

Why body doubles to get things done are so useful for people with ADHD

For some people, with their neurobiology, a task that is challenging can be fun. For others, it can set their nervous system on fire and cause them to be overstimulated, overwhelmed and lead to avoidant behaviors.

There is a task nervous system circuitry that can lead those who live with ADHD to get overloaded by certain kinds of tasks. These can include chores, homework, bill paying, a regular exercise or dietary regimen, or writing a paper for school or for your professional work. These tasks can act as a threat to the part of our brain that goes into fight, flight or freeze, which can lead to overstimulation, overwhelm, and avoidance. Avoidance impacts a person's self-esteem. So, what is the answer to this? A body double!

A body double offers a safe and supportive presence. It is a friend, housemate, parent, partner or another person with ADHD who sits with you or is nearby when you are doing a task that is challenging for you.

In the world of neuroscience, Dr. Dan Siegel, coined the phrase, "name it to tame it." When we can name our struggle, it begins to calm the nervous system, allowing us to embrace rather than resist what is happening and therefore to get the support we need. When we enlist a trusted person, their supportive presence begins to calm our nervous system down, making it easier to attend to our task, knowing that they are there to help directly, if needed, or just to be physically present. That attuned presence and social engagement, Dan Siegel has stated, allows for the nervous system to become more regulated. When we are feeling calm, our brain is more available to utilize the executive function which plays a significant role in organizing and planning how to attend to the tasks at hand.

When the person with ADHD feels calm, capable and confident, the task is not as daunting. The tasks may even feel more enjoyable, thereby decreasing the anxiety that has led to avoidance, while increasing the feel good hormone of dopamine, allowing you to move through the resistance and get things done.

A body double can help in a range of situations as mentioned above by collaborating and being supportive. Below are some suggestions on how to make use of a body double.

Someone to **work with you** on: Chores, housework, homework, paper writing or paying bills.

Someone to work **with you on setting manageable time-frames** and helping you build in breaks while working on projects and being present with you or by being a contact and accountability buddy. They can assist you in mapping out how to get a certain amount done each day in order to have something completed by a designated time and check in with you periodically.

For middle school through college students, having a study partner or a study group.

For exercise routines – having a plan and an accountability buddy.

The beauty of playing with this concept is that it gives your permission. Permission to ask for help and not have to do it alone. It also allows you to be creative and resourceful, which helps you to feel better about yourself and more able to approach something that has been a challenge. When we can

approach a perceived challenge and get something accomplished, we feel so much better about ourselves and about working on things that are challenging.

PS – I used a body double to write this blog!!!