Habit Science for ADHD Women

This document explores how people with ADHD can effectively create and maintain habits.

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Harness the Power of Habits

1 Habits Are Automatic

We do them without even thinking!

2 Habits Fuel Growth and Fulfillment

Good habits help us become our best selves.

3 Habits Define Who We Are

They align our actions with our values and strengths.

4 Habits Make Life Easier

Daily tasks become second nature with the right routines.

5 Habits Replace Unhelpful Coping

Goodbye perfectionism, masking, and self-silencing!

6 Habits Reduce Decision Fatigue

Freeing up energy for what really matters.

💡 Reflection:

What habits already empower your daily life?

Which ones could use an upgrade?

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Things to Know About ADHD and Habits

Understanding how habits work with ADHD can transform your daily life and productivity.

Motivation Is Not Required

ADHD brains often struggle with motivation, but that's okay—habits help you move forward without relying on it.

Forget Willpower

Willpower is overrated. Instead of forcing yourself to do things, create habits that make good choices automatic.

The Power of Mini Habits

Mini habits are tiny steps toward big goals. They fit easily into daily life without stress.

What is Self Efficacy, and What Does It Have to Do with Habits?



Self-efficacy is believing in your ability to succeed. It’s not just confidence—it’s the trust that you can follow through and make things happen.

But many myths about habits create shame. **You might have been told that habit-building is about willpower.** That if you just tried harder, you’d be more consistent.

That’s not true. **Habits aren’t about willpower—they’re about strategy.**

ADHD brains don’t struggle with habits because of a lack of effort. They struggle because **most habit-building methods weren’t designed for them.**

When the right systems are missing, self-efficacy suffers. It’s hard to trust yourself when nothing seems to stick.

Smart Habit Systems Build Self-Efficacy

The right strategies help you rebuild confidence and self-trust—**because success isn’t about trying harder. It’s about having an approach that actually works for you.**

Common ADHD Habit Mistakes

ADHDers often believe they need motivation and willpower to build new habits. However, these aren't reliable strategies because they fluctuate and don't provide the consistency needed for habit formation. As a result, habit-building that relies on them often fails.

These habit building strategies can also leads to feelings of shame and inadequacy.

Those old beliefs—*If only I tried harder, I'd be successful*—can easily get triggered, making you hesitant to even try. The fear of failure, or even of hearing your own inner voice, can hold you back before you begin.



If you have trouble building the habits you want as an ADHD person the problem isn't you it's the system you are using.



Mini and Tiny Habits

Two great books, *Mini Habits* (Stephen Guise) and *Tiny Habits* (BJ Fogg), explain why small habits work.

Here's why:

- They align naturally with who you are.
- They make habit-building enjoyable rather than overwhelming.
- They boost self-compassion by emphasizing achievable steps.
- They prepare you to confidently level up at your own pace.
- They don't rely on motivation or willpower.
- They support consistent progress while preventing burnout.

Why Starting Small Works

Mini habits are easy enough to maintain consistently, eventually becoming automatic and effortless. This steady success builds your confidence, empowering you to pursue bigger goals aligned with your values and strengths.

Starting small with habits also helps with ADHD obstacles such as:

Shame

Procrastination

Executive functioning issues

Willpower and motivation fluctuation

When you start a habit it should be too small to fail. It should feel ridiculously small.

How The Mini Habit Model Works



Starting Small

Easy wins build momentum.

Consistency Over Intensity

Daily tiny actions > occasional big efforts.

Low Pressure

No stress, just small steps.

Scaling Up

Start tiny, grow naturally.

Brain Rewiring

Builds automatic habits over time.

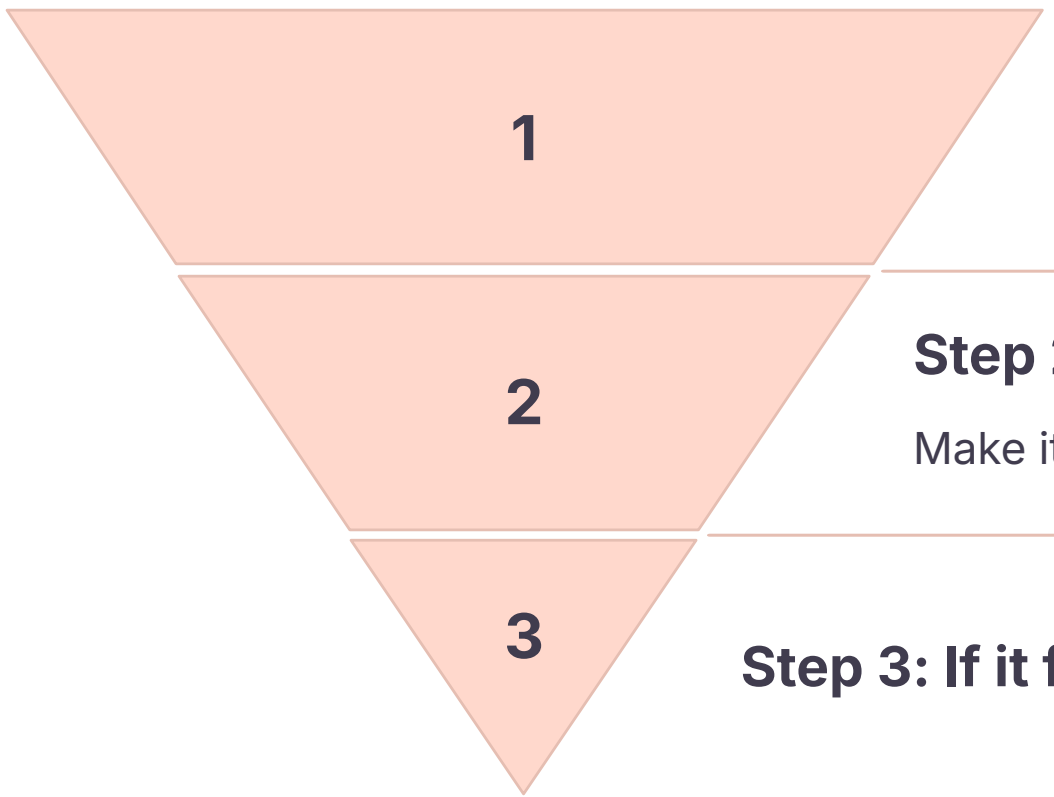
Avoiding Burnout

No overwhelming tasks.

Building Confidence

Each small success strengthens self-trust.

How to Start a Mini Habit



Step 1: Pick a habit

Step 2: Shrink it down

Make it laughably small!

Step 3: If it feels too easy, it's perfect

Examples:

- ☐ Want to do 100 sit-ups? **Do 1 sit-up.**
- ☐ Want to clean the house? **Wipe one counter.**
- ☐ Want to meditate for an hour? **Breathe for 10 seconds.**

If you're curious to explore more mini habits, Stephen has compiled an **extensive list** at minihabits.com.

ADHD and Creating Habits: How to Create Your Own Mini Habit

Try it yourself!

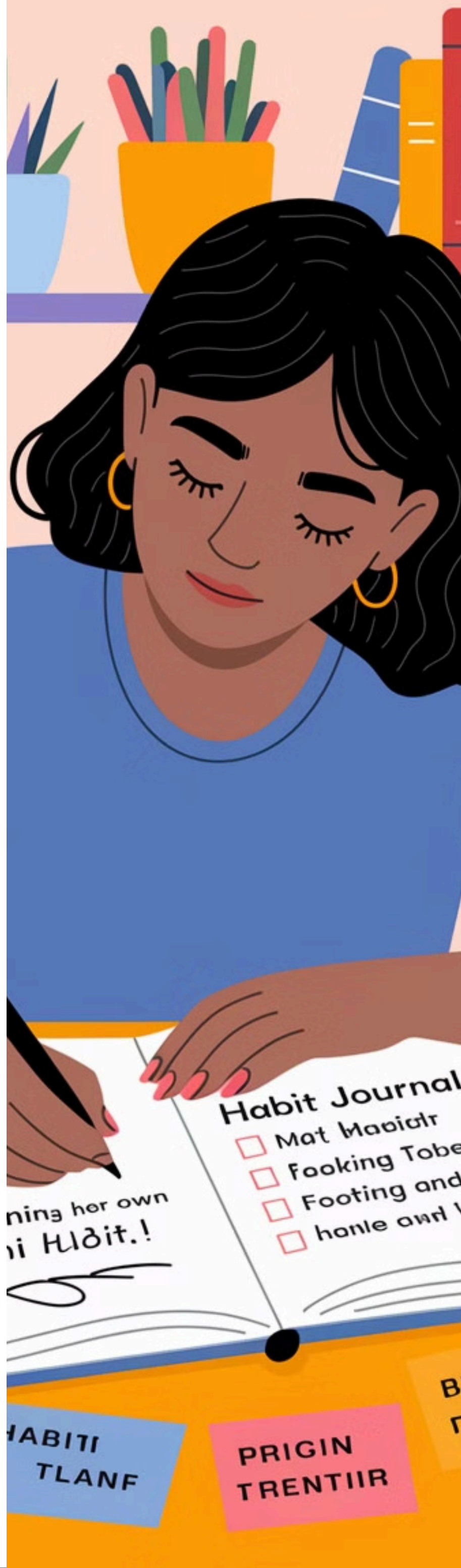
My habit goal:

_____

Tiny version of it:

_____

> "Too small to fail" = success every time!



Tiny Habits Philosophy

Tiny habits use the **B=MAP** formula—Behavior happens when Motivation, Ability, and a Prompt come together—to help you build simple, effortless routines. These small habits become automatic over time, boosting your confidence and moving you closer to your goals.

Tiny Habits Formula

For ADHD brains, by focusing on **ability** (making habits easy) and **clear prompts** (reminders), tiny habits simplify consistency and support your unique brain wiring.

Tiny Habits = Behavior Change Formula (MAP): B = M + A + P (Behavior = Motivation + Ability + Prompt)

Motivation

is unreliable—so don't depend on it.

Ability

makes the habit easy—start **small**.

Prompt

reminds you—attach it to an existing routine.

This system **removes effort** and makes habits stick!

Formula for easy tiny habits

Behavior = Motivation + Ability + Prompt

Prompts: The Secret to Habit Success

Prompts in the BMAP formula are cues that trigger a behavior, helping ADHD individuals initiate actions they might otherwise forget. Because ADHD brains struggle with self-starting, well-placed prompts—like environmental cues or sensory reminders—are essential for making habits stick.

Prompts = habit reminders. They signal when it's time to act.

How to Use Prompts Effectively:

Choose the right prompt

Example: Want to stretch every morning? Use **waking up** as your cue.

Stay consistent

Stick with the **same** prompt every time (e.g., always floss after brushing).

Act immediately

The **shorter** the gap between the prompt and action, the stronger the habit.

Use visual reminders

Keep vitamins **next to your toothbrush** to remember them.

Leverage technology

Use alarms or apps to remind you to drink water.

Design your environment

Want to read more? Put a book on your pillow.

- **What habit do you want to build?**

  _____

- **What will remind you to do it?**

_____

- **Where can you place a reminder?**

_____

Manipulating Ability: Making Habits Easier

Make habits easy = More success. Here's how:

How to Make Habits Easier:

Start ridiculously small

Want to run? **Walk for 1 minute.**

Make resources available

Eating healthier? **Keep fruit on the counter.**

Remove obstacles

Going to the gym? **Lay out your workout clothes the night before.**

Add friction to bad habits

Want to scroll less? **Put your phone in another room.**

Stack habits onto routines

Want to journal? **Do it after morning coffee.**

Gradually increase difficulty

Started walking? **Add 30 seconds of jogging next week.**

Small changes lead to automatic habits.



How to Start a Tiny Habit (Step-by-Step Guide)

1

Pick an existing habit

Example: Brushing your teeth

2

Add a tiny habit after it

"After I brush my teeth, I'll floss ONE tooth."

3

Celebrate immediately

Smile, fist pump, say "Good job!"

Goal: Make it **so small** that you can't fail!

Important and Helpful Ideas from Atomic Habits

What Are Atomic Habits?

Habits & Systems – James Clear explains that the real problem in changing habits isn't lack of willpower—it's a flawed system.

- 🔴 **Bad habits stick** because the system makes them **easy.**
  🟢 **Good habits fail** because the system makes them **hard.**

🔧 **Fix the system**, and better habits will follow.

✨ **Tiny Changes = Big Results** ✨

⚛️ **Atomic habits** are **small, daily improvements** that build up over time.

🔗 Like **atoms in a molecule**, these tiny behaviors **stack up** to create **major change.**



Great Ideas

The Power of 1% Improvement

Just 1% better each day leads to **massive** progress over time.



Clear's research shows that **consistent small wins** lead to **huge** transformations.

The Plateau of Latent Potential

> People quit because they don't see immediate results.



But change is happening **under the surface**—it just takes time to show.

> **Keep going even when it feels slow.** The results will come!

Identity-Based Habits: Change Who You Are



Your habits shape your identity.

- Instead of saying, "I want to run," say: **"I am a runner."**
- Your brain then **aligns behaviors** with your new identity.

Don't set outcome-based goals—set identity-based ones.

> Example: Instead of "I want to write a book," say: **"I am a writer."**

Small actions reinforce this identity until it becomes who you are.

The Four Laws of Behavior Change

James Clear's **four rules** make habits stick:

1. Make it Obvious

Use cues & reminders.

Example: **Put your gym shoes by the door.**

2. Make it Attractive

Link it to something fun.

Example: **Only watch Netflix while walking on a treadmill.**

3. Make it Easy

Start ridiculously small.

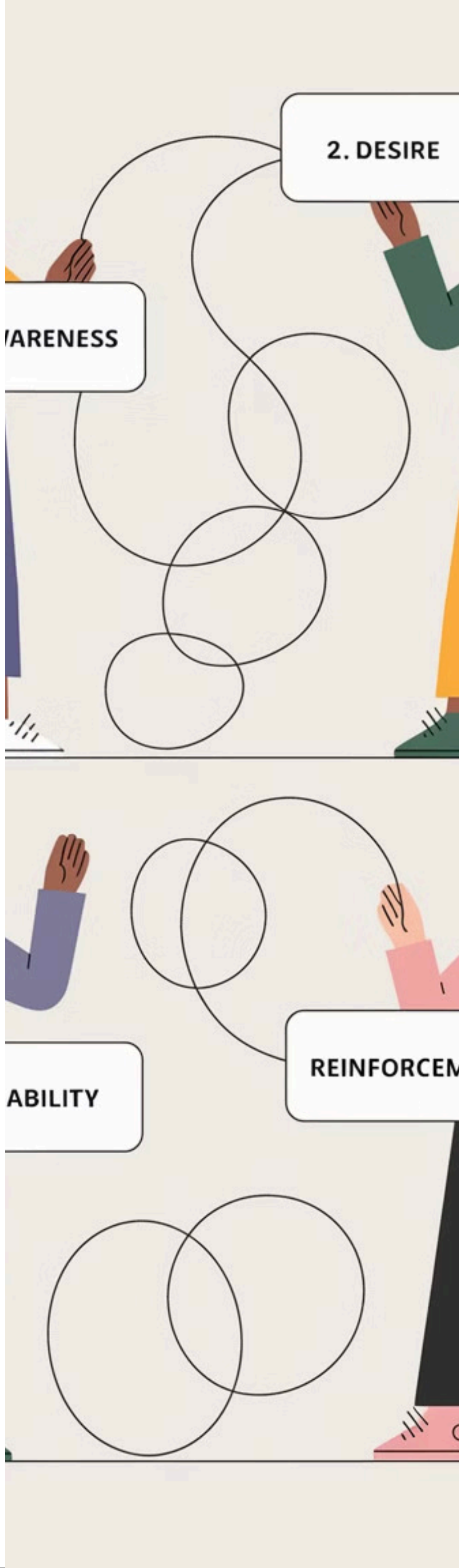
Example: **Floss one tooth instead of your whole mouth.**

4. Make it Satisfying

Celebrate small wins.

Example: **Track your progress & reward yourself.**

The easier a habit feels, the more likely you'll do it!



Time Blindness, Masking & Habit Formation

ADHD Makes Habit Formation Harder

- ADHD brains struggle with **delayed rewards—instant wins** can help you to stay engaged.
- **Time blindness** makes it hard to see progress, so you may **quit too soon before you see the fruits of what you are working towards.**

Solutions:

Track progress visually

- [ ] Habit tracker
- [ ] Checklist
- [ ] Journal
- [ ] Whiteboard

Focus on the process, not just the outcome

Use immediate rewards

To reinforce success

Habits take time—don't give up too soon!

📖 **Reflection:** What's a habit you've struggled to stick with? _____

How could you make the reward more immediate?

_____



The Power of Your Environment: Cue-Based Reminders

Your environment makes or breaks your habits.

- Good cues = good habits.
- Bad cues = bad habits.

How to Design Your Space for Success:



Want to drink more water? **Put a water bottle on your desk.**

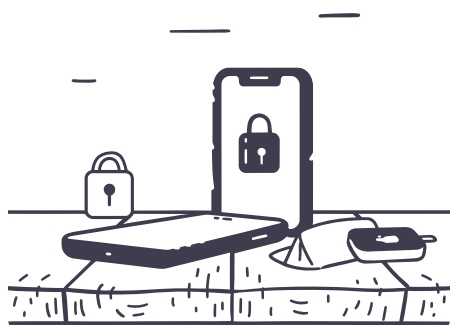
Want to exercise? **Keep sneakers by the front door.**



Want to read more? **Leave a book on your pillow.**



Want to scroll less? **Charge your phone in another room.**



⭐⭐⭐Make habits easy by making cues obvious.

Habit Cues: How to Use Triggers for Success

Using the right cues can set you up for success by creating triggers that make your habits easier and more automatic.

Examples of habit cues:

Drink more water?

Keep a bright bottle on your desk.

Feed your pet on time?

Put food next to the TV remote.

Exercise after work?

Leave sneakers by the front door.

Read more?

Put a book on your pillow.

Remember groceries?

Attach a list to your car keys.

> ⭐⭐⭐⭐The best habit cues are obvious, visible, and tied to something you already do.

Make the Easy Hard & the Hard Easy

Hack your habits: Make good habits easier & bad habits harder!



Environmental Habit Hacks

❓Want to **scroll less?** → **Move your phone to another room.**

❓Want to **exercise more?** → **Lay out workout clothes at night.**

❓Want to **snack less?** → **Store junk food out of reach.**

❓Want to **play guitar more?** → **Keep it next to your couch.**

Key Takeaway

Your environment should push you toward better habits!





The Flourish Model: Building Strong Habits

By combining ideas from *Tiny Habits*, *Mini Habits*, and James Clear's *Atomic Habits*, we create a model that is especially helpful for ADHD women, making habit-building easier, flexible, and sustainable

1

1. Start Tiny – Too Small to Fail

Make habits **so easy** they feel effortless.

Example: Want to read more? **Start with one sentence.**

2

2. Habit Stacking – Attach It to an Existing Routine

Pair your habit with something you already do.

Example: Want to stretch daily? **Do it after waking up.**

3

3. Environment Design – Make It Easy

Put the right cues in place.

Example: Want to drink water? **Keep a bottle on your desk.**

4

4. Immediate Rewards – Make It Satisfying

Celebrate small wins to reinforce success.

Example: After a mini-habit, **give yourself a fist pump!**

Small, consistent steps create long-term success.〰️➡️〰️➡️〰️〰️➡️〰️➡️〰️

Worksheet

The Flourish Model for Habit Formation Worksheet

Key Habit Science Principles

✅ **Habit Stacking** – Attach a new habit to an existing one to make it automatic.
✅ **Environment Design** – Shape your surroundings to support success.
✅ **Visual Cues** – Use objects and reminders to trigger your habit.
✅ **Immediate Rewards** – Reinforce your habit by celebrating right away.
✅ **Value Alignment** – Habits stick better when they match your personal values.
✅ **Emotional Connection** – Feeling good about a habit makes it last longer.

Your Final Habit Plan

1️⃣ Define Your Habit

🔹 Pick **one** habit to focus on first. Make it so small it feels effortless.

📌 **My habit:** _____

📌 **How can I shrink it to a 'too small to fail' version?**

_____

(Example: Instead of "Write daily," say "Write one sentence.")

2️⃣ Stack It on an Existing Habit

🔹 Pair your new habit with something you already do consistently.

📌 **After I [existing habit], I will [new habit].**

_____

(Example: "After I brush my teeth, I will do one squat.")

🛑 **Reminder:** The closer your new habit is to the existing habit, the easier it will be to remember!

3️⃣ Optimize Your Environment

🔹 **Make the good habit easy:** Reduce effort, remove obstacles, and set yourself up for success.

📌 **How will I make this habit easy to do?**

_____

(Example: Put your workout clothes next to your bed.)

🔹 **Make the bad habit hard:** Increase friction to prevent unwanted behaviors.

📌 **How will I make distractions harder?**

_____

(Example: Put your phone in another room while working.)

🛑 **Reminder:** Your environment is stronger than your willpower. Set yourself up to win!

4️⃣ Reinforce It with a Reward

🔹 Habits need **immediate rewards** to stick. Attach a small **positive emotion** to the action.

📌 **How will I reward myself right after doing this habit?**

_____

(Example: Say “Nice work!” or do a happy dance.)

🛑 **Reminder:** The reward doesn’t have to be big—it just needs to happen **right away** to tell your brain, "This is good!"

5️⃣ Connect It to Your Values

🔹 **Long-term habits last when they align with who you are.**

📌 **What personal value does this habit support?**

_____

(Example: “Reading one page a day aligns with my value of lifelong learning.”)

🛑 **Reminder:** If your habit feels disconnected from your values, it won’t last. Find the **meaning** behind it!

🎯 Habit Success Plan: Important Reminders

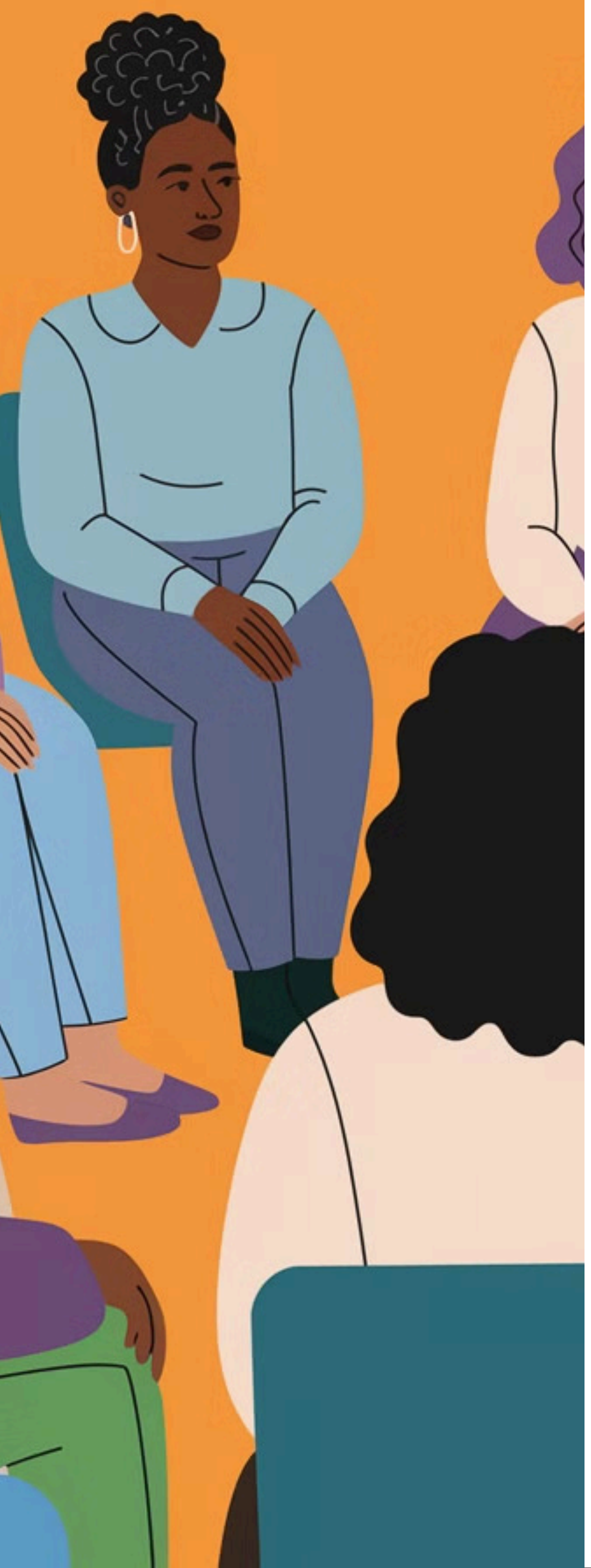
- [ ] **Systems, not willpower, build habits.** Your habits are only as good as the system that supports them. Design your environment and routine to make success inevitable.

- [ ] **Follow the Four Laws of Behavior Change** (James Clear):

1. **Make It Obvious** → Use cues to remind yourself (e.g., place your book where you'll see it).
2. **Make It Attractive** → Link it to something enjoyable (e.g., listen to music while stretching).
3. **Make It Easy** → Reduce friction by simplifying the habit (e.g., do **one** push-up instead of a full workout).
4. **Make It Satisfying** → Reward yourself immediately (e.g., mark a check on a habit tracker).

- [ ] **Start ridiculously small—make it laughably easy.** Tiny steps done daily build momentum.
- [ ] **Anchor new habits to things you already do.** Habit stacking helps reinforce routines effortlessly.
- [ ] **Your environment is your biggest advantage—use it!** Design it to support success and eliminate distractions.
- [ ] **Celebrate immediately—this tells your brain to keep doing it.** Positive reinforcement locks in habits.
- [ ] **If you forget, don't feel bad—just restart without guilt.** Progress, not perfection, is the goal.
- [ ] **Stack new habits slowly—build one solid habit before adding more.** Focus on consistency over intensity.

🌱 **Final Thought: Small daily improvements compound into massive long-term success.** You don't need motivation—just a system that makes habits **automatic and rewarding**! 🚀



Final Reflection: Group Questions

1. What's worked before?

- What habits have you successfully built?
- Why did those habits stick?

2. What's been hard?

- What habits did you struggle to keep?
- What obstacles got in the way?

3. How can you improve?

- What small tweaks can make success easier?

Learning from past wins & struggles helps you build better habits!