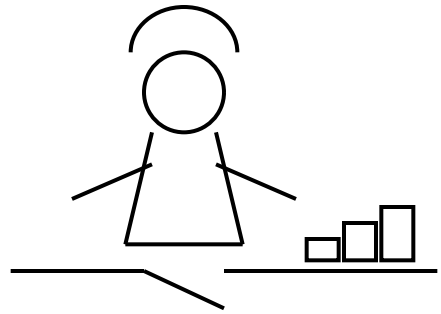
# Why Do I Feel Lazy Even When I Am Trying Hard?

Many ADHD adults use the word lazy when effort is high but action, consistency, or visible results are low. That word hides the real question: what is getting in the way of doing the task?




## WHAT MAY ACTUALLY BE HAPPENING

### Activation difficulty

You care about the task but cannot reliably generate the momentum to begin.

### Working-memory overload

Too many steps compete for limited mental space.

### Low stimulation

The task does not provide enough interest, novelty, urgency, or feedback.

### Depleted capacity

Stress, sleep loss, pain, sensory strain, or too many demands reduce what is available.

### Fear and perfectionism

The first step feels risky because mistakes, criticism, or uncertainty feel costly.

**A gap between intention and action is not proof of indifference.**

## YOU MAY BE TRYING HARD IF YOU

- ☐ Think about the task for hours before starting.
- ☐ Use panic or a deadline to create momentum.
- ☐ Make elaborate plans but cannot enter the first step.
- ☐ Complete easier tasks while avoiding the important one.
- ☐ Need another person present to begin.
- ☐ Work in exhausting bursts and then crash.
- ☐ Feel guilty the entire time you are stuck.
- ☐ Keep rebuilding systems that become too hard to maintain.

# Replace the Judgment With Better Questions

"Lazy" describes neither the mechanism nor the support need. A more useful approach is to identify the barrier and change the conditions around the task.

| WHEN THE BARRIER IS... | TRY CHANGING... |
|---|---|
| **The task is too big** | Choose one visible first action, not the whole project. |
| **The steps are unclear** | Write the next one to three steps or ask for clarification. |
| **The task is boring** | Add novelty, movement, music, company, or a brief timer. |
| **There is no urgency** | Create a near deadline, appointment, or accountability check. |
| **You are overloaded** | Reduce another demand before adding a new strategy. |
| **Perfectionism is blocking you** | Define a rough, incomplete, or good-enough first version. |
| **Your body is depleted** | Address sleep, food, pain, sensory strain, and recovery. |
| **The environment does not fit** | Change the setting, tools, timing, instructions, or expectations. |

**Support should make action more possible. It should not require more shame, fear, or exhaustion.**

## A DIFFERENT SELF-CHECK

- ☐ Do I know the exact first action?
- ☐ Is the task too large, vague, boring, emotionally loaded, or far away?
- ☐ Am I waiting to feel ready?
- ☐ What support would reduce the activation cost?
- ☐ Is this a strategy problem, a capacity problem, or an environment problem?

## REMEMBER

You can be responsible for finding workable support without accepting the belief that difficulty means laziness. The goal is not to excuse every outcome. It is to understand the mechanism well enough to change what can be changed.