

Time Blindness

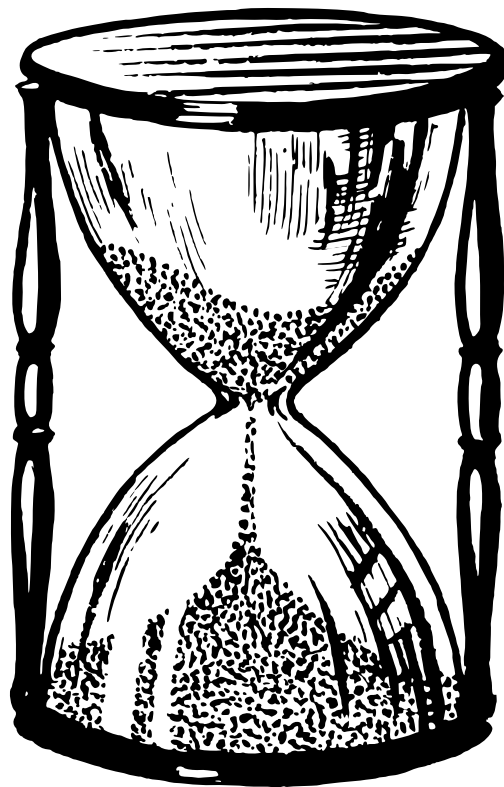
Time blindness, or time agnosia, affects many Adhd women's ability to accurately perceive, estimate, and manage time.

You might be surprised how many things you struggle with are actually due to having a different understanding of time.

This can result in significant challenges in the following areas:

- planning daily activities
- estimating how long tasks take
- getting to places on time
- even generating hope for and thinking about the future.

It also often impacts relationships and your stress level.



Time Blindness

Why Do Adhd Women Have Time Blindness?

Adhd time blindness may be due to dysregulated **dopamine** and **norepinephrine** neurotransmitters, which are critical for focus, motivation, and time perception.

Treatments related to dopamine include:

- Medication that adjusts neurotransmitter levels
- Engaging in stimulating activities

These treatments help Adhder's perceive time more similarly to their neurotypical peers, which further suggests the involvement of dopamine in time blindness.

Another perspective is provided by the **Scalar Expectancy Theory (SET)**. It posits that an internal brain clock, influenced by sensory inputs like pulse rate, brightness levels, and temperature changes, measures time.

Variations in this internal clock may contribute to time perception difficulties in individuals with ADHD.

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Why Do Adhd Women Have Time Blindness?

Brain imaging studies have also indicated that there are structural and functional differences in the brain regions of individuals with ADHD that are associated with time perception.



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What else influences the Perception of Time?

Just some interesting things to note:



1. **Age** 🧓: Younger people often feel time passes slowly, as each year is a significant part of their life. For older people, time seems quicker, as each year is a smaller fraction of their life.
2. **Activities** 🎮🕒: Stimulating activities makes time feel longer, while mundane tasks seem to speed it up.
3. **Emotions** 😨😊: Intense emotions like fear or joy can slow our perception of time due to increased brain activity.
4. **Weather** ☀️❄️: Anecdotaly, warmer temperatures may elongate the sense of time, while cooler weather might shorten it.
5. **Fatigue** 😴: When tired, time seems to drag as our brain processes slow down.



These perceptions are subjective and influenced by our brain's processing of information and emotional states.



Time Blindness

Who else struggles with Time Blindness?

Time blindness is most commonly associated with (ADHD), but it's not exclusive to it. Other conditions that can exhibit time blindness include:

1. Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD): Some individuals with ASD may struggle with time perception and management, which can manifest as time blindness.

2. Dyslexia: There's some evidence to suggest that dyslexia can affect time perception, although the relationship isn't fully understood.

3. Brain Injuries: Certain types of brain injuries can affect the brain's ability to perceive and manage time.

4. Neurodegenerative Disorders: Conditions like Parkinson's disease and Alzheimer's disease can affect time perception.

5. Mental Health diagnoses: Conditions like anxiety and depression can distort a person's perception of time, making it seem like time is passing more slowly or quickly than it actually is.

Time Blindness

Helping Yourself With Time Blindness

Let's look at some ways to help yourself that involve different strategies and coping skills.

Embracing Self-Compassion

Navigating the world with time blindness can be challenging, especially when those around you, including neurotypical individuals, struggle to understand your experiences.

They may misinterpret your actions as **disrespectful or personal**, which couldn't be further from the truth. This misunderstanding can lead to a loss of trust, and it's heartbreaking for you.

However, it's crucial to remember that those who genuinely love and care for you will strive to understand and support you, just as you are. You **deserve of respect and understanding, not harm, shame, or criticism.**

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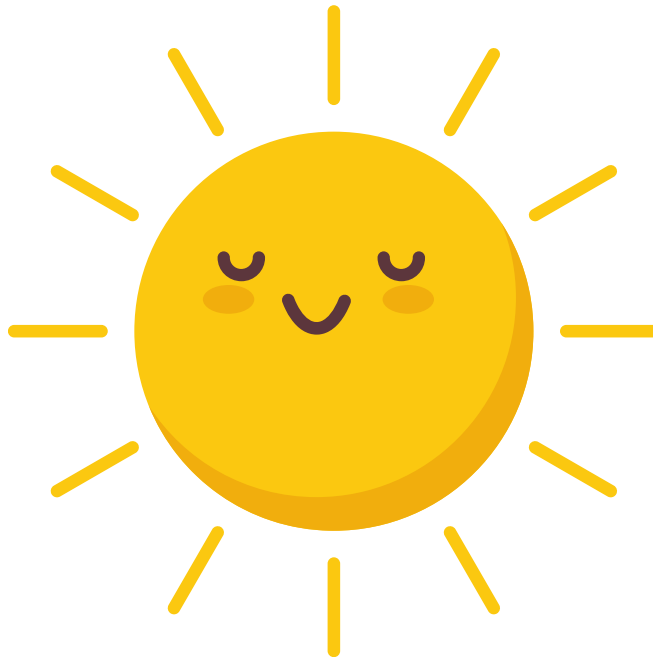
Self Care Strategies: Set Theory Interventions

If you follow a morning-to-evening schedule, incorporating nature into your routine is a self-care strategy that helps manage time blindness.

These are some ideas that can enhance time perception and overall well-being:

Natural Light Exposure: Begin your day with natural light to synchronize circadian rhythms, boosting alertness and mood. This is essential for self-care and effective time management.

Natural Time Cues: Utilize natural cues like the sun's position to track time. Aligning activities with natural light cycles can improve time awareness and reduce stress.





Time Blindness

Self-Care Strategies: Set Theory Interventions

- Nature in Daily Routine: Integrating nature into daily activities, such as taking walks in a park, provides a calming effect.
- Nature-Inspired Environment: Creating an indoor environment with plants and nature sounds aids in emotional regulation and time awareness.
- Mindfulness in Nature: Practice nature-based mindfulness activities to improve internal time management, contributing to mental well-being.
- Routine Aligned with Nature: Aligning your daily routine with natural cycles, like waking with the sunrise can help to regulate your internal clock.





Time Blindness

Self-Care Strategies: Set Theory Interventions

Here are some suggestions for adjusting your environment or your relationship with it to support you:

- Consider getting a dawn clock. These are clocks that simulate the sunrise and help with setting circadian rhythm.
- Upon waking, go outside and spend time in the sun for a few minutes.
- If possible, watch the sunset.
- If you associate a natural event, such as birds chirping in the morning, with a specific time, you can use it as a time cue. Check the clock when you hear them and remember that as a marker of time.



Time Blindness

Self Advocacy and Time Blindness

Navigating through life with time blindness can present unique challenges. Self-advocacy can help you in relationships.

Here are some key points to consider:

1. Advocacy Through Communication

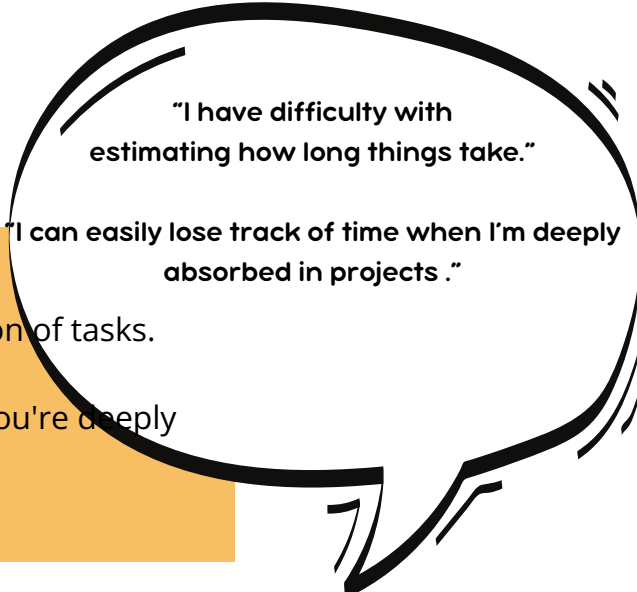
Your experiences with time blindness are personal and significant. Understandably, it can be hard to be vulnerable about these issues, especially if you've faced judgment or criticism in the past. **But remember, you are not to blame for your time blindness; it's a part of your ADHD, not a personal failing.**

When safe, share these experiences honestly and clearly to mitigate their impact on your relationships.

For example:

Detail your struggles with estimating the duration of tasks.

Discuss how you easily lose track of time when you're deeply engaged in projects.



"I have difficulty with estimating how long things take."

"I can easily lose track of time when I'm deeply absorbed in projects."

Time Blindness

Self Advocacy and Time Blindness

2. Support Needs

I think it's just as important to identify and express your specific support needs. These might include:

- Requesting a reminder from a therapist or a friend about a commitment
- Explaining why you may have taken longer to respond to something than someone may have wished (an email or text)

"I care about you. Time slipped through my fingers. I sometimes lose track of how many days have elapsed. I hope you can be patient and understanding." or

"I need patience and understanding around this issue." or

" Would you be willing to be patient and understanding with me around this issue."

3. Tips for Disclosure

When advocating for yourself, consider the following:

- Share your time management difficulties openly if you feel safe
- Keep in mind that your disclosure **doesn't need to mention time blindness or ADHD explicitly**. Instead, you might say, "Sometimes, I have difficulty with task estimation," or **"I tend to lose track of time when I'm deeply focused."**

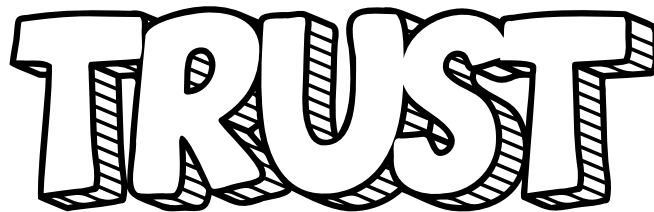
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Self Advocacy and Time Blindness

4. Assess Trustworthiness of person and situation

Finally, it's important to remember that the amount of personal information you share should align with the trustworthiness of the person you're communicating with. Taking into account their history of understanding and supportiveness is crucial. This careful selection can help ensure your experiences and needs are met with understanding, respect, and the right level of support.

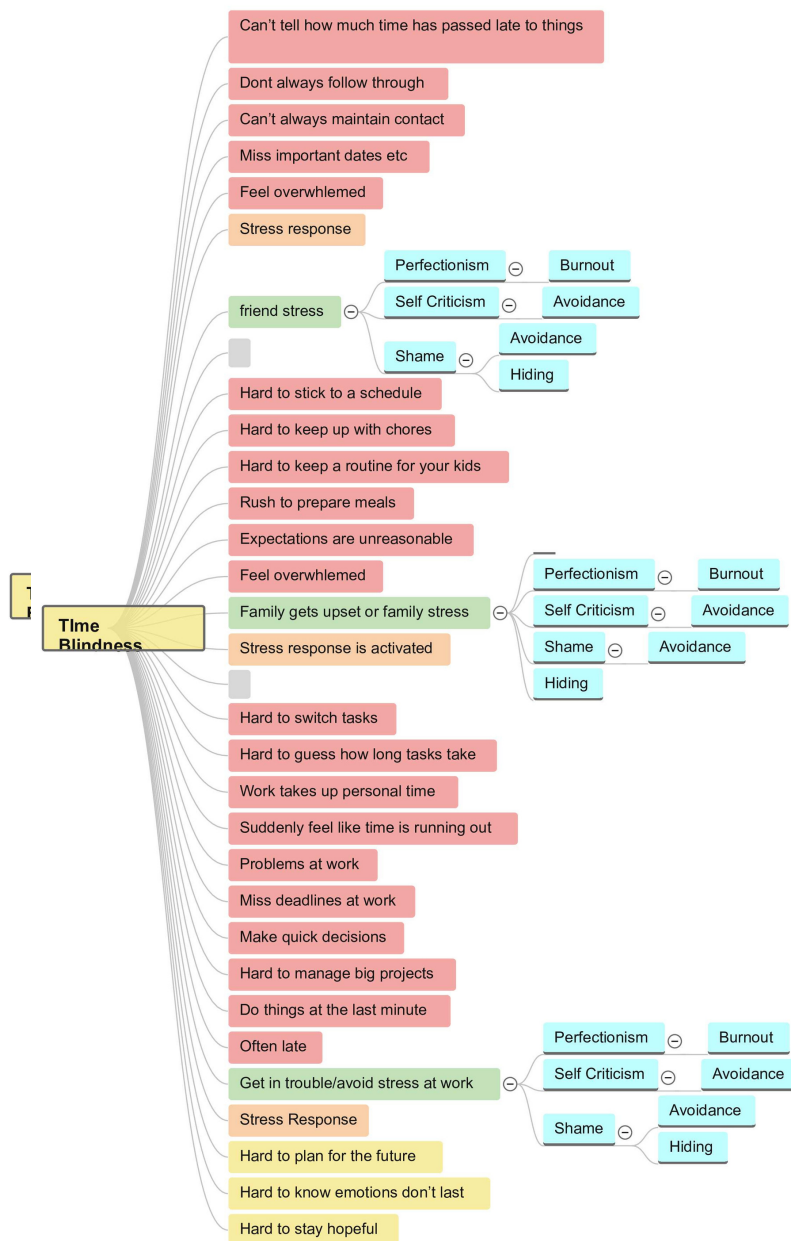


TRUST

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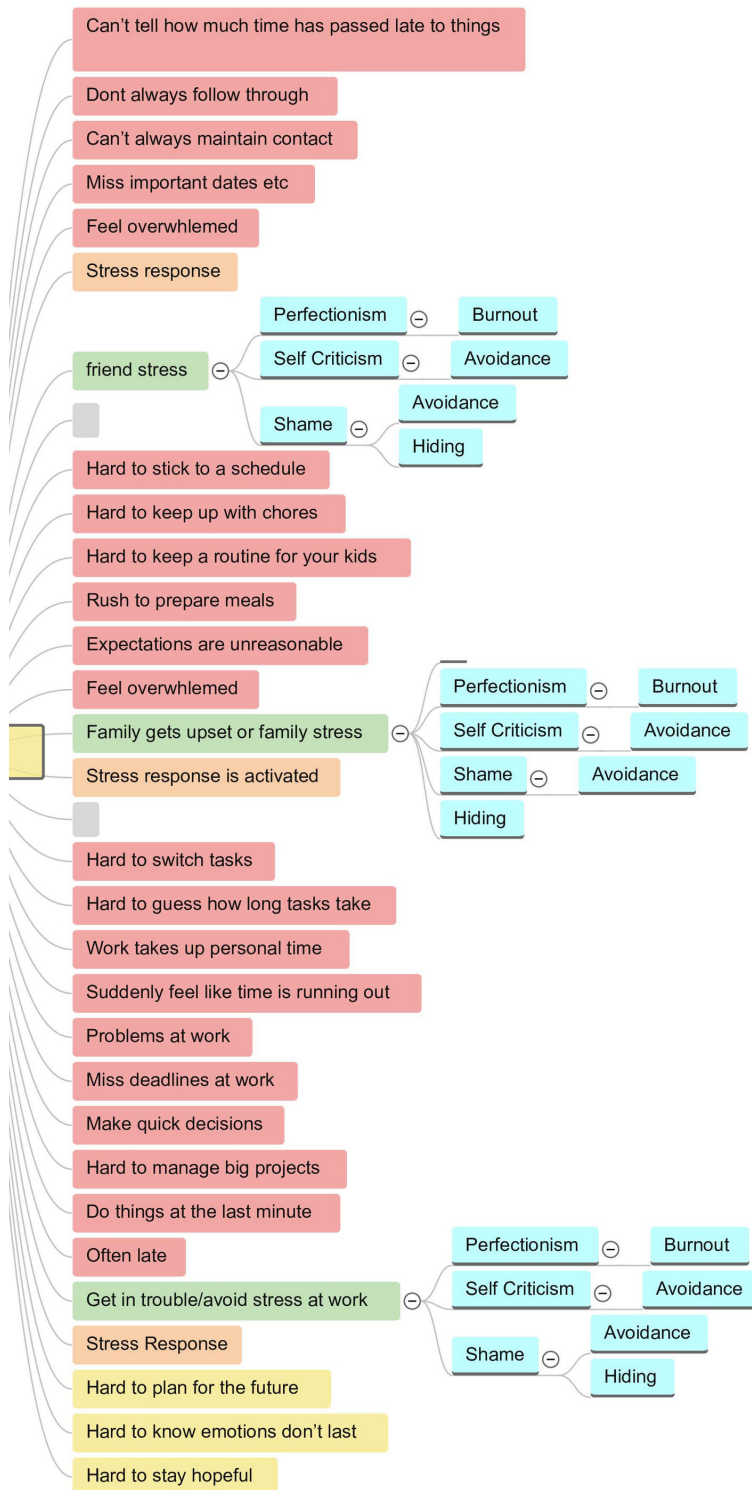
The Old Coping Skills

Time blindness can show up in lots of ways in your life. When it does, it often triggers the old coping skills to kick up. This diagram represents what I see happen with my clients when time blindness impairs **them in the world, and how others respond to it, with anger, misunderstanding, or criticism.** You never deserve to be criticized because of brain-based differences



Time Blindness

The Old Coping Skills



Time Blindness

Helping Yourself With Time Blindness

Self-Accommodations

Going the extra mile to understand yourself better is a form of self-care. Reflecting on your relationship with time can help you identify accommodations that make your life more manageable and fulfilling.

Consider these questions to guide your reflection:

1. How is your relationship with time hindering you from living the life you desire?
2. What changes can you make to improve your relationship with time and move closer to the life you envision?

When doing this exercise it can be helpful to remember your personal values.



Time Blindness

Tips and Strategies

In my practice, I use a few things to help my clients with time blindness; I teach self-advocacy, self-compassion, self-care, self-accommodation, and self-awareness. I try not to teach clients elaborate strategies that often wind up feeling defeated or frustrated, so I choose simple and supportive ones.

Here is a list that may or may not be helpful for you. If any of these don't work, that's okay. It doesn't mean anything is wrong with you or the strategy. It just wasn't a good fit for you. Try on another one until one feels right.

💡 **External scaffolding** is an important concept. Russel Barkley originally described this as setting up systems outside your brain to support your executive functioning. All of the following ideas help with this improving your sense of time by creating these outside systems.

Use analog clocks



Analog clocks show time passing in a visual way, unlike digital clocks. This can help you understand how much time you're spending on tasks in a way that helps you feel time better.

Time Blindness

Tips and Strategies



Set timers

Timers can alert you when it's time to start or stop a task. This can help you stick to your schedule. I prefer visual timers that you can hold that show the visual passing of time like a clock.

Another version is the **pomodoro timer**. A bit different and you can't see the visual passage of time, but many people find success with it. The Pomodoro Technique, created by Francesco Cirillo, breaks work into 25-minute intervals, or "pomodoros," followed by short breaks. It enhances productivity and focus while lessening fatigue. You can see a count down of your sessions. <https://pomofocus.io/> is a website you can use for free online.

Include buffer time in your schedule

Buffer time is extra time you add to your schedule. It's there for when tasks take longer than you thought. Try to add three times more time than you think you'll need for a task.

Time Blindness

Tips and Strategies



Hyperfocus management

We often consider hyperfocus to be a superpower but it can also be an issue. Hyperfocus causes you to lose all perception of time.

It can be helpful to try to identify possible hyperfocus triggers in your environment. Plan for it and support it only after you have done your tasks. I know this sounds impossible, but you can be on guard for hyperfocus triggers that pull you away from other important things that matter to you. Hyperfocus is a strength when it allows us to be in flow, but when it pulls you away from other things that matter to you it can cause you stress anxiety and unhappiness.

Playlist Time Management

You can create a playlist that is the exact length of time you want to spend on a task. For example, if you want to spend an hour cleaning your house, you could create a playlist that is exactly one hour long. When the music starts, you start cleaning. When the music stops, you stop cleaning. This can be a fun and less stressful way to keep track of time, as you're not constantly checking the clock. Plus, it can make the task more enjoyable!

Time Blindness

Tips and Strategies

Routine

A routine assists with time tracking by structuring the day. Regularly performed activities serve as time cues, anchoring our perception. This predictability enhances productivity and alleviates stress, as it sets expectations and aids time management. I often recommend my clients incorporate just one routine into their schedule. It could be as simple as waking up at the same time daily, reading a book, making a regular call to a friend, or even enjoying a habitual cup of tea or coffee. Consistently practicing this routine can gradually instill a better sense of time.



Time Blindness

Tips and Strategies

Dopamine hits and a dopamine menu

Why? When we engage in activities that we enjoy or find rewarding, our brain releases dopamine. This not only makes us feel good, but it also enhances our focus and attention. This heightened state of attention can make us more aware of the passage of time.

For example, let's say you decide to take a quick break from work to do something you enjoy, like listening to a favorite song or playing a quick game. This activity gives you a dopamine hit, which boosts your focus. When you return to work, this heightened focus can make it easier for you to keep track of time.

On the other hand, when dopamine levels are low, such as **when we're bored or uninterested, our perception of time can become distorted.** Tasks can seem to drag on forever, and we can easily lose track of time.

Time Blindness

Explanation of Dopamine Menu

Dopamine Menu: A Customized Strategy for ADHD Management

Here's a proposed structure for your Dopamine Menu:

- ****Appetizers****: These are simple, quick activities that can provide an immediate dopamine boost when you need it.
- ****Main Courses****: These are more substantial rewards that might require a bit of time or planning. They can offer a significant dopamine surge and help elevate your mood.
- ****Side Dishes****: These are enhancements you can add to make tasks more music enjoyable. Consider incorporating things like your favorite or fidget toys into routine tasks.
- ****Desserts****: These are indulgent treats that you should have in moderation, but it's okay to spoil yourself occasionally. Always remember to practice self-kindness!
- ****Specials****: These are grand experiences that you might not be able to do often but can look forward to for a long time, like vacations, concerts, or spa days.

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Visual of a Dopamine Menu

Dopamine Menu

ADHDers have difficulty regulating their dopamine levels. Creating a menu for yourself of ways you can regulate your levels to choose from can help you with maintaining healthy routines.

Starters

Get you going

Dancing, Coffee, Music, Walk

Mains

Good for you

Time With Friend, Hiking, Baking

Watching documentaries, Writing in my journal

Sides

Things you add to boring tasks

Music, Body doubles, Podcasts

Specials

sparingly

Netflix, social media, alcohol

Desserts

Big rewards

Vacation, spending money

Night Time Snacks

Down regulate you

Take a bath, read a book, burn a candle, pet your dog

Time Blindness

Tips coaches offer but I don't 'teach

Task Timing

Choose a task you do regularly, like washing dishes or reading emails. Before you start, estimate how long you think it will take. Then, time yourself while you do it. Compare your estimate to the actual time it took. This can help you calibrate your internal clock.

Time Log

Start timing yourself for the tasks logging every moment of important tasks and how long things take you. Write it down in a log. After a while, this time log can help you know how long things take you.

Interval Estimation

Set a timer for a random amount of time, like 7 minutes. Try to guess when you think the time is up without looking at the clock. This can help you get a better feel for how long different amounts of time feel.

Time Blindness

Tips coaches offer but I don't 'teach

Day Planning

At the start of your day, write down what you plan to do and how long you think each task will take. At the end of the day, compare your estimates to the actual time each task took. This can help you get better at estimating larger blocks of time.

Retrospective Estimation

At the end of the day, try to estimate how long you spent on different activities throughout the day. Then, compare your estimates to the actual times if you have them (for example, if you use a time tracking app). This can help you become more aware of how you spend your time.

Time Blindness

Tips coaches offer but I don't 'teach

Habit Trackers Apps like Habitica or Streaks

These can help you build and maintain "productive habits", which can indirectly help manage time blindness.

Backwards Design

Using backwards design, one would first determine the desired outcome or goal, such as completing a project by a certain deadline. Then, they would determine the steps needed to achieve that outcome and how much time each step might require. Finally, they would schedule these tasks in reverse order, starting from the deadline and working back to the present. This allows for a better understanding of the timeline and can help to prevent procrastination and last-minute rushes.

Focus Apps

Forest or Freedom can help you stay focused on tasks by blocking distracting websites or apps.

Visual Planning Tools

Tools like Trello or Miro can help you visualize your tasks and projects, making it easier to manage your time.

Time Blocking

This involves scheduling specific time slots for different tasks or activities in your calendar