KESTON SCHOOL

WORK & WEALTH · FREE SAMPLE

Busy Brain Planning

Simple, forgiving planning for easily distracted adults

CHAPTER 1 + WORKBOOK SECTION

BEFORE YOU START

How to use this book

By the last page you will have a planning system that fits a busy, easily distracted brain: one place for everything you need to remember, a ten-minute daily plan, timers and cues that make time visible, and a way to restart in two minutes after any day, week or month when the plan fell apart.

1. Read one chapter at a time. Each one gives you a single idea and a single action.
2. Open the Busy Brain Planning Workbook and complete the matching section while the chapter is fresh.
3. Do the “Try this” action within seven days. Reading changes what you know; the action changes what you do.
4. Finish with the checklist in chapter 12 and come back to it whenever you slip.

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CHAPTER 1

The Abandoned Planner

Why planners keep ending up in a drawer by week three, and why the problem is the design of the system, not your character.

It is the first week of January, or the first week of a new job, or simply a Sunday evening when you decide that this time will be different. You buy a beautiful planner. You color-code the first page. On Monday you write down everything, and by Monday night you feel like a new person.

By Thursday a few boxes are blank. The following week you open it twice. A month later you find it under a pile of mail, still open on a page that says “Call dentist,” and you realize you never did.

If this sounds familiar, you are in very large company.

The planner graveyard

Most people with busy, easily distracted brains have a small collection of abandoned systems. A paper planner with three weeks filled in. A to-do app with hundreds of overdue tasks. A bullet journal with a beautiful index and no entries after February. Sticky notes that lost their stick. A whiteboard that now holds a grocery list from last spring.

Each one started with real hope. Each one worked for a while, usually while it was new and exciting. And each one quietly stopped working, without a clear moment when you decided to quit.

Then comes the part that hurts more than the forgotten tasks: the story you tell yourself. “I’m just disorganized.” “I can’t stick with anything.” “Other people manage this, so what is wrong with me?” After a few rounds, you start avoiding planning altogether, because every new attempt feels like a setup for another failure.

This book starts from a different idea. The problem is not that you are lazy or careless. The problem is that most planning systems are designed for a brain that remembers to look at them, enjoys filling them in, and has a fairly predictable day. If that is not your brain, or not your life, those systems will keep breaking.

Why strict systems break

Most popular planning methods share a few features that look sensible on paper and fall apart in real life.

They ask for too much detail. Some planners want you to schedule every hour, track habits, set monthly goals and write a gratitude list. That is fine on a calm Sunday. On a Tuesday when the kids are sick and your inbox is on fire, it is impossible, so you skip it. Skip it three times and the planner feels like a reproach.

They assume you will remember to check them. A plan you forget to look at is the same as no plan. Many systems live in a notebook you leave at home or an app buried on page three of your phone.

They have no plan for bad days. Strict systems are built for good days. When a day goes sideways, the whole plan becomes wrong, and there is no simple way to adjust. Most people respond by abandoning the plan for the rest of the day, and often for the rest of the week.

They punish gaps. Miss a few days and you face a backlog: empty pages, overdue tasks shown in red, a streak counter reset to zero. Catching up feels so heavy that starting over seems easier. Then you start over with a new tool, and the cycle repeats.

> **Key idea:** A planning system that only works on good days is not a system. It is a hobby for good days.

It is a design problem

Here is the reframe that makes everything else in this book possible. If a chair keeps collapsing under different people, you do not blame the people. You look at the chair.

Your planning system is a tool. If it keeps collapsing, the design needs to change. What you need is not more discipline but a system that is:

- **Simple enough to run on your worst day,** not just your best one.
- **Visible,** so it reminds you instead of waiting for you to remember it.
- **Forgiving,** so a missed day costs you two minutes to restart, not an evening of guilt.

None of this requires a special notebook or an expensive app. Over the next chapters you will build a small system with three parts: one place to catch everything, a ten-minute daily plan, and cues that make time visible. You will also learn how to restart without drama when it falls apart, because it will, and that is fine.

A quick note on labels. Some readers of this book have a diagnosis such as ADHD. Some suspect they might. Many simply have full lives, demanding jobs and phones that never stop buzzing. The tools here are everyday planning habits that work across all of these situations. They are not a diagnosis or a treatment. If attention problems are seriously affecting your work, health or relationships, a qualified professional can help you understand what is going on, and the habits in this book can sit alongside that support.

Start with what you forget

Before you pick any tool, it helps to know what actually slips. Most people guess wrong. They think their problem is big projects, when in reality it is the small, scattered things: the form that needed a signature, the reply they meant to send, the birthday they remembered at 11 p.m.

When you know your real patterns, you can design around them instead of copying someone else's system.

Try this

For the next three days, keep a forgetting log. Use the first page of your workbook or a single note on your phone. Every time you notice something slipped, write one line:

1. **What slipped.** "Forgot to pay the electric bill." "Missed the start of the team call."
2. **When you noticed.** Right away, hours later, days later.
3. **Where it lived.** In your head, in an email, on a sticky note, in an app you did not open.

Do not try to fix anything yet. Do not judge the entries. You are collecting evidence, like a detective, not building a case against yourself. Ten minutes in total over three days is plenty.

At the end of day three, read the log once. Circle the most common answer in the "where it lived" column. For most people, the answer is "in my head." That single word explains more than any lack of willpower, and it is where the next chapter begins: why plans slip away, even when you truly mean to keep them.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Dropping planners is a common pattern, not a personal failure.
- Strict, detailed systems break the first time a day goes sideways.
- Start by noticing what you forget, before you choose any new tool.

→ Workbook, section 1

01 The Abandoned Planner

Collect honest evidence about what slips, before choosing any new tool.

FILL IN

Forgetting log - three days

What slipped	When I noticed	Where it lived

CHECKLIST

Systems I have tried and dropped

- [ ] Paper planner
- [ ] To-do app
- [ ] Bullet journal
- [ ] Sticky notes
- [ ] Whiteboard or wall calendar
- [ ] Emailing myself

The story I usually tell myself when a planner fails:

Most common answer in the 'where it lived' column:

YOUR NEXT STEP

Want the whole book?

You just read chapter 1 of Busy Brain Planning and tried the first workbook section. The full e-book has 12 chapters, a complete workbook and a final checklist. Here is everything inside:

01 The Abandoned Planner

02 Why Plans Slip Away

03 The Cost of Winging It

04 Forgiving Beats Perfect

05 One Place for Everything

06 The Ten-Minute Day Plan

07 Make Time Visible

08 Planning Real Busy Days

09 When the System Breaks

10 Anchor It to Your Day

11 Trusting Yourself Again

12 Mistakes & Checklist

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