The Pull of Now

Immediate gratification, the neurodivergent brain, and building a bridge to later

Choosing the reward you can have now over a bigger one later is human. For many neurodivergent people the pull is stronger. It isn't a willpower problem: it's often a brain looking for relief.

UNDERSTAND Why "now" feels louder

Reward runs differently

Research on ADHD points to differences in the brain's reward system. Everyday tasks can feel flat, and quick rewards feel extra loud.

Time has two settings

Now and **not now**. A deadline next week can feel as unreal as one next year. "Future me will handle it."

Interest drives the engine

Interest, novelty, challenge or urgency get us moving more than importance does. Hours on a hobby, none on taxes.

Waiting costs energy

Holding a plan, sitting with uncertainty and managing sensory load all drain the battery. Deciding *now* ends the strain.

SUPPORT How the quick reward protects us

The quick reward is doing a job: it ends discomfort fast. That relief teaches the brain to reach for it again.

Discomfort — Boredom, overwhelm, uncertainty, a hard feeling

→ **Urge** — "I need something different, right now"

→ **Quick reward** — Scroll, snack, buy, switch tasks, say yes

→ **Relief** — It works, for now. The brain remembers that.

→ **Later cost** — The task grows, the goal slips, guilt adds on

...and the next discomfort feels even bigger

BUILD Preparing for delayed gratification

Waiting gets easier when we shrink the cost of waiting and bring the payoff closer.

Name the feeling

Ask, "What am I trying not to feel?" Naming it turns down the volume.

Shrink the wait

Break "later" into small wins you can reach today. Check each one off.

Bring the future close

Make it visible: a photo, a countdown, a note from future you.

Add a bridge reward

Pair the hard thing with something you enjoy now: music, a drink, a cozy spot.

Plan for the urge

Decide ahead: "When I notice ___, I will ___ first." Expect the urge to come.

Wait together CONNECT

Body doubling, a check-in text or a shared timer makes waiting lighter.

My Bridge to Later

Notice the pull of now, then plan a kinder way to wait

Date _____

My "now" moments

When it shows up	What I reach for	What I'm trying not to feel

Map one loop

The discomfort → **My quick reward** → **The relief I get** → **What it costs later**

My plan for the urge

When I notice _____ I will _____ first.

When I notice _____ I will _____ first.

My bridge rewards

Small, kind things I can pair with a hard task

_____

_____

_____

What I'm building toward

The "later" that matters to me

_____

One small step this week _____

Who can wait with me _____

Looking back

What helped me wait this week?

_____

_____

When I chose "now," what did I need in that moment?

_____

_____