	Time
💻 WORK & COMMON SPACES			
☐	After Dinner	Sweep near desk/sofa area	10 MIN
☐		-----	__ MIN
🏠 HOUSEHOLD TASKS			
☐	Music / Podcast	Unload top rack of dishwasher or fold 5 shirts	10 MIN
☐		-----	__ MIN

⚡ LEVEL 3: HIGH ENERGY (Hyperfocus & Momentum Bursts)

Body Doubling / High Dopamine

✓	Section / Anchor	Task Step	Time
🧹	DEEP CLEAN & RESET ZONES		
☐	Playlist On	Full Sweep/Vaccum of entire house	20 MIN
☐	Podcast On	Strip bed sheets & toss directly into washing machine	15 MIN
☐		-----	__ MIN
📌	YOUR ANCHOR AND PERSONAL CUSTOM HIGH-ENERGY TASKS		
☐		-----	__ MIN
☐		-----	__ MIN

Quick-Reference Dopamine Menu (Break Inspirations)

When taking a break between micro-tasks, avoid doomscrolling! Pick an option below to genuinely refresh your brain:

STARTERS (1-3 Mins):

- Drink your favorite beverage
- Step outside for 3 deep breaths
- Engage in Gentle Movements

MAINS (30 Mins):

- Listen to a podcast
- Just dance
- Enjoy a quick walk

WEEKLY LOW-FRICTION ROTATION CHART

Day	Focus Zone	Micro-Task Strategy	Status
Mon	Kitchen Reset	Clear counter trash + run dishwasher	[] Done
Tue	Trash & Recycle	3-Box scan of bedrooms & living room	[] Done
Wed	Laundry Sprint	Sort 1 load (don't worry about folding!)	[] Done
Thu	Bathroom Quick-Wipe	Wipe sink + mirror with disinfectant wipe	[] Done
Fri / Custom	-----	-----	[] Done
Sat / Sun	Rest & Dopamine	Focus on high-reward hobbies & complete rest	[] Rest Day

💖 A Friendly Reminder from Shifa Wellness: You don't need a perfect plan or endless energy to begin.

Neurobiological Evidence & References



Why This Approach Works: ADHD is not a deficit of willpower; it is a neurological challenge with dopamine regulation and executive functioning. The strategies in this guide are built directly on evidence-based behavioral psychology and neuroimaging research to bypass startup friction.

[1] Habit Stacking & Context-Based Anchoring

Wood, W., & Rünger, D. (2016). *Psychology of Habit*. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 67, 289–314.

Key Insight: Linking a new micro-action directly to an existing automatic daily habit (context cue) drastically reduces executive function load and bypasses decision fatigue in neurodivergent brains.

[2] Dopamine Deficits & Task Activation Energy

Volkow, N. D., et al. (2009). *Evaluating Dopamine Reward Pathway in ADHD*. *JAMA*, 302(10), 1084–1091.

Key Insight: Positron Emission Tomography (PET) scans reveal lower baseline dopamine receptor availability in ADHD brains. Reward-pairing (Dopamine Menus) provides the necessary stimulation boost to bridge initiation hurdles.

[3] Decision Fatigue & Cognitive Load Reduction

Sweller, J. (1988). *Cognitive Load During Problem Solving*. *Cognitive Science*, 12(2), 257–285.

Key Insight: Categorizing clutter into explicit, rigid visual buckets (The 3-Box Method) minimizes working memory overload and emotional paralysis during sorting tasks.

[4] Time Blindness & Externalized Visual Structure

Barkley, R. A. (2012). *Executive Functions: What They Are, How They Work, and Why They Evolved*. Guilford Press.

Key Insight: Individuals with ADHD experience impaired temporal processing ("time blindness"). Short, visual micro-sprints externalize time and prevent task-avoidance panic.

[5] Self-Compassion in ADHD Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

Ramsay, J. R. (2020). *Rethinking Adult ADHD: Helping Clients Turn Intentions Into Actions*. American Psychological Association.

Key Insight: Shame and guilt exacerbate task paralysis. Meeting energy fluctuations with adaptive energy tiers restores self-efficacy and sustained momentum over time.

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