



Burnout & Overwhelm Workbook

An ND-affirming workbook for adults



Name: _____

Date started: _____

This workbook is brain-based scaffolding, not behaviour correction. Work through it in any order, at any pace, and skip what doesn't fit. An interactive version you can complete online lives at fittingin.co.uk/burnout-overwhelm-workbook.html

Contents

- 1 Understanding ADHD
- 2 Cognitive Reframing for ND Adults
- 3 Emotional Check-In & Sensory Mapping
- 4 Executive Function Planning
- 5 Strengths, Identity & Self-Compassion
- 6 Pause • Process • Choose
- 7 Decision-Making Map
- 8 Self-Regulation Toolkit
- 9 Sensory Awareness & Overload Recovery
- 10 Focus, Attention & Task Flow
- 11 Routines, Rhythms & Sustainable Structure
- 12 Values, Boundaries & Identity
- 13 Motivation, Momentum & Overcoming Stuckness
- 14 Communication, Conflict & Emotional Safety
- 15 Emotional Recovery, Burnout Cycles & Rebuilding Capacity
- 16 Self-Esteem, Identity Healing & Rewriting Your Inner Narrative
- 17 Relationships, Connection & Social Energy
- 18 Emotional Regulation in Real-World Situations
- 19 Identity, Purpose & Living Authentically
- 20 Self-Advocacy, Asking for Support & Navigating Systems
- 21 Emotional Safety Planning & Crisis-Resistant Support
- 22 Life Design for ND Adults: Building a Future That Fits You
- 23 Bringing It All Together: Your Neurodivergent Wellbeing Blueprint
- 24 Final Reflection & Celebration

Understanding ADHD

What ADHD Means in Adulthood

ADHD isn't a childhood issue you "grow out of." It's a lifelong neurotype — a way your brain processes information, emotion, and energy. Many ND adults discover their ADHD later in life, often after years of masking, adapting, and pushing through systems that weren't designed with them in mind.

Here's a more affirming way to understand it:

Attention isn't missing — it's dynamic.

Your focus shifts based on interest, clarity, emotional load, and sensory environment. That's not a flaw. It's a pattern.

Energy isn't "too much" — it's responsive.

Your body and mind react quickly to stimulation, urgency, injustice, excitement, or overwhelm.

Emotions aren't "overreactions" — they're intense signals.

Your emotional system is fast, deep, and honest. With the right tools, it becomes a strength.

How ND Might Show Up for You

These are common ND-adult experiences — not failures, not character flaws, not laziness:

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ Task initiation difficulty even when you want to start | ☐ Time blindness (everything is "now" or "not now") |
| ☐ Hyperfocus cycles that feel incredible... until they crash | ☐ Executive overload when too many steps exist at once |
| ☐ Emotional intensity that hits fast and hard | ☐ Masking fatigue from years of trying to "seem organised" |
| ☐ Sensory overwhelm in busy, noisy, or unpredictable spaces | ☐ Decision paralysis when choices feel equally important |

If you recognise yourself here, you're not alone — and nothing is wrong with you. These patterns make sense in context.

The Three ND Presentations

These aren't rigid categories — many adults move between them depending on stress, environment, and support.

Inattentive Presentation

- drifting focus
- losing track of tasks
- difficulty organising
- internal restlessness

Hyperactive-Impulsive Presentation

- fast thoughts, fast speech
- acting quickly without pause
- difficulty waiting
- physical or mental restlessness

Combined Presentation

- A blend of both — which is extremely common in adults.

How this workbook helps

It's about building tools that work with your brain, not against it. It can help you:

- understand your thought patterns
- reduce shame-based self-talk
- break tasks into doable steps
- manage emotional intensity
- create systems that support your executive function
- respond rather than react when overwhelmed

Think of it as brain-based scaffolding, not behaviour correction.

Cognitive Reframing for ND Adults

Why This Matters

ADHD brains are fast, intuitive, and emotionally responsive. That means your thoughts can shift quickly — sometimes toward self-criticism, urgency, or overwhelm.

CBT doesn't ask you to "think positive." It helps you **notice patterns**, **reduce shame**, and **choose thoughts that support your wellbeing**. This is about self-understanding, not self-policing.

Thought Detective: Spot the Unhelpful Thought

Below are common ND-adult thought patterns. These are not "bad thoughts" — they're signals that you're overloaded, under-supported, or running on low executive fuel.

Reframing is not pretending. It's shifting from self-blame to self-support.

Unhelpful → Supportive Thought Examples

Unhelpful Thought	Supportive Reframe
"I should be able to do this by now."	"This task needs scaffolding. What's the smallest next step?"
"I'm so behind. I've messed everything up."	"I can restart from where I am. Progress doesn't need to be linear."
"Everyone else manages this. Why can't I?"	"My brain works differently, and that's valid. I can create systems that fit me."
"I'm procrastinating again. I'm useless."	"I'm stuck because something about this task is unclear, overwhelming, or emotionally loaded."
"I can't focus today. What's wrong with me?"	"My capacity fluctuates. I can adjust my expectations and still move forward."
"I always ruin things."	"I'm reacting from stress. I can pause, regulate, and choose my next step."

Your Turn: Identify One Thought Pattern

1. What's a thought you often notice when you're overwhelmed?

Example: "I'm failing at everything."

2. What might this thought be trying to tell you?

Example: "I'm overloaded and need clarity or support."

3. What's a more supportive version of that thought?

Example: "I'm overwhelmed, not failing. I can choose one small step."

Reframing Prompts for ND Adults

Use these when you feel stuck, ashamed, or spiralling:

- "What would I say to a friend in this situation?"
- "Is this thought a fact, or a feeling?"
- "What's the unmet need underneath this thought?"
- "What's one compassionate alternative interpretation?"
- "What's the smallest next step I can take?"

These prompts help shift you from self-criticism to self-support, which is the heart of ND-affirming CBT.

Mini-Practice: Reframe in Real Time

Think of a moment from this week when you felt overwhelmed, stuck, ashamed, behind, or emotionally flooded.

What was the moment?

What thought showed up?

What supportive reframe fits best?

Why Emotional Check-Ins Matter

For many ND adults, emotions can arrive quickly, intensely, and sometimes without a clear “why.” This isn’t a flaw — it’s a **fast-processing emotional system** that responds deeply to:

- sensory input
- stress
- uncertainty
- rejection sensitivity
- overwhelm
- transitions
- unmet needs

Checking in with your emotional and sensory state helps you:

- understand what your body is signalling
- reduce shame around emotional intensity
- choose regulation tools that actually work for your neurotype
- prevent overwhelm before it peaks
- communicate your needs more clearly

This is self-support, not self-surveillance.

Emotional Check-In

Choose the emotion(s) that fit right now:

Core emotions

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| ☐ Calm | ☐ Content |
| ☐ Neutral | ☐ Low energy |
| ☐ Overwhelmed | ☐ Anxious |
| ☐ Frustrated | ☐ Sad |
| ☐ Angry | ☐ Numb |
| ☐ Hopeful | ☐ Motivated |

ND-specific emotional states

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ Sensory overloaded | ☐ Sensory seeking |
| ☐ Masking fatigue | ☐ Social burnout |
| ☐ Rejection sensitivity spike | ☐ Executive overload |
| ☐ Hyperfocus buzz | ☐ Emotional whiplash |
| ☐ “Something’s off but I can’t name it” | |

Where do you feel it?

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ chest tightness | ☐ stomach tension |
| ☐ jaw clenching | ☐ buzzing limbs |
| ☐ heaviness | ☐ heat rising |
| ☐ coldness | ☐ pressure behind eyes |
| ☐ restlessness | ☐ dissociation / floaty feeling |

What does it feel like?

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| ☐ tight | ☐ heavy |
| ☐ sharp | ☐ foggy |
| ☐ buzzing | ☐ numb |
| ☐ hot | ☐ shaky |
| ☐ compressed | ☐ scattered |

Write any thoughts

Regulation Menu

Choose one tool that matches your current state. These are not “calming techniques” — they’re **nervous system supports**.

If you feel overwhelmed

- reduce sensory input (lights, noise, movement)
- step away from the environment
- slow breathing with longer exhales
- grounding through temperature (cold water, cool air)

If you feel anxious or activated

- paced breathing
- weighted blanket or pressure
- movement (walk, stretch, shake out limbs)
- co-regulation (talking to someone safe)

If you feel low energy or flat

- gentle movement
- warm drink
- sunlight or bright light
- music with rhythm

If you feel frustrated or irritable

- physical release (punch pillow, stomp, shake arms)
- name the trigger
- reduce demands temporarily
- break tasks into micro-steps

If you feel sensory overloaded

- noise-cancelling headphones
- dim lights
- reduce visual clutter
- cool compress
- retreat to a low-stim space

If you feel masking fatigue

- remove social expectations
- allow stimming
- drop into comfortable posture
- silence notifications

Choose one tool to try

Reflection Prompt

What changed after using your regulation tool?

- Did your body shift?
- Did your thoughts slow down?
- Did your emotional intensity reduce?
- Did you feel more grounded?

Your reflection

Mini-Practice: Emotional Pattern Awareness

Think of a moment this week when your emotions felt intense or confusing.

What was happening around you?

What emotion(s) showed up?

What sensory signals did your body give you?

What helped (or would have helped)?

Why Executive Function Support Matters

Executive function isn't about willpower or discipline — it's a set of cognitive processes that ADHD impacts directly. For ND adults, tasks often become difficult when they are:

- unclear
- multi-step
- emotionally loaded
- boring
- urgent
- repetitive
- tied to shame or past experiences
- competing with sensory overwhelm

This section helps you **break tasks down**, **reduce overwhelm**, and **create scaffolding** that supports your brain, not fights it.

Task Breakdown: The ND-Friendly Way

Instead of “just do it,” we use:

Micro-steps

Tiny, doable actions that bypass task initiation paralysis.

Externalisation

Getting tasks out of your head and onto paper reduces cognitive load.

Choice-based planning

You choose what's realistic for your energy level today.

Your Task Breakdown Worksheet

Choose one task you want to work on today. It can be practical, emotional, admin-based, or work-related.

Task name

Step 1 — What's the very first micro-step?

Examples: open the document, find the email, gather materials, set a 5-minute timer.

Step 2 — What's the next micro-step?

Step 3 — What's the next one after that?

Optional Step 4 — If I get stuck, what's my backup plan?

Examples: body-doubling, message someone, take a sensory break, switch to a smaller step.

ND-Friendly “Stay on Track” Checklist

Tick off what supports you today:

Before I start

- ☐ I reduced distractions (noise, clutter, notifications)
- ☐ I checked in with my emotional + sensory state
- ☐ I chose a realistic goal for my current energy
- ☐ I broke the task into micro-steps
- ☐ I set a gentle time container (5–15 minutes)

While I'm working

- ☐ I focused on one micro-step at a time
- ☐ I paused when I felt overwhelmed
- ☐ I used a regulation tool if needed
- ☐ I reminded myself that slow progress is still progress

If I got distracted

- ☐ I redirected myself without shame
- ☐ I checked whether I needed a break
- ☐ I adjusted the task to make it easier

After I finish

- ☐ I acknowledged the effort it took
- ☐ I celebrated the completion (even if small)
- ☐ I reflected on what helped me today

Time Blindness Support

1. Choose a task

2. Estimate how long it will take

Your guess doesn't need to be accurate — this is about awareness, not perfection.

3. Actual time it took

4. What influenced the difference?

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ emotional load | ☐ unclear steps |
| ☐ interruptions | ☐ sensory overwhelm |
| ☐ perfectionism | ☐ low energy |
| ☐ hyperfocus | ☐ task switching |

Write your reflection

Energy-Based Planning (Burnout-Aware)

Instead of “morning/afternoon/evening,” we use **energy waves**, which ND adults often find more intuitive.

My energy pattern today:

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ High energy | ☐ Medium energy |
| ☐ Low energy | ☐ Unpredictable |
| ☐ Masking fatigue | ☐ Burnout recovery mode |

Based on my energy, I can realistically do:

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ One small task | ☐ One medium task |
| ☐ One task + one break | ☐ Only rest + recovery |
| ☐ A mix of micro-steps | ☐ Something creative |
| ☐ Something admin-based | |

Write your plan here

Celebrate Your Effort (Not Just Your Output)

ND-affirming celebration ideas:

- acknowledging the emotional labour
- taking a sensory-friendly break
- sharing your win with someone safe
- doing something enjoyable
- resting without guilt
- marking the moment with a sticker, colour, or symbol

Today, I'm proud that I...

Why Strengths Work Matters

Many ND adults grow up hearing what they “should” be doing, what they’re “not good at,” or how they “need to try harder.” Over time, this can bury your strengths under layers of:

- masking
- shame
- perfectionism
- burnout
- self-doubt
- internalised ableism

This section helps you **uncover the strengths you already have**, not the ones you think you’re “supposed” to have. Your strengths are not accidental — they’re shaped by your neurotype, your lived experience, and the ways you’ve adapted to a world that wasn’t built with you in mind.

Your Strengths Inventory

Choose the strengths that resonate with you — or add your own.

Cognitive strengths

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ creative problem-solving | ☐ hyperfocus on meaningful tasks |
| ☐ rapid idea generation | ☐ intuitive pattern recognition |
| ☐ deep thinking | ☐ strong imagination |
| ☐ innovative approaches | ☐ ability to connect seemingly unrelated concepts |

Emotional strengths

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| ☐ empathy | ☐ honesty |
| ☐ emotional depth | ☐ passion |
| ☐ strong sense of justice | ☐ authenticity |
| ☐ loyalty | ☐ resilience |

Practical strengths

- ☐ adaptability
- ☐ crisis-mode competence
- ☐ multitasking under pressure
- ☐ resourcefulness
- ☐ ability to learn quickly when interested
- ☐ improvisation skills

Social strengths

- ☐ humour
- ☐ warmth
- ☐ unconventional communication
- ☐ ability to connect deeply with the right people
- ☐ authenticity in relationships

Write your top strengths here

Strengths in Context: Where You Thrive

Strengths often shine in the right environment. Reflect on these prompts — I thrive when...

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ the task is meaningful | ☐ I have autonomy |
| ☐ the environment is sensory-friendly | ☐ expectations are clear |
| ☐ I can work in bursts | ☐ I'm allowed to be myself |
| ☐ I'm not masking | ☐ I'm supported, not judged |

Where do you thrive?

Goal Setting

Step 1 — Choose a supportive goal. Your goal can be practical, emotional, organisational, or wellbeing-based.

Examples:

- reduce overwhelm in mornings
- create a realistic weekly routine
- finish a task without burning out
- set boundaries without guilt
- reduce masking in safe spaces
- improve task initiation
- build a sensory-friendly environment
- manage emotional intensity

My goal

Step 2 — Why this goal matters. Understanding the “why” helps reduce shame and increase motivation.

Prompts:

- How will this support your wellbeing?
- What will become easier?
- What stress will reduce?
- What need will this meet?
- How will this help future you?

This goal is important because...

Step 3 — Break the goal into micro-steps. ND-friendly micro-steps are tiny, clear, and doable.

Step 1

Step 2

Step 3

Optional step — What support do you need?

Examples: body-doubling, clarity, sensory adjustments, emotional support.

Step 4 — Goal tracker. Instead of “Monday–Friday,” this tracker focuses on capacity, not days. Did I work on my goal today?

- ☐ Yes — even a tiny step
- ☐ No — and that’s okay
- ☐ I rested — which is progress too
- ☐ I adjusted the goal to fit my energy

Use this space to track your week in a way that feels supportive

Step 5 — Celebrate your progress. Celebration is not childish — it's nervous system reinforcement. ND-friendly celebration ideas:

- acknowledging the emotional labour
- taking a sensory break
- doing something enjoyable
- resting without guilt
- sharing your progress with someone safe
- marking the moment with colour or symbols

I will celebrate my progress by...

Step 6 — Weekly reflection.

What felt easier this week?

What felt challenging?

What helped you move forward?

What will you continue next week?

Why This Matters

ND adults often react quickly because:

- emotions hit fast and intensely
- sensory overwhelm spikes suddenly
- urgency feels real even when it isn't
- rejection sensitivity activates
- executive overload shuts down reasoning
- masking fatigue reduces capacity
- the brain seeks relief from discomfort

This section helps you **slow the moment down**, not by suppressing your feelings, but by **creating space to respond with self-support**. This is not about “controlling yourself.” It’s about understanding your nervous system and choosing what helps you most.

Step 1 — PAUSE

A pause is not a stop. It’s a **moment of protection** for your nervous system. Ways to pause (choose one that fits your brain today):

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ take one slow breath | ☐ look away from the trigger |
| ☐ lower your shoulders | ☐ place your feet firmly on the ground |
| ☐ step into another room | ☐ say “I need a moment” |
| ☐ reduce sensory input (lights, noise, movement) | ☐ hold something grounding (fabric, stone, cup) |

How I paused

Step 2 — PROCESS

This is where you check in with what’s happening internally.

What am I feeling?

Examples: overwhelmed, anxious, irritated, hurt, overstimulated, pressured, confused.

What triggered this feeling?

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ sensory overload | ☐ unclear expectations |
|---|---|

- ☐ emotional intensity
- ☐ perceived rejection
- ☐ task overwhelm
- ☐ masking too long

- ☐ conflict
- ☐ time pressure
- ☐ fatigue

Notes on the trigger

What are my options right now?

List as many as you can — even the ones you won't choose.

What might happen with each option?

This isn't about predicting perfectly — it's about clarity.

Step 3 — CHOOSE

Now choose the option that supports your wellbeing, your values, and your future self.

The choice I'm making is...

Why this choice supports me

Real-Life Scenarios

Scenario 1 — You receive a message that feels critical or abrupt.

PAUSE — What helps you pause?

PROCESS — What emotion came up? Did it trigger rejection sensitivity? Is the message actually urgent? What story is your brain telling you?

PROCESS — Your notes

CHOOSE — What's the supportive next step? (wait 10 minutes before replying · ask for clarification · check with someone safe · respond with boundaries · step away until regulated)

CHOOSE — Your choice

Scenario 2 — You're overwhelmed by a task you've been avoiding.

PAUSE

PROCESS — What's the barrier? (unclear steps · emotional load · perfectionism · fear of failure · sensory discomfort)

PROCESS — Your notes

CHOOSE — break into micro-steps · set a 5-minute timer · ask for body-doubling · adjust expectations · postpone without shame

CHOOSE — Your choice

Scenario 3 — You feel impulsive (spending, messaging, quitting, reacting).

PAUSE

PROCESS — What emotion is underneath? What need is unmet? What relief is your brain seeking?

PROCESS — Your notes

CHOOSE — delay the action by 10 minutes · check in with someone safe · regulate first, decide after · write the message but don't send · revisit the decision tomorrow

CHOOSE — Your choice

Reflection: How Did It Go?

How did using Pause–Process–Choose support you?

What was the hardest part?

What helped you stay grounded?

What will you try next time?

Why Decision-Making Is Hard for ND Adults

Decision-making isn't just about choosing. For ND adults, it's influenced by:

- sensory load
- emotional intensity
- executive function capacity
- fear of getting it "wrong"
- past experiences of criticism
- masking fatigue
- unclear expectations
- time pressure
- rejection sensitivity
- perfectionism

This section helps you **map your choices** without shame, pressure, or urgency. It's not about "good vs. bad choices." It's about **supportive vs. unsupportive choices** for your wellbeing.

Decision-Making Map

Choose a situation you're navigating right now — big or small.

Situation

What are my supportive choices? (These are choices that protect your wellbeing, energy, boundaries, or values.)

Examples: asking for clarity · taking a break · setting a boundary · breaking the task down · delaying the decision · choosing rest · communicating honestly · reducing sensory input

Write your supportive choices here

What are my unsupportive choices? (These are choices that might feel easier in the moment but create stress later.) Examples: masking · people-pleasing · pushing through burnout · reacting impulsively · ignoring your needs · avoiding without reflection

Write your unsupportive choices here

Understanding the Impact

If I choose a supportive option, what might happen? reduced overwhelm · clearer communication · more energy later · better emotional regulation · less resentment · more alignment with your values

Write your thoughts

If I choose an unsupportive option, what might happen? emotional crash · sensory overload · burnout · regret or shame · conflict · feeling misunderstood · reinforcing old patterns

Write your thoughts

ND-Adult Scenario Examples

Scenario 1 — Someone asks you for help when you're already overwhelmed.

Supportive choices

- "I can't right now, but I can help later."
- "I don't have capacity today."
- offering a smaller alternative
- saying no without apology

Unsupportive choices

- saying yes automatically
- masking your overwhelm
- pushing yourself into burnout

Your choice

Scenario 2 — You're invited to a social event but you're low-capacity.

Supportive choices

- declining kindly
- asking for details to reduce uncertainty
- choosing a shorter visit
- planning sensory supports

Unsupportive choices

- forcing yourself to go
- masking the whole time
- ignoring your body's signals

Your choice

Scenario 3 — You're emotionally activated and want to send a reactive message.

Supportive choices

- draft but don't send
- wait 10 minutes
- regulate first
- ask someone safe to sense-check

Unsupportive choices

- sending immediately
- venting in a way that escalates
- assuming the worst

Your choice

Reflection: What Did I Learn?

What helped me make a supportive choice?

What made the decision harder?

What will I try next time?

Why Self-Regulation Matters

Self-regulation isn't about "controlling yourself." It's about **supporting your nervous system** so you can respond in ways that feel aligned with your values, your needs, and your wellbeing. For ND adults, regulation can be affected by:

- sensory overload
- emotional intensity
- executive function fatigue
- masking exhaustion
- rejection sensitivity
- unclear expectations
- transitions
- burnout cycles

This section helps you build a **toolkit that fits your neurotype**, not a generic list of coping skills.

Your Self-Regulation Strengths

You already use regulation skills — even if you don't always notice them. I use self-regulation when I...

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ pause before responding | ☐ take a moment to breathe |
| ☐ step away from overwhelm | ☐ ask for clarity |
| ☐ reduce sensory input | ☐ choose rest instead of pushing through |
| ☐ communicate my needs | ☐ break tasks into micro-steps |
| ☐ use humour to diffuse tension | ☐ allow myself to stim |
| ☐ seek connection when I need grounding | |

Write your own examples

Self-Regulation in Real-Life Situations

Scenario 1 — Someone is pushing your boundaries and you feel angry.

What might happen if you react without regulation? (saying something you don't mean · escalating conflict · emotional crash afterwards · feeling misunderstood · guilt or shame)

Your thoughts

What can you do to regulate first? (step away · reduce sensory input · take slow breaths · name the emotion · remind yourself you're allowed boundaries · delay the response)

Your plan

Scenario 2 — You want to comfort-eat, doom-scroll, or spend impulsively.

What might happen if you act immediately? (temporary relief · long-term stress · emotional crash · regret · shame spiral)

Your thoughts

What can you do to regulate first? (check what emotion is underneath · use grounding — temperature, texture, movement · delay the action by 10 minutes · choose a sensory alternative · reach out to someone safe)

Your plan

Scenario 3 — You're working on something important but want to abandon it and escape.

What might happen if you stop abruptly? (increased stress later · feeling "behind" · shame or frustration · task avoidance cycle)

Your thoughts

What's a supportive choice with regulation? (take a 2-minute sensory break · switch to a micro-step · use a timer · ask for body-doubling · adjust expectations · return after grounding)

Your plan

Your Personal Regulation Strategies

Choose the strategies that genuinely help your ND brain.

Sensory regulation

- ☐ noise-cancelling headphones
- ☐ weighted blanket
- ☐ warm drink
- ☐ comfortable clothing
- ☐ dimming lights
- ☐ cold water on hands
- ☐ fidget tools
- ☐ stepping outside

Emotional regulation

- ☐ naming the emotion
- ☐ journaling
- ☐ talking to someone safe
- ☐ validating your own feelings
- ☐ reframing self-talk
- ☐ grounding exercises

Cognitive regulation

- ☐ breaking tasks down
- ☐ using timers
- ☐ externalising thoughts
- ☐ asking for clarity
- ☐ reducing demands
- ☐ choosing one priority

Body-based regulation

- ☐ stretching
- ☐ shaking out limbs
- ☐ walking
- ☐ deep breathing
- ☐ stimming freely
- ☐ changing posture

Which strategies help you most?

Create Your Own Self-Regulation Shield

Your shield can include: your top 3 regulation tools · your core strengths · your boundaries · your sensory needs · your values · your affirmations

My Self-Regulation Shield includes...

Reflection: What Did I Learn About My Regulation Needs?

What helps me regulate most effectively?

What makes regulation harder?

What will I try next time I feel overwhelmed?

Why Sensory Awareness Matters

For many ND adults, sensory experiences shape:

- emotional regulation
- energy levels
- decision-making
- communication
- overwhelm
- burnout cycles
- social capacity
- task initiation
- ability to stay present

Yet most adults were never taught to recognise sensory needs — many were taught to ignore them. This section helps you **understand your sensory profile**, identify **overload patterns**, and build **supportive environments** that honour your neurotype.

Your Sensory Profile

Tick any that resonate — you can be a mix of both seeking and avoiding.

Sensory seeking

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ crave deep pressure | ☐ enjoy strong flavours |
| ☐ love movement or fidgeting | ☐ seek bright colours or patterns |
| ☐ enjoy loud music | ☐ need tactile stimulation |
| ☐ prefer busy environments | |

Sensory avoiding

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ sensitive to noise | ☐ overwhelmed by bright lights |
| ☐ dislike certain textures | ☐ struggle with crowded spaces |
| ☐ find strong smells overpowering | ☐ prefer soft fabrics |
| ☐ need predictable environments | |

Sensory fluctuating

- ☐ sometimes seeking, sometimes avoiding
- ☐ depends on stress, hormones, sleep, masking, or burnout
- ☐ capacity changes day-to-day

My sensory profile looks like...

Identify Your Sensory Triggers

Common ND-adult triggers include:

Auditory

- ☐ sudden noises
- ☐ overlapping conversations
- ☐ alarms
- ☐ traffic
- ☐ humming appliances

Visual

- ☐ bright lights
- ☐ clutter
- ☐ fast movement
- ☐ screens
- ☐ fluorescent lighting

Tactile

- ☐ clothing tags
- ☐ certain fabrics
- ☐ unexpected touch
- ☐ temperature changes

Olfactory

- ☐ perfumes
- ☐ cleaning products
- ☐ food smells
- ☐ smoke

Internal sensory triggers

- ☐ hunger
- ☐ thirst
- ☐ fatigue
- ☐ pain
- ☐ hormonal shifts

My top sensory triggers are...

Signs You're Approaching Sensory Overload

ND adults often miss early signs because they've learned to mask them. Common early signals:

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ irritability | ☐ sudden anxiety |
| ☐ difficulty thinking clearly | ☐ emotional spikes |
| ☐ restlessness | ☐ zoning out |
| ☐ feeling "trapped" | ☐ urge to escape |
| ☐ physical tension | ☐ sound sensitivity increasing |
| ☐ light sensitivity increasing | |

My early signs of overload include...

Overload Recovery Plan

This is your personalised "in case of overwhelm" guide.

Step 1 — Reduce input

- dim lights
- noise-cancelling headphones
- step outside
- close eyes briefly
- reduce movement around you

Step 2 — Regulate the body

- deep pressure
- grounding through temperature
- slow breathing
- stretching
- stimming freely

Step 3 — Regulate the mind

- name the emotion
- remind yourself "I'm overwhelmed, not failing"
- choose one micro-step
- delay decisions

Step 4 — Restore capacity

- rest
- hydration
- food
- quiet time
- connection with someone safe

My overload recovery plan

Designing Sensory-Friendly Environments

You deserve spaces that support your nervous system.

Home environment

- soft lighting
- cosy textures
- decluttered zones
- sensory corner
- weighted blanket
- quiet room

Work environment

- headphones
- clear desk space
- predictable routines
- written instructions
- flexible seating
- visual boundaries

Public spaces

- sunglasses
- earplugs
- choosing quieter times
- planning exits
- sensory tools in bag

What environments support me best

Sensory Boundaries

You're allowed to say:

- "That's too loud for me."
- "I need softer lighting."
- "I can't do crowds today."
- "I need space."
- "I'm overstimulated — I'll come back in a moment."

What sensory boundaries do I want to set?

Reflection: What Did I Learn About My Sensory Needs?

What surprised me?

What do I want to honour more often?

What will I change in my environment or routine?

Why Attention Works Differently in ND Adults

ADHD attention isn't "broken." It's **interest-based**, **emotion-linked**, and **context-dependent**. Your attention may shift when:

- the task is boring or unclear
- the emotional load is high
- the environment is overstimulating
- you're masking
- you're tired or burnt out
- the task feels too big
- you're excited or passionate
- you're in hyperfocus mode

This section helps you understand your **attention patterns**, not fight them.

Your Attention Style

Tick any that resonate — most ND adults are a blend.

Interest-driven attention

- ☐ focus increases when the task is meaningful
- ☐ boredom feels physically uncomfortable
- ☐ passion = hyperfocus
- ☐ low interest = task paralysis

Emotion-linked attention

- ☐ focus shifts with mood
- ☐ emotional spikes disrupt tasks
- ☐ rejection sensitivity impacts concentration

Environment-sensitive attention

- ☐ noise, clutter, or movement disrupts focus
- ☐ sensory overload = instant derailment
- ☐ calm spaces = better flow

Hyperfocus cycles

- ☐ deep immersion in tasks you love
- ☐ losing track of time
- ☐ difficulty switching tasks
- ☐ exhaustion afterwards

My attention style looks like...

Understanding Your Focus Patterns

When I focus well: the task is meaningful · I have autonomy · the environment is calm · expectations are clear · I'm not masking · I'm emotionally regulated

Write your examples

When I struggle to focus: the task is unclear · I'm overwhelmed · I'm tired or burnt out · the environment is overstimulating · the task feels too big · I'm anxious or activated

Write your examples

Attention Training

Instead of “spot the difference,” we use **real-life attention-building practices** that support ND brains. These are not tests — they're awareness exercises.

Exercise 1 — Micro-Observation Practice. Choose an object near you (mug, plant, pen, fabric). Spend 30 seconds noticing colours, textures, shapes, shadows, and patterns.

What did you notice that you hadn't before?

This builds present-moment attention without pressure.

Exercise 2 — Focused Drawing. Draw a simple object in front of you — your hand, your mug, your keys, a plant, your glasses. Draw the outline only. No perfection needed. Focus on shapes, not accuracy. Take 2–3 minutes.

Reflection: Did your mind wander? Did you feel calm or restless? Did focusing feel easy or effortful?

Your reflection

Exercise 3 — Hidden Patterns in Your Environment. Look around the room and find 3 circles, 3 straight lines, 3 repeating patterns, and 3 textures.

What did you find?

This builds visual attention and environmental awareness.

Exercise 4 — Word Search for Adults. Find these words: focus · calm · clarity · energy · rest · boundary · support · regulate · pause · thrive. Tap or click letters to highlight them.

B	O	U	N	D	A	R	Y	T	H	R	I	V	E
C	A	L	M	R	E	G	U	L	A	T	E	F	O
L	P	A	U	S	E	S	U	P	P	O	R	T	C
A	E	N	E	R	G	Y	L	A	R	I	T	Y	U
R	F	O	C	U	S	T	H	R	I	V	E	R	S
I	S	U	P	P	O	R	T	P	A	U	S	E	E
T	R	E	S	T	C	A	L	M	E	N	E	R	G
Y	R	E	G	U	L	A	T	E	F	O	C	U	S

Reflection: Was it soothing or frustrating? Did you feel focused or distracted? Did you enjoy the structure?

Write your reflection

Task Flow Awareness

What helps me enter flow? music · silence · movement · body-doubling · clear steps · meaningful tasks · sensory comfort

Write your examples

What disrupts my flow? noise · interruptions · unclear expectations · emotional spikes · hunger or thirst · clutter

Write your examples

Reflection: What Did I Learn About My Attention?

What surprised me?

What helps me focus best?

What will I try next time I need to focus?

Routines, Rhythms & Sustainable Structure

Why ND Adults Struggle With Traditional Routines

Most ND adults don't struggle with routines because they're "disorganised." They struggle because traditional routines rely on:

- consistent energy
- predictable focus
- low sensory load
- stable emotional regulation
- linear task flow
- minimal interruptions

ND adults rarely experience all of these at once. Your brain works in **rhythms**, not rigid schedules. This section helps you build structure that **moves with you**, not against you.

Your Daily Rhythm (Not a Schedule)

Instead of "Morning / Afternoon / Evening," we use **energy waves**, which ND adults find far more intuitive. My energy today feels:

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ High | ☐ Medium |
| ☐ Low | ☐ Unpredictable |
| ☐ Masking fatigue | ☐ Burnout recovery mode |

Based on my energy, I can realistically manage:

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ One small task | ☐ One medium task |
| ☐ One task + one break | ☐ Only rest + recovery |
| ☐ A mix of micro-steps | ☐ Something creative |
| ☐ Something admin-based | |

Write your plan for today

Flexible Routine Builder

A routine built for ND adults who need **choice**, **flexibility**, and **low-pressure structure**. Choose one from each category — or skip categories entirely if you need to.

1. Morning options: gentle wake-up (slow light, soft sound) · hydration · sensory comfort (blanket, warm drink) · one micro-task (open curtains, brush teeth, get dressed) · grounding moment · check energy level

My morning rhythm

2. Midday options: one meaningful task · one admin task · movement break · sensory reset · food + hydration · rest if needed · body-doubling

My midday rhythm

3. Evening options: decompress from sensory load · low-demand tasks · prepare for tomorrow (only if helpful) · calming activity · screen-free moment · connection with someone safe

My evening rhythm

ND-Friendly To-Do List

A to-do list that supports **executive function**, **emotional load**, and **task initiation**.

Step 1 — Brain dump (no order, no pressure). Write everything on your mind:

Step 2 — Sort by emotional load. Mark each task: (yellow) low load · (orange) medium load · (red) high load

Step 3 — Choose ONE task for today. Not the “most important.” The most doable.

Today's task

Micro-steps

One per line.

Time Awareness for ND Adults

A time check that acknowledges **time blindness**, **emotional load**, and **executive fatigue**.

Task

Estimated time

Actual time

What influenced the difference?

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ emotional load | ☐ unclear steps |
| ☐ sensory overwhelm | ☐ perfectionism |
| ☐ interruptions | ☐ low energy |
| ☐ hyperfocus | ☐ task switching |

Write your reflection

Burnout-Aware Planning

ND adults often cycle through high-energy bursts, overwhelm, shutdown, recovery, and re-engagement. This is normal. This is human. This is your rhythm. Where am I in the cycle today?

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| ☐ High energy | ☐ Productive flow |
| ☐ Overloaded | ☐ Shutdown |
| ☐ Recovery | ☐ Rebuilding |

What does this stage need from me?

Celebrate Your Day

Celebration reinforces progress — not productivity. Today, I'm proud that I...

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ rested | ☐ tried |
| ☐ paused | ☐ asked for help |
| ☐ set a boundary | ☐ completed a micro-step |
| ☐ regulated myself | ☐ honoured my energy |
| ☐ showed up as I am | |

Write your reflection

Why This Matters

Many ND adults spend years — sometimes decades — trying to “fit in” by:

- masking
- people-pleasing
- suppressing needs
- overworking
- avoiding conflict
- shrinking themselves
- ignoring sensory limits
- saying yes when they mean no

This section helps you reconnect with **who you are underneath the masking**, and build boundaries that honour your neurotype, your energy, and your values. This is about coming home to yourself.

Your Core Values

Values are not goals. They're the principles that guide how you want to live, love, work, and show up in the world. Choose any that resonate — or add your own.

Connection values

- ☐ authenticity
- ☐ honesty
- ☐ compassion
- ☐ loyalty
- ☐ kindness
- ☐ mutual respect

Personal values

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| ☐ creativity | ☐ autonomy |
| ☐ curiosity | ☐ growth |
| ☐ rest | ☐ balance |
| ☐ self-expression | |

Wellbeing values

- ☐ safety
- ☐ calm
- ☐ stability
- ☐ sensory comfort
- ☐ emotional honesty
- ☐ boundaries

Justice values

- ☐ fairness
- ☐ equality
- ☐ advocacy
- ☐ inclusion
- ☐ integrity

My top values are...

Values in Action

Values become powerful when they guide your choices.

When I honour my values, I feel...

When I ignore my values, I feel...

One value I want to honour more often is...

Boundaries for ND Adults

Boundaries are not walls. They're **guidelines for how you want to be treated** — and how you treat yourself. ND adults often struggle with boundaries because of:

- fear of conflict
- fear of rejection
- masking
- people-pleasing
- unclear internal signals

- emotional intensity
- past experiences of being misunderstood

Types of Boundaries

1. Emotional boundaries

- “I can’t take on this conversation right now.”
- “I need time to process before responding.”

2. Sensory boundaries

- “That noise/light/smell is too much for me.”
- “I need a quieter space.”

3. Time boundaries

- “I can help, but only for 10 minutes.”
- “I’m not available today.”

4. Social boundaries

- “I can come, but only for a short time.”
- “I need to leave when I feel overwhelmed.”

5. Work boundaries

- “I need clearer instructions.”
- “I can’t take on extra tasks right now.”

Which boundaries do you want to strengthen?

Boundary Scripts

These scripts help ND adults communicate clearly without over-explaining. Choose the ones that feel right for you:

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ “I need a moment to think.” | ☐ “I’m not able to do that today.” |
| ☐ “That doesn’t work for me.” | ☐ “I need clearer expectations.” |
| ☐ “I can continue this conversation later.” | ☐ “I’m feeling overwhelmed — I need space.” |
| ☐ “I can help with X, but not Y.” | ☐ “I’m not comfortable with that.” |

Which scripts feel supportive for you?

Identity Beyond Masking

Masking can make it hard to know who you are underneath the performance. This section helps you reconnect with your authentic self. When I'm not masking, I...

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ stim freely | ☐ speak more honestly |
| ☐ take up space | ☐ express emotions more openly |
| ☐ move at my natural pace | ☐ choose comfort over appearance |
| ☐ follow my interests | ☐ honour my sensory needs |

Write your own

Who Am I When I'm Safe?

When I feel safe, I am...

When I feel unsafe, I tend to...

What helps me return to safety?

Identity Affirmations

Choose the ones that resonate — or write your own.

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ My needs are valid. | ☐ My brain works differently, and that's okay. |
| ☐ I don't have to earn rest. | ☐ I am allowed to take up space. |
| ☐ I deserve clarity and support. | ☐ I am not "too much." |
| ☐ I am not "lazy." | ☐ I am learning myself. |
| ☐ I am allowed to change. | ☐ I am allowed to say no. |
| ☐ I am allowed to be exactly who I am. | |

Affirmations that feel true for me

Reflection: What Did I Learn About Myself?

What part of this section felt most meaningful?

What boundaries do I want to honour moving forward?

What value do I want to centre in my life right now?

Why ND Adults Get “Stuck”

If you’ve ever thought:

- “I want to do it, so why can’t I start?”
- “I know what I need to do, but I can’t make myself do it.”
- “I’m overwhelmed before I even begin.”
- “I wait until the last minute and then panic-do everything.”

You’re not broken.

You’re not lazy.

You’re not unmotivated.

You’re experiencing **executive function paralysis**, which is emotional, cognitive, sensory, and neurological — not a character flaw. This section helps you understand why you get stuck — and how to move gently forward.

Why Motivation Works Differently in ND Brains

ND motivation is influenced by:

Interest

If it’s meaningful, exciting, or aligns with your values, motivation increases.

Clarity

If the task is unclear, motivation drops instantly.

Emotional load

If the task carries shame, fear, or pressure: paralysis.

Urgency

Deadlines can activate the brain — but at a cost.

Reward

Immediate rewards work better than distant ones.

Environment

Sensory comfort = better initiation.

Energy

Low energy = low initiation, no matter how important the task is.

My motivation patterns look like...

What's Really Blocking You?

Choose any that resonate:

Emotional blocks

- ☐ fear of failure
- ☐ fear of success
- ☐ fear of judgement
- ☐ shame from past experiences
- ☐ perfectionism
- ☐ rejection sensitivity

Cognitive blocks

- ☐ unclear steps
- ☐ too many steps
- ☐ task feels too big
- ☐ decision paralysis
- ☐ overwhelm

Sensory blocks

- ☐ noise
- ☐ clutter
- ☐ discomfort
- ☐ lighting
- ☐ temperature

Energy blocks

- ☐ burnout
- ☐ fatigue
- ☐ masking hangover
- ☐ low dopamine
- ☐ hormonal shifts

Which blocks show up for you?

The ND “Activation Ladder”

This replaces the idea of “just start” with a **gentle, step-by-step activation process**. Choose the lowest rung you can manage today.

Rung 1 — Think about the task.

(You’ve already started.)

Rung 2 — Look at the task.

Open the email, glance at the pile, find the document.

Rung 3 — Touch the task.

Pick up the item, open the file, gather materials.

Rung 4 — Do the smallest possible action.

One sentence. One dish. One click.

Rung 5 — Continue for 2 minutes.

Set a tiny timer.

Rung 6 — Decide whether to stop or continue.

Both are wins.

Which rung feels doable today?

The “Two-Minute Momentum Method”

If a task feels impossible, try: set a 2-minute timer · do one micro-step · stop when the timer ends · celebrate the activation. This builds **momentum**, not pressure.

Task I’ll try this with

The ND Momentum Cycle

ND adults often work in cycles:

- Activation (getting started)

- Engagement (flow or steady progress)
- Fatigue (energy dips)
- Pause (rest, regulate, reset)
- Re-engagement (returning gently)

Where am I in the cycle today?

When You Feel Stuck: The 5-Question Reset

Use this when you're frozen, overwhelmed, or spiralling.

- What's the smallest next step?
- What emotion is blocking me?
- What support would help?
- What sensory change would make this easier?
- What expectation can I lower?

My answers

Motivation Without Shame

You don't need

- discipline
- willpower
- perfection
- consistency

You need

- clarity
- compassion
- scaffolding
- sensory comfort
- emotional safety
- realistic expectations
- micro-steps
- support

What supports my motivation most?

Celebrate Activation, Not Completion

ND brains thrive on **dopamine**, not pressure. Celebrate when you:

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ start | ☐ try |
| ☐ pause | ☐ return |
| ☐ adjust | ☐ rest |
| ☐ ask for help | ☐ break a task down |
| ☐ regulate yourself | ☐ honour your energy |

Today, I'm proud that I...

Why Communication Feels Different for ND Adults

ND communication is often: direct · honest · emotionally expressive · intuitive · detail-rich · nonlinear · deeply empathetic · sometimes blunt · sometimes hesitant · shaped by sensory load · shaped by emotional safety.

And yet, many ND adults have been told:

- “You’re too much.”
- “You’re too blunt.”
- “You’re too sensitive.”
- “You overreact.”
- “You talk too much.”
- “You don’t talk enough.”

This section helps you understand your communication style — and navigate relationships without masking or self-silencing.

Your Communication Style

Tick any that resonate:

Direct communicator

- ☐ clear
- ☐ honest
- ☐ straightforward
- ☐ values transparency
- ☐ dislikes vague language

Context-rich communicator

- ☐ shares details
- ☐ explains fully
- ☐ connects ideas
- ☐ thinks out loud

Emotion-linked communicator

- ☐ expresses feelings openly
- ☐ needs emotional safety
- ☐ communication shifts with mood

Internal processor

- ☐ needs time to think
- ☐ prefers writing
- ☐ struggles with on-the-spot responses

External processor

- ☐ talks to think
- ☐ needs dialogue to clarify thoughts
- ☐ ideas unfold in real time

My communication style looks like...

Communication Needs for ND Adults

ND adults often need:

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ clarity | ☐ predictability |
| ☐ emotional safety | ☐ time to process |
| ☐ direct language | ☐ reduced sensory load |
| ☐ space to pause | ☐ permission to ask questions |
| ☐ reassurance when unsure | |

My communication needs include...

Conflict & Emotional Intensity

Conflict can feel overwhelming for ND adults because emotions hit fast, sensory overload increases, rejection sensitivity activates, words feel sharper, tone feels louder, and the body reacts before the mind catches up. This section helps you navigate conflict without losing yourself.

Step 1 — Pause the activation. When conflict arises, try: stepping away briefly · lowering sensory input · taking slow breaths · grounding through touch or temperature · saying “I need a moment”

What helps me pause in conflict

Step 2 — Process before responding. Ask yourself: What emotion am I feeling? What triggered it? What story is my brain telling me? What do I need right now? What outcome do I want?

My processing notes

Step 3 — Choose a supportive response. Supportive responses might include: asking for clarity · setting a boundary · expressing your feelings calmly · delaying the conversation · writing instead of speaking · choosing not to engage until regulated

My supportive response

ND-Friendly Communication Scripts

These scripts help ND adults communicate clearly without over-explaining.

When you need clarity

- “Can you be more specific?”
- “I’m not sure what you mean — can you rephrase?”

When you need time

- “I need a moment to think before I respond.”
- “I’ll come back to this when I’m regulated.”

When you feel overwhelmed

- “I’m overstimulated — I need a break.”
- “This feels intense for me. Can we slow down?”

When you need emotional safety

- “I need reassurance right now.”
- “I’m feeling sensitive — can we talk gently?”

When you need boundaries

- “I can’t continue this conversation in this tone.”
- “I’m not available for this right now.”

Scripts that feel supportive for me

Emotional Safety in Relationships

Emotional safety means: you can be honest · you can make mistakes · you can express needs · you can ask questions · you can pause · you can be ND without masking.

I feel emotionally safe when...

I feel unsafe when...

What helps me return to safety

Scenario Practice

Scenario 1 — Someone uses a tone that feels sharp or critical.

What I feel

What I need

Supportive response

Scenario 2 — You're misunderstood or misinterpreted.

What I feel

What I need

Supportive response

Scenario 3 — You want to express a boundary but feel anxious.

What I feel

What I need

Supportive response

Reflection: What Did I Learn About My Communication?

What helps me communicate clearly?

What makes communication harder?

What will I try next time I feel overwhelmed in a conversation?

Why ND Adults Burn Out More Often

Burnout in ND adults isn't just "being tired." It's a **whole-system crash** caused by:

- chronic masking
- emotional labour
- sensory overload
- unclear expectations
- constant self-monitoring
- perfectionism
- people-pleasing
- overworking to compensate
- unmet needs
- lack of recovery time

ND burnout is **cyclical**, **predictable**, and **recoverable** — with the right support.

The ND Burnout Cycle

Most ND adults move through these stages:

1. High-energy push

- masking
- overcommitting
- hyperfocus
- perfectionism
- saying yes too often

2. Rising overwhelm

- irritability
- sensory sensitivity
- emotional intensity
- difficulty focusing
- fatigue

3. Shutdown / burnout

- exhaustion
- withdrawal
- reduced capacity
- emotional numbness or tears
- difficulty with basic tasks

4. Recovery

- rest
- reduced demands
- sensory comfort
- emotional processing
- slow re-engagement

5. Rebuilding

- gentle routines
- micro-steps
- boundary setting
- pacing
- reconnecting with values

Where am I in the cycle today?

Signs You're Approaching Burnout

Tick any that resonate:

Emotional signs

- ☐ irritability
- ☐ sudden sadness
- ☐ emotional numbness
- ☐ feeling "on edge"
- ☐ rejection sensitivity spikes

Cognitive signs

- ☐ brain fog
- ☐ difficulty focusing
- ☐ task paralysis
- ☐ forgetfulness
- ☐ decision fatigue

Physical signs

- ☐ headaches
- ☐ heaviness
- ☐ fatigue
- ☐ tension
- ☐ sensory overload

Behavioural signs

- ☐ withdrawing
- ☐ avoiding tasks
- ☐ cancelling plans
- ☐ doom-scrolling
- ☐ comfort-seeking

My early burnout signs include...

Burnout Recovery Plan

This is your personalised “in case of burnout” guide.

Step 1 — Reduce demands: cancel non-essential tasks · postpone decisions · reduce social expectations · simplify routines

What I can reduce right now

Step 2 — Increase support. Support is not weakness — it’s strategy. ask for clarity · ask for help · use body-doubling · communicate capacity · lean on safe people

Support I can access

Step 3 — Sensory recovery. Your nervous system needs gentleness. dim lights · quiet space · soft textures · warm drink · grounding through temperature · stimming freely

My sensory recovery needs

Step 4 — Emotional recovery. Let your emotions move without judgement. journaling · crying · talking to someone safe · naming the emotion · validating your experience

What my emotions need right now

Step 5 — Physical recovery. Your body carries the burnout too. rest · hydration · food · stretching · slow movement · sleep

What my body needs

Rebuilding Capacity (Slow, Gentle, Sustainable)

Recovery is not about “getting back to normal.” It’s about **creating a new normal that honours your neurotype.**

1. Start with micro-steps

- one small task
- one gentle routine
- one supportive habit

2. Reintroduce structure slowly

- flexible routines
- energy-based planning
- low-pressure expectations

3. Strengthen boundaries

- say no sooner
- reduce masking
- protect your energy

4. Reconnect with values

- choose what matters
- release what doesn’t

5. Honour your sensory needs

- adjust environments
- reduce overload

What rebuilding looks like for me

Shutdown vs. Burnout: Know the Difference

Shutdown

- sudden
- short-term
- triggered by overwhelm
- need immediate sensory + emotional relief

Burnout

- gradual
- long-term
- caused by chronic stress
- need extended recovery + boundary changes

Which one am I experiencing?

Self-Compassion in Burnout

You are not failing.

You are not weak.

You are not “too sensitive.”

You are responding exactly as a nervous system responds when it has been overloaded for too long. Compassion statements that support me:

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ “I’m overwhelmed, not broken.” | ☐ “My body is asking for rest.” |
| ☐ “I don’t have to push through.” | ☐ “I deserve recovery.” |
| ☐ “I’m allowed to slow down.” | |

Write your own

Reflection: What Did I Learn About My Burnout Patterns?

What are my early warning signs?

What helps me recover?

What boundaries will protect me moving forward?

Self-Esteem, Identity Healing & Rewriting Your Inner Narrative

Why This Matters

Many ND adults grow up hearing messages like:

- “You’re too sensitive.”
- “You’re not trying hard enough.”
- “You’re so smart — why can’t you just do it?”
- “Stop overreacting.”
- “You’re lazy.”
- “You’re difficult.”
- “You’re too much.”
- “You’re not enough.”

These messages don’t disappear. They become **internal narratives** — stories you tell yourself without realising they were planted by others. This section helps you **rewrite those stories**, reclaim your identity, and build self-esteem rooted in truth, not criticism.

Your Inner Narrative: Where It Comes From

ND adults often internalise messages from: school · family · peers · workplaces · partners · society · medical professionals · past trauma · masking · unmet needs. These messages shape how you see yourself — even when they’re inaccurate.

Messages I internalised growing up

How those messages made me feel

Spot the Old Narrative

Old narratives often sound like:

- “I’m failing.”
- “I’m behind.”
- “I’m too much.”
- “I’m not enough.”
- “I should be able to do this.”
- “Everyone else manages.”

- “I’m a burden.”
- “I always mess things up.”

My old narrative sounds like...

Challenge the Narrative

Instead of forcing “positive thinking,” we use **compassionate truth-checking**. Ask yourself:

- Is this thought a fact or a feeling?
- Whose voice does this sound like?
- What context is missing?
- What would I say to a friend feeling this way?
- What’s a more supportive version of this story?

A more compassionate version of my story is...

Rewriting Your Inner Narrative

This is where the healing happens. Choose the statements that feel true — or write your own.

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ I am not difficult — I am different. | ☐ I am not lazy — I am overloaded or unsupported. |
| ☐ I am not too sensitive — I feel deeply. | ☐ I am not behind — I am moving at my own pace. |
| ☐ I am not broken — I am neurodivergent. | ☐ I am not failing — I am adapting. |
| ☐ I am not dramatic — I am expressive. | ☐ I am not inconsistent — I am energy-based. |
| ☐ I am not weak — I am human. | |

Which reframes resonate with me

Your New Inner Voice

Let’s build a new internal narrative that supports your wellbeing.

When I make a mistake, I will tell myself...

When I feel overwhelmed, I will remind myself...

When I feel behind, I will say...

When I feel ashamed, I will offer myself...

Healing the “Not Enough” Wound

Many ND adults carry a deep belief that they are not organised enough, not calm enough, not productive enough, not consistent enough, not social enough, not successful enough. But these standards were never designed for ND brains.

Areas where I feel “not enough”

What I actually need in those areas

Reclaiming Your Identity

You are not the labels others gave you.

You are not the misunderstandings you endured.

You are not the mask you wore to survive.

Who I am underneath the masking

What I love about my ND brain

What I'm learning to accept about myself

Self-Esteem Through Self-Compassion

Self-esteem doesn't grow from achievement. It grows from **how you treat yourself when you're struggling.**

Compassionate statements I want to practise:

☐ "I'm doing my best with the capacity I have."

☐ "My needs are valid."

☐ "I deserve rest."

☐ "I'm allowed to take up space."

☐ "I don't have to be perfect to be worthy."

☐ "I'm learning myself."

Write your own

Reflection: What Did I Learn About My Inner Narrative?

What story am I ready to release?

What story am I ready to embrace?

What will I tell myself moving forward?

Why Social Life Feels Different for ND Adults

Neurodivergent social life isn't "less than" — it's simply different. ND adults often experience:

- deep, meaningful connection rather than casual socialising
- intense empathy or emotional absorption
- social burnout after masking or high-demand interactions
- long recovery periods after social events
- difficulty with small talk but ease with depth
- inconsistency in social capacity
- fear of rejection or misunderstanding
- a strong need for predictability and clarity

This section helps you understand your **social rhythm**, honour your **capacity**, and build relationships that feel safe, sustainable, and authentic.

Your Social Energy Profile

Choose the descriptions that feel true for you:

The Low-Capacity Connector

- ☐ prefers short interactions
- ☐ needs recovery time
- ☐ avoids sensory-heavy environments
- ☐ thrives in calm, predictable spaces

The Deep-Dive Connector

- ☐ loves meaningful conversations
- ☐ forms intense bonds
- ☐ struggles with surface-level chat
- ☐ values emotional honesty

The Intermittent Connector

- ☐ social in bursts
- ☐ long periods of solitude
- ☐ unpredictable capacity
- ☐ needs flexibility and low pressure

The Hyper-Empathic Connector

- ☐ feels others' emotions strongly
- ☐ absorbs tension
- ☐ needs emotional boundaries
- ☐ easily overwhelmed by conflict

My social energy profile

What Drains & What Recharges You

My social battery drains when: there's masking · the environment is loud or chaotic · expectations are unclear · I feel misunderstood · I'm emotionally overloaded · I'm around draining people · I'm "on" for too long

What drains me

My social battery recharges when: I'm with safe people · I can unmask · the environment is sensory-friendly · I have predictable plans · I can leave when I need to · I have time alone afterwards

What recharges me

Your Connection Needs

ND adults often need:

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ clarity ("What's the plan?") | ☐ predictability |
| ☐ low-sensory environments | ☐ emotional safety |
| ☐ permission to leave early | ☐ time to process |
| ☐ direct communication | ☐ relationships without pressure |
| ☐ space to unmask | |

My connection needs include...

Friendship Styles That Work for ND Adults

ND friendships often look different — and that's a strength.

Parallel companionship

- being together without talking
- doing separate tasks in the same space
- low-demand connection

Deep-connection friendships

- long, meaningful conversations
- emotional honesty
- shared passions

Sporadic friendships

- months of silence
- instant reconnection
- no guilt or pressure

Safe-space friendships

- no masking
- sensory-aware
- emotionally grounding
- mutual understanding

Which styles feel right for me

Boundaries That Protect Your Social Energy

Boundaries aren't barriers — they're **care instructions** for your wellbeing. Boundaries I want to strengthen:

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ time boundaries | ☐ sensory boundaries |
| ☐ emotional boundaries | ☐ communication boundaries |
| ☐ availability boundaries | |

Notes on my boundaries

ND-Friendly Social Scripts

Scripts help reduce anxiety and remove the pressure to improvise.

When you need clarity

- “Can you tell me what to expect?”
- “What’s the plan and how long will it last?”

When you need to leave

- “I’m at capacity — I’m heading off now.”

When you need space

- “I need some quiet time to recharge.”

When you need emotional safety

- “Can we talk about this gently?”

When you need predictability

- “Can we agree on a start and end time?”

Scripts that feel supportive for me

Understanding Social Burnout

Social burnout is not “being antisocial.” It’s a **nervous system crash** caused by masking, sensory overload, emotional labour, unclear expectations, high-demand interactions, and conflict or tension.

My signs of social burnout

What helps me recover

Safe People vs. Draining People

This isn't about judging others — it's about recognising your nervous system's responses.

Safe people feel like

- calm
- clarity
- acceptance
- warmth
- low pressure
- emotional safety
- sensory awareness

Draining people feel like

- unpredictability
- criticism
- emotional intensity
- unclear expectations
- sensory overwhelm
- pressure to mask

People who feel safe to me

People who drain my energy

Scenario Practice

Scenario 1 — You're invited to a social event but feel low-capacity.

What I feel

What I need

Supportive response

Scenario 2 — A friend wants emotional support when you're overwhelmed.

What I feel

What I need

Supportive response

Scenario 3 — You want connection but fear rejection or misunderstanding.

What I feel

What I need

Supportive response

Reflection: What Did I Learn About My Social Needs?

What helps me feel connected?

What protects my social energy?

What boundaries will I honour moving forward?

Emotional Regulation in Real-World Situations

Why Real-World Regulation Is Hard for ND Adults

ND adults often feel emotions faster, deeper, louder, and longer. And when you add sensory overload, unclear expectations, masking fatigue, rejection sensitivity, executive function strain, and past experiences of being misunderstood... it's no wonder emotional regulation becomes a challenge. This section gives you **practical scripts, steps, and tools** for the moments that matter most.

The ND Regulation Framework: Pause → Process → Support → Respond

You've seen this pattern in earlier sections — now we apply it to real-life situations.

PAUSE

Create a moment of safety for your nervous system.

PROCESS

Name what's happening internally.

SUPPORT

Give yourself what you need before responding.

RESPOND

Choose a supportive action or communication.

Scenario 1 — Work Stress: You receive an abrupt or unclear message.

PAUSE: look away from the screen · take one slow breath · relax your shoulders **PROCESS:** What emotion came up? Did it trigger rejection sensitivity? Is the message actually urgent? **SUPPORT (choose one):** ask for clarity · delay responding · regulate first · reduce sensory input

My support choice

RESPOND — ND-friendly script: “Can you clarify what you need from me?” · “I’ll take a look and get back to you shortly.” · “I need a moment to process this.”

My response

Scenario 2 — Home Overwhelm: Too many tasks, not enough capacity.

PAUSE: step into another room · sit down · breathe into your belly **PROCESS:** What's overwhelming you? What's the emotional load? What's the sensory load?

My processing notes

SUPPORT (choose one): reduce the task to one micro-step · ask for help · remove sensory triggers · take a 2-minute reset

My support choice

RESPOND — ND-friendly script: “I can do one small thing right now.” · “I need help with this.” · “I’m overwhelmed — I’m taking a break.”

My response

Scenario 3 — Relationship Tension: A conversation feels too intense.

PAUSE: soften your gaze · lower your voice · place your hand on your chest or leg **PROCESS:** What emotion is activated? What story is your brain telling you? What do you need to feel safe?

My processing notes

SUPPORT (choose one): take a break · ask for gentler tone · regulate before continuing

My support choice

RESPOND — ND-friendly script: “I want to talk about this, but I need a moment.” · “This feels intense — can we slow down?” · “I’m overwhelmed. Let’s pause and come back.”

My response

Scenario 4 — Sensory Overload in Public

PAUSE: close your eyes briefly · turn away from the stimulus · ground through your feet **PROCESS:** What's overwhelming you? What's your body asking for?

My processing notes

SUPPORT (choose one): step outside · use earplugs/headphones · reduce visual input · apply cold or pressure

My support choice

RESPOND — ND-friendly script: “I need a moment outside.” · “This is too loud/bright for me.” · “I’m stepping away to regulate.”

My response

Scenario 5 — Emotional Flooding: You feel everything all at once.

PAUSE: place both hands on a solid surface · breathe slowly · name one thing you can see **PROCESS:** What emotion is strongest? What triggered the flood? What need is underneath?

My processing notes

SUPPORT (choose one): grounding exercise · sensory comfort · journaling · reaching out to someone safe

My support choice

RESPOND — ND-friendly script: “I’m emotionally overwhelmed — I need to pause.” · “I’m going to regulate and come back.”

My response

Scenario 6 — Decision Paralysis: You can't choose what to do next.

PAUSE: stop trying to decide · breathe · unclench your jaw **PROCESS:** What's making the decision hard? Emotional load? Too many options? Fear of getting it wrong?

My processing notes

SUPPORT (choose one): reduce to two options · choose the easiest · choose the smallest · delay the decision

My support choice

RESPOND — ND-friendly script: "I'm choosing the smallest next step." · "I'll revisit this when I have more capacity."

My response

Scenario 7 — Conflict at Work or Home

PAUSE: step back · breathe · reduce sensory input **PROCESS:** What emotion is activated? What outcome do you want? What boundary is needed?

My processing notes

SUPPORT (choose one): take a break · ask for clarity · regulate before responding

My support choice

RESPOND — ND-friendly script: "I want to resolve this, but I need a moment." · "Can we talk about this calmly?" · "I need clearer expectations."

My response

Reflection: What Did I Learn About My Regulation in Real Life?

Which scenario felt most familiar?

What strategies helped me feel grounded?

What will I try next time I feel overwhelmed?

Why Identity & Purpose Feel Complicated for ND Adults

Many ND adults spend years — even decades — living in survival mode: masking, adapting, people-pleasing, overworking, shrinking themselves, trying to “fit in,” suppressing needs, ignoring sensory limits, performing versions of themselves to stay safe.

When you've lived like this for so long, it's natural to ask:

- Who am I underneath the masking?
- What do I actually want?
- What matters to me — not to others?
- What does a life that fits me look like?

This section helps you reconnect with your **authentic identity**, explore your **purpose**, and design a life that honours your neurotype.

Who Am I Beneath the Mask?

Masking can blur your sense of self. Let's gently uncover the parts of you that feel most true.

When I feel safe, I am...

When I don't feel safe, I tend to...

Parts of me that feel most authentic

Parts of me I'm still getting to know

Your Identity Anchors

Identity anchors are the **qualities, values, and truths** that stay with you even when life feels chaotic. Choose any that resonate — or add your own.

Emotional anchors

- ☐ empathy
- ☐ depth
- ☐ honesty
- ☐ passion
- ☐ sensitivity

Cognitive anchors

- ☐ creativity
- ☐ curiosity
- ☐ pattern-spotting
- ☐ problem-solving
- ☐ imagination

Relational anchors

- ☐ loyalty
- ☐ authenticity
- ☐ compassion
- ☐ fairness
- ☐ connection

Personal anchors

- ☐ autonomy
- ☐ integrity
- ☐ humour
- ☐ resilience
- ☐ intuition

My identity anchors

Purpose, Meaning & What Matters to You

Purpose doesn't have to be grand or world-changing. It can be small, gentle, personal, evolving, quiet, unconventional. Purpose is simply what gives your life **meaning, direction, or aliveness**.

Things that give me a sense of purpose

Things that make me feel alive or energised

Things I care deeply about

Unmasking Your True Priorities

Many ND adults live by priorities that were handed to them — not chosen. Let's explore what you want.

What I've been told should matter

What actually matters to me

What I want to prioritise moving forward

Designing a Life That Fits Your Neurotype

A life that fits you includes:

1. Sensory alignment

- environments that soothe
- clothing that comforts
- routines that reduce overload

2. Emotional alignment

- relationships that feel safe
- communication that's clear
- boundaries that protect your energy

3. Cognitive alignment

- work that matches your strengths
- tasks broken into micro-steps
- flexibility and autonomy

4. Identity alignment

- unmasking when safe
- expressing your true self
- honouring your values

What alignment looks like for me

Your Authenticity Map

This exercise helps you identify where you're living authentically — and where you're still masking or shrinking.

Areas where I feel most like myself

Areas where I feel I'm performing or masking

Areas where I want to show up more authentically

Scripts for Living Authentically

These scripts help you express your needs and identity without apology.

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ "This is what works best for me." | ☐ "I need to do this in a way that fits my brain." |
| ☐ "I'm choosing what feels right for me." | ☐ "I'm honouring my energy today." |
| ☐ "I'm learning to show up as myself." | ☐ "I'm not masking right now." |

Scripts that feel empowering for me

Your Vision for an Authentically ND Life

Let's imagine your life with less masking, more clarity, more sensory comfort, more emotional safety, more alignment, more joy, more rest, more self-trust.

What I want more of in my life

What I want less of in my life

What my ideal ND-aligned life looks like

Reflection: What Did I Learn About My Identity & Purpose?

What surprised me?

What feels most true about who I am?

What small step will I take toward living more authentically?

Why Self-Advocacy Is Hard for ND Adults

Most ND adults were never taught how to advocate for themselves. Instead, they learned to: mask · minimise needs · avoid conflict · “push through” · stay quiet · over-explain · apologise for existing · assume they’re the problem.

Self-advocacy isn’t about being demanding. It’s about **communicating your needs clearly and safely** so you can thrive. This section gives you the tools to do exactly that.

What Self-Advocacy Means

Self-advocacy is

- asking for clarity
- requesting accommodations
- expressing needs
- setting boundaries
- saying no
- asking for time
- asking for support
- choosing environments that work for you
- honouring your neurotype

Self-advocacy is not

- being rude
- being difficult
- being demanding
- being dramatic
- being “too much”

What self-advocacy means to me

Understanding Your Needs Before You Advocate

Before you ask for support, it helps to know:

1. What is the actual need?

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ clarity | ☐ time |
| ☐ sensory comfort | ☐ emotional safety |
| ☐ structure | ☐ flexibility |
| ☐ support | ☐ reassurance |

2. What makes the situation difficult?

- ☐ unclear expectations
- ☐ sensory overload
- ☐ emotional intensity
- ☐ executive function strain
- ☐ fear of judgement

3. What would make it easier?

- ☐ written instructions
- ☐ extra time
- ☐ quieter environment
- ☐ predictable routines
- ☐ body-doubling
- ☐ step-by-step guidance

My needs in this situation

ND-Friendly Self-Advocacy Scripts

These scripts reduce the pressure to improvise and help you communicate clearly.

When you need clarity

- “Can you explain what you need from me?”
- “What’s the priority here?”
- “Can you give me an example?”

When you need more time

- “I need a little more time to process this.”
- “Can we extend the deadline?”

When you need sensory adjustments

- “This environment is overwhelming — can we move somewhere quieter?”
- “I need softer lighting / fewer distractions.”

When you need emotional safety

- “I want to talk about this, but I need a calm tone.”
- “I’m feeling overwhelmed — can we slow down?”

When you need support

- “I need help breaking this down.”
- “Can we do this together for a few minutes?”

When you need boundaries

- “I can’t take this on right now.”
- “I’m not available for this today.”

Scripts that feel empowering for me

Self-Advocacy at Work

ND adults often need: clear expectations · written instructions · predictable routines · sensory-friendly environments · flexible communication · realistic deadlines · autonomy · breaks to regulate

What I need at work

How I can ask for it

Self-Advocacy in Healthcare

Healthcare can be overwhelming for ND adults because of sensory overload, time pressure, unclear communication, emotional intensity, and fear of not being believed. What helps: writing symptoms down · bringing someone with me · asking for plain language · asking for time to process · requesting written summaries

What I want to advocate for in healthcare

Self-Advocacy in Relationships

Healthy relationships allow you to express needs, set boundaries, ask for reassurance, communicate processing time, and unmask safely.

What I need in relationships

How I can communicate it

Self-Advocacy in Daily Life

Everyday situations where ND adults may need support: shopping · appointments · travel · social events · parenting · household tasks

Areas where I want to advocate for myself more

Overcoming Barriers to Self-Advocacy

ND adults often struggle with:

Fear of being a burden

Reframe: Needs are human. Support is allowed.

Fear of conflict

Reframe: Clarity prevents conflict.

Fear of rejection

Reframe: Your needs don't make you unworthy.

Not knowing what to ask for

Reframe: Start with one small need.

Feeling like you “should” manage alone

Reframe: Support increases capacity.

Which barriers show up for me

Your Self-Advocacy Plan

1. What I need

2. Why it matters

3. Who I can ask

4. How I will ask

5. What support looks like

Reflection: What Did I Learn About Self-Advocacy?

What feels easier now?

What still feels hard?

What small step will I take next?

Why Emotional Safety Planning Matters

ND adults often experience emotional intensity, sensory overwhelm, shutdowns, spirals of shame, panic or freeze responses, difficulty communicating needs in the moment, and difficulty accessing coping tools when overwhelmed.

An emotional safety plan gives you clarity, grounding, predictability, reassurance, a sense of control, and a way back to yourself. It's not about preventing difficult moments. It's about **supporting yourself through them**.

Your Emotional Safety Profile

Let's start by understanding what safety feels like for you.

I feel emotionally safe when...

I feel unsafe when...

People who help me feel grounded

Environments that help me feel calm

Your Grounding Toolkit

Choose the tools that genuinely help your nervous system — not the ones you think you “should” use.

☐ weighted blanket

☐ soft textures

- ☐ dim lighting
- ☐ warm drink
- ☐ stepping outside

- ☐ cold water on hands
- ☐ earplugs or headphones

My sensory grounding tools

- ☐ slow breathing
- ☐ shaking out limbs
- ☐ stimming
- ☐ pressing feet into the ground
- ☐ stretching
- ☐ rocking
- ☐ lying on the floor

My body-based grounding tools

- ☐ naming 5 things you can see
- ☐ listing colours or categories
- ☐ writing thoughts down
- ☐ repeating a calming phrase
- ☐ focusing on one object

My cognitive grounding tools

- ☐ naming the emotion
- ☐ reaching out to someone safe
- ☐ gentle self-talk
- ☐ validating yourself
- ☐ journaling
- ☐ stepping away from triggers

My emotional grounding tools

Your Overwhelm Early-Warning Signs

Recognising early signs helps you intervene before things escalate. My early signs of overwhelm include:

- ☐ irritability
- ☐ difficulty thinking
- ☐ urge to escape
- ☐ withdrawing
- ☐ feeling “too much”
- ☐ sensory sensitivity
- ☐ emotional spikes
- ☐ shutting down
- ☐ crying easily

Other early signs

Your Emotional Safety Plan

This is your personalised “in case of overwhelm” guide.

1. When I notice early signs, I will...

2. When I feel myself shutting down, I will...

3. When I feel emotionally flooded, I will...

4. When I feel unsafe or overstimulated, I will...

5. When I can't communicate verbally, I can use...

Examples: text, notes, gestures, pre-written scripts, leaving the room briefly.

Scripts for Difficult Moments

These scripts help you communicate your needs when you're overwhelmed.

When you need space

- “I need a moment to regulate.”
- “I’m overwhelmed — I’ll come back.”

When you need clarity

- “I can’t process this right now. Can you simplify it?”

When you need emotional safety

- “Can we talk gently about this?”
- “I’m feeling sensitive — please speak softly.”

When you need to pause a conversation

- “I want to continue this, but I need a break.”

When you need support

- “Can you sit with me while I calm down?”
- “Can you help me break this down?”

Scripts that feel right for me

Shutdown Support Plan

Shutdowns are not failures — they’re your nervous system protecting you. When I’m in shutdown, I need:

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ quiet | ☐ low light |
| ☐ no demands | ☐ no questions |
| ☐ time alone | ☐ sensory comfort |
| ☐ gentle presence (if wanted) | |

Other things I need in shutdown

Things that make shutdown worse

Things that help me recover

Emotional Spiral Interruptions

When your thoughts start spiralling, try: grounding through senses · naming the emotion · writing down the thought · reframing with compassion · delaying decisions · stepping away from triggers

My spiral interrupters

Your Emotional First-Aid Kit

Fill this with things that soothe, comfort, or ground you. Examples: favourite music · soft item · grounding object · calming scent · supportive messages · photos · affirmations · sensory tools

My emotional first-aid items

Reflection: What Did I Learn About My Emotional Safety Needs?

What helps me feel grounded?

What makes overwhelm worse?

What will I put in my emotional safety plan moving forward?

Why Life Design Matters for ND Adults

Most ND adults have spent years — sometimes a lifetime — trying to fit into rigid systems, meet neurotypical expectations, mask their needs, push through burnout, adapt to environments that overwhelm them, follow routines that don't match their energy, and pursue goals that weren't truly theirs.

Life design is the opposite of all that. It's about **building a life that works with your neurotype**, not against it. This section helps you imagine — and begin creating — a future that feels aligned, sustainable, and authentically you.

Your Life Design Foundations

Let's start with the core ingredients of a life that fits your ND brain.

1. Sensory alignment

Your environments support your nervous system.

2. Emotional alignment

Your relationships feel safe and reciprocal.

3. Cognitive alignment

Your work and routines match your strengths.

4. Identity alignment

You show up as your authentic self.

5. Energy alignment

Your days follow your natural rhythms.

Which foundations matter most to me right now

Your Strengths as a Neurodivergent Adult

ND strengths are often overlooked — but they're powerful. Choose any that resonate:

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ creativity | ☐ empathy |
| ☐ deep focus | ☐ problem-solving |
| ☐ pattern recognition | ☐ innovation |
| ☐ honesty | ☐ resilience |
| ☐ intuition | ☐ passion |
| ☐ curiosity | ☐ unconventional thinking |

My top strengths

How I want to use these strengths in my life

What's Working in My Life Right Now

Before designing the future, let's honour what's already aligned.

Things that support my wellbeing

Things that energise me

Things that feel authentic

What Isn't Working (And Why)

This is not about blame — it's about clarity.

Things that drain me

Things that overwhelm me

Things that feel misaligned

Designing Your Ideal Day

Not a rigid schedule — a **sensory-aware, energy-based rhythm**.

Morning: What helps me start gently?

Midday: What helps me stay regulated?

Evening: What helps me unwind?

Non-negotiables for my wellbeing

Designing Your Ideal Environment

Your environment should support your nervous system, not fight it.

Home environment

- soft lighting
- sensory-friendly spaces
- predictable routines
- comfort items
- quiet zones

Work environment

- clarity
- autonomy
- low sensory load
- flexible structure
- written instructions

Social environment

- safe people
- low-pressure connection
- predictable plans
- emotional safety

Changes I want to make to my environments

Designing Relationships That Support You

Healthy relationships for ND adults include emotional safety, clear communication, low-pressure connection, mutual respect, space to unmask, and predictable expectations.

What I want more of in my relationships

What I want less of

What I need to feel safe and connected

Designing Work That Fits Your Neurotype

Work that aligns with ND strengths often includes creativity, autonomy, meaningful tasks, flexibility, deep-focus opportunities, clear expectations, and low sensory load.

Work that energises me

Work that drains me

What I want my work life to look like

Your Long-Term Vision

Let's imagine your life 1–3 years from now, with less masking, more clarity, more sensory comfort, more emotional safety, more alignment, more joy, more rest, more authenticity.

In the future, I want to feel...

I want my life to include...

I want my days to look like...

Your ND-Aligned Life Design Plan

1. What I want to change

2. What I want to protect

3. What I want to grow

4. What I want to let go of

5. My next small step

Reflection: What Did I Learn About the Life I Want?

What feels most important to me now

What surprised me

What I'm ready to move toward

Bringing It All Together: Your Neurodivergent Wellbeing Blueprint

What This Blueprint Is

This is not a “plan” you must follow. It’s not a rigid routine. It’s not a set of rules. Your wellbeing blueprint is:

- a living document
- a gentle guide
- a self-compassionate reference point
- a map back to yourself
- a reminder of what supports your ND brain
- a way to honour your needs without shame

It grows with you. It adapts with you. It supports you — not the other way around.

1. My Identity & Values

Who I am when I feel safe

My core values

What matters most to me right now

2. My Strengths & ND Superpowers

My top strengths

How I want to use these strengths in my life

What I'm proud of about my ND brain

3. My Energy Rhythms

What drains my energy

What restores my energy

My natural daily rhythm

4. My Sensory Profile

My sensory sensitivities

My sensory seeking needs

Environments that support my nervous system

5. My Emotional Regulation Tools

My grounding strategies

My emotional safety needs

My early signs of overwhelm

What helps me recover

6. My Social & Relationship Needs

My social energy profile

What helps me feel connected

What protects my social battery

Boundaries that support my wellbeing

7. My Self-Advocacy Toolkit

What I need at work / home / socially

How I can ask for it

Scripts that feel empowering for me

8. My Burnout Prevention Plan

My early burnout signs

What I can reduce when I'm overwhelmed

What I can increase when I'm recovering

People who support my recovery

9. My Authentic Life Design

What I want more of in my life

What I want less of

Changes I want to make to my environment

Changes I want to make to my routines

10. My Vision for the Future

In the next 3 months, I want to...

In the next year, I want to...

Long-term, I imagine a life where...

11. My Self-Compassion Statements

Choose the ones that feel true — or write your own.

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ I am allowed to rest. | ☐ I am allowed to take up space. |
| ☐ My needs are valid. | ☐ I don't have to mask to be worthy. |
| ☐ I am learning myself. | ☐ I am doing my best with the capacity I have. |
| ☐ I deserve environments that support me. | ☐ I am allowed to change. |

My self-compassion statements

12. My Personal Wellbeing Blueprint Summary

This is your one-page “at a glance” guide.

What supports me

What overwhelms me

What I need to feel safe

What helps me thrive

My next small step

A Closing Note

You’ve created something powerful here — a compassionate, honest, ND-affirming map of who you are and what you need. This blueprint isn’t about perfection. It’s about **permission**.

Permission to be yourself.

Permission to rest.

Permission to unmask.

Permission to design a life that fits you.

You deserve a life that feels safe, aligned, and authentically yours.

If you're reading this section, you've travelled through a workbook that asked you to reflect, unmask, explore, question, feel, rest, imagine, rebuild, and honour yourself. That's not small work. That's brave, tender, transformative work.

This final chapter is here to help you **pause, breathe**, and **recognise how far you've come**.

1. Looking Back: Your Journey Through This Workbook

What part of this workbook impacted you the most

What surprised you about yourself

What felt validating or relieving

What felt challenging but important

2. What You're Taking With You

You've gathered insights, tools, language, and self-knowledge. Let's name the pieces you want to carry forward.

One thing I understand about myself now that I didn't before

One need I will honour more consistently

One boundary I will protect

One strength I will celebrate

3. Your Growth, Seen Clearly

Growth isn't always loud or dramatic. Sometimes it's: choosing rest · asking for clarity · saying no · saying yes to yourself · noticing your patterns · being kinder to your nervous system · unmasking a little more · letting go of shame · choosing environments that support you

Ways I've grown during this process

4. Words You Needed Then — and Words You Need Now

This is your space to speak to your past self, your present self, or your future self.

If I could speak to my younger self, I would say...

If I could speak to myself today with compassion, I would say...

If I could speak to my future self, I would say...

5. Your Commitments to Yourself

Not rules. Not pressure. Just gentle commitments rooted in self-respect.

I commit to honouring my energy by...

I commit to protecting my wellbeing by...

I commit to showing up authentically by...

6. Your Celebration Page

This is where you acknowledge yourself — fully, proudly, without shrinking.

Today, I celebrate that I...

I am proud of myself for...

I am learning to love these parts of me...

7. A Closing Reflection

You are not “too much.”

You are not “not enough.”

You are not broken, difficult, dramatic, lazy, or failing.

You are:

- sensitive in a world that rewards numbness
- deep in a world that skims the surface
- intuitive in a world that values logic over feeling
- creative in a world that prefers conformity
- resilient in a world that misunderstands difference

You are allowed to take up space.

You are allowed to rest.

You are allowed to unmask.

You are allowed to design a life that fits you.

My final reflection

Thank You for Showing Up for Yourself

This workbook wasn't about "fixing" you. It was about **meeting yourself**, gently and honestly, with compassion and curiosity.

You've done something powerful. You've chosen to understand yourself. You've chosen to honour your neurodivergence. You've chosen to build a life that supports your nervous system, your identity, and your joy.

That is worth celebrating.