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The Re-Entry Card.

*A 3-minute ritual for the moment you sit back
down at your system after being gone.*

FROM: THE ADHD EXECUTIVE FUNCTION KIT

LENGTH: 8 PAGES · 10 MIN READ

FOR: THE 24TH MISSED DAY, WHEN THE GAP IS THE THING KEEPING YOU OUT

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The Re-Entry Card

A free 3-minute ritual for the moment you sit back down at your system after being gone.

From the Deskrune ADHD Executive Function Kit. This chapter is yours, free, with our compliments. If it's useful, the full Kit is at deskrune.com/kits/adhd.

If you only read one thing

We don't restart. We re-enter.

Restarting implies the old run was wasted and the counter is back to zero. Re-entry means you were gone, you're back, and the gap doesn't owe anything to be reckoned with. Open the system, answer three questions, go.

The scene we're designing for

It's been 23 days since you opened this. Maybe longer. You're not sure. You got slammed at work, or you got sick, or you hyperfocused on something else, or you went through something hard, or there's no reason at all and you just fell off. The brain wasn't here for a while.

Now you're thinking about opening the system again, and your finger is hovering over the icon. The dread is doing its thing. You can feel the shape of what's behind that icon: old to-dos that are now either stale or urgent, an energy log with a three-week gap, a dashboard that's lying to you about what's current. You can feel the *catch-up* that's waiting.

And so you don't open it. You close the tab. That's another day. The gap extends.

This is the most common failure mode in every productivity system ever built. Not the missed day. The 24th missed day, where the gap becomes the thing keeping you out.

The re-entry ritual exists because of this specific moment.

Why catch-up was the wrong goal

The default model, in every other system: *"you've been gone, here's what you missed, reconcile it."* You go through the overdue tasks. Mark what's still real. Delete what isn't. Update the calendar. Re-prioritize. Spend 45 minutes putting the system back together before you can use it.

This is the wrong shape of work, for us, for three reasons:

- 1. It front-loads executive function at the moment you have least of it.** The reason you fell off, usually, was that executive function was low. Coming back during a low-EF week and demanding 45 minutes of high-EF triage is asking the wrong thing. By the time you've spent the energy to "catch up," you don't have any left to do the actual work the system was supposed to support.
- 2. It reinforces the shame that kept you out.** The catch-up screen *is* the gap, made material. Every item on it is a small timestamped failure. You can't reconcile the system without looking at the gap, and looking at the gap is what you've been avoiding for 23 days. Catch-up is the wall you couldn't climb, with "catch-up" written on it.
- 3. Most of the catch-up work is pointless.** A large fraction of tasks that were urgent 23 days ago have self-resolved, are no longer relevant, have been handled another way, or should be dropped outright. Reconciling them in detail is labor without return. The cheapest reconciliation is "most of this is no longer live, and the rest I'll find when I look."

So we don't catch up. We re-enter.

The three prompts

Open the re-entry page. There are three questions. That's it.

Prompt 1 — "Where are you right now?"

One or two sentences. Not about the system. About *you*.

Examples:

- "Tired. Just got through a hard week of work, kid's sick, haven't been sleeping. Capacity feels low."
- "Okay, actually. Took some time off. Brain feels clearer than it has in a while."
- "Overwhelmed. Too much going on at once. Not sure what's real."

This is the most important prompt. The purpose is to locate yourself, *as the person sitting down to re-enter*, before touching any task.

We often try to re-enter by pretending we're at the energy level we were at when we last opened the system. That's rarely true. Re-entering at a pretended capacity leads to taking on too much in the first 10 minutes and crashing out again by day 3. Naming where you are, honestly, calibrates what you'll do next.

Prompt 2 — "What's actually live right now — the three things that matter this week?"

Three items. Not your whole task list. Not what was on the list 23 days ago. The three things that matter *now*.

Don't go look at the old list to derive these. Pull them from your head. The things you already know are live are the live things. The things you have to dig for usually aren't — or if they are, they'll surface again on their own.

Three. Not five. Not "let me think of more." Three.

Prompt 3 — "What's the single next concrete step, on one of those three?"

One step. Concrete enough that you could start it in the next ten minutes.

Not "make progress on the report." That's an ambition. *"Open the report file and read the last paragraph I wrote."* That's a step.

This prompt is the bridge from re-entering to actually working. It is a deliberately tiny ask — because we're trying to break the "I don't know where to start" freeze, not perform productivity.

What you don't do

You don't reconcile. You don't archive the old stuff. You don't apologize to the system. You don't update the dashboard. You don't read the energy log. You don't go through the old to-dos and re-prioritize them.

You don't because all of that is catch-up — and catch-up is what the system is designed to *not* require of you.

The old stuff isn't deleted. It's there. If something on it becomes live again, it'll come find you. (The world is good at re-surfacing things that actually matter.) Until then, leave it alone.

The ritual in use

Here's what it looks like in practice.

It's Sunday evening. You haven't opened the system since the Tuesday before last. You sit down. Phone away. Two minutes set on a timer if it helps.

Where are you right now? *"Tired but okay. Last two weeks were heavy — work deadline, the kids both got sick. Feeling clearer this weekend. Not sure what's still real on my plate."*

Three things that matter this week. *"1) Finish the deck for Tuesday. 2) Reply to Sara about the apartment. 3) Get my prescription refilled before Friday."*

Single next step on one of those. *"Open the deck and re-read the slide I left half-done."*

Three minutes. You're back in.

You did not look at the old to-do list. You did not reconcile your energy log. You did not feel the shame of the 23-day gap. You re-entered.

The gap doesn't get smaller by being reckoned with. The gap gets smaller by being walked past.

Why this works (the brief mechanism note)

Three things are happening underneath:

1. Self-locating before task-loading. Naming your state lowers the cognitive load of the next two prompts. Most "I can't get started" is actually "I haven't acknowledged what I'm bringing to this." Acknowledgment is cheap and it changes the next 30 seconds.

2. Memory is doing the prioritization. What you can recall as "live" is usually the actually-live work. The things you have to dig for are noise. This is a feature of how working memory and salience interact — we don't lose the urgent stuff, we lose the moderately important stuff, and that's mostly fine.

3. One concrete step, not a plan. Plans require executive function we don't have right now. A single concrete next step is small enough to act on without planning. Action breaks the freeze faster than any plan does.

That's it. Three prompts. Three minutes. No catch-up.

How often you'll use this

If you're new to the Kit: more than you'd think. Most weeks, in the first month or two. That's normal.

After a while, the prompts internalize. You'll find yourself re-entering on autopilot — locating, naming three live things, picking one — without opening a card. That's the goal. The card is training wheels for a habit, not a permanent piece of furniture.

But the card stays available. For the bad month. The hard quarter. The thing that broke you off the system for ten weeks. The card is there for then.

A word about the gap

You will fall off again. That's not a failure of the system. It's a feature of being human, and especially of being a human with ADHD.

Most productivity advice treats the gap as a moral problem to be prevented. We treat it as a recurring fact to be designed for.

The Re-Entry Card is the design.

This is one chapter from The Deskrune ADHD Executive Function Kit — a 41-page handbook + tools for the late-diagnosed ADHD adult who's tired of "your brain is your superpower" advice and wants something built for how the brain actually works.

If this chapter helped, the full Kit is at deskrune.com/kits/adhd — founding-buyer pricing (\$29) for the first 50 buyers.

Built by an ADHD adult who needed it first.

If this was useful

The full Kit — 41 pages, four chapters, the Re-Entry Card plus three more tools, founding-buyer pricing for the first 50 buyers.

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