



ND Emotional Safety Checklist

*A gentle tool to notice safety, capacity, and overwhelm...
without judgement*

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Important note

This resource is intended to support understanding and good practice in neuro-inclusive workplace design. It provides general guidance and does not constitute legal, medical, or clinical advice. Organisations should apply the principles in line with their own policies, regulatory obligations, and professional judgement.

This checklist is not about “coping better” or pushing through.
It’s about **noticing what’s happening early**, so you can respond with care instead of waiting until everything collapses.

You don’t need to complete every section.
You don’t need to be precise.
This is about **signal, not perfection**.

Before you start

Take one slow breath.
You’re not trying to fix anything.
You’re just checking in.

1. Sense of Safety (Right Now)

Read each line and notice your first response.

- I feel basically safe in my body right now
- My environment feels predictable enough
- I’m not bracing for something bad to happen
- I don’t feel watched, judged, or on edge
- I can soften my shoulders or jaw a little

If most of these feel **hard to agree with**, that’s information... not failure.

2. Capacity Check

(How much you can hold... not how much you “should”)

Right now, I feel able to handle:

- Thinking clearly
- Talking or messaging
- Making decisions
- Being around other people
- Taking in information
- Doing tasks without forcing myself

If several of these feel unavailable, your **capacity may be low**... even if you’re still functioning.

Low capacity doesn't mean you're lazy or broken.
It means your system is working hard already.

3. Early Overwhelm Signals

(Often subtle... often ignored)

Tick anything that's present, even mildly:

- Everything feels louder, brighter, or "too much"
- I feel irritable or fragile for no clear reason
- My thoughts feel tangled or foggy
- I want to withdraw or disappear
- I'm rushing or freezing internally
- My body feels tight, heavy, buzzy, or numb
- I'm scrolling, zoning out, or avoiding without meaning to

These are **early warnings**, not problems to suppress.

4. Shutdown / Meltdown Risk

(Not destiny... just awareness)

Right now, I notice signs that might mean I'm close to overload:

- I can't access words easily
- Small things feel unmanageable
- I feel close to tears, anger, or collapse
- I want everything to stop
- I feel blank, frozen, or detached

If this section resonates:

Your system may be asking for **less**, not more effort.

5. What Would Increase Safety by 10%

(Not fix everything... just soften the edge)

Without overthinking, one thing that might help right now:

- Reducing sensory input (light, sound, people)

- Slowing down or stopping
- Being alone or with someone safe
- Dropping a task or expectation
- Doing something grounding with my body
- Resting without “earning” it

Write one small permission you can give yourself:

Even a 10% shift matters.

6. Gentle Re-Orientation

(To remind your nervous system where you are)

Try one... or skip if it feels wrong:

- Name **three things you can see**
- Feel your feet or your back against a surface
- Place a hand somewhere that feels steady
- Look around and remind yourself:
“I’m here. This moment is not an emergency.”

No breathing techniques required.
No positivity required.

Important reminders

- You do not need to wait until you’re in crisis to rest
 - Functioning does not equal safety
 - Needing space does not mean you’re failing
 - Overwhelm is a **signal**, not a flaw
 - You are allowed to protect your capacity
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How to use this checklist

- Use it **before** pushing through
- Use it **after** social or demanding situations
- Use it when you can’t explain what’s wrong
- Use it to validate yourself, not interrogate yourself

You can revisit it multiple times a day... or not at all.

Closing note

Emotional safety isn't about being calm all the time.
It's about noticing when your system is under strain... and responding with care
instead of pressure.

You don't need to "handle more."
You need **enough safety to stay whole.**

That's not weakness.
That's wisdom.

