



# Body-Doubling

*A simple, powerful support for focus, follow-through, and nervous-system regulation*

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## **Important note**

This resource is intended to support understanding and good practice in neuro-inclusive workplace design. It provides general guidance and does not constitute legal, medical, or clinical advice. Organisations should apply the principles in line with their own policies, regulatory obligations, and professional judgement.

Body-doubling is one of the most effective... and most misunderstood... supports for ADHD and AuDHD.

It is often described as “working alongside someone else.”  
What it actually provides is **regulation through presence**.

This guide explains:

- what body-doubling really is
- why it works
- how to do it well (virtually or in person)
- what makes it fail
- how to use it without shame or pressure

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## What body-doubling actually is

Body-doubling is the practice of **being in the presence of another person while doing a task**, without that person directing, supervising, or rescuing you.

The other person (the “body-double”) does not:

- manage your work
- motivate you
- check your output
- hold you accountable through pressure

They simply **exist alongside you**.

That presence changes how the nervous system functions.

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## Why body-doubling works (especially for ADHD & AuDHD)

Body-doubling works because it:

- increases nervous-system regulation
- reduces isolation and freeze
- supports task initiation
- stabilises attention
- lowers emotional activation

This is not about discipline.

It's about **co-regulation**.

Many neurodivergent nervous systems access focus more easily when another regulated presence is nearby... even silently.

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## What body-doubling is NOT

Body-doubling is **not**:

- supervision
- productivity policing
- performance monitoring
- “keeping someone on track”
- motivational pressure

If body-doubling feels evaluative or stressful, it stops working.

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## Who body-doubling helps most

Body-doubling is particularly helpful if you:

- struggle to start tasks
- freeze when overwhelmed
- feel paralysed when alone
- avoid tasks despite caring about them
- work best with ambient structure

It often helps even when:

- you're tired
  - you're unmotivated
  - the task feels boring or emotionally loaded
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## Types of body-doubling

### 1. In-person body-doubling

Examples:

- sitting at the same table
- working quietly in the same room
- doing parallel tasks (not the same task)

Key features:

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- no conversation required
- no checking in unless agreed
- optional brief start/end check-ins

This can happen at:

- home
  - libraries
  - offices
  - classrooms
  - cafés (if sensory load is manageable)
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## 2. Virtual body-doubling

Examples:

- video call (camera on or off)
- shared online co-working rooms
- timed virtual focus sessions

Key features:

- presence matters more than visibility
- microphones usually muted
- chat used only if agreed

Virtual body-doubling works **even if no one speaks**.

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## A simple body-doubling structure (recommended)

You can keep this extremely light.

### Step 1: Set intention (1–2 minutes)

Each person silently or briefly notes:

- what they're working on
- how long the session will be

No justification required.

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### Step 2: Work alongside each other

- No monitoring
- No prompting
- No commentary
- No multitasking expectations

You are allowed to:

- work slowly
- stop and restart
- change tasks
- regulate your body

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### **Step 3: Close the session (optional)**

- “Done for now.”
- “Thanks for being here.”

Completion is not required for success.

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## **What makes body-doubling effective**

Body-doubling works best when:

- the other person feels safe and non-judgemental
- expectations are minimal
- the session is time-limited
- there is no pressure to perform
- the task is self-chosen

Even brief sessions (10–25 minutes) can be effective.

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## **What makes body-doubling stop working**

Body-doubling often fails when:

- it becomes evaluative
- output is commented on
- someone checks progress repeatedly
- it’s framed as accountability or compliance
- there’s pressure to “use the time properly”

Shame kills co-regulation.

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## Body-doubling for emotionally loaded tasks

Body-doubling is especially helpful for:

- admin
- emails
- paperwork
- forms
- studying
- tidying
- starting something you've been avoiding

You don't need to explain *why* the task is hard.

Presence is enough.

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## Body-doubling and motivation

Body-doubling does not create motivation.

**It reduces the barrier to starting.**

Often:

- motivation appears *after* action
- not before

Body-doubling helps you cross the start line without force.

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## For managers, educators, or supporters

If you're offering body-doubling to support someone else:

Do:

- frame it as optional
- keep it non-directive
- let the person lead
- normalise silence

Avoid:

- checking progress
- commenting on productivity
- tying it to performance evaluation
- using it as surveillance

Your role is **presence, not pressure.**

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## For neurodivergent individuals

Needing body-doubling does not mean:

- you're dependent
- you're incapable
- you're avoiding responsibility

It means:

- your nervous system accesses focus relationally
- you work better with shared presence

That is a difference... not a deficit.

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## Common myths to let go of

- "I should be able to do this alone"
- "This is cheating"
- "If I were disciplined, I wouldn't need this"
- "I'm wasting their time"

Body-doubling is a **legitimate access strategy.**

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## A final reminder

Body-doubling works because humans are relational.

It's not a hack.

It's not a trick.

It's not a failure of independence.

It's a way of **borrowing calm, structure, and momentum** through shared presence.

And for many neurodivergent people, it's the difference between stuck and started.

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