FREE WORKSHEET · NEURODIVERSITY

My Sensory Needs

Notice what overwhelms you, what settles you, and plan around both

Everyone takes in the world through their senses, but people experience it very differently. Many autistic people, and many people with ADHD, are more sensitive than others to some things, such as noise, bright light, textures or smells, and less sensitive to others.

Sensory overload is tiring, and it builds up over a day. Knowing your own pattern makes it easier to protect your energy, and to ask for what helps.

IF YOU NEED HELP NOW

If there is an immediate risk to life, call **999**. The Samaritans are available free, 24 hours a day, on **116 123**. In England, NHS 111 (option 2) connects to an urgent mental health service.

01

Mapping your senses

SENSE	WHAT OVERWHELMS ME	WHAT I SEEK OUT OR FIND CALMING
Sound		
Sight and light		
Touch and clothing		
Smell		
Taste and food		
Movement and balance		
Body signals: hunger, thirst, tiredness		

02

Spotting overload early

Overload rarely arrives without warning. There are usually earlier signs: getting irritable, finding it harder to talk or think, wanting to leave, fidgeting, headaches. Catching these early gives you more options.

EXERCISE

My early signs

1. The first signs that I am getting overloaded:

2. Places or situations where it happens most:

3. What helps me recover afterwards, and how long it takes:

03

Small changes

Ideas other people find useful:

- Noise-cancelling headphones or earplugs in busy places.
- Sitting with your back to a wall, away from doors and walkways.
- Sunglasses, a cap, or a desk away from harsh lighting.
- Clothes chosen for comfort: soft fabrics, no scratchy labels.
- Planned breaks somewhere quiet, before you need them.
- Going to shops or the gym at quieter times.
- Something to fidget with, or a chance to move.

Three changes I will try

CHANGE	WHERE OR WHEN	WHAT HAPPENED

FURTHER READING

- What is autism?, NHS (https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/autism/)