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MY BODY'S USER MANUAL

Understanding my body signals, needs, patterns and warning signs

NEW DISABILITY WORKBOOK SERIES - BOOK 18

This workbook belongs to:

Bodies communicate in many ways. Signals can be clear, delayed, inconsistent or difficult to identify. This workbook is for noticing your own patterns and communicating them more easily - not diagnosing symptoms.

Welcome

Learning your patterns can make it easier to respond earlier, explain needs and plan support. There is no correct way to sense or describe your body.

A body signal I find easy - or difficult - to notice:

1. How My Body Gets My Attention

Tick signals you notice.

- ☐ Tension
- ☐ Pain
- ☐ Pressure
- ☐ Dizziness
- ☐ Shakiness
- ☐ Weakness
- ☐ Heaviness
- ☐ Restlessness
- ☐ Nausea
- ☐ Temperature changes
- ☐ Heart beating faster
- ☐ Breathing changes
- ☐ Headache
- ☐ Brain fog
- ☐ Sudden irritability
- ☐ Going quiet / less speech

My notes / what applies to me:

2. My Body Signal Dictionary

Give your own meaning to recurring sensations.

Signal / sensation	What it may mean for me	What I usually need

3. Hunger & Fullness

Internal signals can be strong, faint, delayed or confusing.

My early hunger signs:

My late hunger signs:

How fullness feels to me:

What helps me eat regularly when signals are unclear:

4. Thirst

Some people notice thirst late or mainly through secondary signs.

My early thirst signs:

My late thirst signs:

Things that help me remember fluids:

Drinks / formats that are easiest for me:

5. Toilet Signals

Notice how your body tells you it needs the toilet, including late signals.

My early signals:

My urgent / late signals:

Things that make me miss the signal:

Access or routine that helps:

6. Temperature

Heat and cold can affect comfort, energy and functioning.

How I know I am too warm:

How I know I am too cold:

What helps me regulate temperature:

When temperature affects my other symptoms:

7. Pain: My Description Toolkit

Pain can be difficult to put into words. A description can include location, quality, intensity, timing and impact.

Describe	My words / notes
Where is it?	
What does it feel like?	
How strong is it?	
When did it start?	
Constant or changing?	
What makes it better / worse?	
What does it stop me doing?	

8. Fatigue & Physical Depletion

Fatigue can show up in movement, thinking, speech, mood or sensory tolerance.

Body:

Thinking:

Communication:

Movement:

Sensory tolerance:

What I need:

9. Sensory Overload in My Body

Overload may appear physically before you consciously identify it.

Early body signs:

Later body signs:

Communication changes:

Movement changes:

What makes it worse:

What helps:

10. Stress & Anxiety Signals

Notice your personal physical signs without assuming every symptom has the same cause.

Body signs:

Thought / attention changes:

Communication changes:

Behaviour / movement:

What helps me settle:

When I need extra support:

11. Shutdown / Low-Capacity Signals

What happens when your system needs demands to reduce?

What others may notice:

What I notice internally:

Communication I can still use:

Demands I need reduced:

Environment I need:

Recovery afterwards:

12. My Early Warning Signs

Earlier signs may be easier to act on than crisis-level signs.

Early sign	What it may be warning me about	My early response

13. Yellow, Orange, Red

Create a simple escalating warning system.

Level	What my body may be doing	What I need
GREEN - manageable		
YELLOW - warning		
ORANGE - struggling		
RED - stop / urgent support		

14. What Helps at Each Stage

Match support to the level of need.

Stage	Things I can do	What others can do
Green		
Yellow		
Orange		
Red		

15. Things That Make Signals Harder to Read

Context can blur or delay body awareness.

- ☐ Being busy
- ☐ Masking
- ☐ Stress
- ☐ Sensory overload
- ☐ Pain
- ☐ Fatigue
- ☐ Hyperfocus
- ☐ Being around other people
- ☐ Medication effects
- ☐ Not wanting to interrupt an activity
- ☐ Previous experiences of being dismissed

My notes / what applies to me:

16. My Baseline

Knowing what “usual for me” looks like can make changes easier to notice.

My usual energy / stamina:

My usual pain / discomfort:

My usual sleep:

My usual appetite / thirst:

My usual sensory tolerance:

My usual communication / thinking:

17. Changes From My Usual

A personal pattern is useful, but new or significant changes deserve attention.

Useful question: “Is this normal for me, or is this new, stronger, longer-lasting or otherwise different?”

Change I noticed:

When it began:

How it differs from my usual:

What else was happening:

What I want to record / ask about:

18. Communicating Symptoms

You do not have to find perfect medical language to describe what you experience.

Simple structure: “I am experiencing _____. It started _____. It feels like _____. It affects my ability to _____. It gets better / worse when _____.”

My version:

19. Preparing for Healthcare

Collect useful observations without needing to remember everything in the appointment.

Useful information	My notes
Main concern	
When it started	
Pattern / frequency	
What changes it	
Effect on daily life	
Questions I want answered	
Communication / access needs	

20. My Body & Medication / Treatments

Record observations rather than changing treatment on your own.

Medication / treatment	What I notice	Question / note for clinician

21. My Body & Activity

Notice what different activities tend to do to your body.

Activity	During	After	Recovery needed

22. My Body & Recovery

Recovery needs may be physical, sensory, cognitive or social.

After...	My body tends to need...
Busy day	
Travel	
Social activity	
Sensory overload	
Healthcare appointment	
Physical activity	
Poor sleep	

23. My Body Check-In

Create a short check-in that works for you.

- ☐ Have I eaten?
- ☐ Have I had enough to drink?
- ☐ Do I need the toilet?
- ☐ Am I too hot / cold?
- ☐ Am I in pain?
- ☐ Am I tired?
- ☐ Am I overloaded?
- ☐ Do I need movement or stillness?
- ☐ Do I need less talking / fewer demands?
- ☐ Has something changed from my normal?

My own short body check-in:

24. My Body Experiment

Try responding to one familiar signal a little earlier.

Signal I want to notice earlier:

My earliest clue:

What I will try doing at that point:

What will make the response easy to access?

What happened?

Did responding earlier change anything?

What will I try next time?

25. My Body's Quick-Reference Manual

A personal summary you can use yourself or choose to share.

My early warning signs	
My signs I am becoming depleted / overloaded	
How pain usually looks / sounds for me	
How I communicate when capacity is low	
What helps my body regulate	
What tends to make things worse	
My usual recovery needs	
Important changes from my usual that I want noticed	

26. What I Want People to Understand About My Body

My body may communicate before I have words for what is happening.

A signal other people sometimes miss:

Something people sometimes misinterpret:

What helps me notice or communicate a need:

What I need people to take seriously:

How someone can support me without taking over:

Notes

This workbook is a general disability-focused body-awareness and communication resource. It is not a diagnostic tool and does not replace medical assessment. Seek appropriate medical help for new, severe, rapidly worsening or concerning symptoms, or when you are unsure whether a symptom needs urgent attention. Do not change prescribed medication or treatment solely on the basis of this workbook.

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