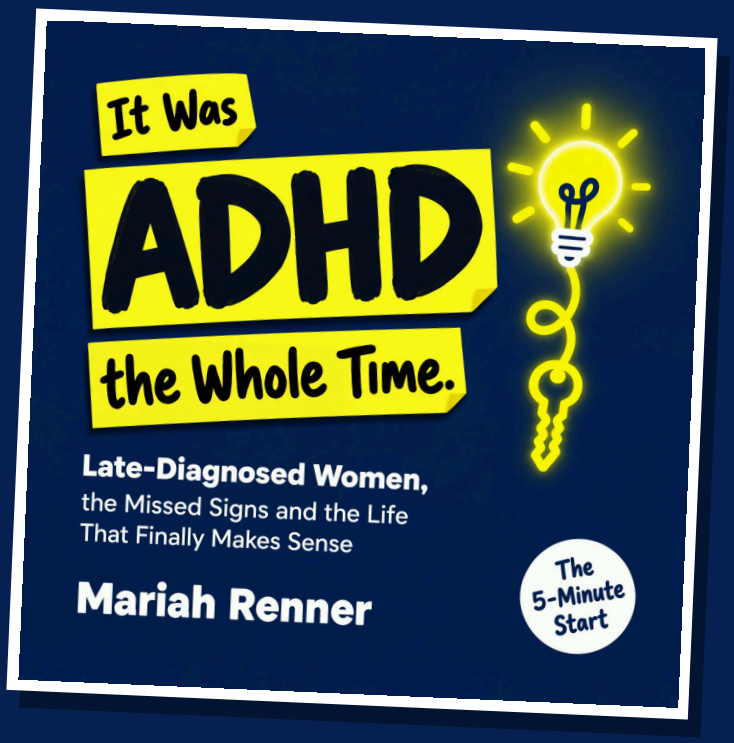
The printable companion to the audiobook

The tools from the book, written down for an ordinary Tuesday. Cards to cut out, pages to fill in and sentences to try.



The Start Again Kit



For It Was ADHD the Whole Time.

Eight tools from the book, free for listeners.

I'm allowed to start again.

Mariah Renner

PRINT IT, OR KEEP IT ON YOUR PHONE

START HERE



Curious is enough for now.

Here's a sentence you might try on, quietly or just in your head: I'm allowed to be curious about this without being certain yet.

How to use this kit

Pick one tool. Cut out the cards, fill in the pages, or keep a photo on your phone. You can stop, and skip whatever doesn't fit.

What this kit is, and isn't

This is a companion, with some practical bits for an ordinary Tuesday. It isn't a test or a quiz, and nothing in it tells you what you have. Recognizing yourself isn't the same as a diagnosis, and the five-minute start doesn't check your paperwork.

1	**The leave-by trick**	Work back from when you need to be there to a leave-by time, then set two alarms: one to get ready, one for the door.	3
2	**Checking the story card**	For when a short reply lands like a punch: pause, set one boring explanation next to the scary one, then ask lightly.	4
3	**Bring the real costs sheet**	For an assessment appointment: what it actually cost you, a sentence for a second opinion and questions for afterwards.	5
4	**You weren't lazy, you were...**	A page to finish the sentence nobody said to the girl you were, in your own words, as many times as it takes.	7
5	**The two coins card**	Two phrases for your pocket when the old voice starts: "Of course that was hard." and "What would help right now?"	8
6	**The 5-minute start card**	One task, a timer you can hear and five minutes. When it rings, you are allowed to stop, and that counts.	9
7	**Restarting is the skill**	Notice it's stopped, ask what changed, change one small thing, start again today. For any system that falls over.	10
8	**Who to Tell and How**	First sentences for a partner and for work, a three-part repair, a remembering jobs list and small asks to try.	11
+	**The decompression buffer**	Five minutes between one part of the day and the next, and a visible home where things stay in sight.	13
+	**One word a night**	A month of one-word notes, and five questions to take to your doctor or a specialist.	14
+	**Tonight**	One kind and true sentence, the kit page, and where to get help.	15

Practice the tools: kalderno.com/adhd/practice

The leave-by trick



One thing that helps some people: stop thinking about when you need to arrive and start thinking about when you need to walk out the door.

Work backwards.

You need to be there at ten. It takes twenty-five minutes to get there. Finding a parking space takes ten. So you need to leave at nine twenty-five. Now add ten minutes for the keys you'll lose, the shoes you'll change, and the "oh I need to take that" moment at the door. Your leave-by time is nine fifteen.

Be there at	**10:00**
Getting there	**25 min**
Finding a parking space	**10 min**
The extra ten	**10 min**
Leave-by time	**9:15**

Then set two alarms.

9:05 ALARM 1 — That's the get-ready alarm. Shoes on, bag by the door, keys in your hand.

9:15 ALARM 2 — That one is for walking out the door, with your coat on.

It sounds almost too simple. But "be there at ten" lives in the fog. "Out the door at nine fifteen" is a real thing you can do.

Your leave-by planner

WHERE TO	BE THERE AT	GETTING THERE	PARKING	THE EXTRA TEN	LEAVE-BY TIME	ALARM 1: GET READY	ALARM 2: OUT THE DOOR

CUT OUT AND STICK BY THE DOOR

Out the door at _____

Get-ready alarm _____

Out the door at _____

Get-ready alarm _____

Out the door at _____

Get-ready alarm _____



Checking the story card

This one isn't for right now. Keep it for the moment a reply lands like a punch.

FRONT

Checking the story

Keep it for the moment a reply lands like a punch.

BACK

1. First, pause. If you can, put the phone face down for ten minutes before you answer.
2. Then think of one boring explanation. She's busy. He's tired.
3. Just set it next to the scary one, so the scary one isn't the only story in the room.
4. If it's still bothering you later, ask, calmly and lightly.

Cut along the dashes Fold on the dots Or take a photo for your phone

HERE'S WHAT IT CAN FEEL LIKE

You send a friend a long message. She replies, "ok."

> **ok.**

And it hits you somewhere under the ribs. Your face gets hot. Then your brain gets to work.

Later you find out she was in line at the post office with one hand free. That's all.

But for those two hours, it was real.

If you still want to ask

"Just checking we're okay? Your reply was short and my brain ran off with it."

Most people answer that kindly, and you get real information instead of a guess.

You don't have to believe the boring version.

Set them side by side

The scary story

One boring explanation



Bring the real costs sheet

What helps an assessor far more is the cost. What actually went wrong, and what it took from you.

A list of relatable things, like “I lose my keys, I’m always late, I’ve got a drawer of half-finished hobbies,” is a start. But lots of people could say most of that.

NOT		BUT
~~I’m bad with money~~	>	**“I paid late fees on my credit card nine months out of twelve last year, even though the money was in my account.”**
~~I’m disorganized at work~~	>	**“I was let go from a job after missing three deadlines in a row, and I’d been working evenings to try to catch up.”**
~~I forget birthdays~~	>	**“My oldest friend stopped speaking to me for a year because I missed her wedding dress fitting, then her bachelorette party, then forgot to reply about the wedding.”**

Your real costs

_____ > _____

_____ > _____

_____ > _____

_____ > _____

LAURA’S PHONE NOTE

Meanwhile she kept a note on her phone, adding things as she remembered them. The late fees. The time she forgot to pick her daughter up from a party. The job she left at twenty-six because she couldn’t face telling her manager she was behind.

Those details can be painful to write down. They’re also the clearest picture you can give of how this has shaped your life.

Some quiet day, you might record a minute on your phone about one moment when a difficulty actually cost you something, and keep it for when you need it.



Questions to take with you

Whatever you feel first, the next step is the same: find someone qualified, bring the real costs, and ask what comes after.

If you're brushed off, you can say, calmly:

"I understand that's your view. I'd still like a full assessment, or a second opinion. Can you tell me how I'd go about that?"

Write it down before the appointment if you think you'll freeze.

Can you refer me for a full ADHD assessment, not just a questionnaire?

By the end it was soggy. I still said the sentence.

When the records are gone, or the people are

Call the service before your appointment and ask what they do when the usual informants aren't available. You might ask:

- [ ] "If my family can't fill out a questionnaire, who else could?"
- [ ] "What other evidence would help?"
- [ ] "Can the assessment lean more on my own account, with a longer interview?"

Tell them honestly what's missing and why. That's part of the information too.

If you go privately, check three things before you pay anything.

- [ ] First, who actually does the assessment, and are they properly licensed for their profession?
- [ ] Second, is it a full adult assessment, or only "screening"?
- [ ] Third, will the report be accepted by whoever looks after you afterwards?

Ask your own doctor's office before you book, not after.

After an answer, useful questions

- [ ] "Can I have a copy of the report?"
- [ ] "Who handles my follow-up, and when?"
- [ ] "Who do I contact if things get harder while I wait?"

Your struggle doesn't stop being real because the name is different from the one you expected.

My notes for the appointment

An assessment is a way to find out, not a stamp on something you've already decided.



You weren't lazy, you were...

Grief for the girl you were is real, and it's allowed to take its time. That girl didn't need to be better. She needed to be understood.

Before you start

You can keep your eyes open the whole way through. If you want to stop at any point, just look around and name three things you can see.

If it brings up more than a wave, the help note is on page **15**.

How it might end

It might end with "overwhelmed," or "exhausted," or "doing your best with nobody showing you how." It might be one word. It might take a few tries before the ending feels right, and that's fine.

Now say the thing nobody said to her. Start with, "You weren't lazy, you were..." and finish it however is true for you. In your head, or quietly out loud.

You weren't lazy, you were

You weren't lazy, you were

You weren't lazy, you were

You weren't lazy, you were

You weren't lazy, you were

You weren't lazy, you were

She might not believe you straight away. That's alright. You can say it again.

If a wave comes, let it come. Do what you need to: a cup of coffee or tea, a walk around the block, a text to a friend, ten minutes on the edge of the bed.



The two coins card

You don't need a whole script. Just two phrases. Carry them around like coins in your pocket.

"Of course that was hard."

"What would help right now?"

Later on, if you like, write the two phrases on a sticky note and put it on the kettle or the bathroom mirror.

Practice is allowed to feel clumsy.

TRY IT

So when you've forgotten the parent-teacher conference and you hear, "You're a terrible mother," you try: Of course that was hard. It's been a crazy week. What would help right now? Maybe an email to the teacher. Maybe a reminder on your phone for next term.

TRY IT

When the report still isn't started and the old voice says, "You're so lazy," you try: Of course that was hard. What would help right now? Maybe ten minutes with a timer. Maybe asking someone to sit with you.

A quick test: ask yourself whether the thought is about something that happened, or about what kind of person you are.

"I didn't see the signs" is about something that happened.

"I'm too stupid to see anything" is about who you are, and it's usually the bully talking.

When you catch the second kind, you don't have to argue with it. Just name it. There it is again.

A one-day sorry count

If you want somewhere to start, try counting your sorries for one day. Then sort them.

Keep: Some are real apologies.

"Sorry I'm late, and thanks for waiting."

Drop: Those are the ones to drop.

Sorry for asking a question. Sorry for needing it in writing.

You can still be polite without handing over a little piece of shame.



The 5-minute start card

You pick one task. You set a timer you can hear for five minutes. You work on the task until the timer rings. And when it rings, you're allowed to stop.

FRONT

The 5-minute start

Five minutes is small enough that the part of you that digs its heels in can usually agree to it.

BACK

1. Think of one task you've been putting off.
2. Say it out loud.
3. Now picture the first tiny bit.
4. Now decide when today you'll give it five minutes, on a timer you can hear.

Later, when the timer rings, you can stop, and that counts.

Cut along the dashes Fold on the dots Or take a photo for your phone

Say it out loud

"I'm going to sort the receipts."

"I'm going to reply to my cousin."

I'm going to _____

When today _____

You've already started, because deciding was the hard part.

Three things. Quick, healthy, and short.

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

Mine, today, are: a song I love, played loud. Five minutes outside with a cup of tea. Texting my sister something silly.

The point isn't the list. It's knowing you're allowed a small good thing.

Starts this month · color in a day for every start

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	

Or you can go again for another five.



Restarting is the skill

The goal isn't finding the perfect system that lasts forever. The real skill is restarting. And it can be done in four small steps.

1 Notice it's stopped.
"Oh. I haven't looked at that list in two weeks." That's all.

2 Ask what changed.
Am I tired? Is work heavier? Did the list end up behind the cereal boxes?

3 Change one small thing.
If it's gone stale, freshen it. If you've got less to give right now, make it smaller instead. Doing less, or doing it with someone, is a proper answer, not a cheat.

4 Start again today.
Not on Monday. Not on the first of the month. Today, even if it's half past nine at night and all you do is put your keys in the bowl.

Restart log

THE SYSTEM	NOTICED ON	WHAT CHANGED	ONE SMALL THING	STARTED AGAIN

Some systems will need restarting every few weeks. That's part of using them, not a sign they're broken.

Notice the good calls you made.

- [ ] You spotted that something had slipped.
- [ ] You picked a plan you could actually manage this week, instead of a heroic one.
- [ ] You asked for help instead of struggling quietly.

LAURA'S SUNDAY RESTART

Her evenings belonged to her mom for now. So she kept the restart small. She hung the bags up. She set the shoe alarm for Monday. She made two very basic sandwiches. Monday wasn't perfect. But it was better than Friday.

The skill isn't finding the perfect system. It's starting again without beating yourself up.

Who to Tell and How



Mostly, you don't have to tell anyone. Not your partner, not your mom, and usually not your boss either. Beyond that, it's your information, and it's yours to share or keep.

In some jobs and some places, though, rules may require you to report a health condition that could affect safety, and some driving license rules work that way too. It depends on your work and where you live, so check the rules that apply to you.

Talking to a partner

Not in the middle of a fight. Pick a calm moment instead. A walk. A cup of coffee on a Saturday morning when nobody's in a rush.

> **"Here's how my brain seems to work, and here's what helps."**

That's not an apology. It's an instruction manual.

My brain seems to _____

What helps _____

A three-part repair

So the explanation goes alongside a repair. One that tends to work has three parts.

1. **Acknowledge the impact.** Not just "sorry," but what it actually did to them.

   _____

2. **Fix what you can.**

   _____

3. **Agree on a system.**

   _____

The remembering jobs

One simple way to start: make a list together of all the "remembering jobs" in your house, then decide who owns each one. Owning a job means remembering it too, not waiting to be reminded.

JOB	WHO OWNS IT

If they doubt it

> **"I'm not asking you to agree with me right now. I'm asking you to keep talking about it with me."**

You don't need their permission to take this seriously.

YOUR SAFETY

But doubt is different from belittling. If conversations keep turning into mocking, name-calling, or your diagnosis being used against you, you're allowed to stop explaining. You can set a boundary, the way Laura did with her mom in chapter 6, and then leave the room. And if you ever feel controlled, frightened or unsafe, talk to someone outside the relationship: a friend you trust, your doctor, or a domestic violence hotline where you live. If you're ever in danger, the safety note in chapter 5 applies. In this kit it is on page **15**.



One sentence for each

People usually picture one decision: tell my manager, or say nothing. In practice, there are steps in between.

1. **Ask for the thing, without the label.**
2. **Ask about the process first.**
3. **Share only what's needed.**
4. **Tell your manager fully.**

Before you share health information, it's fair to ask a few plain questions.

- [ ] Who will see what I tell you?
- [ ] Who can access that record?
- [ ] Will it be written down, and where is it kept?
- [ ] Will my manager be told the diagnosis, or just the change that's been agreed?

If you go the quiet route, keep the work on your side.

"After we talk about tasks, I'll send you a quick bullet-point recap. Could you let me know if I've got anything wrong?"

If you decide to tell your manager, you might say:

"I've recently been diagnosed with ADHD, and I'd like to talk about a couple of things that would help me do my best work."

Then stop, and let them respond.

Here's a small menu. Pick one.

- [ ] Priorities. "When several things land at once, could you tell me which matters most?"
- [ ] Interruptions. "Could I block out an hour each morning for focused work and catch up on messages after?"
- [ ] Meetings. "Could the agenda come around beforehand?"
- [ ] Focused work. "Would headphones, or a quieter desk, be okay for the reports?"

Then frame it as a trial. "Could we try this for a month and see if it helps?" At the end, check in. Keep it, change it, or drop it.

Protections vary a lot by country, job and employer, and I can't tell you what applies to you. Your employer's policies, HR, a union, or official guidance where you live can.

Your first sentence

Before you move on, think of one person you trust. Now say, out loud or under your breath, the first sentence you might use if you told them. Just the first sentence. You don't have to send it, say it to them, or decide anything yet.

The person _____ **My first sentence** _____



The decompression buffer

This one's for the moment you switch from one part of your day to another. If you're driving, it starts once you've parked.

A decompression buffer is a few minutes of doing nothing in between. Not scrolling. Not planning tomorrow. Just sitting. In the parked car, on the stairs, in the bathroom with the door locked. Five minutes is enough to start with.

When you try it, a timer helps, so you're not checking the clock. And if anyone at home needs to know, "I'll be in in five minutes" is enough.

My buffer spot _____

When _____

LAURA IN THE DRIVEWAY

> **"So I wasn't hiding. I was getting ready."**

She started doing it on purpose. Five minutes, timer on her phone. Mostly it helped. She walked in calmer.

But it gives your nervous system a moment to put down the day before you pick up the evening.

A visible home FROM CHAPTER 7

So here are a few ideas that keep things where you can see them.

- [ ] **Hooks by the door.** For coats, bags, the dog leash.
- [ ] **A landing spot for keys.** A bowl or little tray right by the door. Keys go there the moment you walk in. Every time.
- [ ] **Open baskets.** For shoes, hats, chargers, the kids' things. No lids.
- [ ] **The one-basket rescue.** It's a holding spot for the moment, not sorting. So keep it somewhere you'll see it, like the bottom of the stairs, and give it a set return: one five-minute start the next morning, say.
- [ ] **Unfolded laundry.** If folding is the step that leaves clean laundry on a chair for two weeks, skip the step.

My hooks, spots and baskets

_____ _____ _____

_____ _____ _____

None of this will make your home look like a magazine. It might make it a home that works.

One word a night



One simple way to keep track is a running note on your phone. Each evening, add one line with the date and a single word, either your mood or the thing you most want help with. Something like: March 12, scattered.

Month _____

1 P	2 P	3 P	4 P
5 P	6 P	7 P	8 P
9 P	10 P	11 P	12 P
13 P	14 P	15 P	16 P
17 P	18 P	19 P	20 P
21 P	22 P	23 P	24 P
25 P	26 P	27 P	28 P
29 P	30 P	31 P	

If you have periods, add a P on the first day of bleeding, even if your cycle is irregular. Gaps are fine. After a couple of months, it gives you and your doctor something real to look at.

Questions to your doctor or a specialist

- [ ] My sleep, mood or concentration has changed. Since when, and how much?
- [ ] Strategies that worked for years have stopped working. Why might that be?
- [ ] Are my periods changing, and are certain days in my cycle worse?
- [ ] Could this be perimenopause, ADHD, something else, or a mix? How would we find out?
- [ ] What would you like me to keep track of before the next appointment?

Research on ADHD and hormones is still developing. It's not settled, and experiences vary a lot from woman to woman. Because research here moves quickly, check dates on anything you read.

It's one to start later, when you're settled for the evening.

My struggle deserves understanding. And I'm allowed to start again.

Tonight, when you're in bed and the light is off, say one sentence about yourself out loud. It has to be kind, and it has to be true.

I tried hard today.

I'm a good friend.

I made my kid laugh.

I got out of bed when it was hard.



Mine: _____

Say it once, quietly, in the dark.

Your struggle was real before anyone gave it a name.

THE KIT PAGE, FREE

kalderno.com/adhd

Scan it to get this kit again, to print a fresh copy, and for more from Mariah Renner. If the book helped you, a rating on Spotify helps the next listener find it.

Practice the tools, free: kalderno.com/adhd/practice

Your safety comes first (from the book)

If you ever feel unsafe, or think about harming yourself or someone else, don't wait. Call your local emergency number, that's 911 in the US. Elsewhere, contact your local crisis line.

It's worth getting more help if the low feeling sticks around most days for a couple of weeks or more. A good place to start is your doctor, or a licensed therapist or counselor.

And if you ever feel controlled, frightened or unsafe, talk to someone outside the relationship: a friend you trust, your doctor, or a domestic violence hotline where you live.

So if you're tired most of the time, raise it with your doctor rather than deciding on your own that you know the reason.