The Personal Toolkit

Understand yourself, ask for what you need, work with your brain

FOR NEURODIVERGENT INDIVIDUALS · AND THOSE EXPLORING

Whether you're diagnosed, self-identified, or just recognizing patterns: you don't need anyone's permission to understand yourself better. This toolkit works with or without a label.

Start here | 20 minutes

1. Answer the five prompts in section 1; write them down, on this page if you printed it.
2. Pick one strategy from section 2 for your biggest friction point. Try it for a week.
3. Adapt one script from section 3 and use it once. No label required.

1 Notice What Helps You

- **Focus:** When did I last lose track of time in a good way? What was I doing, where, at what time of day?
- **Friction:** Which tasks do I endlessly postpone? What exactly is hard: starting, sustaining, finishing, or the format?
- **Senses:** Which environments exhaust me (noise, light, crowds, fabrics)? Which calm me?
- **Social:** After which interactions do I need recovery? Where do I feel I can be fully myself?
- **Energy:** What reliably recharges me, and how often do I actually do it?

My answers:

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Possibilities, not diagnoses · sharedlanguage.org

2 Everyday Strategies to Try

Challenge	Strategies to try
Getting started	Shrink step one to two minutes · body-doubling (work alongside someone) · “junk version first” drafts
Time blindness	Visual timers · alarms for transitions, not just deadlines · schedule the prep, not just the event
Working memory	Externalize everything: one capture app or notebook · checklists for routines · photos as reminders
Sensory overload	Noise-canceling headphones · sunglasses/cap indoors · pre-plan exits · recovery time after known triggers
Task switching	Batch similar tasks · shutdown ritual between contexts · protect one no-switching block daily
Reading heavy text	Text-to-speech tools · reader mode · print + ruler · summarize each section in one line
Emotional intensity	Name it to tame it · 20-minute delay before responding to triggering messages · movement as pressure release

3 Asking for What You Need

AT WORK

“When instructions come only verbally, I sometimes lose details, and that costs us rework. Could we do a two-line written summary after briefings? A written summary would help me check that I have the details right.”

AT SCHOOL / UNIVERSITY

“I understand the material best when I can process it before class. Could I get the slides in advance? It makes a real difference to what I contribute.”

WITH FAMILY & FRIENDS

“When plans change last minute, I find it hard to adjust. Even a short heads-up helps me prepare.”

SAYING NO WITHOUT BURNING BRIDGES

“I can't take that on right now and do it well. I could do [smaller version] or [later date]. Which helps more?”

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4 Know Your Rights (the basics)

- Most countries legally protect neurodivergent people at work and in education (e.g., the ADA in the US, the Equality Act 2010 in the UK, EU equal-treatment directives); typically requiring “reasonable accommodations/adjustments.”
- Formal protection usually requires disclosure to your employer or institution; informal adjustments don't.
- You choose what to disclose, to whom, and when. Disclosure to HR does not automatically inform your manager or colleagues.
- Document requests and responses in writing. Polite, dated emails are your friend.
- Check your specific jurisdiction and institution's process; rules and terminology vary.

5 Self-Compassion Guardrails

☐ I compare myself to my own yesterday, not to neurotypical defaults

☐ I treat rest and recovery as maintenance, not reward

☐ I have at least one space or person where I don't mask

☐ Bad brain days are data about conditions, not verdicts about my worth

☐ I celebrate what my brain does well and keep a note I can return to

If you're struggling seriously — persistent low mood, anxiety, or burnout — that deserves real support, not just better systems. Speak to a healthcare professional; neurodivergent-affirming practitioners exist and it's okay to ask for one.

Go further: the Behavior Translator (sharedlanguage.org/translator) turns any workplace moment into possible context and a better question. The Neurodivergent Professional's toolkit picks up where this one ends.

Shared Language provides management and educational guidance, not medical, psychological, or legal advice. Formal accommodations should follow local law and involve HR, occupational health, or disability services. Possibilities, not diagnoses.

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