

Inside the Mind: ADHD Paralysis

What would be considered a simple task to someone not affected by ADHD, such as tidying up the pile of clothes in the corner of the room or scheduling that long-overdue appointment, may be greeted with a groan but it typically gets done once the mind is made up. The mindset of 'just get it done' or a to-do list is more than enough for most people to accomplish a task. Yet, for those with ADHD, it is a greater challenge to get to that task done. The mind takes over and creates smaller steps such as getting up, feeling guilty for not completing it sooner, comparing themselves to others, being self-critical, thinking of ways to avoid having to do the task in the future... all while staring blankly at the pile of clothes or the phone screen with the dialer ready to hit 'call'. This is often referred to as ADHD Paralysis – when faced with a task, the ADHD brain struggles to get started.

There are many ways a friend, spouse, or family member can help them overcome this paralysis and become more successful, productive and understood.

- Encourage them to verbalize what they would like to do and the steps that need to occur. Let them get it out and paint the picture of how their mind processes.
- Acknowledge the steps they share with you. Repeat back the general process and what appears to be the biggest obstacle for them.
- Don't be afraid to work along with them – just don't fall into doing the whole task for them. It is important that they take control and complete the task they have stated they wanted to complete.
- Recognize that there will be frustrating moments for the ADHD mind or even moments of feeling like giving up. It's okay to pause for a moment to take a breath. Then refocus back onto the next step.
- Comment on their progress if the task is more complex than one action such as making a call. Use positive feedback to help them focus on what they have completed instead of what is left to do.
- Encourage reflection when the task is done. Ask questions about how they feel after completing, what things they found helpful during the process, how difficult was the task, etc.

Living with and loving someone with an ADHD mind comes with its set of challenges. Learning how the ADHD mind works and how to help them get through the paralysis will result in more success, productivity, and a greater sense of being understood. Things everyone wants in their life.