
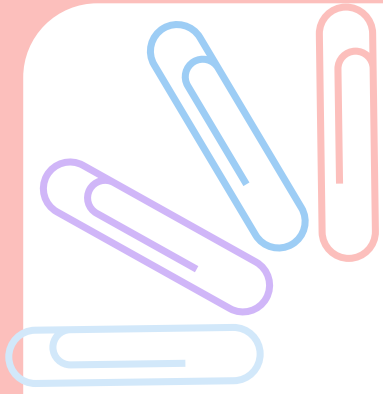


NEURODIVERGENCE AND MANAGING ENERGY



A self-help workbook from
ndhelp.co.uk 



Contents

About

What do we mean by energy?

Exploring Beliefs

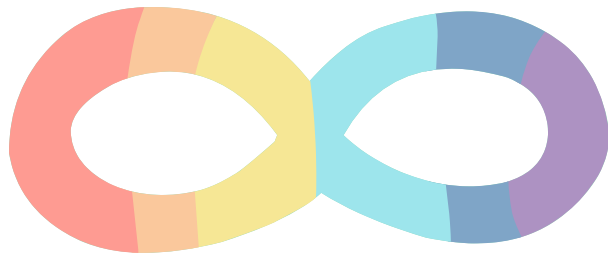
Management Systems

Dropping Demands

Resources

About

This workbook was created by two neurodivergent therapists. We hope you find it helpful as an introduction to neurodivergence and mental health. Please note this booklet is for informational purposes only and is not a substitute for medical advice.



What do we mean by energy?

When we're talking about energy and resting, we don't always mean it in the literal sense of sleep- although that is an important factor.

We're also looking at energy levels **through the day**, and what activities we find tire us out, and which we find **restorative**.



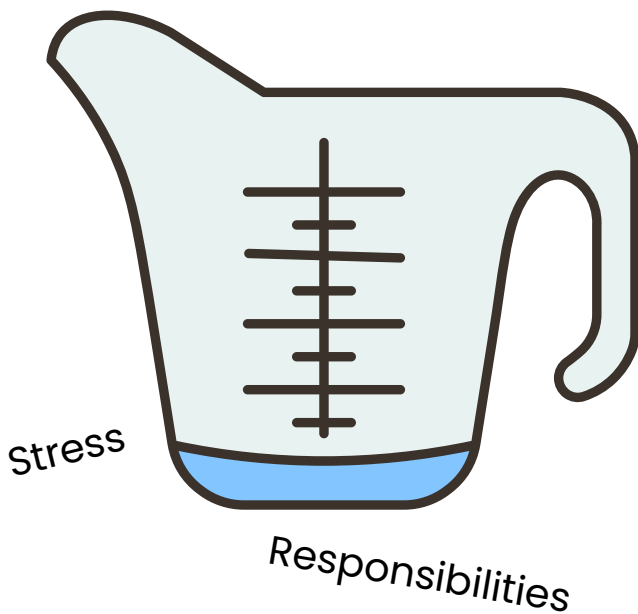
Different, not deficient

Often, what wears us neurodivergent lot out can be a little different to others, and we might tire more easily. On the flip side, we might be energised by things that exhaust others! We are not lesser because our brains' work differently.

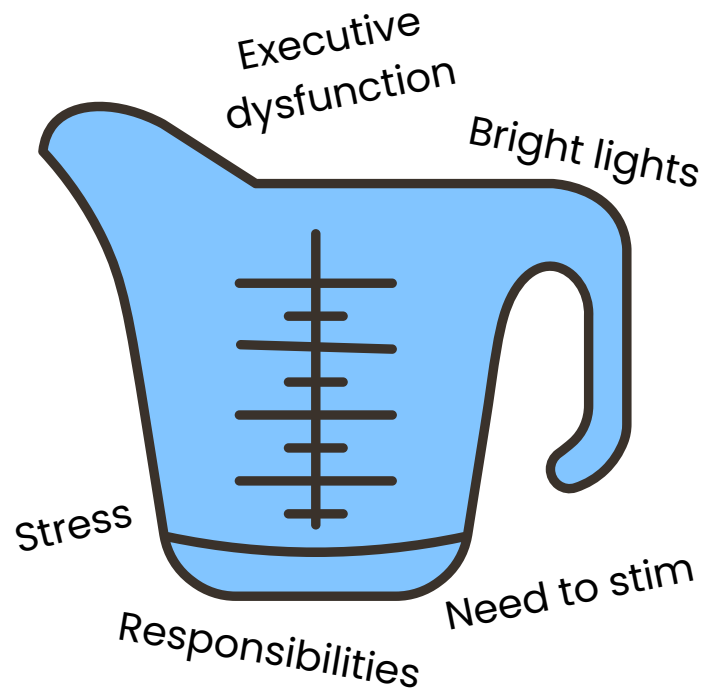
Why is rest important?

It goes without saying for all types of brains: restoration and relaxation is integral to functioning. Sometimes as neurodivergent people because our brains have to work harder just to function.

Neurotypical



Neurodivergent



Imagine the level of strain on a person is like how full their jug is- here's how the same situation might fill the jug of a neurotypical person compared to a neurodivergent person.

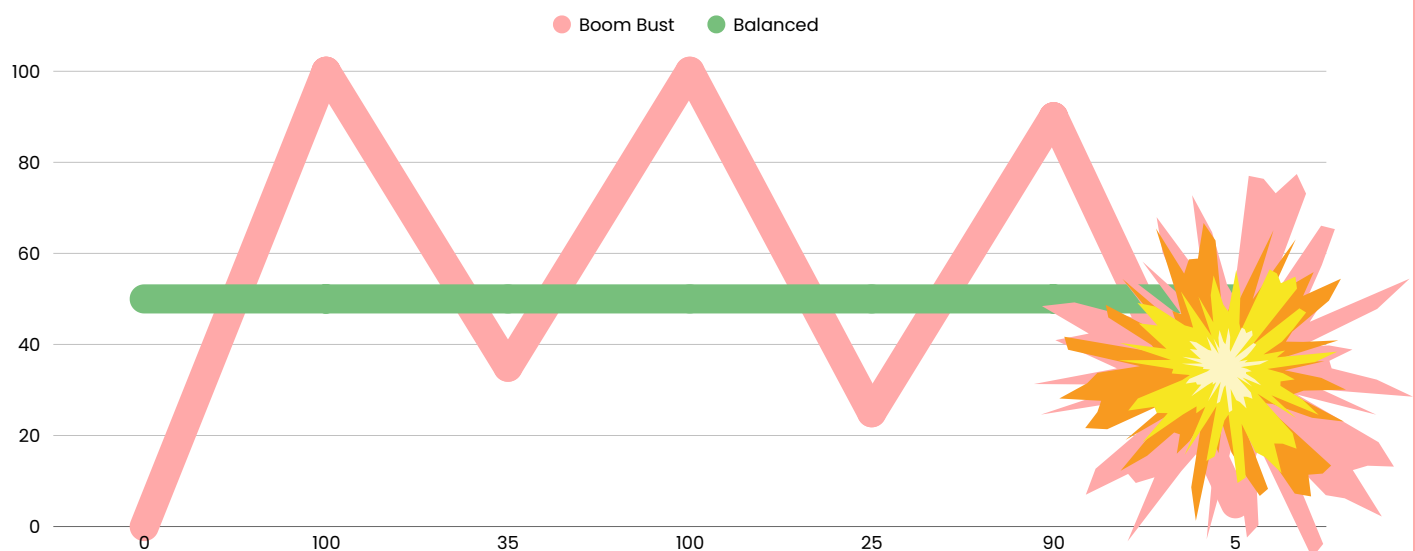
*This is a really crude example, and doesn't account for the individual differences in everyone's experience- but I hope it illustrates the point that often we may be expending more energy than we realise to compensate for our different needs.

Up and down energy

If we're someone who experiences vast differences in our energy levels, we might be tempted to push ourselves on days we feel good, and do lots and lots!



When we ignore our body's subtle signals, we often push too far- then we crash, crash and need time to recover. This can build up over a day, a week, or longer



If we keep doing this, we can become trapped. Energy accounting helps us break this cycle by noticing our limits, being aware of what drains and restores us, and pacing ourselves. It's a way to avoid burnout and an integral part of our wellbeing.

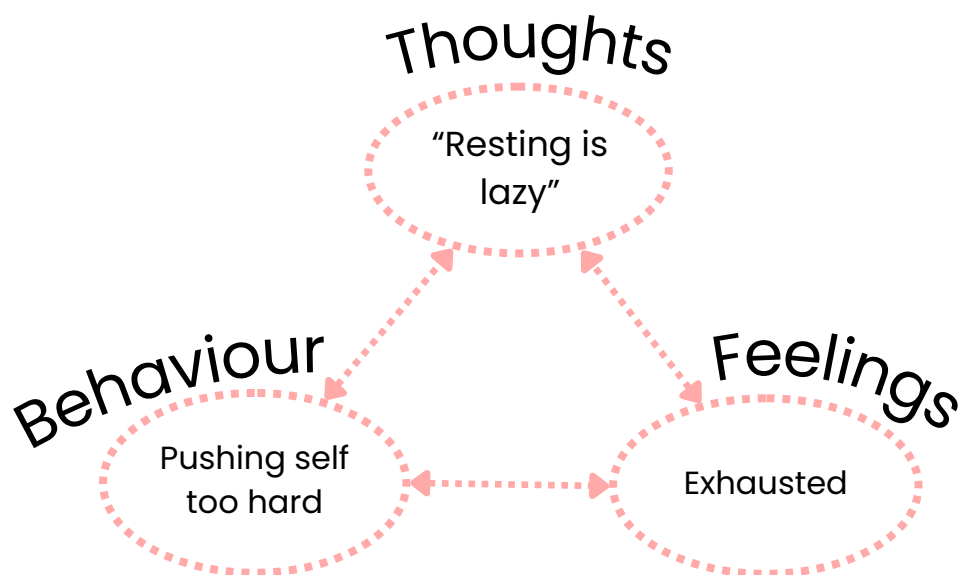
Beliefs about rest

It's easy to develop negative beliefs about rest because of societal messages that equate productivity with worth. Many of us internalize ideas like "rest is lazy". These beliefs can make it hard to rest, even when we truly need it.

"Resting is lazy"

"People will judge me if I rest."

"I have to earn rest."



Do you have any unhelpful beliefs around resting?

“ _____ ”

_____ ”

“ _____ ”

_____ ”

“ _____ ”

_____ ”

The way you view rest can deeply affect how you treat yourself. Exploring any unhelpful beliefs you might hold about resting can gently uncover what's making it hard to prioritize your needs and take care of yourself.

Challenging Beliefs

Once you've identified any negative beliefs about resting, we can gently explore whether these beliefs align with your values and personality, and whether they are truly helpful.

Belief

“

”

In CBT, a common tool for examining beliefs is to explore the evidence supporting them—why we believe what we do.

Evidence for

☐☐☐☐☐

Evidence against

☐☐☐☐☐

We also consider alternative explanations and look for evidence against the belief, which might come from past experiences or different perspectives.

Important: Questions to ask yourself




- Is this your belief, or is it someone else's that you may have internalized?
- Would you say the same thing to a close friend?
- When did it protect you to have this belief? Against who?
- Is this belief true 100% of the time?
- If this is an old belief, is it still in line with your values now?



Levels of Fatigue

Fatigue feels different for everyone, and it can affect your body and mind in lots of ways. For people with chronic conditions, disabilities, or who are neurodivergent, it's not just "feeling tired." It can show up in many forms.

Use the below chart to explore different levels of fatigue and what they look like for you.

 Low Fatigue	 Moderate Fatigue	 High Fatigue
Eg, Fidgeting difficulty concentrating	Eg. Yawning, can't concentrate	Eg, feeling exhausted, finding it more difficult to speak

If you're unsure how you're feeling, try setting "check-in times" during the day. Pause and ask yourself:

- How does my body feel? (e.g., tired, relaxed)
- What emotions am I feeling? (e.g., calm, stressed)
- What have I been doing? (e.g., working, resting)

Writing this down in a journal can help you tune into your energy levels and recognize when to rest or slow down. It's a simple way to care for yourself.

Energy Accounting

Some activities drain our energy, while others help us recharge. Below are some examples, and space for you to reflect on what uses and restores your energy

Drains	Restores
<div>Eg. Getting the bus Brushing my teeth Meetings at work</div>	<div>Eg. Sitting in a quiet room Reading about my special interest Spending time with a safe person</div>

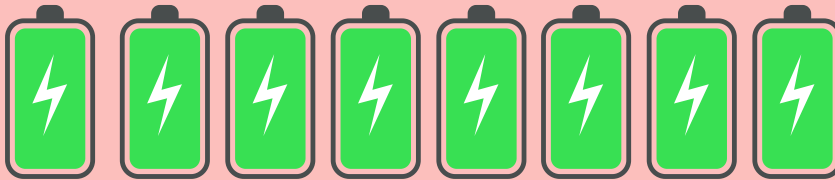
Things that drain our energy aren't necessarily a bad thing! Sometimes the things we really love doing take a lot of our energy, and it's just important to be aware of that when balancing your energy. I love seeing my friends- but I find it exhausting, and often need time to rest afterwards.

Energy Systems

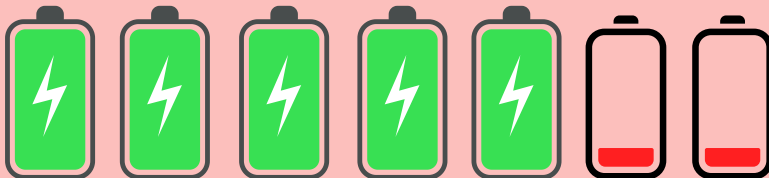
It might be helpful to dive in a little deeper here, and use a full energy system. There's a few that have been devised and are frequently used, including "Spoon Theory", but we'll change it to batteries, as that might be easier to understand if you tend to take things literally.

Batterys.

Battery theory uses the ideas that we all start of the day with a number of "batteries" representing our energy for that day. If you have a good day, you might wake up fully charged, with say, 7 batteries!



On a bad day, or when you haven't slept well, or used a lot of energy the last day, you might only wake up with 5 batteries.



Every activity you do throughout the day uses an individual amount of energy (or batterys) for each person. For example, seeing a friend might drain two of my batteries, but for my friend, it might only drain one.



Tip: Track your usage!

The idea is to make a note of the different activities you need to do, and how many batteries it will use up.

Some activities will drain your batteries and some will refill them. It's so individual for everyone

Use the planner on the next page to keep track of your energy and batteries, and plan ahead.

Battery Tracker

Remember, the goal is to stay balanced, and not go over the batteries we have available that day. Use this planner to have a think of what drains and restores your energy.

Activity

Batteries

Eg. Getting the bus	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
Spending time alone	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
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Tracker

Now it's time to track your energy over multiple days. How much energy are you using, are you staying balanced?



How many batteries did you wake up with today?

Activity	Battery Usage (+ or -)

How did you feel at the end of the day?

Reducing demands

When recovering from burnout, prioritizing your needs is key. For some, this means extended rest and reducing demands. Identifying what's essential FOR YOU and temporarily letting go of non-urgent tasks can create space for recovery and restoration.

Essential responsibilities

Eg, preparing meals, childcare

Non-essential responsibilities

Eg, Volunteering, social events

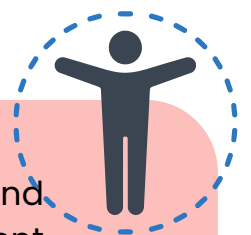
Essential Tasks: Lightening the Load

- Share tasks: Ask others to help (e.g. with cooking or childcare).
- Support your senses: Use tools like noise-cancelling headphones.
- Pair with rest: Add something soothing (e.g. music or a podcast) while doing chores.

- Set boundaries: Say no to anything that isn't truly necessary.
 - E.g. skip extra work or social plans.
- Focus on recovery: Choose rest, good food, special interests, and things that help you feel like you.

Tip: Setting Boundaries

It often doesn't come easy for a lot of us to express our needs and enforce them around other people. Having a boundary statement prepared "No thank you, I need to rest" can be helpful.



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Remember: your needs are, and always have been, valid.