

The Soft Systems

NEURODIVERGENT PLANNING TOOLKIT

Plan Without Pressure

Your Complete Everyday Toolkit

Plan your days with calm, clarity, and self-kindness

A gentle, flexible system designed for ADHD and autistic adults.
Use what helps. Skip what doesn't. Start anywhere.



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1 · Toolkit Index & Navigation Guide

Welcome to Your Support System

This isn't about productivity — it's about working with your brain, not against it. Every tool here is designed to reduce overwhelm, honour your energy, and help you move forward gently. Use what helps. Skip what doesn't. Start anywhere.

■ Emergency Support — Use First When Struggling

- Emergency Protocol — For when you're spiralling, overwhelmed, or in meltdown.
- Quick Start Guide — Brain fog day? Can't think? Use this 3-minute plan.
- Soft Reset — Pause, breathe, and gently restart. No judgement.

■ Daily Planning Tools

- Daily Planner — Flexible daily structure with energy checks and gentle priorities.
- Brain Dump — Empty your mind without organising. Just release everything.
- Focus Funnel — Sort your brain dump. Reduce overwhelm by choosing what matters most.

■ Regulation & Wellbeing Tools

- Sensory Regulation Tool — Tools to find calm when overwhelmed.
- Task Breakdown Helper — Turn big tasks into tiny, doable steps.
- Energy & Focus Matrix — Match tasks to your actual energy state.
- Celebration Tracker — Every small win counts, especially the invisible ones.

2 · Quick Start Guide — Brain Fog Days

Use this when you're overwhelmed, frozen, or can't think straight. Skip the full planner — just do these three things.

Step 1: Check Your Body

- Drink some water
- Eat something (anything counts)
- Take your meds if you haven't
- Go to the bathroom

Step 2: Pick Your Energy Level

- High — Ready for harder tasks
- Medium — Can manage light tasks
- Low — This is a gentle rest day

Step 3: Choose ONE Thing

Pick just one tiny action for today.

Write it here: _____

That's it. That one thing is enough.

Nothing else matters today. Rest is enough.

3 · Emergency Protocol — Crisis Support

STOP. BREATHE.

In through your nose (4 counts) → Hold (4 counts) → Out through your mouth (6 counts)

Ground Your Body — Pick ONE

❄️ Cold Water / Ice

Hold an ice cube, splash your face with cold water, or sip ice water slowly.

■ Pressure / Weight

Weighted blanket, tight self-hug, hug a pillow, or press your palms together hard.

■ Strong Scent

Peppermint oil, coffee beans, or a scented candle — something you like.

■ Feet on the Ground

Press your feet firmly into the floor. Stand barefoot. Stomp gently.

5-4-3-2-1 Grounding

Name these things out loud or quietly in your mind:

5 — things you can SEE around you

4 — things you can TOUCH right now

3 — things you can HEAR

2 — things you can SMELL

1 — thing you can TASTE

You are not failing. You are surviving. That is more than enough right now.

4 · Daily Planner

Fill this in at any time of day — it doesn't have to be morning. Add 1–3 key tasks, track your energy, and note your wins. Skip any parts that don't fit today.

Today's Date: _____

How Is My Energy Today?

- High — Ready to tackle harder tasks
- Medium — Steady, not superhuman
- Low — Gentle tasks only today

Today's Top 1–3 Tasks (that's all!)

Choose tasks you'd feel good completing — not necessarily urgent ones.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Flexible Time Flow

(±2 hours is fine — this is a guide, not a schedule)

Morning	_____
Midday	_____
Afternoon	_____
Evening	_____

Day Going Sideways?

It's okay to pause. Use the Soft Reset or Emergency Protocol instead. You can come back to this tomorrow. Rest is productive too.

Today's Wins (big or tiny):

6 · Sensory Regulation Tool

Tools to find calm when overwhelmed. Use when experiencing sensory overload, dysregulation, or feeling overstimulated or understimulated.

Right Now, I Am Feeling:

- Overstimulated — Too much input
- Understimulated — Bored or restless
- Dysregulated — Out of balance
- Overwhelmed — Everything is too much

Quick Regulation Tools:

■ Sight

- Dim lights or wear sunglasses
- Look at something calming (nature, a candle, a soft colour)
- Close your eyes for 60 seconds

■ Sound

- Noise-cancelling headphones
- White or brown noise
- Your favourite calming music

■ Touch

- Weighted blanket
- Soft fabric or comfort item
- Take off uncomfortable clothes

■ Smell

- Essential oils (lavender, peppermint)
- Fresh air
- Your favourite candle

■ Taste

- Strong mint or sour candy
- Cold water or ice chips
- A safe or comfort food

■ Movement

- Gentle rocking
- Fidget toy or safe stim
- Short walk or gentle stretching

If Nothing Helps Right Now:

1. Go to your safest, quietest space
2. Remove as much sensory input as possible
3. Let yourself shut down or melt down safely if needed
4. No shame. Your nervous system is overwhelmed.
5. Rest and recover. Try again when you're regulated.

7 · Task Breakdown Helper

Turn overwhelming tasks into tiny, doable steps.

When to use this:

When a task feels too big, too vague, or you don't know where to start. Break it into small, concrete steps your brain can actually follow.

Tips for Breaking Down Tasks:

- **Make it physical:** 'Get out of bed' instead of 'Start my day'
- **One action at a time:** 'Open laptop' then 'Open email' — not 'Check emails'
- **Include transitions:** Add steps for switching tasks or locations
- **Be specific:** 'Put on shoes' is better than 'Get ready to leave'
- **Build in breaks:** Add 'Rest for 5 minutes' between hard steps
- **Can't break it smaller?:** Then it's probably the right size!

Real Example: 'Do Laundry'

- 1. Walk to laundry basket
- 2. Pick up basket and carry it to the washing machine
- 3. Open washing machine
- 4. Put clothes in (don't sort yet)
- 5. Add detergent
- 6. Press the start button
- 7. Set a timer on your phone
- 8. Walk away and do something else

Now Try Your Own Task:

Task: _____

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____

■ 6. _____

■ 7. _____

■ 8. _____

8 · Energy & Focus Matrix

Match your tasks to your actual state. Energy and focus don't always match — you might have high energy but can't concentrate, or feel tired but super focused. This matrix helps you plan for your real state, not an ideal one.

	HIGH ENERGY	LOW ENERGY
HIGH FOCUS	<p>■ Power Mode</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deep work • Complex tasks • Learning new things • Important decisions 	<p>■ Flow State</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading & research • Writing & editing • Planning • Detailed work
LOW FOCUS	<p>■ Scatter Mode</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical tasks • Quick errands • Social calls • Brainstorming 	<p>■ Rest Mode</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gentle self-care • Comfort shows • Light tidying • Resting — guilt-free

Right Now, I Am Experiencing:

- Brain fog / can't think
 Restless / fidgety
 Physically tired
 Racing thoughts
 Calm and present
 Sensory overload

9 · Celebration Tracker

Every small win counts — especially the invisible ones.

This isn't a to-do list. This is where you celebrate EVERYTHING — finishing tasks, yes, but also resting when you needed to, saying no, asking for help, and just surviving hard days. All of it matters.

■ Tasks I Completed

- Finished (or started) that thing I've been avoiding
- Did one small productive thing
- Followed through even when it was hard

■ Rest & Recovery Wins

- Rested when I needed to (even when I felt guilty)
- Took a mental health day
- Let myself have an 'off' day without shame
- Stopped before burnout hit

■ Boundaries I Set

- Said 'no' to something I couldn't handle
- Asked someone to stop or give me space
- Left a situation that was too much
- Protected my energy or time

■ Self-Care & Regulation

- Used a sensory regulation tool
- Fed myself real food
- Did something that felt good for me
- Took meds or went to an appointment

■ Just Showing Up

- Got out of bed even though it was hard
- Survived a really hard day

- Asked for help when I needed it
- Stayed safe during a meltdown or shutdown
- Tried again after failing

Weekly Reflection:

What actually worked this week?

What drained me or felt too hard?

What do I want to try (or stop trying) next week?

You did things this week that mattered. Even if they felt small. Even if you're tired. That's worth celebrating.

10 · How to Use This System

Where to Start?

- Feeling okay? → Start with the Daily Planner
- Overwhelmed? → Use the Quick Start Guide or Emergency Protocol
- Brain fog? → Just do a Brain Dump and rest
- Unsure? → Read the guidebook chapters to understand your brain first

Key Principles:

- **Progress over perfection:** 70% completion is a win. **Energy over time:**
- Plan by how you feel, not the clock. **Rest is productive:** Celebrate rest days
- — they count. **Flexibility always:** Abandon ship when needed. That's
- wisdom, not failure. **No shame, ever:** You're not behind — you're on your
- own path.

There is no wrong way to use this system. Skip pages. Use tools out of order. Rest when needed. You are not behind — you are on your own path.

This system was designed with one question in mind:

"What would actually help a neurodivergent person on their worst day?"

Not their best day. Not their ideal day. Their worst day. Because if it works on the worst day, it will work on the good days too. That's what makes this system truly different.