



ADHD & ANALYSIS PARALYSIS

Analysis Paralysis Info Sheet

WHAT IS ANALYSIS PARALYSIS?



Analysis paralysis (AP) is the state of overthinking, or over-analysing, to the point where decision-making becomes stalled, sometimes permanently. For individuals with ADHD, this experience is often intensified by executive functioning challenges and emotional regulation difficulties.

WHY IS AP COMMON IN ADHD?



People with ADHD will often experience difficulty holding and organising multiple pieces of information in their working memory, making decisions feel overwhelming or disorganised (Wilcutt et al., 2005; Barkley, 1997).

Fear of Mistakes & Perfectionism:

Emotional dysregulation and past negative experiences may cause heightened fear of making a “wrong” choice, leading to avoidance and indecision (Shaw et al., 2014).

Dopamine Deficiency & Decision Fatigue:

ADHD is linked to lower baseline dopamine levels, making mundane and complex decision-making feel unrewarding or exhausting (Volkow et al., 2011). This often leads to delay, procrastination, or even the abandoning of tasks altogether.

HYPERFOCUS vs. AVOIDANCE



When overwhelmed, the ADHD brain may swing between extreme focus on minute details or total disengagement, further complicating task initiation and completion (Brown, 2006).

COMMON EXPERIENCES OF AP IN ADHD



Some of the signs of Analysis Paralysis are as follows:

- Feeling mentally frozen when faced with too many options
- Spending hours on simple decisions like emails, shopping, or forms
- Abandoning tasks halfway due to overwhelm
- Rewriting or rechecking work repeatedly out of uncertainty
- Delaying important tasks because you can't decide where to start
- Avoiding decisions out of fear of getting it wrong

COMMON IMPACTS OF AP IN ADHD



Some of the impacts of Analysis Paralysis are as follows:

- Missed deadlines and opportunities
- Chronic stress and mental fatigue
- Poor self-confidence in decision-making
- Perfectionism and fear of failure
- Relationship strain or frustration from indecision



If you experience Analysis Paralysis, it is recommended that you:

Limit Choices:

Reduce the number of options to 2–3 at a time to prevent overload.

Time-Boxing Decisions:

Set a timer and commit to making a decision within a set window.

Externalise Options:

Use visual aids (lists, diagrams, pros/cons, etc.) to reduce mental load.

Adopt “Good Enough” Thinking:

Practice choosing options which are “sufficiently good” instead of perfect.

Seek Support:

An ADHD-informed coach or peer can help guide and break decisions into steps.

References:

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