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BAD DAY RESCUE KIT

My personal plan for overload, shutdown, fatigue, communication difficulty and days when normal routines stop working

NEW DISABILITY WORKBOOK SERIES - BOOK 9

This workbook belongs to:

A bad day does not always need fixing. Sometimes the goal is simply to reduce demands, stay safe, meet essential needs and make the day gentler.

Welcome

This workbook helps you build a plan while you have enough capacity to think about it, so you have fewer decisions to make when your capacity is low.

On a difficult day, the thing I most wish other people understood is:

1. What Does a Bad Day Mean for Me?

Different difficulties may overlap.

- ☐ Sensory overload
- ☐ Shutdown
- ☐ Extreme fatigue
- ☐ Pain flare
- ☐ Executive-function crash
- ☐ Communication becomes difficult
- ☐ Anxiety / panic
- ☐ Too much social demand
- ☐ Unexpected change
- ☐ Poor sleep
- ☐ Emotional overwhelm
- ☐ Everything feels harder at once

My notes / what applies to me:

2. My Early Warning Signs

Notice what happens before you reach your limit.

- ☐ Noise feels louder
- ☐ I stop talking as much
- ☐ I cannot decide
- ☐ My body feels heavy
- ☐ I become irritable
- ☐ I forget simple things
- ☐ I feel trapped
- ☐ I start cancelling things
- ☐ I need more stimming / movement
- ☐ Pain increases
- ☐ I cannot start tasks
- ☐ I want everyone to stop asking questions

My notes / what applies to me:

3. My Traffic-Light System

Create a simple way to recognise your capacity.

GREEN - coping	AMBER - running low	RED - overloaded / depleted

4. Things That Make It Worse

Knowing what not to add can be as useful as knowing what helps.

- ☐ Lots of questions
- ☐ Being rushed
- ☐ Unexpected touch
- ☐ Bright light
- ☐ Noise
- ☐ Having to explain myself
- ☐ More decisions
- ☐ Being told to cheer up
- ☐ Pressure to socialise
- ☐ Changes to the plan
- ☐ Feeling watched
- ☐ Trying to push through

My notes / what applies to me:

5. First 10 Minutes Rescue Plan

If I notice I am overloaded or crashing, what are the first few things I can do?

Step	What I can do
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

6. Reduce the Demands

A low-capacity day may need a different standard.

- ☐ Cancel non-essential tasks
- ☐ Move something to another day
- ☐ Use easiest food option
- ☐ Wear comfortable clothes
- ☐ Use delivery / online options
- ☐ Ask someone else to handle a task
- ☐ Use written communication
- ☐ Turn off notifications
- ☐ Stop trying to multitask
- ☐ Leave an overwhelming environment

My notes / what applies to me:

7. My Minimum-Viable Day

What is genuinely essential today?

Must happen	Can be simplified	Can wait

8. Sensory Rescue

Build a quick sensory-downshift plan.

Sense	Reduce / avoid	Add / use
Sound		
Light		
Touch		
Smell		
Movement		
Temperature		

9. Communication Rescue

When words become difficult, make communication simpler.

- ☐ Text instead of speaking
- ☐ AAC
- ☐ Point / gesture
- ☐ Yes-no questions
- ☐ Communication card
- ☐ One question at a time
- ☐ Extra processing time
- ☐ No conversation for a while
- ☐ Someone else explains for me

My notes / what applies to me:

10. My “I Cannot Talk Much” Card

Write a short message that could be shown to another person.

Example: “I am overloaded and speaking is difficult. Please give me time, use short questions and do not touch me. I will communicate when I can.”

My version:

11. Food and Drink on Difficult Days

Low energy and sensory overload can make eating and drinking harder.

Easy / familiar food and drink options that work for me:

12. Medication and Essential Routines

If you have essential routines, think about how to make them easier to remember without changing prescribed treatment.

Essential routine	Prompt / support I use	Backup plan

13. Pain or Physical Flare Days

A bad day may involve physical symptoms as well as emotional or sensory load.

Things that usually make physical comfort easier for me:

14. Shutdown

During shutdown, someone may become quieter, less responsive, slower to process or need to withdraw.

When I shut down, I may:

15. Overload / Meltdown

Overload can look different for different people. Focus on reducing input, demands and risk rather than judgement.

When I am overloaded, I may:

16. What I Need From Other People

Support should match your preferences.

- ☐ Stay nearby quietly
- ☐ Give me space
- ☐ Do not touch me
- ☐ Reduce questions
- ☐ Help me leave
- ☐ Bring water / familiar item
- ☐ Dim lights / reduce noise
- ☐ Handle practical tasks
- ☐ Use short clear language
- ☐ Wait for me to communicate

My notes / what applies to me:

17. What I Do NOT Need

Be explicit about responses that make things worse.

Please do not:

18. My Safe Place

Where can you go, physically or mentally, to reduce demands?

My safest / calmest places are:

19. My Rescue Kit Bag

What could you keep ready at home or take out with you?

Item	Why it helps	Where I keep it

20. Digital Rescue Kit

Your phone can reduce thinking when set up in advance.

- ☐ Emergency / trusted contacts favourited
- ☐ Saved taxi / travel information
- ☐ Notes with access needs
- ☐ Food delivery favourites
- ☐ Calming audio
- ☐ Communication message saved
- ☐ Calendar / reminders
- ☐ Low-brightness setting
- ☐ Do Not Disturb shortcut

My notes / what applies to me:

21. After the Worst Has Passed

Recovery may continue after you look “fine” again.

What I need immediately afterwards:

What I may need for the rest of the day:

What I may need the next day:

Signs I am ready for more demands again:

22. Learning Without Blaming Myself

Review the day as information, not a personal failure.

What happened before the difficult period?

What were my earliest signs?

What made things worse?

What helped even a little?

Was there a demand or barrier I could change next time?

What do I want to remember - without blaming myself?

23. My Rescue-Kit Experiment

Test one part of the plan before you urgently need it.

Which rescue strategy will I test?

When will I test it?

Was it easy to access when my energy was lower?

Did it reduce decisions or demands?

What needs changing before I rely on it?

24. My One-Page Bad Day Rescue Plan

Keep this somewhere easy to find or photograph it for your phone.

My earliest warning signs	
First thing to reduce	
Sensory things that help	
How I communicate when overloaded	
Easy food / drink options	
People I may want support from	
Please do not	
What recovery looks like for me	

25. My Pocket Rescue Card

When I am having a very difficult day...

You may notice:

The best way to communicate with me is:

Please help by:

Please avoid:

A person I may choose to contact:

Notes

This workbook is a general disability-focused wellbeing and self-management resource. It is not an emergency or medical care plan. New, severe or concerning physical or mental-health symptoms may require appropriate professional or emergency assessment. Personal support plans should reflect the individual's health, communication, safeguarding and care needs.

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