

FREE PRINTABLE + DIGITAL TOOL

The 5-Minute Midlife ADHD Workday Rescue

A low-friction reset for moments when focus, memory, or task initiation suddenly drops.

PAUSE • EXTERNALIZE • CHOOSE • SHRINK • RESTART

Use it on a laptop, tablet, phone, or printed beside your desk.

When your workday starts

You might notice:

- ✓ You reread the same email but cannot decide how to answer.
- ✓ One interruption makes you forget what you were doing.
- ✓ You keep opening tabs, lists, or apps without starting the task.
- ✓ A short to-do list suddenly feels physically heavy.
- ✓ You are tempted to redesign the whole day instead of taking one next step.

Why a low-friction reset can help:

Adults with ADHD may experience difficulties with organization, remembering tasks, planning, and completing projects. During perimenopause, many women report cognitive symptoms such as forgetfulness, concentration difficulty, and distractibility. Research on the overlap is growing, but it remains limited.¹⁻³

Use this rescue before you: build a new productivity system, force a long work block, or decide the entire day is lost.

 **5 minutes**

Protect a small pause.

 **One surface**

Use one sheet or note.

 **No fixing**

Capture first. Solve later.

The five-minute rescue

1

MINUTE 1: STOP THE INPUT

Silence notifications, close the extra tabs, and turn the phone face down.

Say: "Nothing new enters for five minutes."

2

MINUTE 2: EMPTY WORKING MEMORY

Write every open loop in fragments: email Sam, finish slide, book appointment, reply later.

Do not organize. Your brain is unloading, not planning.

3

MINUTE 3: CHOOSE ONE OUTCOME

Ask: "What single result would make the next 25 minutes useful?"

Choose an outcome, not a category. Example: "Send the revised paragraph."

4

MINUTE 4: SHRINK TO ONE ACTION

Convert the outcome into the smallest visible action you can physically do.

Example: open the document and highlight the paragraph that needs revision.

5

MINUTE 5: RESTART FOR TEN MINUTES

Begin the action and protect ten minutes from switching.

If needed, send one short message: "I am delayed. I will update you by 3:00."

My rescue sheet

Write in fragments. Short answers reduce cognitive load.

DATE / TIME

CURRENT CAPACITY

☐ GREEN

☐ AMBER

☐ RED

1. EVERYTHING PULLING AT MY ATTENTION

Capture unfinished tasks, worries, reminders, and interruptions.

2. THE ONE OUTCOME FOR THE NEXT 25 MINUTES

What needs to be true - not everything that could be done.

3. MY NEXT VISIBLE ACTION

A physical action small enough to begin immediately.

4. WHAT I AM INTENTIONALLY POSTPONING

Not forgotten. Not now.

5. SUPPORT OR COMMUNICATION I NEED

One message, boundary, clarification, or request that protects the next step.

What to do after the five

GREEN CAPACITY

You can think, prioritize, and recover from interruptions.

- Continue for one 25-minute work block.
- Keep the capture list visible.
- Take a real break before adding new work.

AMBER CAPACITY

You can work, but switching and decision-making are costly.

- Use a 10-15 minute single-task block.
- Remove optional choices and extra tabs.
- Ask for clarity before starting ambiguous work.

RED CAPACITY

The goal is to preserve function, communicate, and reduce further overload.

- Choose one essential action only.
- Delay nonessential work without guilt.
- Communicate the delay or ask for support.

What counts as success?

- ✓ The task is visible.
- ✓ The next action is small.
- ✓ A delay has been communicated.
- ✓ The day feels less chaotic.

WHEN THE SAME FRICTION KEEPS RETURNING

Turn the rescue into a personal operating system.

The Midlife ADHD Reset expands this five-minute tool into a complete low-friction framework for workdays, meetings, interruptions, capacity changes, and a flexible 14-day reset.

EXPLORE THE FULL INTERACTIVE GUIDE

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SCAN TO EXPLORE

IMPORTANT EDUCATIONAL NOTICE

This resource provides general educational and organizational support. It does not diagnose or treat ADHD, perimenopause, or any health condition, and it does not replace medical, psychological, or psychiatric care. New, severe, rapidly changing, or concerning symptoms should be discussed with a qualified health professional. Medication and hormone-treatment decisions should always be made with an appropriately qualified clinician.

REFERENCES

1. National Institute of Mental Health. ADHD in Adults: 4 Things to Know. <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/adhd-what-you-need-to-know>
2. The Menopause Society, Perimenopause. <https://menopause.org/patient-education/menopause-topics/perimenopause>
3. Smari UJ, et al. Perimenopausal symptoms in women with and without ADHD: a population-based cohort study. European Psychiatry. 2025. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/40903825/>