

Neurodiversity

Additional card pack: wellbeing cards

These ideas to **improve your wellbeing** have come from many different viewpoints, including neurodivergent people, mental health clinicians, and researchers working with neurodivergent people. Autistic and neurodivergent people have many different experiences, challenges, and identities. Sometimes strategies that work for some people do not work for others. Please choose what works for you. If you don't find a strategy useful, that's OK. Try a different strategy to see what works in this particular moment.

You may also want to use this free, Emotions Worksheet: www.yorks.ac.uk/emotions

Copyrighted to Dr Stephanie Petty (s.petty@yorks.ac.uk). Illustrations are by Matt Cole (<https://mattcoleillustration.co.uk>). This card extension pack is inspired by Dr Karen Treisman's Therapeutic Treasure Decks of Feeling and Regulating cards.

Please cite and share respectfully. www.safehandsthinkingminds.co.uk



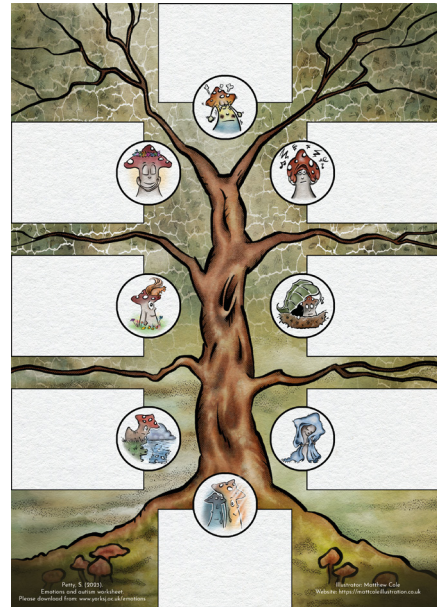
Neurodiversity

Wellbeing Cards

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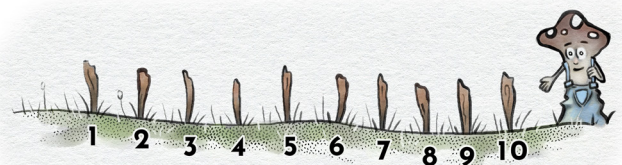
Dim your sensory world.

Turn off overhead lights, take a break from looking at screens, close your eyes, or wear sunglasses.

Try to notice how overwhelmed you feel.

Are you 'at ease with yourself' or are 'things too much'?

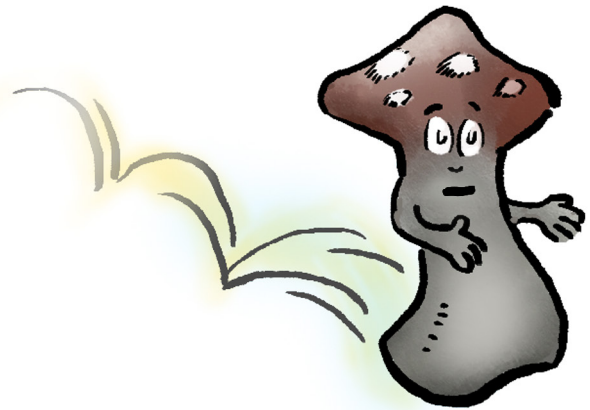
This can be a general feeling of overwhelm or tiredness. Some people find it difficult to know how they feel exactly, which is ok. Try to remember one thing that you can do to manage feeling overwhelmed.





Quieten your sensory world.

Turn off things that buzz or hum where possible. Cover your ears with headphones or a scarf.



Move with rhythm.

You could walk, dance, stroke your body, jiggle, bounce, rock, or drum your fingers.



Take a break from censoring yourself.

Find a place where you can relax your face, feel comfortable, and fully be yourself. Choose somewhere without interruptions, such as at home, the toilet, or your car.



Schedule in a break.

In your day, plan a moment where you control the demands on you. Take away stressors. This might be a short break, or it could be at night when the world is asleep.



Carry something comforting.

This might be something small.



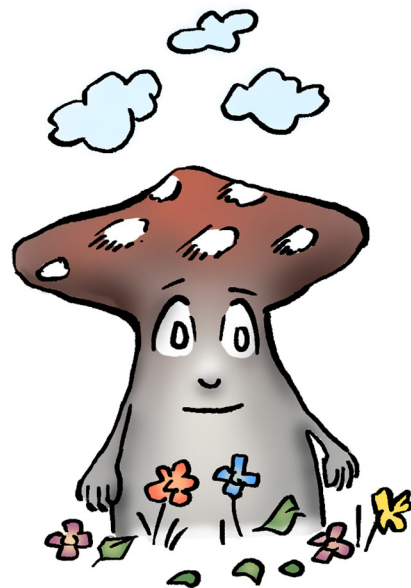
Notice a strength.

What is something that you are proud of about yourself? Some strengths are not always recognised by other people so think about what you value, such as having strong morals or being honest.



Connect with your body.

You could squeeze your hands, push on a surface, hold something heavy, or chew.



Be alone.

This is not the same as being lonely. It can feel positive to be by yourself sometimes, to enjoy your rich inner world and creativity, and have time to understand yourself.



Find where you belong.

Be with pets or animals, be in nature, or be somewhere meaningful to you. These can make you feel connected and can recharge you.

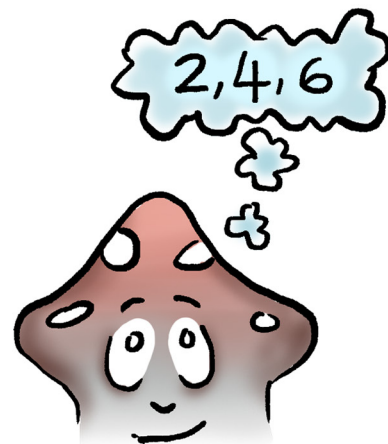
Interact with your chosen people.

This is where you feel relaxed and like yourself. You might choose interactions where you know the rules, or you make the rules. It might be in online places, or within games.



Make a list.

You might list things to do in the day, or make a shopping list.



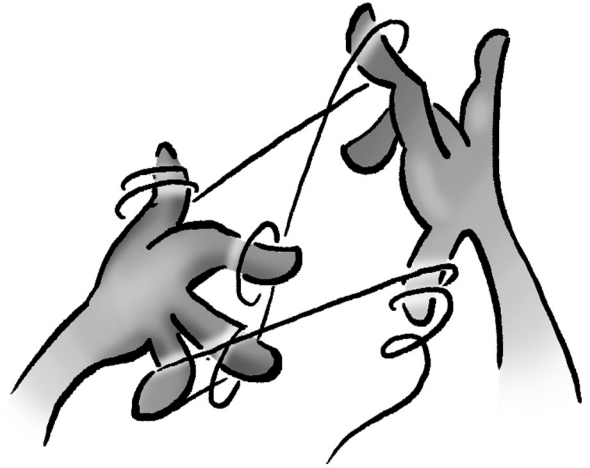
Use a comforting sequence.

Rituals can be personal and meaningful. They are often a repeated action, done in a certain order, that help you to feel comforted because things feel 'right'.



Create a plan.

Plan your day, or week, or holiday. Some people like to make a plan A and a plan B.



Keep your hands busy.

Fidget toys or items can help to release energy and regulate how your body feels.



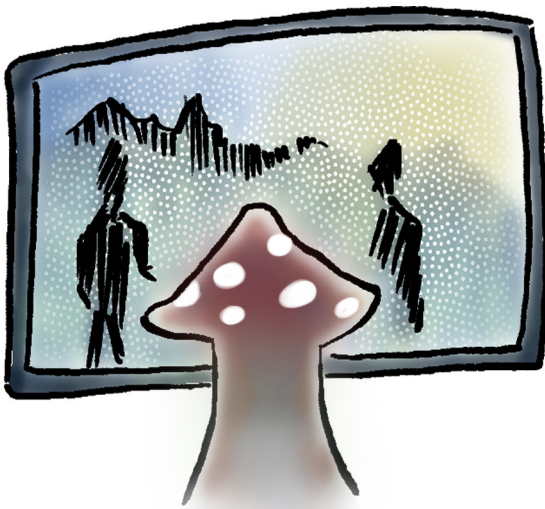
Follow a recipe.

Some people feel relaxed when they follow clear instructions and they can take a break from thinking about other things. A recipe can be like a story that makes sense.



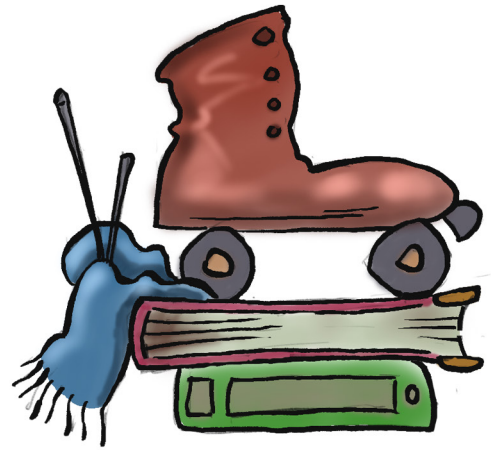
Listen to a familiar song.

Knowing how a song goes, without interruptions, can be comforting. You might enjoy a particular line or sound on repeat.



Watch something familiar.

Knowing how a TV show, film, scene, or video goes, can be comforting.



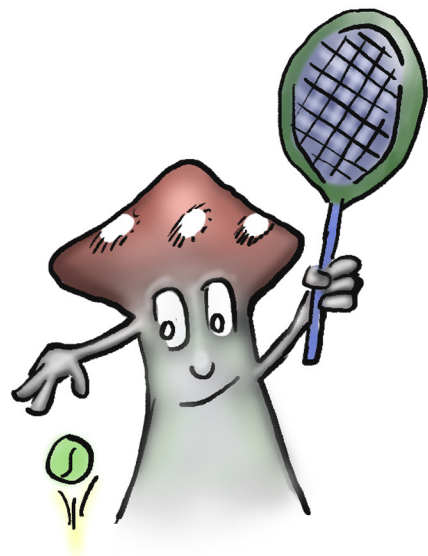
Plan to do your favourite thing.

Choose something you like or love to do. It might be reading, wearing your favourite things, writing, knitting, or playing a game.



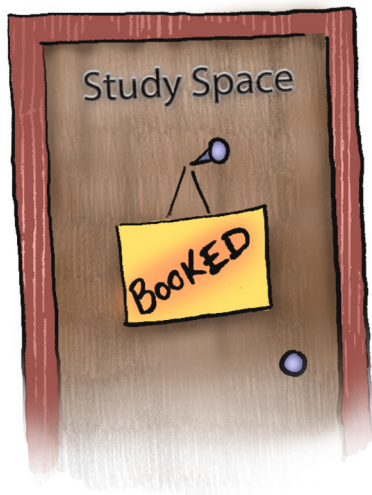
Plan a holiday that suits you.

Being out of routine can be stressful. During holidays, keep routines that work for you, and plan in more rest, as well as activities that are enjoyable for you.



Exercise.

You can schedule in physical activity. Exercise can be a predictable thing to do when other things feel uncontrollable.



Make an environment predictable.

When you study or work, arrange a suitable space. You could choose somewhere that suits you or take familiar things with you.



Advocate for yourself.

Share your insights about being neurodivergent if you feel comfortable doing so. Talk about your differences and the things that help you with friends, colleagues, or organisations. Move freely, wear headphones, or use sensory items to show others how valuable these are.



Think about an inspiring place that you have been to.

You could keep a series of photos or images.

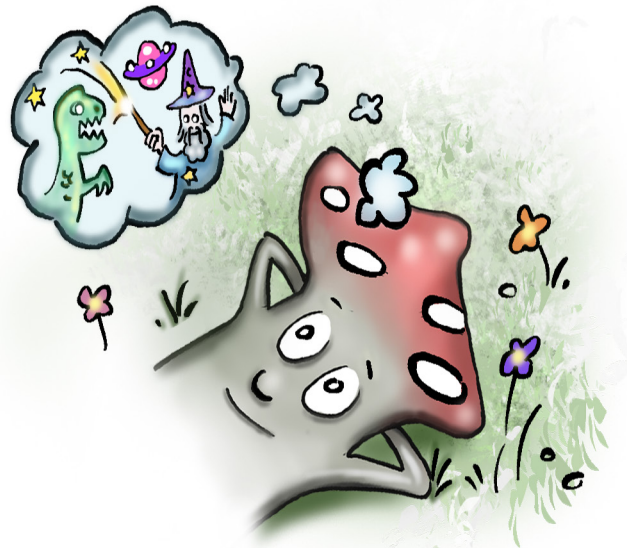


Remember a favourite story.

This might be something familiar to help you feel comforted. Or you might like a particular character, or enjoy how stories can help to make sense of experiences.

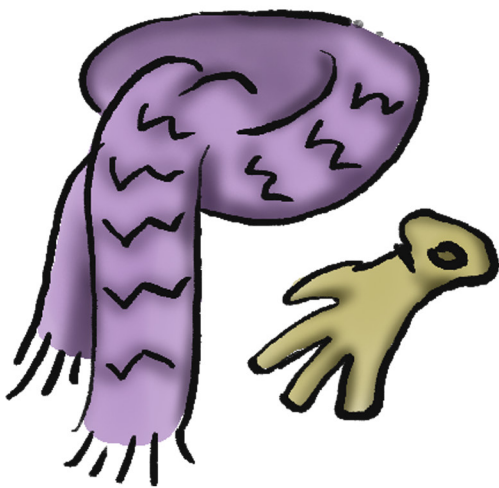


Remember a supportive person who you value, who has understood you.



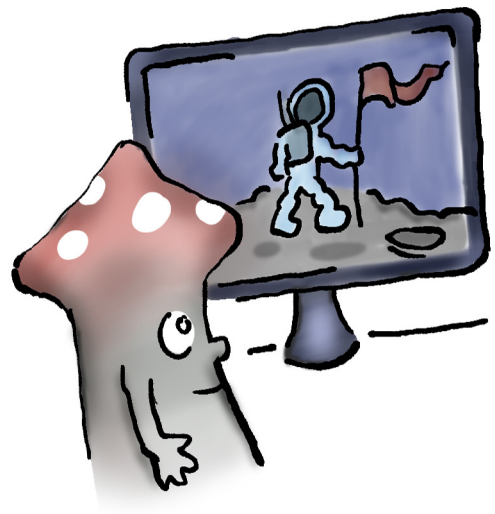
Daydream for a short while.

When you can, create a fictional world. You can think about, draw, write, or design characters, or play out scenarios.



Wear layers of clothing.

You can manage how hot you are feeling (such as when in appointments) by adding or removing layers or accessories.



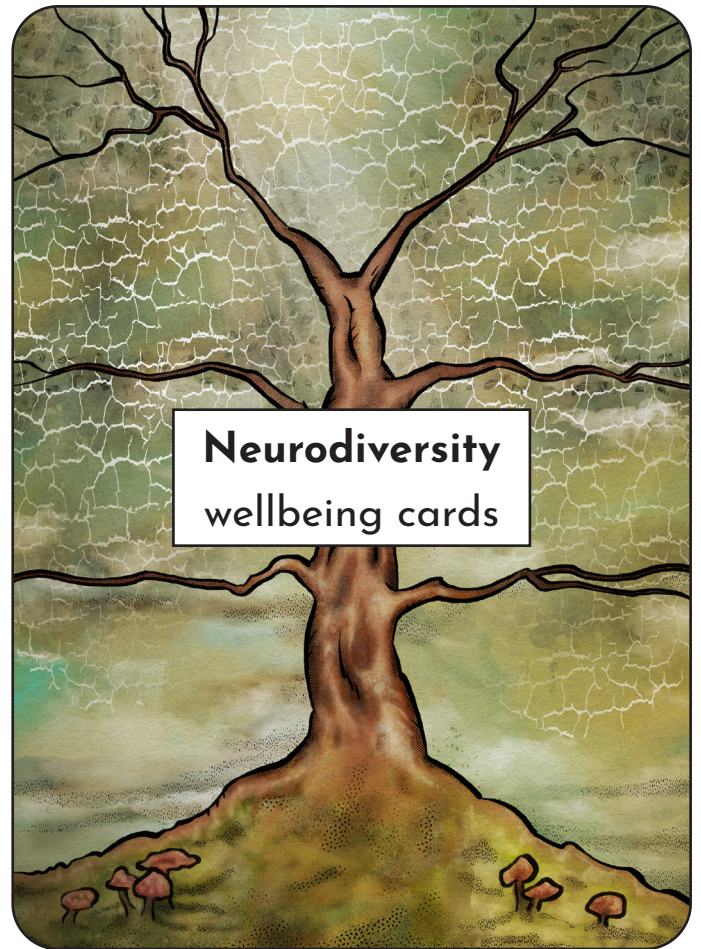
Express yourself through a character.

Read about or watch a character that you relate to.



Create your own space.

Create a space with things that are meaningful to you. Think about lighting, sounds, textures, and objects that you find calming. Your sleep space can be a good place to start.



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References for underpinning work

Petty, S., & Ellis, A. (2024). The meaning of autistic movements. *Autism*. doi: 10.1177/13623613241262151

Petty, S., Lambarth, S., & Hamilton, L. G. (2023). Rethinking anxiety and depression for autistic adults through personal narratives: mixed-method analysis of blog data. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research*. doi: 10.1002/capr.12729

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Cantwell, A., & Petty, S. What do routines and rituals mean to autistic adults? Co-production of revised understandings. (In prep).

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