



Micro-Activation Planning Sheet

Tiny, doable steps for getting from “stuck” to “moving.”

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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.

A grounding orientation

This is not a productivity planner.
It's not a discipline tool.
It's not a way to push yourself past your limits.

This planning sheet exists for moments when:

- you feel stuck or frozen
- starting feels impossible
- motivation isn't available
- pressure makes everything worse

Its purpose is simple:

To reduce the cost of starting until movement becomes possible again.

You are not expected to complete every section.
You can use one line, one box, or none at all.
Stopping halfway is allowed.

Micro-activation is about **entry**, not output.

1. A reframe that matters before we begin

When people are "stuck," the usual advice is:

- break the task down
- try harder
- remove distractions
- push through resistance

For many neurodivergent people, this fails... not because the steps are wrong, but because **the nervous system is not available yet.**

Micro-activation assumes:

- your system is conserving energy
- starting feels unsafe, costly, or unclear
- force will increase freeze, not reduce it

This tool does **not** ask:

"How do I get this done?"

It asks:

“How do I lower the entry cost enough to begin?”

2. What micro-activation actually means

Micro-activation is not:

- finishing a task
- making visible progress
- being productive

Micro-activation *is*:

- reintroducing motion
- restoring a sense of agency
- gently reopening the task space

Sometimes micro-activation looks like:

- opening a file
- reading one sentence
- laying out materials
- naming the task out loud

If movement returns, that's success...
even if nothing else happens.

3. Step one: Name the stuck (without fixing it)

Before planning, it helps to orient.

You might quietly name:

- “I feel frozen.”
- “I feel overwhelmed.”
- “I feel blank.”
- “I feel pressured.”

You don't need to explain *why*.
You don't need to solve it.

Naming the state reduces internal noise and self-blame.

4. Identify the *actual* task

(often different from the one you think)

Many people freeze because the task is described too broadly.

For example:

- “Work on project”
- “Sort life admin”
- “Write report”

You might gently ask:

“What is the smallest accurate description of what’s being asked?”

Examples:

- “Open the document.”
- “Read the brief.”
- “Check what’s outstanding.”

If the task still feels heavy, it’s probably **too big**.

Clarity reduces threat.

5. Spot what’s making this hard to start

(optional, but powerful)

You might notice one or two factors that are increasing the freeze:

- unclear expectations
- fear of judgement
- perfection pressure
- too many steps at once
- lack of an endpoint
- low physical or emotional capacity

You are not required to remove all of these.

Even recognising **one** can soften the hold.

6. Choose a micro-step

(smaller than feels necessary)

A micro-step should feel:

- slightly possible
- almost trivial
- safe to abandon

Good micro-steps often:

- take under 2–5 minutes
- don't require decisions
- don't create commitment

Examples:

- open the laptop
- rename the file
- read one paragraph
- write a heading only
- set a timer and sit with the task

If your system says “that’s still too much,” go smaller.

Smaller is not avoidance.
Smaller is **strategic**.

7. Reduce the cost further (if needed)

If even the micro-step feels heavy, you can lower the cost again.

Ways to do this include:

- removing evaluation (“no one sees this”)
- lowering the standard (“messy is fine”)
- reducing time (“just one minute”)
- changing location or posture
- pairing with something regulating (music, warmth)

You are not cheating.

You are negotiating with a nervous system that wants safety first.

8. Create a soft container (not a demand)

Instead of “I must do this,” try:

- “I’ll try this for two minutes.”
- “I’ll stop when the timer ends.”
- “I’m allowed to stop early.”

Containers work because they:

- reduce open-ended pressure
- make exit visible
- reassure the nervous system

Stopping on purpose is still a regulated choice.

9. What counts as success here

Success is **not**:

- finishing
- being efficient
- feeling motivated

Success *is*:

- movement returned
- choice restored
- freeze loosened slightly

Even if you stop after one micro-step:

- your system has learned that starting is survivable
- the entry point will be easier next time

This is how momentum is rebuilt... quietly.

10. If nothing moves at all

Sometimes, despite best efforts, nothing shifts.

This does not mean:

- you failed
- the tool didn’t work
- you didn’t try hard enough

It usually means:

- capacity is genuinely depleted
- rest or recovery is still in progress
- the cost is still too high today

In those moments, the most regulating option may be:

- postponement without guilt
- choosing containment over action
- naming “not today” explicitly

That is not giving up.

That is **accurate self-reading**.

11. Using this sheet over time

Micro-activation works best when:

- pressure is reduced
- it's used early, not at crisis point
- success is defined narrowly
- self-judgement is actively softened

Over time, many people notice:

- freeze happens less intensely
- starting feels less dangerous
- self-trust increases

Not because they became more disciplined...

but because their nervous system learned that **starting doesn't always hurt**.

12. A gentle template (use or ignore)

You can copy and paste this if it helps:

- **Right now, I feel:**
- **The smallest accurate task is:**
- **One thing making this hard:**
- **My micro-step is:**
- **My container is:**
- **I'm allowed to stop when:**

Filling in one line is enough.

A closing permission

Being stuck does not mean you are broken.

It usually means:

- the task is costly
- safety is missing
- your system is protecting you

You are allowed to:

- start smaller than feels reasonable
- move sideways
- pause without collapsing into shame
- rebuild motion slowly

Micro-activation is not about doing more.

It's about **making movement safe again.**

Use what fits.
Leave the rest.

