

ADHD Crisis Protocol: What to Do When You're Overwhelmed

You're not broken. Your nervous system is just overloaded right now. Let's bring you back.

Immediate Grounding Techniques

5-4-3-2-1 Sensory Method

This pulls you out of overwhelm and back into your body. Go slowly:

- **5 things you can SEE** - Look around. Name them out loud if possible.
- **4 things you can TOUCH** - Feel your feet on the floor, your back against the chair.
- **3 things you can HEAR** - Traffic, breathing, a fan humming.
- **2 things you can SMELL** - Coffee, soap, fresh air.
- **1 thing you can TASTE** - Water, gum, or just notice your mouth.

Box Breathing (4-4-4-4)

Breathe in for 4 counts → **Hold** for 4 → **Breathe out** for 4 → **Hold** for 4

Repeat 3-4 times. This resets your nervous system.

Quick Body Scan

Notice where you're holding tension:

- Jaw clenched? Relax it.
- Shoulders up by your ears? Drop them.
- Hands in fists? Open them.
- Holding your breath? Let it go.

Emergency Task Breakdown Process

When everything feels impossible, your brain needs **smaller steps**.

The 2-Minute Rule

What can you do in 2 minutes or less?

Not the whole task. Just the tiniest first step.

Examples:

- Open the document (don't write it)
- Put one dish in the sink
- Reply to one email with "Got it, will respond soon"
- Write down the task that's overwhelming you

When to Ask for Help

You don't have to do this alone. Ask for help if:

- ☐ You've been stuck for more than 30 minutes
- ☐ The task feels physically impossible
- ☐ You're spiraling into shame or panic
- ☐ You need body doubling (someone just being present)
- ☐ You need someone to break down the task with you

Asking for help is not failing. It's being smart about your brain.

Use the Task Breaker App

When you can't break down a task yourself, let the app do it for you:

→ **Visit humanafbook.com/task-breaker**

Get more free tools at humanafbook.com

Type in what you're stuck on, and it will break it into ADHD-friendly micro-steps.