

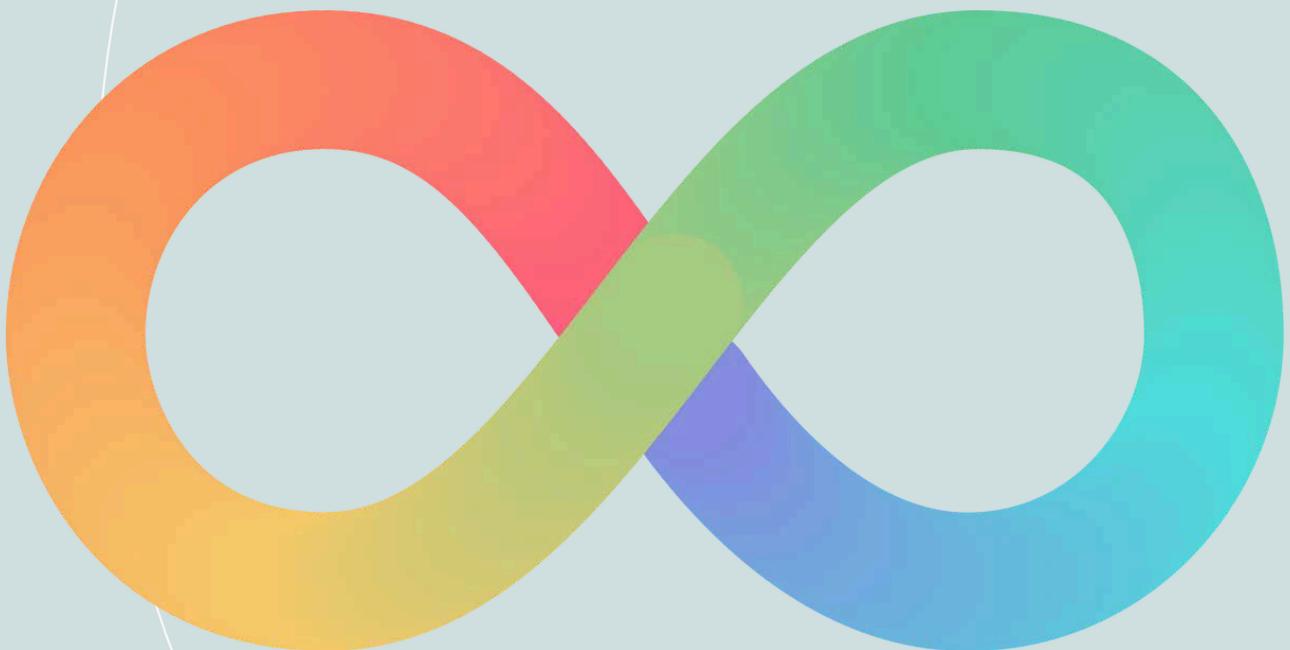


Embracing your unique self

A booklet
just for you



Everyone has their own way of thinking, learning, and interacting with the world.



My name: _____

My mentor: _____

Contents



1 Welcome to embracing your unique self

PAGE 3



2 Your strengths

PAGE 5 - 9



3 Tips to help you in school

PAGE 10



4 My Support Network

PAGE 11 - 12



5 Making friends and what makes a good friend?

PAGE 13 - 14

Contents



6 Sensory processing and sensory profile activity

PAGE 15 - 19



7 Interoception

PAGE 20 - 21



8 Energy, wellbeing and pacing

PAGE 22 - 30



9 Self care and stress management tools

PAGE 31 - 33



10 Goals and executive function

PAGE 34 - 36



11 Reflection Activity

PAGE 37

Welcome to Embracing your unique self



Every brain has its own brilliance.



Hey there! Welcome to a booklet designed just for you.

Whether you identify as autistic, ADHD, dyslexic, or any other form of neurodivergence, this booklet is here to celebrate your unique strengths and help you navigate the world with confidence.

Understanding Neurodiversity

Neurodiversity is a term that recognises and respects the variety of human brains and minds. It means that being different is not only okay but also something to be proud of. Everyone has their own way of thinking, learning, and interacting with the world.

Having neurodifferences comes with its own set of strengths. Here are a few that some people have recognised in themselves. You might recognise some of these in yourself:

Creativity: You might see the world in a unique way, leading to amazing ideas and solutions.

Focus: When you're interested in something, you can dive deep and become an expert.

Honesty: You tend to be straightforward and genuine, which is a great quality.

Problem-Solving: Your different perspective can help you find solutions others might miss.

It's important to remember that we are all unique and each of us has our own set of strengths and the great thing is, we can also develop new strengths!

Your strengths

Strengths are tasks or actions that you can do well. These include talents, knowledge, and skills. People use these traits and abilities in their daily lives to learn, complete work, relate with others, and to achieve goals. Everybody has their own set of strengths. **On the next few pages you can view a range of different character strengths. You can discuss these strengths with your mentor and there's a task at the end to identify which are your strengths.**



Creativity

You come up with new and original ways to think about and do things.



Curiosity

You like exploration and discovery. You ask lots of questions because you want to learn more about anything and everything.



Judgement

You like to consider new ideas and try new things. You examine things from all sides and don't jump to conclusions.



Perspective

You appreciate that people see things in different ways. You have the ability to understand the world from multiple points of view.



Bravery

You act with mental, moral, or physical strength even when you know things are difficult or scary.



Perseverance

You complete what you start despite obstacles. You never give up.

Your strengths

Strengths are tasks or actions that you can do well. These include talents, knowledge, and skills. People use these traits and abilities in their daily lives to learn, complete work, relate with others, and to achieve goals. Everybody has their own set of strengths.



Zest

You approach life with excitement and energy. You energise people around you.



Perspective

You appreciate that people see things in different ways. You have the ability to understand the world from multiple points of view.



Social
Intelligence

You are aware of other people's thoughts and feelings. You understand why they do things.



Kindness

You are generous to others and you are never too busy to help out. You enjoy doing good deeds for other people.



Love

You value close relationships with others and being close to people.



Leadership

You value each member of your group and inspire people to do their best.

Your strengths

Strengths are tasks or actions that you can do well. These include talents, knowledge, and skills. People use these traits and abilities in their daily lives to learn, complete work, relate with others, and to achieve goals. Everybody has their own set of strengths.



Fairness

You believe that all people have value. You approach situations with an unbiased mindset and treat everyone with respect.



Team work

You work well as a member of a group or team. You are loyal, reliable, and dedicated to helping your team achieve its goals.



Forgiveness

You forgive those who have done wrong. You accept that people make mistakes.



Love of learning

You master new skills and topics on your own or in school.



Gratitude

You are aware of and thankful for good things that happen.



Spirituality

You have a clear purpose in life and believe that you are connected to a higher meaning.

Your strengths

Strengths are tasks or actions that you can do well. These include talents, knowledge, and skills. People use these traits and abilities in their daily lives to learn, complete work, relate with others, and to achieve goals. Everybody has their own set of strengths.



Self
Regulation

You monitor your behaviour, the influences on your behaviour, and consider the consequences of choices that you make.



Humility

You are modest, show empathy and respect to others. You are self-aware.



Appreciation
of beauty

You notice and value the world's beauty and people's skills. You don't take things for granted.



Prudence

You plan for the future and achieve your goals by making careful everyday choices.



Optimism

You expect the best from the future and work to achieve it.



Humour

You like to laugh and bring smiles to other people.

My strengths



My Top 5 Strengths

How my strengths can help me with my goal(s)

Five horizontal light blue bars for writing the top 5 strengths.

Five horizontal light blue bars for writing how strengths help with goals.



Tips to help you in school

School can be challenging, but there are ways to make it work for you.

Neurodiversity describes the idea that people experience and interact with the world around them in many different ways; there is no one "right" way of thinking, learning, and acting. We are all different and everyone of us has different needs when learning in school.

Discover and share with others what works for you

Everyone is different, so it can be helpful to work out what works for you to help you feel comfortable and supported in school. In this booklet you will have a chance to reflect and discuss what works best for you with your mentor.

For example, some young people find that they work well with visual tools, or technology such as apps or planners. These can help people feel organised and focused.

Some young people find that short breaks help. Whether it's a movement break or having a quiet place to go when we need it, breaks can help us feel more comfortable and relax.

Did you know? It is thought that around 1 in 7 people are neurodivergent although this number may be higher.

Connecting with others

Connecting with others is one of the five ways to wellbeing. It's all about communicating with the people in your life and understanding each other in a meaningful way.

Be yourself: this attracts genuine friends who appreciate you for who you are.

Find common interests: join clubs or groups that match your hobbies and passions.

Ask for help when you need it

It's okay to ask teachers, friends, or family for support when you need it. Seeking help when we need it and practicing self-care are signs of strength.



Connecting with others can help our wellbeing. It's also okay if you need time alone sometimes to relax and recharge your batteries.

My support network

What is a support network?

A support network is a group of people who we have in our lives, who provide support, advice, or sometimes just listen to us when we need someone to talk to. Talking to them can help us to solve a problem, or just makes us feel better.

A support network is vital for our wellbeing

Identifying people in our support network can remind us that there are people in our lives to support us, and we can reach out to them when needed.

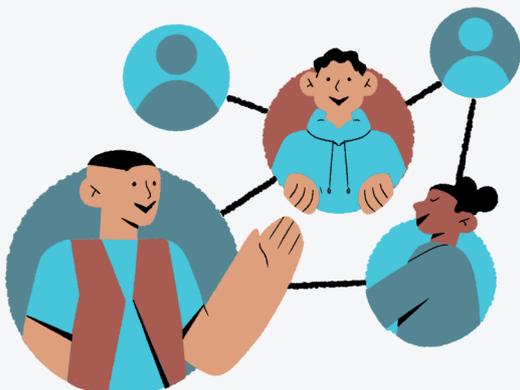
1. Using the diagram on the next page, choose one of the options below to fill in the small circle:

- Find a photo of yourself or cut and carefully stick it into place (check with an adult first to make sure it's ok to use, or if you need help).
- Draw a picture of yourself, and/or write your name.

2. Use the big circle to write the names of all the people you can think of that you can include in your support network. This can be anyone you trust or anyone that cheers you up – even your pets!

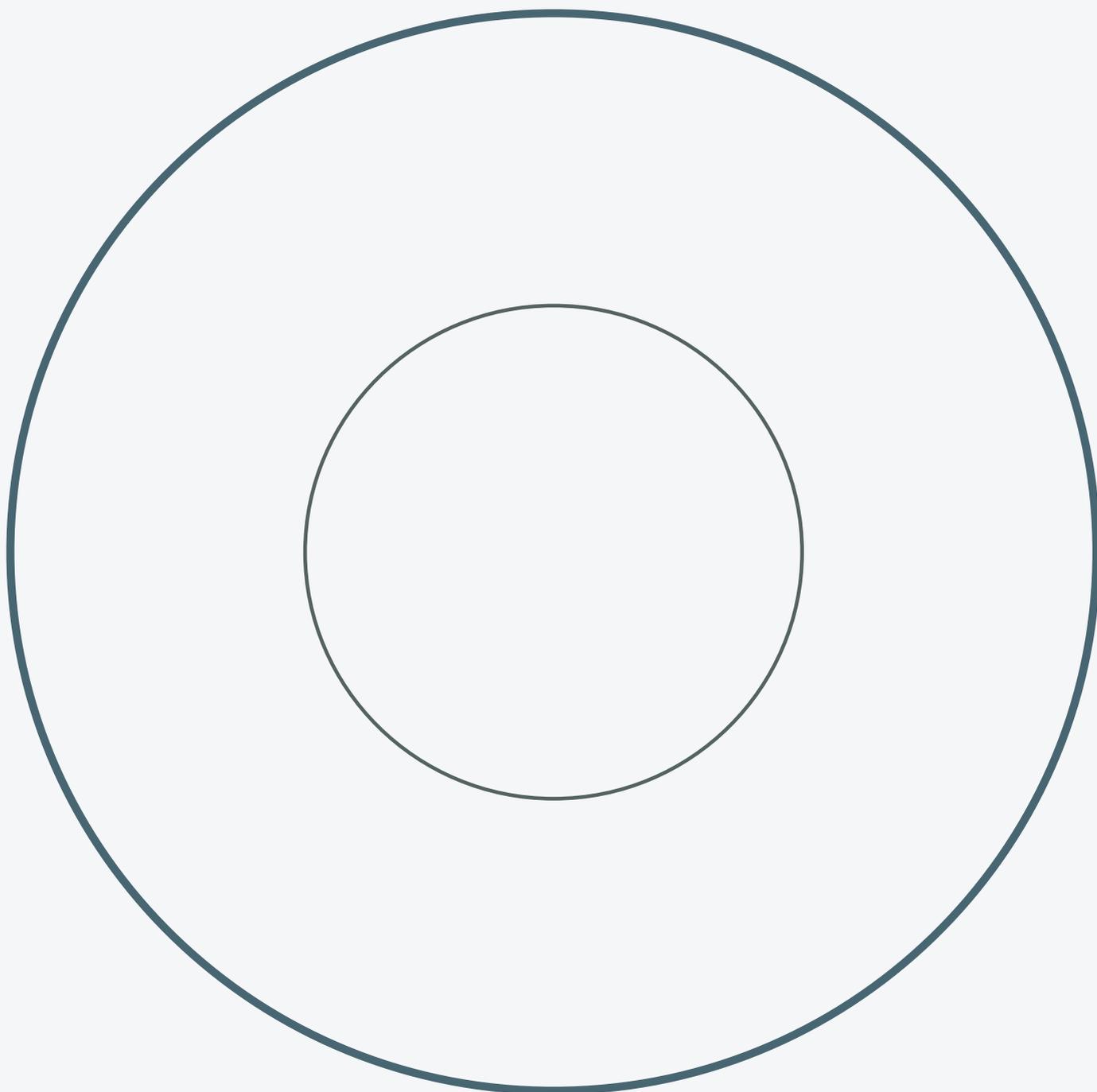
Try and think about all the different places where you have people you can talk to. These can be:

- At home
- At school
- At youth/activity clubs
- Charities/helplines



A support network is the 'team' of people you have in your life that help support you in your physical and mental growth. They are the people that you can draw on for support, motivation and overall well-being.

My support network



Making friends

Being neurodivergent can shape friendships in different ways, and the experience is different for each person. Remember, neurodivergence isn't a flaw — it's just a different way of experiencing the world. The key is finding people who appreciate and respect those differences.

Making friends as a neurodivergent young person can feel like navigating an obstacle course designed for someone else. But the good news? There's no single "right" way to make friends — just the way that works for you.

Here are a few things to keep in mind:

- **Find Your People:** Look for friends who share your interests. Whether it's gaming, art, coding, or a niche hobby, connecting over something you love makes friendships easier.
- **Quality Over Quantity:** You don't need a big circle—just a few people who genuinely understand and appreciate you.
- **Social Rules Are Flexible:** Eye contact, small talk, and other "norms" are not universal. If these things feel unnatural, it's okay to communicate in a way that works best for you.
- **Start Online If Needed:** Sometimes, making friends in digital spaces feels more natural. It's a great way to meet like-minded people without the pressure of in-person interactions. But remember what you have learnt in school about e-safety: *always stay safe online and think before you share personal information.*
- **Ask Yourself What Feels Good:** Some friendships require a lot of interaction, while others thrive on occasional deep conversations. Figure out what works for you, and communicate that with your friends.

Friendship isn't about changing who you are — the right people will see your individual uniqueness as a strength.



Many neurodivergent people have deep, passionate interests. Finding friends who appreciate those interests can make social connections more meaningful.

What makes a good friend?

A good friend is someone who makes life better—whether that’s by sharing laughs, supporting you through tough times, or just being genuinely kind and understanding.

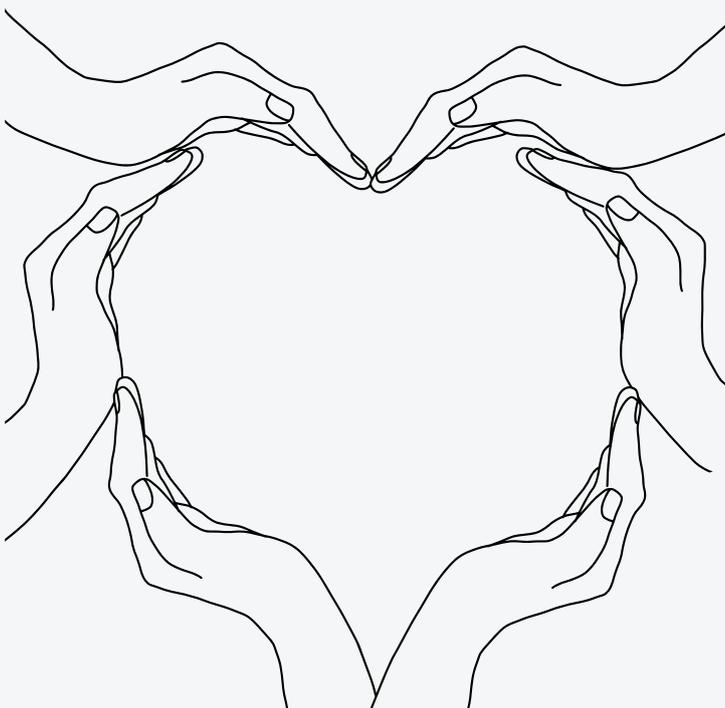
A good friend is someone who makes life better—whether that’s by sharing laughs, supporting you through tough times, or just being genuinely kind and understanding.

Here’s what really matters in a great friendship:

- **Respect:** They value your thoughts, feelings, and boundaries. No pressure, no judgment.
- **Trust:** You can count on them to keep your secrets safe and be honest with you.
- **Support:** Whether it’s cheering you on or standing by you when things get tough, they’ve got your back.
- **Fun and Connection:** Friends make life brighter. Whether you bond over shared interests or just enjoy hanging out, friendship should feel comfortable and uplifting.
- **Understanding:** They accept you for who you are — quirks and all — without trying to change you.

The best friends don’t need to be perfect, but they do need to be kind, real, and worth your time.

What qualities do you look for in a friend? Write your ideas below:



Sensory processing

We all have different sensory needs. We can learn more about our own needs to help us to share with others what we need.

Most people know about the 5 senses, which are:



Sight



Sound



Smell



Touch



Taste

However, there are actually 3 more senses, which are:



Vestibular

Balance and awareness of where our body is in space. This helps with coordination and movement.



Interoception

The physical and emotional state of our body including hunger, thirst, heart rate, and the need to use the toilet.



Proprioception

A sense of body awareness and the strength needed to complete an action.

We process information through our 8 senses. We can learn to be aware of what we like or don't like linked to our senses. This can help us know what we need to help us feel comfortable.

What is sensory processing?

Sensory processing is how your brain takes in information from the world around you and decides how to respond from our senses. Sensory processing can affect how people feel, move, and interact with the world. It's common for neurodivergent people to experience sensory differences.

We all process information differently

Some people are sensitive to lights, sounds, or textures. For example, a sound that seems normal to some people might feel uncomfortably loud to other people. Or school uniform may feel uncomfortable to some pupils so they may feel more comfortable in adaptive sensory friendly school uniforms.

Other people might be less sensitive to sensory input than others. They might not notice things that others find obvious, like the feeling of clothes on their skin.

Some people seek out sensory experiences. This could involve touching various textures, enjoying strong flavours, or seeking extra movement or touch.

We are all different. Understanding and sharing our own unique sensory differences with others can be helpful as it means people can be aware and make the environment more comfortable for you.

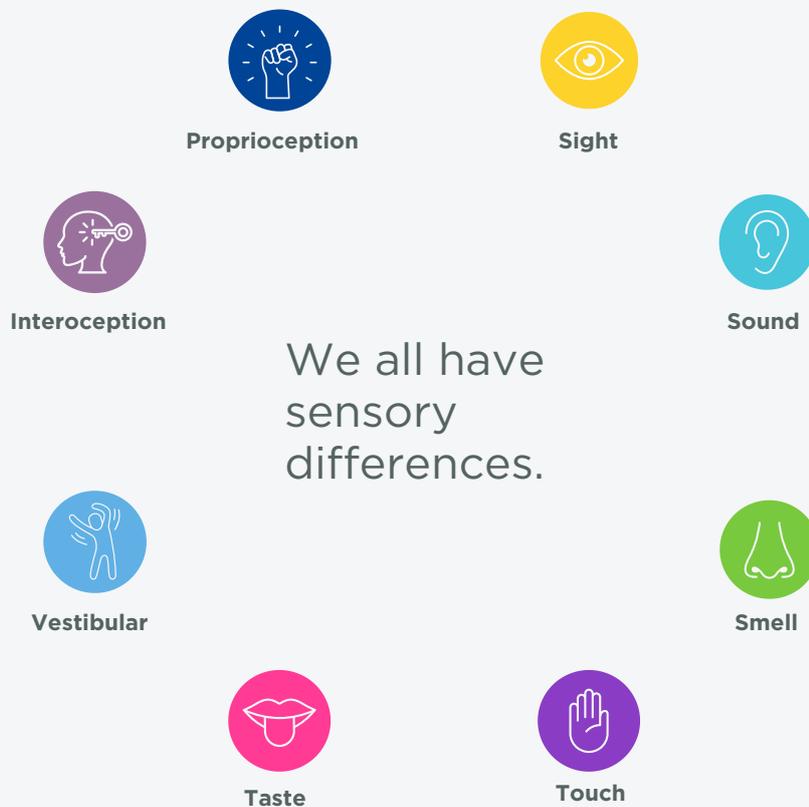
What is a sensory profile?

A sensory profile is a way of mapping out your sensory needs.

We all have unique sensory needs and things we prefer. Some sensory experiences are overstimulating (when your brain gets overwhelmed by too much sensory input, like noise, light, or activity—coming at you all at once). Other sensory experiences are enjoyable or calming. Understanding your sensory needs can help:

- make daily life easier
- improve mental health
- help you be more self aware
- help you understand and manage feelings
- improve your mood
- improve relationships

In the following pages, you'll find six categories of senses: visual, sound, touch, taste, smell, and movement. Fill in each as best you can. If you're unsure, as you go about your day, add information as you become aware. It can be helpful to share this with others on school or home who can offer understanding and support.



My sensory profile



Visual Preferences



Favourite colours:

Preferred lighting:

Things I like to look at (e.g., nature, art):

Things I find difficult or overstimulating to look at:

Sound Preferences



Favourite music:

Comfortable noise level:

Calming sounds:

Sounds I don't like:

My sensory profile



Smell Preferences



Favourite scents:

Calming scents:

Preferred smell levels:

Smells I find unpleasant:

Touch Preferences



Preferred fabrics/materials:

Clothing I feel comfortable in:

Physical touch preferences (e.g, pressure, firm/soft):

Uncomfortable textures or touch:

My sensory profile



Taste Preferences



Favourite flavours:

Preferred meals or snacks:

Enjoyable food textures:

Food flavours and textures I dislike:

Movement Preferences:



Preferred physical activities:

Relaxing activities:

Movements that help when I'm distressed:

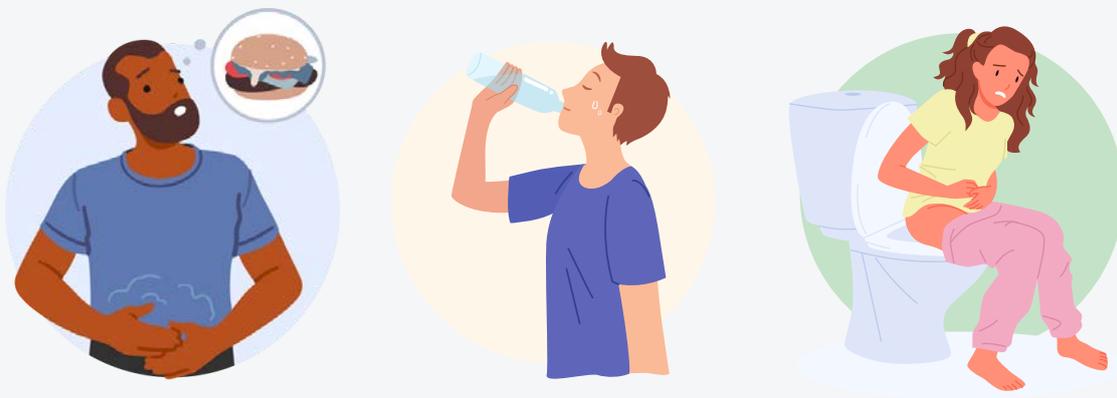
Uncomfortable movements (e.g, spinning, riding in a car):

Interoception

If you have sensory processing differences, you might have differences with the sense of interoception.

Interoception is like your body's inner messaging system—it helps you notice things like hunger, thirst, or when you need the bathroom. But for some people, this system doesn't work as well, making it harder to recognise these signals.

The good news? You can train your interoceptive sense, kind of like levelling up in a game. Some people need to "wake it up" so they can notice their body's signals better, while others need to learn how to manage it so they don't feel overwhelmed.



Staying aware of your body's internal signals can be helpful, but it's easy to lose touch when you're focused on gaming, social media, or schoolwork. Have you ever stepped away from your screen and suddenly realised you're hungry or need the toilet? Your interoceptive sense may have been signalling these needs all along!

Setting phone timers or jotting down reminders can help you reconnect with your body, whether it's drinking water, taking a break, or checking in on your emotions. However, tuning in to these signals can sometimes feel overwhelming, especially during moments of emotional dysregulation (when you are experiencing difficulties in managing emotions).



Interoception

You can practice interoception throughout the day can help you understand your body and emotions more clearly. Learning strategies to manage this can make a big difference!

Noticing how your whole body feels can be tough, so start small! Focus on one body part at a time, especially the body parts you already pay attention to. If you always notice when you're hungry, try tuning in to how your stomach feels. Once you get the hang of it, you can explore other body parts that aren't as obvious, such as hands, feet, mouth, nose, skin, heart, lungs, etc. If you're feeling emotional, tuning in to body signals might feel intense or confusing, so be kind to yourself at these times and remember your Support Network is there for you.

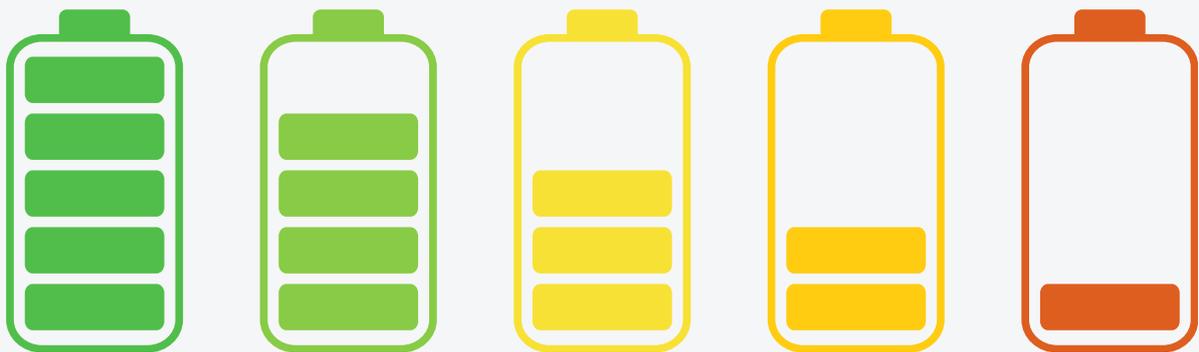
If you're unsure where to begin practicing interoception, start with parts you can see and touch, like your hands or feet. Then, work inward and think about how things like your heartbeat or stomach feel. The more you practice, the easier it gets! Try noticing how your body feels when the signals are really obvious, like after physical activity or eating a big meal. These moments make it easier to recognise what your body is telling you.

The more you practice “tuning in,” the better you'll get at understanding your body's signals. It's like building a skill—the more you do it, the stronger it becomes! Most importantly, have fun with it. You can try these activities with friends or family, or with your mentor, but keep in mind that everyone experiences things differently. What feels strong to you might not feel the same for someone else, and that's totally okay!

For more interoception activity ideas: [click here](#).



Managing your energy to support your wellbeing



Take a break here...

...not here.

Many of us need to learn to manage our physical and mental energy so we feel healthy, well and comfortable. This is an important part of self care.

Looking after our energy levels

As we have seen, some of us have differences in sensory processing, how we feel or think, or how we feel or communicate in social situations. Some of us may start the day with less energy than other days. This is why resting, spending quiet or alone time, or time on our interests, is very important. It's also helpful to get support with daily activities that take too much physical or mental energy.

For other people it may feel like you have lots of physical or mental energy and need an outlet to release it. Things like movement breaks, having a fidget tool, or sharing with others how we feel can all help.

It's also very common to experience less or more energy at different times.

What can drain our batteries?

This can be different for all of us. Sometimes we can experience sensory overload, which is when you're getting more input from your senses than your brain can sort through and process.

Sometimes we might feel over-exhausted from our daily activities. Learning, being social, and hyper-focusing can all drain our battery. Sometimes we may even have a day where we haven't eaten or slept as well as we need to for our wellbeing. This can also leave our battery empty.

Something that can help with looking after ourselves is 'pacing'. Pacing is where we spread out activity throughout the day and look after our needs.

What is pacing and how can it help me?

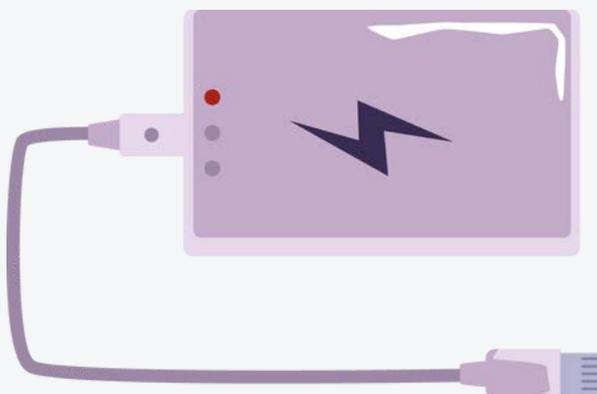
Pacing is a valuable strategy for neurodivergent people to manage energy levels and prevent burnout. Here are some key points about pacing:

What is Pacing?

Imagine your energy is like the battery in your phone. If you use all your apps at once, play games non-stop, and never let it charge, your phone dies pretty fast. But if you spread out your usage, close apps you don't need, and charge it regularly, your battery lasts way longer.

That's what pacing is like for your energy! Instead of going full speed, then crashing and feeling exhausted (the "boom-or-bust" cycle), you plan out your activities so you don't drain yourself completely. It means doing things in smaller, balanced amounts — whether it's studying, hanging out with friends, exercising, or scrolling social media—so you don't push yourself too hard and feel wiped out.

Pacing helps you keep up with everything you want to do without burning out. It's like making sure your energy lasts for the whole day instead of just a few hours. Pretty smart, right?



Why is Pacing Important?

Pacing can help with:

- Preventing sensory overload
- Preventing fatigue
- Preventing burnout
- Reducing stress
- Improving focus
- Improving overall quality of life

Pacing to help you

Learning to 'pace' takes practice. It may take some time to create new habits. You can work with your mentor to discuss different options and try some methods until you find options that you like.

Pacing strategies

Here are some ways you can adopt pacing in your life:

- **Energy Accounting:** Track activities that drain or replenish emotional or sensory energy. Adjust your schedule to balance these activities.
- **Spoon Theory:** Visualise energy as spoons. Each activity uses a certain number of spoons. Plan your day to avoid running out of spoons.
- **Traffic Light System:** Categorise activities into green (low energy), yellow (moderate energy), and red (high energy). Balance your day with a mix of these activities.

We will explore some of the above methods over the next few pages and you can give them a try and see which ones you find useful.

Energy Accounting

Energy accounting began with a neurodivergent teenager named Maja Toudal. Maja went on a journey of self-discovery to find a way to manage her stress while attending school. Along the way, she discovered bits and pieces of knowledge and strategies that worked, and she combined them to create the energy accounting method, working with a British Psychologist named Tony Attwood. Today, Maja is a psychologist, speaker, educator, and author.



Too much energy out and not enough in is bad. It can lead to overload, exhaustion or burnout.



Balancing your energy using energy accounting is good. It leads to feeling regulated, calm and happy.



Energy Accounting

We all have different things that drain our batteries. Some things that are drainers for one person might charge energy for another.

One person's battery drainers may be:

Small amount

- Getting dressed
- Travelling to school
- Entering a busy classroom

Medium amount

- Having a shower or bath
- Being in a noisy environment
- Being in a bright environment

Large amount

- Not getting enough sleep
- School
- Hot day



There may also be things that recharge our batteries. For example, time spent with a special interest or listening to music. Spending time doing these things can restore energy levels.

One person's battery chargers might be:

- Being active
- Gaming
- Spending time alone
- Spending time with friends
- Wearing noise-cancelling headphones
- Listening to music
- Time with a special interest
- Self Care
- Eating a health meal
- Cancelling plans, prioritising yourself, and only doing what is achievable

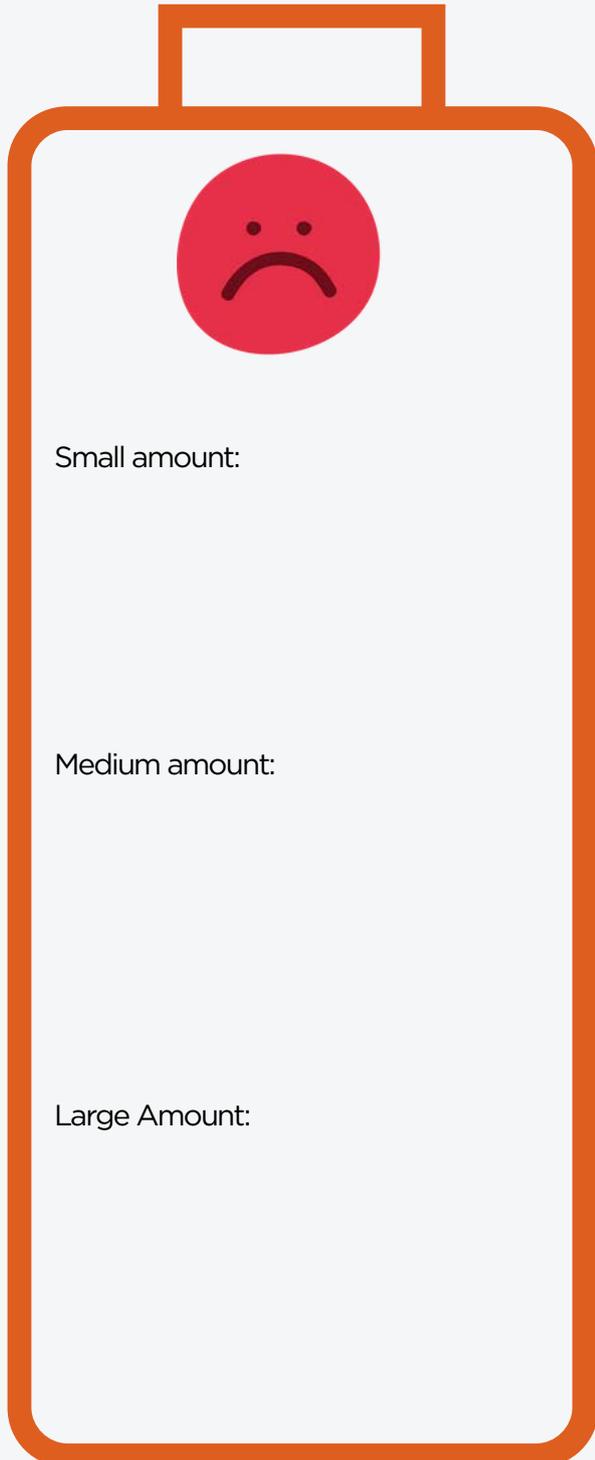


However, if our energy level is too low, we might not be able to do some of the things above. Remember, we are all different and what may drain one person's energy may charge another person's energy. Each activity also takes different amounts of energy depending on the person.

Battery drainers and chargers

Write or draw your ideas for what drains your battery and what helps charge it up again in the batteries below.

What makes your battery feel low?



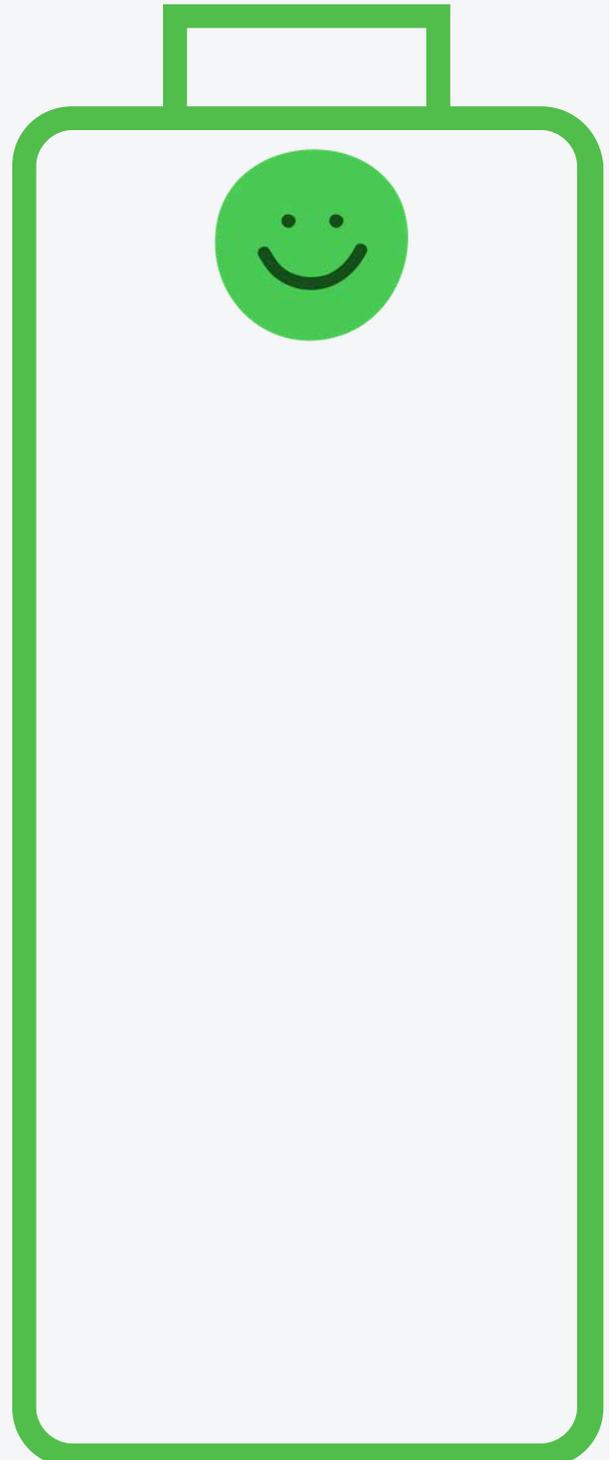
A large orange-outlined battery shape with a handle at the top. Inside the battery, at the top, is a red circle containing a sad face icon (two dots for eyes and a downward-curving line for a mouth). Below the icon, the text "Small amount:" is written. Further down, the text "Medium amount:" is written. At the bottom, the text "Large Amount:" is written. The rest of the battery shape is empty space for writing or drawing.

Small amount:

Medium amount:

Large Amount:

What helps charge it up again?



A large green-outlined battery shape with a handle at the top. Inside the battery, at the top, is a green circle containing a happy face icon (two dots for eyes and an upward-curving line for a mouth). The rest of the battery shape is empty space for writing or drawing.

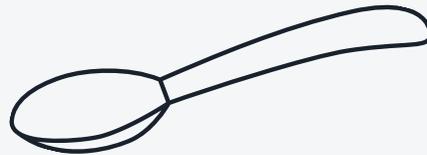
Spoon Theory

Spoon Theory is a way to explain what it's like to live with limited energy due to neurodivergence.

What is Spoon Theory?

Spoon Theory was developed by Christine Miserandino, who lives with a long-term health condition called Lupus. One day over dinner, Christine was struggling to explain to her friend how energy is limited for her compared to other people because of her health condition. To explain to her friend, Christine grabbed the spoons on the table and nearby to show how people with chronic conditions wake up each day with limited energy (spoons) to spend on tasks.

Although Spoon Theory was originally a way to explain how people who may have a disability or a chronic illness manage their energy, it has since been widened to explain how neurodivergent people can also experience limited emotional and sensory energy.



Imagine you start the day with a set number of spoons, and every activity—getting dressed, going to school, hanging out with friends—uses up a spoon. Once you run out, you have no energy left and need to rest. For young people, this can mean balancing school, social life, and personal needs.

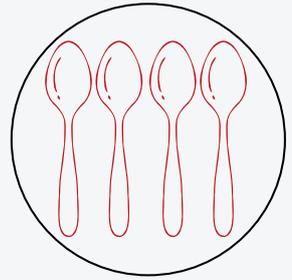
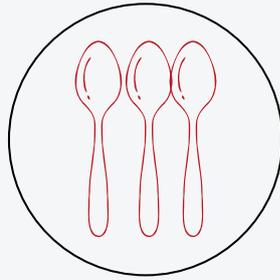
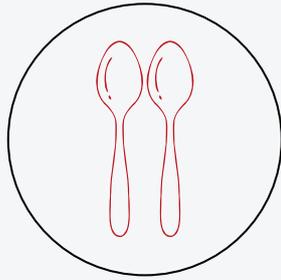
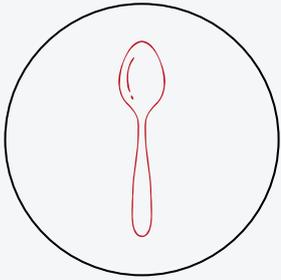
Some days, simple tasks might take more spoons than usual, making it harder to keep up with everything. That's when it's important to take a break to rest and 'refill'. Understanding Spoon Theory can help you communicate your limits to friends, teachers, and family, making it easier to set boundaries and prioritise self-care.



Trying Spoon Theory

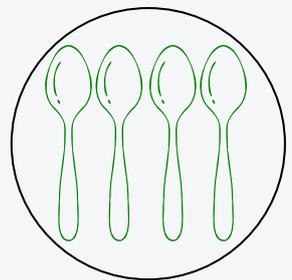
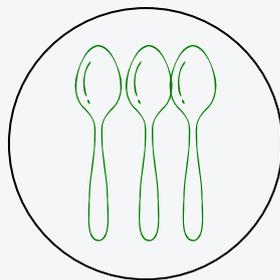
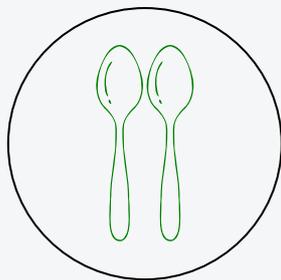
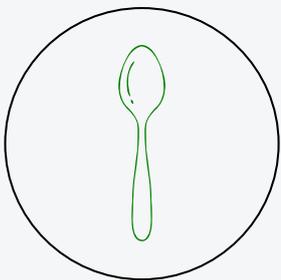
Activities or experiences take away spoons day to day. Some things will take away one spoon (e.g., getting dressed for school) and other things will take away more spoons (completing homework).

What things take away spoons for you?



In the same way that activities take away spoons, each of us can do things that give us back spoons.

What can you do to replenish spoons?



Tips for using the Spoon Theory



Tips for using the Spoon Theory

Now you have an idea of how different activities each day can both take and give spoons to you. You may like to keep the previous page as a visual reminder to take care of yourself and make time to replenish your spoons.

- Create a Schedule: Plan your day or week to include time to replenish spoons. You can add ideas on the planner below.
- Plan in time for low-energy activities.
- Break big tasks into smaller chunks and spread them out.
- Set Boundaries: Learn to say no politely and prioritise your well-being.
- Listen to Your Body: Pay attention to signs of fatigue and take breaks as needed.
- Be Flexible: When you can adjust your plans based on how you feel each day.

	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THR	FRI	SAT

Traffic light system

The Traffic Light System is a simple way to manage energy levels and avoid burnout. It helps you categorise activities based on how much energy they take and how they affect your well-being.

How does the traffic light system work?

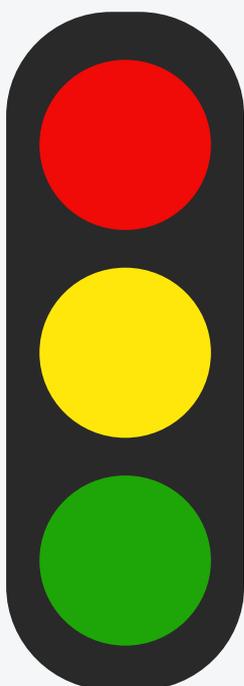
Red Activities 🚫: These drain your energy quickly. They might include intense exercise, things that can stress you out, or social events that leave you exhausted.

Amber Activities ⚠️: These require some energy but are manageable. Things like doing light chores, light exercise, or casual conversations fit here.

Green Activities ✅: These recharge and restore your energy. Examples include relaxing hobbies, meditation, deep breathing, or spending time in nature.

By balancing your activities, you can avoid burnout and keep your energy levels steady. If you notice you're spending too much time in the red zone, adding more green activities can help you recover. Some people use this system to track their daily routines and make adjustments to feel better overall.

Try thinking of some examples of red, amber and green activities for you below:



Red Activities 🚫:

Amber Activities ⚠️:

Green Activities ✅:

The stress bucket

The 'stress bucket' is a great way to think about how we can manage stress. Throughout the day, different things may cause us stress. We might feel stressed by school work, difficulties with friends, social media pressures, or we may worry about the future. These things that make us feel stressed can pour into the bucket like water. Stress is a normal part of life. Sometimes stress can be a good thing - a certain level of stress helps keep your mind and body alert and ready to respond, and it can be motivating and help you perform your best. However, sometimes we may experience stress that builds up, and it may be more than we can cope with.

In the stress bucket model, the more stress builds up, the fuller the bucket becomes. If too much stress goes into the bucket and there's nowhere for it to go; the bucket overflows, leading to feelings of overwhelm, anxiety, emotional outbursts, or burnout.



To prevent our bucket from overflowing, we need healthy ways to empty our bucket — these are coping strategies. Healthy coping strategies act like holes that release some of the water, keeping stress levels manageable. Things like exercising, talking to friends, hobbies, getting enough sleep, practicing mindfulness, or asking for support can help drain the bucket and prevent stress from reaching a breaking point.

If we feel like their bucket is constantly overflowing, it might mean we need to strengthen our coping strategies or seek help from a trusted adult, teacher, or mentor. This is where your Support Network can help!

Exploring the stress bucket

What things causes your bucket to fill (causes you stress)? You can write your ideas on the bucket below.



What kind of things help you to relieve stress?
You can write them below.

A light blue writing area with a dark blue tab at the top. It contains seven horizontal grey lines for writing. The bottom right corner of the area is folded over.

5 ways to wellbeing

There are 5 ways you can take to improve your mental health and wellbeing. Trying these things could help you feel more positive and able to get the most out of life.

Connecting

Connecting with other people can make us feel happy.

- Chat with friends.
- Hang out with family.
- Play games with others.
- Spend time with pets.



Getting active

Moving your body and doing exercise can help us feel good.

- Find something you enjoy.
- Play your favourite sport.
- Do stretches while watching TV, dance, or go for a walk.



Keep learning

Learning new things can help us feel happy.

- Learn how to draw your favourite animal.
- Play a new game.
- Learn the lyrics to your favourite song.



Give to others

Helping others can make us feel good about ourselves.

- Make breakfast for your family.
- Do something nice for a friend .
- Raise money for a charity you like.



Take notice

It can be helpful to notice how we feel right now, rather than worrying about things that have happened or we think are going to happen.

- Try sitting quietly in your favourite spot.
- Do some deep breathing.
- Write down something you enjoyed about today



Wellbeing toolkit

There are 5 ways you can take to improve your mental health and wellbeing. Trying these things could help you feel more positive and able to get the most out of life. Complete your own wellbeing toolkit below.



Connecting

Who do you like to spend time with? What do you like to do with them?



Getting active

What sort of physical activity do you enjoy? How can you move more in the day?



Keeping learning

What things would you like to learn to do? Are there things you'd like to know more about?



Give to others

Is there someone you'd like to give a helping hand to?



Take notice

Where's your favourite place to be? What are your favourite things to see and hear?

Communication Plan

A communication plan allows you to reflect and share with adults how you may communicate when you're experience difficulties with emotions. The plan allows important adults to know what you need and how they can support you at different times

	How I might communicate	What adults thinks this means	What I need the adults to do to support me	What to say to support me
Stage 1: I am beginning to feel anxious or distressed				
Stage 2: I am feeling anxious or distressed				
Stage 3: I'm in crisis				
Stage 4: I'm not ready to explain or explore how I am feeling				
Stage 5: I'm beginning to recover and I will be ready to move on				

Helping you achieve your goals

Have you ever experienced difficulties in achieving your goals?

Imagine your brain is like the control centre of a video game. Normally, it helps you plan, focus, start tasks, and stay organised — kind of like the game's menu that lets you pick levels, set goals, and track progress. But sometimes, it's like the menu glitches and the controls don't respond the way they should.



You **want** to start a task — like homework or cleaning your room — but your brain just won't let you. You might struggle to **stay on track**, forget important things, or feel overwhelmed by decisions. It's like your brain is stuck in "buffering" mode. If you need help to focus, prioritise, get organised or make choices, you're not on your own. The good news is that there are techniques and habits you can try to strengthen these skills. Some people find tools like reminders, timers, checklists, and breaking big tasks into smaller steps helpful.

Remember, it's normal to have difficulties with organisation, time management, and controlling impulses. These skills take time to strengthen, especially when your brain is still growing. Although even adults need help with these skills sometimes!

Did you know?

- **Young people's brains are still growing:** The part of your brain responsible for skills such as 'executive function' (more on the next page about this) isn't fully developed until your mid-20s.
- **Everyone has strengths and challenges:** Some people naturally excel at planning and focus, while others need extra strategies to stay on track.
- **Life is full of distractions:** Social media, schoolwork, and personal responsibilities can make it hard to stay organised and manage time effectively.
- **Stress and emotions play a role:** Feeling overwhelmed or anxious can make executive function skills harder to use.

The important thing to remember is that you can keep learning new skills and you have support from your mentor and other staff in school to help you.

What is executive function?

Executive function is like your brain's management system – it helps you stay organised, make decisions, and get things done. It's what allows you to plan, focus, remember instructions, and control impulses.



Here's a breakdown of the three main executive function skills:

- **Working Memory:** Helps you hold and use information in the moment (like remembering a teacher's instructions).
- **Flexible thinking:** Allows you to switch between tasks and adapt to new situations (like changing plans when something unexpected happens).
- **Self Control:** Helps you manage impulses and distractions (like resisting the urge to check your phone when you need to focus).

These skills develop over time and can be challenging for some people who have neurodivergent traits. But the good news? You can strengthen executive function skills with strategies like using planners, setting reminders, and breaking tasks into smaller steps.

Discuss with your mentor:

Have you used any of the following strategies (ways of helping), and how did you find them?

Strategy	I have tried <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	I would like to try <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
A planner or diary		
Reminders		
Timers		
Checklists		
Breaking big tasks into smaller steps		

Tips to help with executive function

Here are some things that might help you with executive function both in school and at home. Strengthening your executive function can make a big difference so you can achieve your goals, manage tasks and stay organised. It may also help with regulating emotions.



- **Break Tasks into Smaller Steps:** Instead of thinking about a big project, break it down into smaller, more manageable parts. This can help it feel less overwhelming and help make tasks more manageable.
- **Use Tools and Reminders:** Use planners, calendars, timers or apps to keep track of assignments and deadlines.
- **Create Routines:** Establish daily routines to make tasks more predictable and manageable. This can help with schoolwork and your hobbies and interests.
- **Use Visual Aids:** Charts, checklists and colour-coded systems can help some people to stay organised and remember important tasks.
- **Ask for Help:** Don't be afraid to ask teachers, parents, or friends for support or reminders.
- **Practice Self-Care:** Make sure to get enough sleep, eat well, and take breaks to recharge.

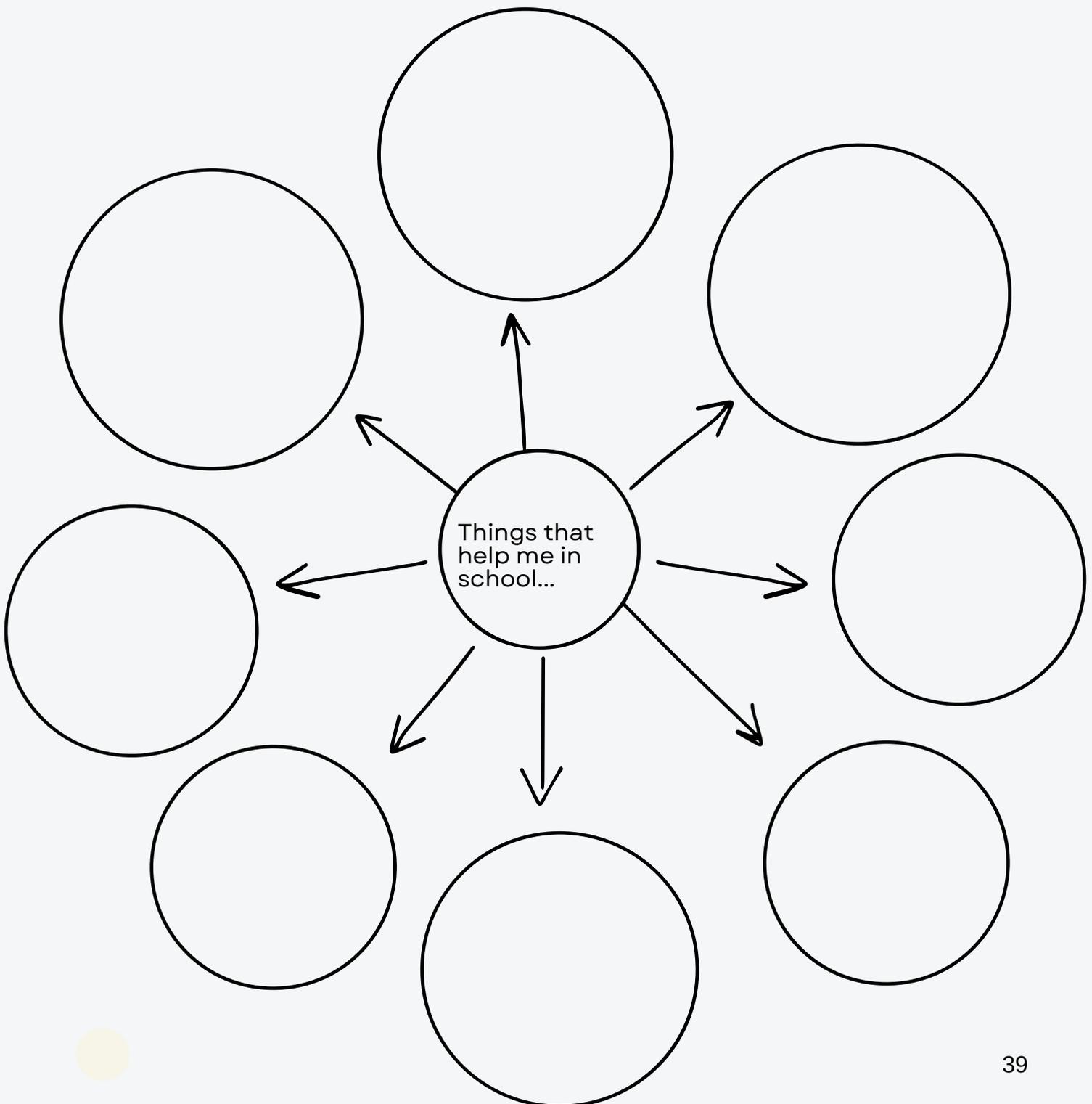
Remember it's okay to make mistakes. Practicing these skills takes time. You can use mistakes as a way of learning and improving problem-solving skills. Remember, you have a support network to help you with solving problems too!



Reflecting on your needs

What works for you?

Work with your mentor in school to think of ideas that can help you and record in the space below.



References

Blakemore, S. J., & Robbins, T. W. (2012). Decision-making in the adolescent brain. *Nature Neuroscience*, 15(9), 1184–1191. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/22929913/>

Diamond, A., & Ling, D. S. (2016). Interventions shown to aid executive function development in children 4 to 12 years old. *Science*, 333(6045), 959–964. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/21852486/>

Health Education England (2025) *Neurodiversity*. <https://www.hee.nhs.uk/our-work/pharmacy/transforming/initial/foundation/resources/edi/neurodiversity>

Humber Sensory Processing Service (2025) *What is Interoception?* <https://connect.humber.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Interoception.pdf>

National Health Service (2025) *5 steps to wellbeing. 5 steps to mental wellbeing*. <https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/self-help/guides-tools-and-activities/five-steps-to-mental-wellbeing/>

Marzi, A., Caniato, M., and Gasparella, A. (2025). Inclusive indoor comfort of neurodivergent individuals diagnosed before adulthood: A comprehensive study on thermal, acoustic, visual and air quality domains. *Building and Environment*, 267 (Part A), 112254. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.buildenv.2024.112254>

Nocon, A. S., Roestorf, A., and Gutiérrez Menéndez, L. M. (2022). Positive psychology in neurodiversity: An investigation of character strengths in autistic adults in the United Kingdom in a community setting. *Research in Autism Spectrum Disorders*, 99, 102071. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rasd.2022.102071>

Peterson, C., and Seligman, M. (2004) *Character Strengths and Virtues: A Handbook and Classification*. Oxford University Press

Snyder, H. R., Miyake, A., & Hankin, B. L. (2015). Advancing understanding of executive function impairments and psychopathology: Bridging the gap between clinical and cognitive approaches. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 33(1), 1–14. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25859234/>

Spectrum Gaming. (2024, June 29). *Energy accounting*. *Spectrum Gaming*. <https://www.spectrumgaming.net/post/energy-accounting>

Toudal, M. and Attwood, T., (2024). *Energy Accounting :Stress Management and Mental Health Monitoring for Autism and Related Conditions*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Wilmer, H. H., Sherman, L. E., & Chein, J. M. (2017). Smartphones and cognition: A review of research exploring the links between mobile technology habits and cognitive functioning. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 8, 605. <https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/psychology/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.00605/full>

With thanks to:

- Levenshulme High School
- The Parent Carer Forum
- Manchester Thrive in Education
- The Neurodiversity in Schools Steering Group
- Barlow Hall Primary School
- Bridgelea Primary School
- Pioneer House High School