



Why Productivity Systems Make ADHD Shame Worse and Two Shifts to Reduce the Fog

Cathy Rashidian ([00:00](#)):

Hello, and welcome to TADD Talks with ADDA. I am Cathy Rashidian, professional skills development advisor and coach joining you from Canada. Today, I'll be sharing my thoughts on how shame, or rather the fog of shame can really affect how we show up in our day and our productivity. I think the biggest misconception that people have around productivity and ADHD is that they're in this search of looking for the ultimate system that works for them, the perfect system that works for them, and that's just not realistic. That really puts us in a disadvantage, and I think it causes what I call the fog of shame. Imagine every time you're looking for that perfect planner approach, that perfect day-to-day management approach, the time management approach, if you don't adhere to it or if you're not consistent, what ends up happening is you're actually fueling what I call the fog of shame.

Cathy Rashidian ([01:05](#)):

And this fog gets thicker by every time there's a failure in the way that you try to set up this productivity system that doesn't work. So here's a personal story that I wanna share around this fog of shame. For the longest time, I thought if I dedicated a specific day or a time of day to my own projects, I would get things done. So I would start on a Monday where there's back-to-back meetings, things to be done. Tuesday, same thing. Wednesday, same thing. Then Thursday was, oh, clear calendar, because I had blocked it off so nobody would schedule me in. And right there on that day, the Thursday morning, I'd wake up, go to work, and I see the calendar. I'm like, oh, it's empty. Well, first of all, it was like, oh, thank goodness, it's empty. There's no meetings because I'm done with meetings.

Cathy Rashidian ([01:53](#)):

Then I'd be like, right, I had this day for me to get my stuff done. You think I'd get anything done? Hell no, nothing was getting done that day. And so I'd be like, okay, so this week was a write off. I just procrastinated. I did other things, so I'll try again next week. Next week, the same thing would happen. So for a while, every Thursday actually became a very unproductive day. So here's the thing, the shame of that of, well, they've told me that I need to time box, or I need to do things in themes of projects or batch working, all of that stuff that's out there, right? Why isn't it working? I internalized that as I suck. I can't figure this out. It's just totally me. That fog of shame was really thick for me, actually, especially on Thursdays. You know how we dread Sundays, my Thursday came the day that I would dread, and



actually I ended up looking forward to Friday of back to back meetings, and then a Monday of back to back meetings because other people's agendas

Cathy Rashidian ([02:59](#)):

Were now mine. And actually, I was able to show up to those, well, kind of, sort of, but I was showing up to those, so it wasn't really working for me. So here's the thing that I realized once I had my ADHD diagnosis, that my brain likes to be activated in a certain way, and that certain way for me with my brain is that I needed to consider how my brain boots up and how it gets going, and how my brain boots down and how I'm transitioning out of tasks, if you will. So the boot up and boot down was one thing I started to pay attention to. For example, for that Thursday, what I started to do was actually have one task that would activate me, get me into action, and that task was something really small. It would take like 10 minutes or so, but that task itself was energizing for me.

Cathy Rashidian ([03:54](#)):

So here's the thing. The task could be listening to a podcast, going for a walk, really sitting down and enjoying my coffee by myself before I get into my day. So that was one way for me to boot up my day. Another thing I started to do with my tasks of, let's say if I did time box a particular task in a day, I would write down in that time box, not just do expense report. I would say the first three steps of a expense report is take out all the invoices, open up the portal for the expense report a thingy and go. And so I would have three things for each task to kind of get me going. You see, with ADHD, when we sit in this, I have a task. Where do I begin? You need to give it a little bit of a direction, a little bit of a nudge so that it gets activated.

Cathy Rashidian ([04:48](#)):

Without that, you're sitting in all the different areas that could go and your brain goes, dude, I suck at prioritization, task initiation. Why are you making this difficult for me? So that way of booting up my brain into things was really important. I also sometimes would change environments. I'd go work in our lunch room with my laptop, I'd go work in a coffee shop, or even just switching out the environment was helpful for me to get activated. Some of us like to be in quiet places. For me, I needed that little bit of an ambiance. When we want to get going on a task, we do need to honor that. Our brain needs to be activated a little bit. There needs to be a little bit of friction or a little bit of agitation, if you will, before we get going. The other thing that I started to do at the end of each task was also creating breadcrumbs so that I could transition out of them. So I did my job, I got activated, and now I'm ready to go. And all of a sudden, somebody interrupts me. It's almost like my brain wants to just shatter like, dude, you

Cathy Rashidian ([05:56](#)):

Know how long it took me to get here, and now you're interrupting me and I'm gonna lose my train of thought. Working memory sucks. I don't know where I pick back up again. So the thing I started to do was to leave sticky notes or notes inside my tasks to say, this is where you've accomplished so far, and this is where you need to go next. So you see, I'm already pre-planning my task initiation activities. So



between the breadcrumbs and booting up my brain, those two became more of a direction into my Thursday project days. I think the other thing I want you to know is get to know your navigation around hyperfocus. Hyperfocus is when we are into a task that we lose track of time to even forget to eat or go to the washroom. We are in our element, and really, it could be hours or sometimes days on a hyperfocus state that we could be in.

Cathy Rashidian ([06:52](#)):

But here's the thing that happens after hyperfocus, and I call it the hyperfocus hangover, where your brain goes, dude, you've been on this high of dopamine and it's not sustainable. For us to sustain that level of dopamine surge. We need to calm the heck down. And to rebalance your dopamine and all of your brain chemicals, it actually will feel uncomfortable. It'll feel like you want to withdraw. It'll feel like depression. It'll feel like, why am I doing this again to myself? And actually, fog of shame comes back in again, right? Because it's like, dang it. Why can't I be consistent? Why do I have to put myself through this crap every time? So when hyperfocus hangover happens, I want you to become friends with it. Honestly, become friends with it and accept it for what it is. Your brain is recalibrating. That acceptance sometimes takes me out of my hangover.

Cathy Rashidian ([07:52](#)):

I used to be like three, four days in that hangover state. Now it's a few hours. It's a could be a half a day, because I'm actually honoring that. It's not me being broken, lazy, all of that stuff. It's my brain saying, thanks. We went on this fast sprint and we need to calm down. So what do I do? I do nothing. I do very mundane activities. I'll go for walks. I'll just binge watch Netflix if, if you will. I will actually do it intentionally because I know that my brain is trying to recalibrate. And I also give myself grace that, Hey, I left breadcrumbs that I know how to get back into that task again. So I don't need to be panicky or worried that am I ever going to follow through on the thing that I started before? Sometimes when my hyper focus would kick in on a Thursday, I wouldn't adjust my schedule on a Friday. I had somebody come to me and say, my Mondays are just crap. I have the day to myself. I've blocked it off and nothing is happening. And what

Cathy Rashidian ([08:54](#)):

Was actually happening to this individual is Sundays was a busy day for him and his family, and also being with the in-laws, and there was just so much going on. Usually when we're in that much energy and emotional state, it takes a day or a half a day or a little bit for us to kind of come back to self. So to think that come Monday we're gonna be back on our good self and ready to go is unrealistic. I would love to see us go more into, Hey, Monday is actually a transition for me into my workday, and it'll take me a slower pace to get into my day. So give yourself grace on Monday mornings. The first couple of hours shouldn't be all like, ready, let's go. Let's get productive. It's actually, I'm easing into my week. So overall, my biggest thing that I want you to walk away with is grace to self.

Cathy Rashidian ([09:51](#)):



Know that hyper-focus hangovers are going to kick in, be with your brain to understand what activates it and what kind of gets you back in track and how can you decompress from your day. And those are some of the things that I think is missed. It's at the essence of it. If we can pay attention to just those few things for about a week, and I'm sure you'll notice a shift and a difference. I'm glad you joined in today for this brief talk on shame and productivity. Again, I am Kathy Ian, a leadership development coach for those with ADHD, wanting to make ADHD make sense in the workplace. For more information about my work with adults with ADHD visit, readysetchoose.com. Thanks for listening.