Capacity & Workload Self-Assessment

A simple, psychologically safe tool for staff to express workload limits without fear.

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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 clear orientation (for organisations)

This is not a productivity tracker.
It is not a performance rating.
It is not a way to test resilience, motivation, or commitment.

This self-assessment exists because **capacity fluctuates**, especially for neurodivergent (ND) staff… and because many people avoid naming limits when doing so feels risky.

Used well, this tool helps organisations:

- surface capacity early (before burnout or shutdown)
- normalise fluctuation without penalty
- adjust workload based on reality, not assumption
- reduce crisis escalation and attrition

This tool must be used **to adapt work**, not to judge people.
Completion is optional. Partial completion is valid.

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1. Core principles (non-negotiable)

- **Capacity is state-dependent**, not a character trait
- **Honest signals must be safe to share**
- **Support must not require diagnosis or disclosure**
- **Adjustments should follow information**
- **No negative consequences for naming limits**

If this tool increases fear, it is being misused.

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2. How to use this tool safely

Who uses it

- Individual staff members (voluntary)
- Shared selectively with a manager/HR partner **by choice**

When to use it

- During periods of high workload
- At regular, low-pressure check-ins
- During transitions or role changes
- As an early-warning tool… not only after crisis

What it is for

- Communicating capacity clearly
- Supporting prioritisation and pacing
- Enabling timely adjustments

What it is not for

- Measuring effort
- Comparing individuals
- Freezing expectations permanently

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3. Section A… Current capacity snapshot (today / this week)

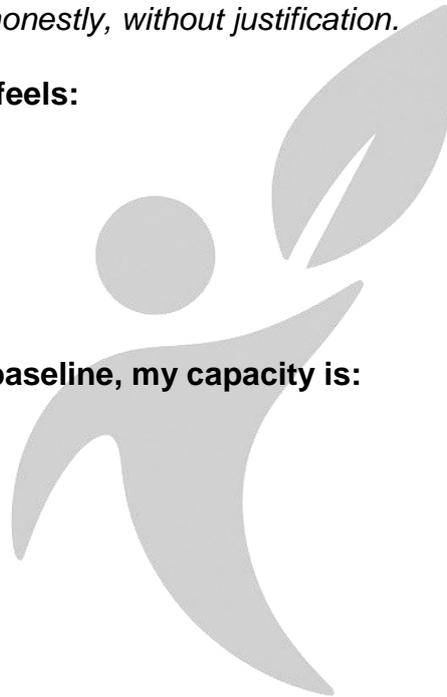*Purpose: name capacity honestly, without justification.*

Right now, my capacity feels:
☐ Steady
☐ Fluctuating
☐ Reduced
☐ Near limit
☐ Unclear

Compared to my usual baseline, my capacity is:
☐ About the same
☐ Slightly lower
☐ Significantly lower
☐ Temporarily higher

Capacity is not a promise.
It is **information**.

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4. Section B… What's currently drawing the most energy

Purpose: identify load sources, not personal weakness.

The biggest drains on my capacity right now are:
☐ Volume of work
☐ Task switching / interruptions
☐ Unclear priorities
☐ Tight or changing deadlines
☐ Sensory environment

- ☐ Meetings
- ☐ Emotional labour
- ☐ Parallel responsibilities
- ☐ Health / recovery
- ☐ Other: _____

Specific areas or tasks that feel most demanding:

_____

_____

Naming drains early prevents escalation later.

5. Section C… Early warning signals (before burnout)

Purpose: catch overload before it becomes crisis.

When my capacity is being exceeded, early signs often include:
- ☐ Slower initiation
- ☐ Increased errors
- ☐ Irritability or withdrawal
- ☐ Difficulty prioritising
- ☐ Brain fog
- ☐ Physical fatigue
- ☐ Heightened sensitivity
- ☐ Reduced communication
- ☐ Shutdown after meetings

Other early signals I notice:

_____

_____

These signals are **protective**, not problematic.

6. Section D… What helps me stay within capacity

Purpose: centre supports that prevent overload.

Things that reliably help me work sustainably include:
- ☐ Clear priorities

☐ Written instructions
☐ Fewer interruptions
☐ Predictable check-ins
☐ Flexibility around timing
☐ Reduced meeting load
☐ Quiet / low-sensory conditions
☐ Ability to focus on one task at a time
☐ Recovery time after high-load periods

Other supports that help:

_____

_____

Support should reduce strain, not increase visibility.

7. Section E… Current workload reality

Purpose: align expectations with actual load.

Right now, my workload feels:
☐ Manageable
☐ Tight but workable
☐ At risk
☐ Unsustainable

If everything continues as is, I'm most concerned about:

_____

_____

This is not pessimism.
It is **forecasting**.

8. Section F… What might help *right now* (practical options)

Purpose: enable timely, reversible adjustments.

Short-term changes that would reduce risk include:
☐ Re-prioritising tasks
☐ Extending or renegotiating deadlines

☐ Pausing non-essential work
☐ Clarifying what can wait
☐ Reducing meetings temporarily
☐ Switching to written communication
☐ Adjusting hours or pacing
☐ Sharing or redistributing work
☐ Other: _____

These changes would be:
☐ Temporary
☐ Reviewable
☐ Context-specific

Adjustments are **working agreements**, not permanent labels.

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9. Section G… Communication preferences during high load

Purpose: reduce misattunement and escalation.

When my capacity is low, it helps if:
☐ Expectations are stated clearly
☐ Requests are prioritised explicitly
☐ Feedback is scheduled, not ad-hoc
☐ Processing time is allowed
☐ Follow-up is in writing

Things that make it harder during high load:

This section protects coordination… not behaviour.

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10. Section H… Sharing & consent (important)

Purpose: keep control with the individual.

I am choosing to share this with:
☐ My manager
☐ HR / People team

☐ A project lead
☐ Not sharing at this time

I would like this information to be used for:
☐ Adjusting workload
☐ Prioritisation conversations
☐ Planning support
☐ Information only

I do / do not want this recorded (circle one).
If recorded, I want it reviewed by: _____

Consent can be changed at any time.

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11. What leaders should do with this information

When someone shares this assessment, the organisational response should be:

- **Believe the signal**
- **Reduce load before asking for more explanation**
- **Collaborate on adjustments**
- **Avoid emotional interpretation**
- **Confirm no penalty**

Helpful responses sound like:

- "Thank you for naming this… let's adjust the work."
- "What can we pause or re-prioritise?"
- "We can review this again in a week."

Avoid:

- "Can you push through?"
- "How long will this last?"
- "Everyone's busy."

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12. What this tool must NOT be used for

This self-assessment must not be used to:

- assess motivation or attitude
- deny future opportunities
- require disclosure
- compare staff

- justify performance management
- monitor regulation

If people fear consequences, honesty will disappear.

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13. Introducing this tool organisationally (best practice)

This tool works best when organisations:

- frame it as **support**, not evaluation
- model use at leadership level
- normalise fluctuating capacity
- respond with action, not debate
- allow private or partial sharing

Trust is built through **what happens after information is shared**.

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14. A brief organisational self-check (optional)

Leaders and teams may reflect:

- Can people name limits here without penalty?
- Do we adjust work when capacity shifts?
- Are we responding early… or waiting for crisis?
- Do our systems reward over-extension?

This is not an audit.
It is an **orientation question**.

A closing note for organisations

Capacity awareness is not indulgence.

It is how:

- burnout is prevented
- work quality is protected
- people stay in roles longer
- trust becomes real

When staff can name limits without fear, organisations gain **earlier, better information…** and can act before harm occurs.

This tool is not about asking people to cope better.

It is about **designing work that fits the humans doing it**.

Use what helps.
Adapt freely.
Respond with care.