

The 8-Week Mindfulness Plan for ADHD

A week-by-week path to retrain your brain — one small focus at a time.

Research shows that about 8 weeks of steady daily practice can begin to change the ADHD brain (Zylowska et al., 2008; Hölzel et al., 2011; Mitchell et al., 2017). This planner turns that science into a simple path. Each week has ONE main focus that builds on the last, drawn from an 8-step program for adults with ADHD (Zylowska, 2012) and from mindfulness-based cognitive therapy, or MBCT (Segal, Williams, & Teasdale, 2013). Print one page for each week and check it off as you go.

Your daily habits — every week, all 8 weeks:

- ☐ About 8 hours of sleep ☐ Three ADHD brain-supporting meals
- ☐ 3–5 minutes of mindfulness practice ☐ Catch yourself on “autopilot” and come back

Then jot one line about what you did and how it felt.

The 8 Weeks at a Glance

Week	This week's focus	Main practice
Week 1	Become More Present: Attention & the Five Senses	Five-senses check-in daily; one routine activity done mindfully; one mindful meal.
Week 2	Focus the Wandering Mind: Mindful Breathing	3–5 min mindful breathing daily; short body scan a few times this week.
Week 3	Direct & Anchor Your Awareness: Sound, Breath & Body	5-min seeing/hearing exercise; upright “dignified” posture for breathing.
Week 4	Listen to Your Body: Body Sensations & Movement	Daily body scan or slow mindful movement/walking; work gently with your limits.
Week 5	Observe Your Mind: Mindfulness of Thoughts	“Name That Thought” daily; watch for the judging mind.
Week 6	Manage Your Emotions: Mindfulness of Feelings	Name feelings + breathe; one self-compassion moment daily.
Week 7	Communicate Skillfully: Mindful Listening & Speaking	Listen fully without planning your reply; pause before speaking.
Week 8	Slow Down to Be More Effective: Mindful Decisions & Actions	One mindful breath before tasks/decisions; do one thing at a time.

Tip: pair this plan with good sleep. See the Daily Sleep Optimization Plan at utah23.org/2026/05/27/sleep_plan.

References

- Hölzel, B. K., Carmody, J., Vangel, M., Congleton, C., Yerramsetti, S. M., Gard, T., & Lazar, S. W. (2011). Mindfulness practice leads to increases in regional brain gray matter density. *Psychiatry Research: Neuroimaging*, 191(1), 36–43.
- Mitchell, J. T., McIntyre, E. M., English, J. S., Dennis, M. F., Beckham, J. C., & Kollins, S. H. (2017). A pilot trial of mindfulness meditation training for ADHD in adulthood. *Journal of Attention Disorders*, 21(13), 1105–1120.
- Segal, Z. V., Williams, J. M. G., & Teasdale, J. D. (2013). *Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy for depression* (2nd ed.). Guilford Press.
- Zylowska, L. (2012). *The mindfulness prescription for adult ADHD*. Shambhala.
- Zylowska, L., Ackerman, D. L., Yang, M. H., Futrell, J. L., Horton, N. L., Hale, T. S., Pataki, C., & Smalley, S. L. (2008). Mindfulness meditation training in adults and adolescents with ADHD: A feasibility study. *Journal of Attention Disorders*, 11(6), 737–746.

WEEK 1 Become More Present: Attention & the Five Senses

This week's focus: Wake up from “autopilot” by noticing the world through your five senses — sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell. (Autopilot means doing things without really noticing, like driving somewhere and not remembering the trip.)

This week's skills & practice:

- Once a day, do a “Five Senses” check-in: name 5 things you see, 4 you feel, 3 you hear, 2 you smell, 1 you taste.
- Pick ONE routine activity — brushing teeth, showering, eating — and do it with full attention each time, the way you would slowly taste a single raisin (Segal, Williams, & Teasdale, 2013).
- Eat at least one meal mindfully. Don't expect a special feeling — just notice; let your experience be your experience (Segal et al., 2013).

Daily check-in

Day	8 hrs sleep	3 ADHD meals	3-5 min mindful	Caught autopilot	What I did today & how it felt
Mon	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Tue	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Wed	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Thu	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Fri	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Sat	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Sun	☐	☐	☐	☐	

A mindfulness struggle this week — and what I reflected on doing about it:

An insight I gained this week:

WEEK 2 Focus the Wandering Mind: Mindful Breathing

This week's focus: Use your breath as an anchor to come back to the here and now whenever your mind drifts. The breath is always with you — a free anchor you can use anywhere.

This week's skills & practice:

- Do 3–5 minutes of mindful breathing every day (box breathing or counting breaths). Each time your mind wanders, gently return — that return is the “rep.”
- A few times this week, add a short body scan: slowly move your attention through the body from your toes to the top of your head (Segal et al., 2013).
- Notice when you were on autopilot during the day, and come back to your breath (Zylowska, 2012).

Daily check-in

Day	8 hrs sleep	3 ADHD meals	3–5 min mindful	Caught autopilot	What I did today & how it felt
Mon	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Tue	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Wed	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Thu	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Fri	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Sat	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Sun	☐	☐	☐	☐	

A mindfulness struggle this week — and what I reflected on doing about it:

An insight I gained this week:

WEEK 3 Direct & Anchor Your Awareness: Sound, Breath & Body

This week's focus: Practice aiming your attention on purpose — to sounds, to the breath, and to the body — and moving it from one to another at will.

This week's skills & practice:

- Try a 5-minute “seeing” or “hearing” exercise: look out a window or just listen, letting go of labels, taking in raw color and sound (Segal et al., 2013).
- Sit in an upright, dignified posture — feet flat, back tall but not stiff — for your daily breathing (Segal et al., 2013).
- Keep the daily 3–5 minutes of breathing going, and keep catching autopilot moments.

Daily check-in

Day	8 hrs sleep	3 ADHD meals	3-5 min mindful	Caught autopilot	What I did today & how it felt
Mon	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Tue	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Wed	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Thu	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Fri	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Sat	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Sun	☐	☐	☐	☐	

A mindfulness struggle this week — and what I reflected on doing about it:

An insight I gained this week:

WEEK 4 Listen to Your Body: Body Sensations & Movement

This week's focus: Notice what your body is telling you, and add gentle mindful movement. The body often holds emotions before we are even aware of them.

This week's skills & practice:

- Each day, do a body scan or slow mindful stretching/walking. Notice sensations without judging them (Segal et al., 2013).
- Work gently with your limits — mindful movement teaches new, kinder ways to care for yourself (Segal et al., 2013).
- Keep sleep, meals, and breathing steady.

Daily check-in

Day	8 hrs sleep	3 ADHD meals	3-5 min mindful	Caught autopilot	What I did today & how it felt
Mon	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Tue	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Wed	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Thu	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Fri	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Sat	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Sun	☐	☐	☐	☐	

A mindfulness struggle this week — and what I reflected on doing about it:

An insight I gained this week:

WEEK 5 Observe Your Mind: Mindfulness of Thoughts

This week's focus: See thoughts as just thoughts — passing events in the mind, not facts you must believe or act on.

This week's skills & practice:

- Use “Name That Thought”: say “I’m having the thought that …,” and picture it as a cloud or a leaf floating by.
- Watch for the “judging mind” that says things aren’t good enough, then gently let those judgments go (Segal et al., 2013).
- Remember: you don’t have to believe or chase every thought (Zylowska, 2012).

Daily check-in

Day	8 hrs sleep	3 ADHD meals	3-5 min mindful	Caught autopilot	What I did today & how it felt
Mon	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Tue	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Wed	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Thu	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Fri	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Sat	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Sun	☐	☐	☐	☐	

A mindfulness struggle this week — and what I reflected on doing about it:

An insight I gained this week:

WEEK 6 Manage Your Emotions: Mindfulness of Feelings

This week's focus: Allow feelings to be here — even hard ones — with kindness, instead of pushing them away or over-thinking them.

This week's skills & practice:

- When a strong feeling shows up, name it (“this is anger,” “this is sadness”), breathe, and let it be — a hand on your heart can help.
- Practice self-compassion: “This is hard, and I’m doing my best.” Mindfulness isn’t about forcing positive thoughts; it’s allowing what’s here (Segal et al., 2013).
- Be as gentle with yourself as you would be with a good friend — kindness is “caught, not taught” (Segal et al., 2013).

Daily check-in

Day	8 hrs sleep	3 ADHD meals	3-5 min mindful	Caught autopilot	What I did today & how it felt
Mon	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Tue	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Wed	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Thu	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Fri	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Sat	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Sun	☐	☐	☐	☐	

A mindfulness struggle this week — and what I reflected on doing about it:

An insight I gained this week:

WEEK 7 Communicate Skillfully: Mindful Listening & Speaking

This week's focus: Bring mindfulness into your conversations — really listening, and pausing before you speak.

This week's skills & practice:

- In one conversation a day, put full attention on the other person, without planning your reply.
- Notice the urge to interrupt (common with ADHD) and let it pass; take one mindful breath before you respond (Zylowska, 2012).
- Keep your daily habits going.

Daily check-in

Day	8 hrs sleep	3 ADHD meals	3-5 min mindful	Caught autopilot	What I did today & how it felt
Mon	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Tue	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Wed	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Thu	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Fri	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Sat	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Sun	☐	☐	☐	☐	

A mindfulness struggle this week — and what I reflected on doing about it:

An insight I gained this week:

WEEK 8 Slow Down to Be More Effective: Mindful Decisions & Actions

This week's focus: Bring awareness to your choices and actions, so you respond on purpose instead of reacting automatically.

This week's skills & practice:

- Before a task or decision, take one mindful breath and ask, "What actually helps here?"
- Do one thing at a time (Zylowska, 2012).
- Keep all your daily habits going — you have built them over 8 weeks. Slowing down a little often gets you there faster, and calmer.

Daily check-in

Day	8 hrs sleep	3 ADHD meals	3-5 min mindful	Caught autopilot	What I did today & how it felt
Mon	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Tue	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Wed	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Thu	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Fri	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Sat	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Sun	☐	☐	☐	☐	

A mindfulness struggle this week — and what I reflected on doing about it:

An insight I gained this week: