

Attention planning and follow through

Ten original resources for More Than Therapy. Choose a page that fits the client's priorities and review the clinical notes before use. The materials support professional care and are not validated assessments.

FOC01 Put the Plan Where You Look

Worksheet | 10 to 15 minutes

FOC02 Make the First Step Smaller

Worksheet | 10 to 15 minutes

FOC03 Learn How Long Tasks Take

Worksheet | 10 to 15 minutes

FOC04 Shape a Workable Attention Space

Worksheet | 10 to 15 minutes

FOC05 Plan the Transition Before Leaving

Worksheet | 10 to 15 minutes

FOC06 Find the Barrier Before the Fix

Worksheet | 10 to 15 minutes

FOC07 Understand Attention Support Options

Handout | 10 to 15 minutes

FOC08 Replace Blame With Useful Questions

Clinician script | 10 to 15 minutes

FOC09 Test One Practical Support System

Session guide | 50 minutes

FOC10 Review Progress Without Self Blame

Journal prompts | 10 to 15 minutes

Fillable responses work in compatible PDF readers. Save each completed worksheet separately in an approved record system.

Clinical notes

Attention planning and follow through

FOC01 Put the Plan Where You Look

Offer paper, audio, visual, or assistive options. Explore environmental barriers and access rather than assuming low motivation. These supports may help organization but do not diagnose or constitute comprehensive treatment for ADHD.

FOC02 Make the First Step Smaller

Assess whether avoidance reflects anxiety, depression, trauma, fatigue, pain, or unrealistic demands. Avoid framing task completion as proof of worth. Collaboratively select tasks that serve the client's goals.

FOC03 Learn How Long Tasks Take

Use timing collaboratively and avoid surveillance or punitive tracking. Consider disability, medication effects, caregiving, variable symptoms, and transportation. Time estimates should support accommodation and planning rather than rigid productivity demands.

FOC04 Shape a Workable Attention Space

Ask about sensory preferences, disability access, shared housing, and control over the environment. Avoid presenting a quiet desk as universally available or sufficient. Persistent impairment warrants appropriate assessment and support.

FOC05 Plan the Transition Before Leaving

Customize for mobility, medication routines, dependents, transport, and housing. Do not include sensitive details on exposed checklists. Encourage flexible supports rather than rigid routines that become another source of distress.

FOC06 Find the Barrier Before the Fix

Treat the barrier as a hypothesis, not a diagnosis. Explore structural constraints, literacy, fatigue, mood, anxiety, pain, and attention needs. Obtain appropriate assessment when difficulties are persistent or widespread.

FOC07 Understand Attention Support Options

Avoid diagnosing from disorganization, online checklists, or this collection. Invite developmental and cross-setting history through a proper assessment process when indicated. Include strengths without romanticizing impairment or minimizing support needs.

FOC08 Replace Blame With Useful Questions

Do not use this script to dismiss clinically significant impairment. Explore mental and physical health contributors and structural barriers. When indicated, offer assessment, accommodations, or referral instead of repeated productivity advice.

FOC09 Test One Practical Support System

Prioritize comprehensive evaluation when persistent impairment is unexplained. The sequence is flexible and should not delay risk assessment or needed care. Avoid interpreting difficulty during rehearsal as resistance.

FOC10 Review Progress Without Self Blame

Monitor whether reflection becomes rumination or another demanding assignment. Offer a verbal check-in instead. Reinforce concrete observations, self-advocacy, and appropriate clinical assessment rather than reassurance alone.

Put the Plan Where You Look

Attention planning and follow through | Adults and teens 13+ | 10 to 15 minutes

Move one practical plan out of memory and into a visible place.

Remembering a task and doing it are different steps. This exercise helps you create a small external reminder that you are likely to notice. Choose a system you can actually access rather than one that looks impressive but is difficult to maintain.

Capture and choose

Write the tasks that are competing for attention. Pick one that matters today. Define what finishing means: "send the email" is clearer than "deal with work." Put other tasks in a separate place so they do not become today's entire list.

Place the cue

Choose a place you already check, such as a paper by your keys or an existing calendar. Write the next physical action and when it will be useful to see it. Keep private information out of publicly visible reminders.

Check the fit

At the next session or chosen check-in, ask whether you noticed the cue and whether it led to action. If you did not, change its placement or simplify the task. Do not add several new apps at once.

The task and what finished means

The first physical action

The reminder and where I will notice it

When I will review whether the system helped

Make the First Step Smaller

Attention planning and follow through | Adults and teens 13+ | 10 to 15 minutes

Reduce one avoided task to a clear and manageable starting action.

A task can feel impossible when it contains many unnamed decisions. Choose something you want or need to begin. You are designing the entrance to the task, not promising to complete the whole thing immediately.

Find the actual starting point

"Clean the room" might begin with bringing one bag to the doorway. "Apply for a job" might begin with opening the saved posting. Write an action that you could recognize on a video, rather than an instruction to try harder.

Make it possible today

Identify what the step requires: materials, information, a quieter location, assistance, or enough energy. Choose a short practice window and a stopping point. The window should fit your capacity; it is not a competition.

Test and adjust

Try the first step during the session if feasible. Notice the exact point where you get stuck. A missing password, unclear instruction, pain, fear, or exhaustion needs a different response from a vague task. Adjust the plan based on what happened.

The task I am trying to begin

The smallest visible starting action

What I need and the practice window I choose

What happened and the next adjustment

Learn How Long Tasks Take

Attention planning and follow through | Adults and teens 13+ | 10 to 15 minutes

Compare a time estimate with one observation to improve a future plan.

Planning gets harder when a task takes longer than expected or when preparation time is invisible. Use one low-stakes activity to learn about your own timing. The result is information for planning, not a grade.

Choose one repeatable activity

Examples include getting ready to leave, answering a routine email, or packing lunch. Estimate the whole sequence, including finding materials and putting things away. Write the estimate before starting.

Observe once

Use a clock or timer if comfortable and practical. Note the start and finish, interruptions, and any waiting. If timing makes you anxious or distracts you, use a rough observation with your clinician instead.

Build a more realistic plan

Compare the estimate with what happened. Identify one overlooked step and a reasonable buffer for next time. Avoid turning one observation into a fixed rule. Repeat on another day only if it would be useful.

The activity and my estimated total time

What happened and the observed time

Preparation, interruptions, or transitions I overlooked

My next estimate and a practical adjustment

Shape a Workable Attention Space

Attention planning and follow through | Adults and teens 13+ | 10 to 15 minutes

Test one environmental change that may support a chosen activity.

Attention depends partly on the situation around you. A workable space may look different for different people and tasks. Start with one activity and one change you can realistically make, even if you do not control the whole environment.

Look at the current setup

Notice noise, light, movement, notifications, temperature, seating, materials, and interruptions. Some input may help you stay engaged while other input pulls you away. Describe your experience rather than assuming that complete silence is best.

Change one thing

Try keeping needed materials within reach, moving a distracting object, choosing a different seat, or asking for an agreed quiet period. Consider safety and access before using headphones or muting notifications. Keep necessary communication available.

Evaluate usefulness

Do the task briefly and ask: Did starting or returning become easier? Was the space comfortable and accessible? What tradeoff appeared? Keep, modify, or stop the change. An experiment that does not help still narrows the choices.

The activity and where I usually do it

Input or interruptions that help and hinder me

One environmental change I can test

What I noticed and what I will keep or change

Plan the Transition Before Leaving

Attention planning and follow through | Adults and teens 13+ | 10 to 15 minutes

Create a short sequence for one transition that often becomes difficult.

Leaving home, ending work, or moving between activities can involve many small steps. Choose one transition that regularly creates stress. Build a short sequence that reduces the need to remember everything at the same moment.

Work backward from the destination

Describe where you need to be and what you need there. Include the items, information, travel, and access arrangements involved. Decide what can be prepared earlier without creating a safety or privacy problem.

Use a short checklist

Choose three to five essential steps. Example: check the appointment address, place necessary items by the door, put on shoes, and check the travel plan. A visible cue or existing reminder may help you begin.

Plan for disruption

Choose what matters most if time is short and how to communicate a delay. Review the sequence after one attempt. If the same step repeatedly fails, change the setup or seek assistance rather than adding more self-criticism.

The transition and what I need at the destination

Three to five essential steps in order

My starting cue and what I can prepare earlier

A backup plan and one change after trying it

Find the Barrier Before the Fix

Attention planning and follow through | Adults and teens 13+ | 10 to 15 minutes

Identify why one task is stuck before choosing a strategy.

When a task is not moving, many explanations are possible. The step may be unclear, the resources may be missing, or the task may bring up difficult feelings. This page helps you choose a response that fits the barrier.

Locate the sticking point

Describe the exact moment progress stops. Ask whether you know what to do, have what you need, can do it in the current setting, and have enough capacity today. Several barriers can exist together.

Match the support

Unclear instructions may need an example. Missing resources may need practical help. Overload may need a smaller task or reduced demands. Fear may need discussion and a supported practice plan. No single productivity trick fits every barrier.

Test one response

Choose one change and define what would count as useful progress. Example: ask for a worked example and complete the first item. If it does not help, reassess the explanation rather than concluding that you are unwilling or incapable.

The task and the point where it stops

The barrier I suspect and what supports that guess

One matching support or change to test

What I will observe and when I will review it

Understand Attention Support Options

Attention planning and follow through | Adults and teens 13+ | 10 to 15 minutes

Distinguish practical attention supports from a clinical diagnosis or complete treatment plan.

Difficulty starting, remembering, organizing, or returning to tasks can have different causes. ADHD is one possibility, but a worksheet cannot establish it. Persistent difficulties that affect daily life deserve a careful assessment rather than a character judgment.

Describe the pattern

Notice where difficulties occur, how long they have been present, and what helps or worsens them. Include sleep, stress, mood, health, environment, and demands. A clinician can consider the pattern and other possible explanations.

Try support that fits the task

External reminders, smaller starting steps, written instructions, a manageable environment, and predictable routines are options to test. Choose one at a time so you can tell whether it helps. Practical accommodations may matter as much as personal effort.

Use a collaborative treatment plan

When ADHD or another condition is identified, discuss suitable treatment and supports with qualified professionals. These pages provide organizational practice; they do not replace assessment, medication management, or individualized care.

Measure usefulness fairly

Ask whether a strategy makes an important activity more manageable, reduces avoidable stress, or improves access. A system does not have to look conventional to be useful. If it repeatedly fails, revise the system and the demands placed on it.

One difficulty I want assessed or one support I want to test

Replace Blame With Useful Questions

Attention planning and follow through | Clinicians | 10 to 15 minutes

Explore a missed task without assuming a lack of motivation.

Use when a client reports that a plan did not happen. Begin with curiosity about the sequence and the fit of the plan. The purpose is to find a useful adjustment while keeping the client involved in deciding what matters.

Invite an account

Clinician: "The plan did not happen this week. Can we look at the moment it became hard to start or continue?" Client: "I was just lazy." Clinician: "That is a painful label. What did you notice in the actual situation?"

Identify a testable barrier

Clinician: "Was the next step clear? Were the materials available? Did something else need your attention? What feelings or body needs were present?" If the client is unsure: "We can take one recent example slowly, or choose a different plan."

Offer options with permission

Clinician: "Would you like to try a smaller first step, a visible reminder, or asking for support? We can also question whether this task is the right priority." Client: "The instructions were confusing." Clinician: "Then clarifying them may be more useful than another reminder."

Check ownership

Clinician: "What will you try, and what would tell us it helped? How should we adjust if the same barrier appears?" Invite the client to describe the plan in their own words and record uncertainty honestly.

The barrier hypothesis and the client-chosen experiment

Test One Practical Support System

Attention planning and follow through | Clinicians | 50 minutes

Help a client test one task support and plan how to evaluate it.

The session focuses on one meaningful activity. Success means learning whether a support fits the client's circumstances, not proving productivity. Offer writing, demonstration, or verbal planning according to communication and access needs.

Minutes 0 to 8

Check current needs, safety, and priorities. Ask which unfinished activity has the greatest meaningful impact. Confirm that the task is realistic and chosen collaboratively.

Minutes 8 to 18

Use FOC06 to identify the exact sticking point. Consider unclear instructions, missing resources, emotional barriers, health, and environmental demands. Treat the explanation as a hypothesis.

Minutes 18 to 28

Choose FOC01, FOC02, FOC04, or FOC05 according to the barrier. Design one support with a clear action, cue, and practical setup.

Minutes 28 to 40

Rehearse the first step in the session when feasible. Observe where the plan helps or breaks down. Ask permission before offering an adjustment and test the revised step briefly.

Minutes 40 to 46

Choose one real-world trial and a simple observation, such as whether the reminder was noticed or the task began. Include a fallback for disruption and avoid excessive tracking.

Minutes 46 to 50

Review what was learned and what remains uncertain. Confirm follow-up, needed assessment or accommodations, and the client's view of whether the plan is worth trying.

Selected support, trial occasion, and observation

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Review Progress Without Self Blame

Attention planning and follow through | Adults and teens 13+ | 10 to 15 minutes

Notice useful supports and revise one plan without turning difficulties into a personal verdict.

Review one recent day or task. Include what the situation asked of you and what resources were available. You are gathering information about a pattern, not deciding whether you are a good or bad person.

Notice what worked

Look for a specific condition that helped, even briefly. Perhaps instructions were clear, someone shared the task, or the starting step was visible. Give the support as much attention as the effort you used.

Describe the hard part fairly

Write the event and its context before adding an interpretation. "I forgot after the appointment changed" gives more useful information than "I never follow through." Notice any demands that were unrealistic from the beginning.

Choose a small revision

Keep one useful support and change one element that did not fit. You can also ask for an accommodation, reduce a demand, or bring the pattern to a clinician. Rest and support can be legitimate needs, not rewards for finishing.

What became more manageable and what helped?

Where did I get stuck and what was happening around me?

What would a fair description of my effort include?

What support or adjustment will I try next?

Clinical foundations

These sources inform the general clinical concepts. The original resources in this collection are not validated instruments or publisher-endorsed protocols. Links checked October 26, 2026.

S01 Psychotherapies

National Institute of Mental Health | n.d.

General psychotherapy principles, collaborative goals, skills practice, and choosing care.

<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/psychotherapies>

S04 Doing What Matters in Times of Stress An Illustrated Guide

World Health Organization | 2020

Stress coping, present moment awareness, values, and kindness. Original exercises in this library are separate from the WHO guide.

<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240003927>

S12 Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder What You Need to Know

National Institute of Mental Health | n.d.

Attention related difficulties, evaluation, treatment, and organizational supports. Planning pages are not ADHD tests.

<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/attention-deficit-hyperactivity-disorder-what-you-need-to-know>