



THE NEURODIVERGENT SENSORY SELF-CARE WORKBOOK

*Mapping Your Senses: A Guide to
Understanding What Overwhelms
and Calms You.*

*Discover Your Sensory Patterns and
Take Better Care of Yourself*



Brilliant Minds Psychology Pty Ltd. Copyright 2025

Self Care Start With Understanding What Works for You

About This Workbook

This workbook is designed to help you increase self-awareness of your sensory patterns and develop a personalised self-care plan based on your unique needs. By understanding your sensory differences, you can better care for yourself in ways that align with your brain and body.

Self-care is personal and varies from person to person. This guide encourages exploring your sensory preferences and differences, helping you build a self-care checklist tailored to your needs.

For neurodivergent individuals, self-care involves meeting your needs in the ways that work best for you. It's about creating routines and utilising tools that support your physical, emotional, sensory, and social well-being.

This workbook aims to help you create a sense of calm and control—even in environments that may not always accommodate neurodivergent experiences.

Disclaimer: This book is not a substitute for therapy.

Dr Jenni Silva

Clinical Psychologist

Director, Brilliant Minds Psychology Pty Ltd

www.brilliantmindspychology.com.au

Follow us on Instagram



Brilliant Minds Psychology Pty Ltd, Copyright 2025



YOUR SENSORY SELF-CARE PLAN

Your Sensory Self-Care Plan will involve engaging the senses to help you create a sense of calm. Use the information from previous worksheets to help you map your sensory self-soothing plan.



How Sensory Self-Soothing Works

This involves intentionally using sensory input—through touch, sight, sound, taste, smell, movement, or interoception—to bring relief. Focusing on our sensory experiences can activate the brain’s parasympathetic nervous system, which helps reduce stress and increase feelings of safety and comfort.

Personalising Sensory Self-Soothing

Everyone’s sensory preferences are unique. What feels soothing for one person might feel overstimulating or unpleasant for another. Take the time to explore your preferences and create a personalised plan that works best for you.

As you work through this workbook, you will gain a better understanding of what helps calm and soothe you.



What is the Sensory System & How Does It Impact on Mood?

The sensory system is the part of the nervous system responsible for receiving, processing, and interpreting information from our environment and internal body states. It consists of several sensory modalities, including:

1. Vision (sight)
2. Audition (hearing)
3. Olfaction (smell)
4. Gustation (taste)
5. Tactile perception (touch)
6. Vestibular system (balance and spatial orientation)
7. Proprioception (body position awareness)
8. Interoception (internal body signals, such as hunger or heartbeat)

These systems work together to help us navigate and respond to the world. They influence how we perceive our surroundings, regulate our behaviour, and maintain our emotional balance.

Impact on Mood

Our sensory system plays an important role in shaping our emotional states and overall mood. Here's how:

Sensory Overload and Stress:

When exposed to overwhelming sensory stimuli—such as loud noises, bright lights, or crowded environments—the nervous system can become overstimulated, triggering feelings of anxiety, irritability, or frustration.

Soothing Sensory Input:

1. Calming sensory experiences, like listening to soft music, feeling a gentle touch, or smelling a pleasant aroma, can activate relaxation responses in the brain, promoting a sense of calm and improving mood.
2. Interoception and Emotional Awareness: The sensory system helps us detect internal bodily states (e.g., hunger, fatigue, or a racing heart). Misinterpreting these signals can lead to mood fluctuations, such as irritability when hungry or heightened anxiety when experiencing an elevated heart rate.
3. Sensory Preferences and Mood Regulation Each individual has unique sensory preferences. Engaging in sensory activities that align with these preferences—such as physical movement for those who seek vestibular input or dim lighting for those sensitive to brightness—can enhance mood and emotional well-being.
4. Chronic Sensory Dysregulation: Difficulty processing sensory information, often seen in conditions like ADHD, autism, or sensory processing disorder, can lead to persistent mood disturbances. Struggles with sensory integration may contribute to feelings of frustration, stress, or isolation.



Workbook Activity: Exploring Your Sensory World

Discovering Your Sensory Pattern

The worksheets on the following pages are designed to help you identify your sensory preferences and patterns. Understanding your sensory needs is a powerful step toward creating a more comfortable and supportive environment for yourself.

In these sections, you'll explore the sensory inputs that have the greatest impact on your daily life. Take your time, write down observations, and stay curious as you learn more about your own experiences.

How to Use These Worksheets

Step 1: Choose a Sensory Domain

Step 2: Reflect Using the Worksheets

Use the worksheet for your chosen domain to think about how you interact with sensory input in that area. Do you tend to seek out certain sensations, or do you try to avoid them? Your responses may differ depending on the type of sensory input you're reflecting on.

Tips

Write down your thoughts as you go. Understanding your sensory preferences is an ongoing process, and your reflections will provide insights into your own sensory experience and what works well for you. This is a process of self-discovery, please be kind and patient with yourself throughout this process.



Brilliant Minds Psychology Pty Ltd, Copyright 2025

EXPLORING YOUR TACTILE(TOUCH) NEEDS

This worksheet can help you explore your tactile preferences, identify triggers, and discover the best strategies. Understanding your tactile needs can help create a more comfortable and supportive environment. Answer the questions below to reflect on how you experience touch.

Textures

- Are there textures you enjoy touching? Examples: soft fabrics, smooth surfaces, rough materials.
 - Yes (List them): _____
 - No (List those you avoid): _____



Clothing

- How do you feel about different clothing fabrics?
 - Preferred materials: _____
 - Materials to avoid: _____

Temperature

- Do you notice a preference for warm or cool sensations on your skin?
 - I prefer: _____

Personal Space

- How do you feel about being touched by others (e.g., handshakes, hugs)?
 - Comfortable: _____
 - Uncomfortable: _____

Water Contact

- How do you feel about activities involving water (e.g., showers, swimming)?
 - Positive Experiences: _____
 - Negative Experiences: _____

Outdoor Elements

- Are you comfortable with sensations like sand, grass, or mud?
 - Yes (Favorite sensations): _____
 - No (Avoided sensations): _____

NOTES



TACTILE(TOUCH) NEEDS

EXPLORING WHAT WORKS FOR YOU

What types of touch or materials make you feel calm?

Examples: weighted blankets, fuzzy sweaters.

Preferred Activities: List any activities you enjoy that involve touch. Examples are painting, kneading dough, and petting animals.

Tools or Accommodations: Are there sensory tools or adjustments that can help you?

Examples: seamless clothing, fidget items, gloves.

NOTES



EXPLORING YOUR VISUAL NEEDS

You can use this worksheet to explore your visual preferences, identify triggers, and discover the best strategies for you. Understanding your visual needs can help create a more comfortable and supportive environment. Tick the items that reflect your visual needs.



Lighting

- I prefer natural light (e.g., sunlight through windows).
- I prefer soft, dim lighting (e.g., lamps or warm-toned bulbs).
- I prefer bright, even lighting (e.g., overhead lights).
- I avoid fluorescent lights or harsh lighting.

Colours

- I find muted or pastel colours soothing.
- I enjoy vibrant and bold colours.
- I find certain colours overstimulating (list them): _____.

Movement and Patterns

- I enjoy visual movement (e.g., watching flowing water, leaves swaying).
- I find fast or repetitive movement overwhelming (e.g., flashing lights, crowded spaces).
- I prefer simple patterns and clean designs.
- I avoid complex or busy patterns.



Clutter

- I prefer clean and organised spaces.
- I'm okay with some visual clutter.
- Cluttered environments make me feel distracted or overwhelmed.

Screens

- I can focus well on screens for long periods.
- I experience eye strain or fatigue from screens.
- I use tools like blue-light filters to help with screens.



VISUAL NEEDS -DISCOVERING WHAT WORKS FOR YOU

What types of environments feel visually calming or energising?

Examples: natural outdoor spaces, dimly lit rooms, neatly organized spaces.

Tools or Adjustments That Help

Tick the tools you might find helpful. Add your own ideas as well.

- Sunglasses or tinted glasses.
- Dimming lights or using lamps.
- Using blinds or curtains to adjust natural light.
- Decluttering spaces to reduce visual distractions.
- Using visual aids (e.g., larger text, color overlays).

Other ideas:

Activities That Support Visual Regulation

- Watching calming videos (e.g., nature or ASMR).
- Creating art with soothing colors and designs.
- Organising spaces or creating visual order.

Other idea:

NOTES



UNDERSTANDING YOUR AUDITORY PREFERENCES

Use this worksheet to identify your auditory preferences, triggers, and strategies. Understanding your relationship with sound can help you create an environment that supports your sensory needs and enhances your well-being. Place a tick next to the statements that represent your experience.



Volume

- I prefer soft, quiet sounds.
- I enjoy moderate levels of sound.
- I feel comfortable with loud environments.
- I avoid loud or sudden noises.

Background Noise

- I like having background noise (e.g., white noise, music, or nature sounds).
- I find background noise distracting or overwhelming.
- I work best in complete silence.

Music Preferences

- I feel calm with slow, soothing music.
- I feel energized with upbeat or fast-paced music.
- I find certain types of music overstimulating (list examples): _____.

Speech and Conversations

- I find one-on-one conversations manageable.
- I feel overwhelmed in group discussions or crowded spaces.
- I process spoken information best when it's slow and clear.

Repetition or Predictable Sounds

- I enjoy repetitive or rhythmic sounds (e.g., tapping, drumming).
- Repetitive sounds make me feel irritated or anxious.

Surprising or Sudden Sounds

- I find sudden or unexpected noises startling (e.g., alarms, door slams).
- I feel comfortable even when noises are unpredictable.

AUDITORY (SOUND)



EXPLORING WHAT WORKS FOR YOU

Comforting Sounds

- What types of sounds make you feel calm or happy? Examples: soft music, water sounds, nature.

Preferred Listening Environment

- What auditory conditions make you feel most comfortable? Examples: quiet spaces, soft background noise.

Tools or Adjustments That Help

- Noise-canceling headphones.
- Earplugs for loud environments.
- White noise machines or apps.
- Using playlists tailored to my mood.
- Controlling volume settings on devices.

Activities That Support Auditory Regulation

- Listening to music or podcasts.
- Engaging in nature walks with calming sounds.
- Practicing mindfulness with sound-based exercises (e.g., sound baths)

NOTES



UNDERSTANDING YOUR TASTE PREFERENCES



Use this worksheet to identify your taste preferences. Understanding your relationship with flavours and textures can help you make choices that align with your sensory needs and enhance your overall well-being.

Place a tick next to the statements that reflect your experience.

Flavour Preferences

- I enjoy sweet flavors (e.g., fruits, desserts).
- I prefer salty foods (e.g., chips, pretzels).
- I like sour tastes (e.g., citrus, vinegar-based foods).
- I enjoy bitter flavors (e.g., dark chocolate, coffee).
- Other: _____

Temperature Preferences

- I like cold foods and drinks (e.g., ice cream, smoothies).
- I prefer warm or hot foods (e.g., soup, tea).
- I feel uncomfortable with foods that are too hot or too cold.
- Other: _____



Texture Preferences

- I enjoy crunchy textures (e.g., crackers, raw vegetables).
- I prefer soft or smooth textures (e.g., yogurt, mashed potatoes).
- I avoid foods with slimy or mushy textures (e.g., certain fruits or cooked vegetables).
- I dislike foods that are grainy or gritty (e.g., certain sauces or desserts).
- Other; _____

Spice Tolerance

- I enjoy mild and subtle flavors.
- I like moderately spicy foods.
- I find spicy foods overwhelming or uncomfortable.
- Other; _____

Novelty and Variety

- I like trying new or exotic foods and flavors.
- I prefer familiar foods and find new tastes overwhelming.
- Other; _____



TASTE – DISCOVERING WHAT WORKS FOR YOU

Comforting Flavors and Textures

- What types of flavors and textures make you feel happy or at ease?
 - Examples: sweet and smooth, savory and crunchy.

Preferred Eating Environment

- What conditions make eating more enjoyable for you? Examples: quiet meals, eating with others, specific lighting.
- Other: _____

Tools or Adjustments That Help

- Drinking water or tea to cleanse the palate.
- Eating smaller portions to manage strong flavors.
- Choosing foods with single, consistent textures.
- Preparing meals with familiar ingredients.
- Other: _____

Activities That Support Taste Exploration

- Experimenting with new recipes that align with your preferences.
- Incorporating flavors gradually to expand your comfort zone.
- Exploring sensory-friendly snacks.
- Other: _____

NOTES 



UNDERSTANDING YOUR SMELL PREFERENCES



You can use this worksheet to explore your relationship with smells, identify preferences and triggers, and develop strategies that align with your sensory needs. Understanding your olfactory preferences can help create environments and routines that enhance your comfort and well-being. Place a tick next to the statements that reflect your experience.

Preferred Scents

Think about the smells that bring you comfort or joy. Do you enjoy:

- Fresh scents like citrus, mint, or freshly cut grass?
- Warm and cozy aromas like vanilla, cinnamon, or baked goods?
- Earthy smells such as wood, soil, or rain?
- Floral fragrances like lavender, rose, or jasmine?
- Clean scents such as soap, laundry detergent, or fresh linen?

Neutral Scents

Reflect on smells that don't evoke strong reactions but feel neutral to you. These might include mild natural scents or faint background fragrances in your environment.

Unpleasant or Overwhelming Scents

Identify smells that cause discomfort or overwhelm you.

- Are there strong or artificial fragrances (e.g., perfumes, air fresheners) that you avoid?
- Do certain chemical smells (e.g., cleaning products or gasoline) trigger headaches or nausea?
- Are there specific food odors that you find unpleasant?

Sensitivity to Smells

Think about how you respond to various intensities of scent:

- Do you prefer subtle, barely noticeable smells?
- Do strong or lingering scents bother you or feel overwhelming?
- Are you highly sensitive to odors that others might not notice?



DISCOVERING WHAT WORKS FOR YOU (SMELL)

Discovering What Works for You



Comforting Smells

List smells that make you feel calm, focused, or energised. These could include:

- Essential oils like lavender or eucalyptus.
- Natural scents such as fresh air, ocean breeze, or pine trees.
- Personal items like a favorite lotion or scented candle.
- Incense

Tools or Adjustments That Help

- Use scent-free or hypoallergenic products to reduce exposure to overwhelming smells.
- Carry a small item with a calming scent (e.g., an essential oil roller or scented sachet).
- Open windows or use fans to improve air circulation when needed.

Creating a Supportive Environment

Think about how you can adjust your surroundings to better suit your smell needs:

- Limit exposure to triggering odors by avoiding specific products or areas.
- Incorporate pleasant, calming scents into your daily routine.
- Ensure spaces like your home or workspace have good ventilation.

NOTES 



VESTIBULAR SYSTEM (BALANCE AND SPATIAL ORIENTATION)



The vestibular system is responsible for helping us maintain balance, posture, and a sense of spatial orientation. Activities that stimulate or regulate this system can be particularly beneficial for improving coordination, focus, and mood. Below are some ideas tailored to the vestibular domain:

MY NEEDS

WRITE YOUR OWN LIST OF WHAT YOU LIKE

Gentle rocking	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Slow swimming	<input type="checkbox"/>	
water movement, floating	<input type="checkbox"/>	
sitting or lying on the floor	<input type="checkbox"/>	
I like to sit in spaces with blinds closed 	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Yoga poses - tree pose, child pose, downward dog	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Busy shopping centres can be overwhelming	<input type="checkbox"/>	
I like to have plants in my space	<input type="checkbox"/>	
I like to have visual reminders	<input type="checkbox"/>	
I like when my room is tidy	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Jumping activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Running Activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Spinning Movements	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Physical Exercise	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	



INTEROCEPTIVE NEEDS (INTERNAL BODY SIGNALS)

You can use this worksheet to explore your relationship with interoceptive awareness.
Place a tick next to the statements that reflect your experience.

TICK IF THIS APPLIES TO YOU

- I forget to drink water
- I have trouble noticing when I am hungry or thirsty
- I often forget to go to the toilet
- I have difficulty noticing how I am feeling
- I need reminders to eat, drink, sleep
- I have difficulty noticing when I am tired
- I need reminders to use bathroom ♥
- I like the feeling of water on my skin
- I need to use tools or apps to track my body needs (e.g., sleep, hydration, eat)
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-

WRITE YOUR OWN LIST OF WHAT HELPS AND WHAT YOU NEED TO HELP YOU IN THIS DOMAIN

APPS OR PROGRAMS I USE THAT HELP



My Sensory Self-care Plan

Write down things you can do in each section that will help ensure that you are taking care of yourself. Remember sleep, eating well and physical activity are all very important part of a self care routine.

Things I will try today to help my mind and body feel calm

MY NOTES

