

A guide for adults with ADHD

Understanding your *ADHD*.

A calm, plain-language guide to how your brain works — and how to work *with* it, not against it.

Centre › Clarify › Choose › Repeat



The C³ Loop™

Human first. Then performance.

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You have a name *for it now.*

A diagnosis is information, not a verdict — an explanation for patterns you have lived with for a long time.

WHAT MATTERS ON THIS PAGE

A diagnosis explains long-standing patterns and opens the door to support that actually fits. It doesn't change who you are.

Getting a diagnosis can bring up a lot. Relief, grief, validation, or a wave of “why did no one see this sooner?” — all of these are common, and all of them are okay.

What may come up

- Relief at finally having an explanation that fits.
- Grief for the years you spent working twice as hard.
- Questions about what this means for work, study or relationships.

What the diagnosis changes

- It gives you a clearer, kinder explanation for long-standing patterns.
- It points toward strategies and support designed for your kind of brain.
- It can make self-understanding — and self-compassion — a lot easier.

What it does not change

- Your intelligence, your character, or your worth.
- The strengths and creativity you already bring.
- Who you are. You are the same person you were yesterday — with better information.

GOOD TO KNOW

ADHD is a well-researched neurodevelopmental condition, with a range of evidence-based treatment and support options. Finding the right combination for you is a process — and you don't have to work it out alone.

A helpful way *to think about it.*

Executive-function skills can develop on a different timeline — and one clinical idea helps explain why.

WHAT MATTERS ON THIS PAGE

If a task feels harder than it “should,” that difficulty is real. It is about timing and capacity, not effort or will.

Executive function is the brain’s management system. It helps you start tasks, hold a plan in mind, manage time and steady your emotions. In ADHD, this system tends to come online more gradually.

A CLINICAL HEURISTIC

Barkley has used an approximate **30% developmental lag** as a broad way of explaining why executive-function expectations can sometimes exceed an ADHD person’s current capacity. It is a way of understanding the gap between what is expected and what feels possible on a given day.

Read it gently. This is a clinical heuristic — a rule of thumb — *not* an individual score, a fixed limit, or a measure of potential.

“The gap is about timing and capacity — not about how hard you are trying.”

◆ A MOMENT TO REFLECT

Where have you been holding yourself to a standard that didn’t account for how your brain actually works?

Seven executive *functions*.

Executive function isn't one skill — it's a set of them. Knowing which feel harder helps you target the right support.

01 SELF-AWARENESS

Noticing what you're doing while you're doing it.

02 INHIBITION

The pause between an impulse and an action.

03 WORKING MEMORY

Holding information in mind long enough to use it.

04 EMOTIONAL REGULATION

Steadying feelings so they inform you rather than flood you.

05 SELF-MOTIVATION

Generating drive when a task isn't urgent or interesting.

06 PLANNING & PRIORITISING

Turning a goal into ordered, doable steps.

07 TIME MANAGEMENT

Sensing how time passes and pacing yourself within it.

THE MIND'S FUEL TANK

Think of self-motivation as your **Mind's Fuel Tank**. ADHD brains can run the tank down faster and refuel more slowly — which is why the “boring but important” task can feel impossible even when you care. The skill isn't forcing more fuel; it's noticing the gauge and building in ways to top up.

Strengths that often *travel with ADHD*.

ADHD is a difference, not only a difficulty. These aren't universal — but many people recognise some of themselves here.

WHAT MATTERS ON THIS PAGE

Some people with ADHD describe strengths such as the ones below. Read them as possibilities to look for, not a checklist you must match.

01 · CREATIVITY

Making unexpected connections and seeing solutions others miss.

02 · HYPERFOCUS

Deep, absorbed attention on things that genuinely engage you.

03 · ENERGY & DRIVE

Momentum and enthusiasm that can carry a team or a project.

04 · RESILIENCE

Adapting and recovering — often practised over many years.

05 · WARMTH & EMPATHY

Reading a room and caring deeply about the people in it.

06 · PROBLEM-SOLVING

Thriving in fast, novel or high-pressure situations.

Strengths and difficulties can sit side by side, and they shift with sleep, stress and support. Naming your strengths isn't about minimising the hard parts — it's about seeing the whole picture.

Common patterns — *and what helps.*

If you recognise a pattern below, there's a practical starting point beside it. You don't need to fix everything — just choose one.

WHAT YOU MIGHT NOTICE	ONE THING THAT CAN HELP
Overwhelm & task initiation	Shrink the first step until it's almost too small to refuse.
Time blindness	Make time visible — timers, alarms, and a single visible clock.
Emotional reactivity	Name the feeling and pause before responding; regulate, then decide.
Planning & follow-through	Externalise the plan — write it down so your brain doesn't have to hold it.
Inconsistent performance	Expect variability; build systems that work on low-fuel days too.

Confirm: table rows and wording from your source document.

→ YOUR NEXT STEP

Pick one pattern. Try one strategy. This week.

You don't have to overhaul your life. Choose a single row above, try its strategy for a week, and notice what changes. *Small, repeatable steps are how change sticks.*

Three ways *to work with us.*

There's no single "right" path. Choose the level that fits where you are now — you can always move between them.

CLINICAL

Therapy & coaching

One-to-one work with a clinician — assessment-informed, tailored to your goals.

TOGETHER

Workshops & groups

Structured, facilitated sessions — learn the tools alongside others who get it.

SELF-GUIDED

Tools & workbooks

Practical resources you can use at your own pace, in your own time.

HOW TO CHOOSE

Start where you have energy. If you want personal guidance, begin with clinical support. If you learn well with others, a workshop is a strong first step. If you'd rather explore quietly, the self-guided tools are yours to keep.

The S.H.I.F.T.TM *approach.*

A simple, repeatable way to move from stuck to steady — one small step at a time.

S **SEE IT**
Notice the pattern without judgement.

H **HOLD THE PAUSE**
Make room between trigger and response.

I **IDENTIFY THE NEED**
Name what's actually going on underneath.

F **FRAME THE STEP**
Choose one small, doable next move.

T **TAKE IT**
Act, then notice what changed.

Confirm: final S.H.I.F.T.TM step words from your source (shown here as placeholders).

REGISTER YOUR INTEREST

Ready to start? We'll help you find the right entry point.

Register online at executiveframe.co.nz/neurodiversity, or email hello@executiveframe.co.nz. We'll be in touch within a few working days.

Centre. Clarify. *Choose. Repeat.*

The rhythm behind everything we do — a loop you can return to any time you feel scattered or stuck.

Centre › Clarify › Choose › Repeat

Centre

Settle your nervous system first. A calm body thinks more clearly.

Clarify

Name what matters right now, and what can wait.

Choose

Pick one next step that's small enough to actually happen.

Repeat

Come back to the loop — progress is built from repetitions, not one big leap.

→ **START HERE**

The Intro Pack

New to Executive Frame™? The Intro Pack is the simplest place to begin — a short, guided set of tools that walks you through the loop for the first time. Ask us for your copy, or download it from the Neurodiversity page.

You are *not broken*.

You have a brain that works differently — not one that works wrongly. The difficulties are real, and so are the strengths. With the right understanding and the right support, life gets steadier, kinder and more workable.

“Work with your brain, not against it. That’s where things start to change.”

Whatever brought you to this guide, you don’t have to carry it alone. The next step doesn’t have to be big — it just has to be yours.

WE’RE HERE WHEN YOU’RE READY

Reach out — no pressure, no rush.

Email hello@executiveframe.co.nz · visit

executiveframe.co.nz/neurodiversity

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