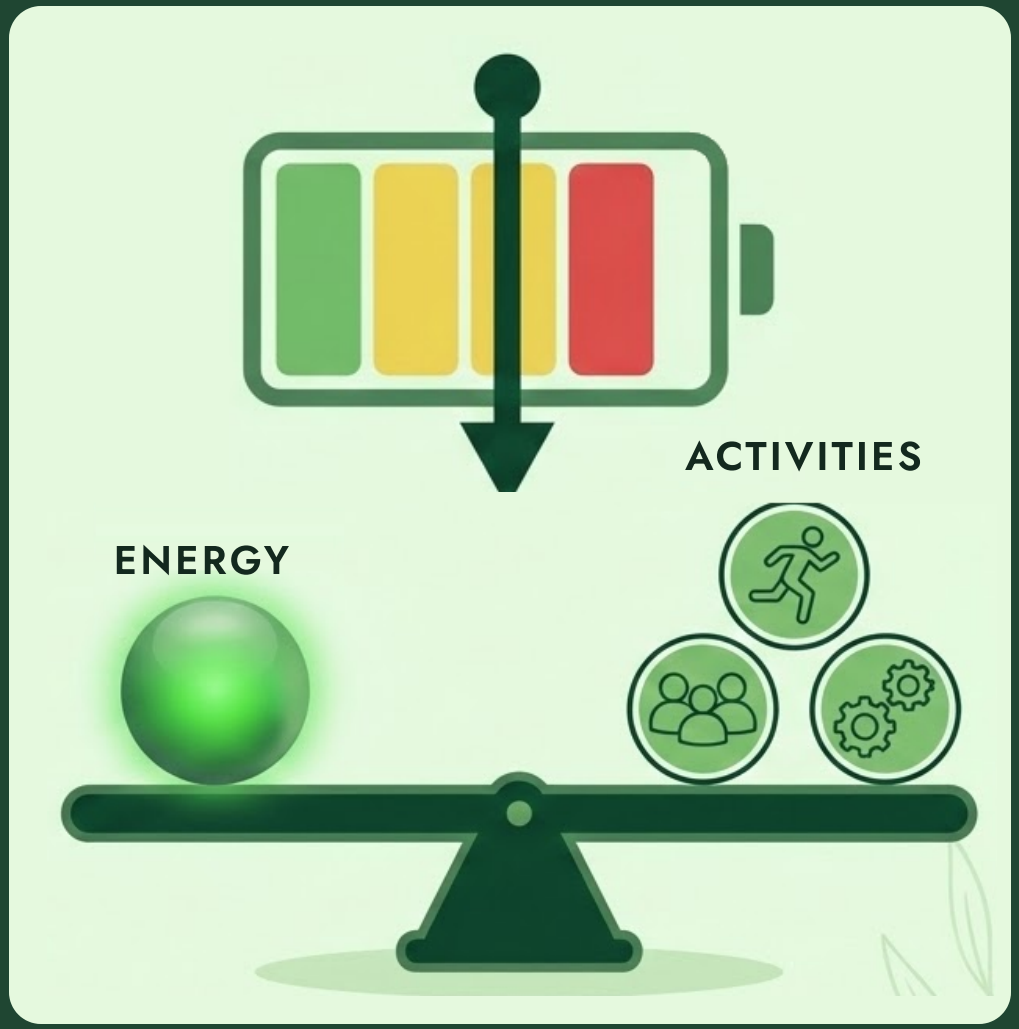
The Battery (V2.0)

Dr. Aileen Doyle, psychiatrist

A WORKSHEET FOR LEARNING TO BALANCE ACTIVITIES, ENERGY AND LIMITS THROUGHOUT THE DAY



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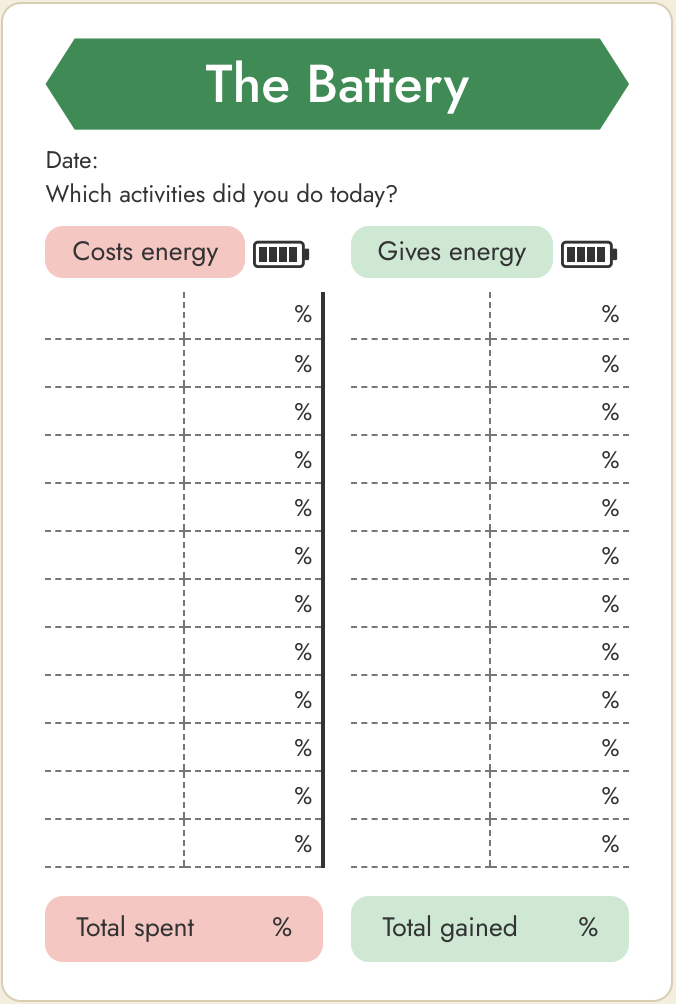
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1. “I’m tired.”

The challenge
Many people with ADHD and/or autism are **tired**.
Recognising emotions in this, let alone regulating them, is difficult. And which activities should we say no or yes to?
The Battery gives a language to talk about this and to practise it together.

The client learns step by step:

1. to check in on how much energy they have
2. to recognise what gives energy and what costs energy
3. to find a new balance in this



It is **supportive** for **anyone** with fatigue, whatever the cause. I have often used it myself to help (ND) people with depression, burnout, complaints of overstimulation and being “completely spent”.

It is a **working document**: making mistakes and learning along the way, or finding that your original ideas were right, are part of the therapeutic process. Our aim is also to bring the client from collaboration to self-direction.

The Battery

Date:

Which activities did you do today?

Costs energy		Gives energy	
	%		%
	%		%
	%		%
	%		%
	%		%
	%		%
	%		%
	%		%
	%		%
	%		%
	%		%
	%		%
	%		%
	%		%
Total spent	%	Total gained	%

The Battery

Date:

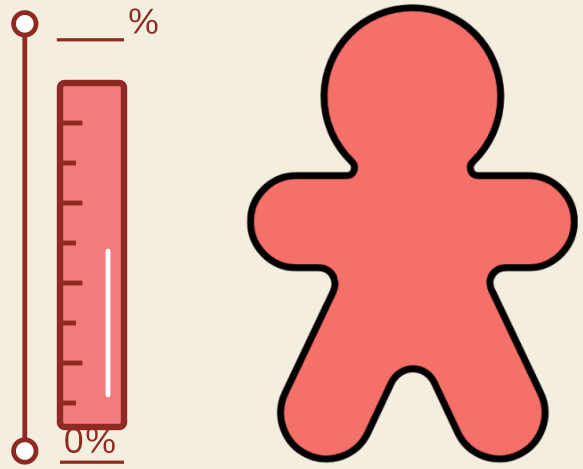
Which activities did you do today?

Costs energy		Mixed			Gives energy	
	%		%	%		%
	%		%	%		%
	%		%	%		%
	%		%	%		%
	%		%	%		%
	%		%	%		%
	%		%	%		%
	%		%	%		%
	%		%	%		%
	%		%	%		%
Total spent	%	Total mixed	%	%	Total gained	%

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Body battery

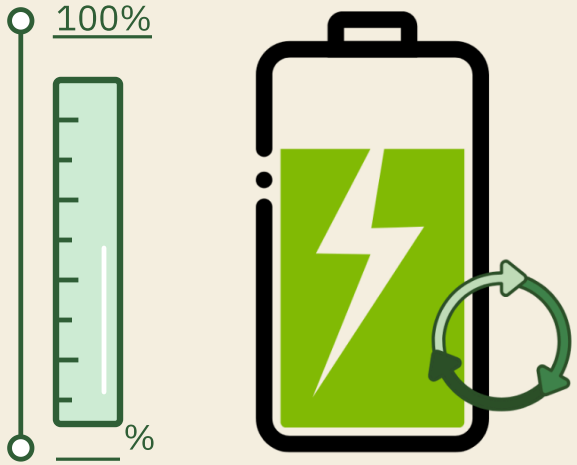
Energy buffer for short-term stress responses (fight or flight)



- Buffer for moments of crisis, unpredictability and change. Protecting it builds resilience.
- Running on it for too long leads to mental and physical complaints, and in time risks illness/burnout.
- This battery recovers much more slowly after being drained for a long time, and this can show up as depression.

Boost battery

Dynamic battery for daily charging and use



- For fun things and obligations alike, emotions, organising, processing sensory input, ...
- This battery is meant to be charged and used every day
- Recognisable when people say “I feel like doing something”

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Different kinds of use



Diagnostic

Put battery costs and leakage into perspective



Therapeutic

Teach the client to bring their battery use back into balance



Psychoeducation

About limits and needs



Communication

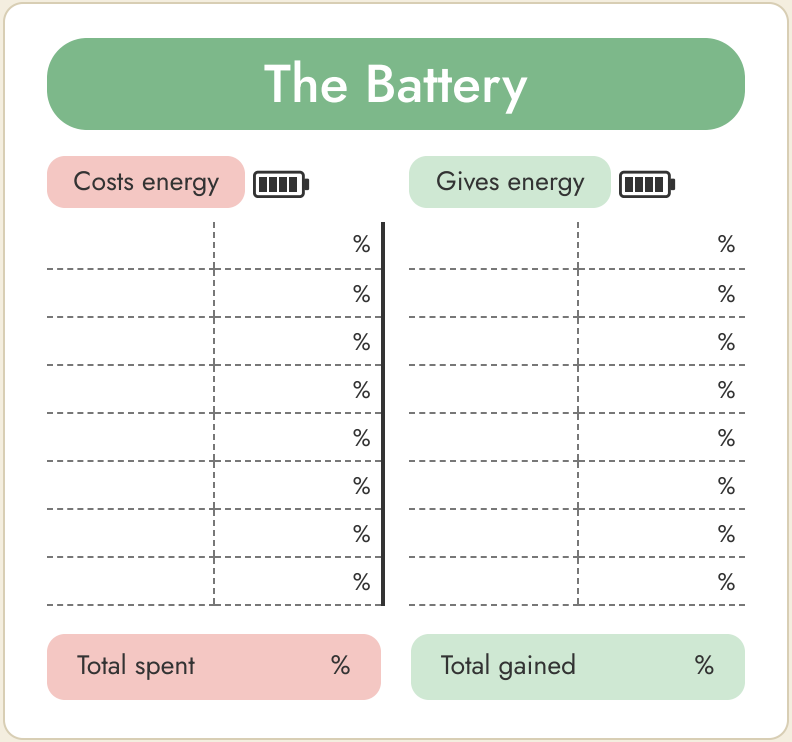
A shared language with the people around them

Other – have you used it in other ways yet? ?

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How do I use this with a client?

1. Make a list of what happened today.
2. Fill in the table and classify activities as an energy gain or an energy cost. If an activity is mixed or you are unsure, split it into smaller pieces.
3. Fill in roughly how much energy the activity gave you or cost you.
4. Add up the total gains and costs. Does it reflect how you feel? Did you forget any costs?
5. Repeat this exercise at home for several days, discuss it together and keep puzzling to discover what feels right. Did the client gain new insights? What did the client run into? Are there hidden energy costs or sources? Is it always clear which column something belongs in?



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Basic attitude: learning is a process

Approach & attitude

- Growth mindset, psychologically safe, non-judgemental, curious
- Always start from, and validate, the client's experience
- Start easy, go slow
- The client takes charge of the process

Learning & adjusting

- Learning and experimenting every week
- What doesn't go smoothly = learning information (ask "why?", adjust course)
- OVER TIME
  More pattern recognition
- OVER TIME
  More future-oriented thinking
- OVER TIME
  Energy & choices

Buffers around tiring activities

- Learning to combine activities
- Choosing assertively and saying no

Example: filling in The Battery – Step 1

What did I do / experience today?

- Sleeping in
- Taking the dog for a walk
- Going swimming
- Meeting a friend at a restaurant
- Spending an evening at home alone

Example: filling in The Battery – Step 2

Sleeping in

Taking the dog for a walk

- Hot outside
- A stranger made small talk with me
- Routine

Going swimming

- No traffic on the way
- Busy
- Fun activity

Green = energy gain **Red** = energy cost
Orange = mixed energy price, or unsure how to classify it. The activity was split into smaller parts so the balance could be drawn up more accurately.

Meeting a friend at a restaurant

- Rushing to get there on time
- Still arriving too late
- Spending time with Julie
- Menu layout completely changed
- Had pizza, my favourite food

Spending the evening alone

- Loneliness
- Cuddling the dog
- A mindfulness moment
- Listened to music

The Battery

Which activities did you do today?
Which ones cost energy, which ones gave energy?

Costs energy	
Hot day	25%
Small talk	10%
Busyness	15%
Rushing	10%
Arriving too late	15%
Menu changes	10%
Loneliness	25%
	%
	%
	%
	%
	%
Total spent	110%

Gives energy	
Sleeping in	10%
Routine	10%
No traffic	5%
Fun activity: swimming	15%
Time with Julie	50%
Favourite food: pizza	30%
Cuddling the dog	10%
Mindfulness moment	5%
Listening to music	10%
	%
	%
	%
Total gained	145%

> **“Does it reflect how you feel? Did you forget any costs?”**

Explain that every person is different, and every day is different. What gives one person energy can cost another. What costs one person 5% energy may cost someone else 50%.

The energy you start each morning with can also differ, and may never be 100%. Previous days have an impact too.

Special interests and passions are a major source of energy for neurodivergent clients.



Break

After the break, we will already go through some of the questions about The Battery

What do we learn from using The Battery over a longer period?

? Difficulties in applying it

- ↘ Chronically low body battery: “orange/red as standard”; green feels almost unrealistic
- ↘ Perfectionism around recharging and letting go of obligations → getting stuck, over-analysing
- ↘ Guilt about resting and asking for help → relational energy givers turn orange/red
- ↘ Overdrive in the boost battery: job + postgraduate course + family + training courses
- ↘ Mental “shoulds” and social scripts (family, parties, expectations) as hidden energy guzzlers

↗ Growth in insight

- ↗ **Sensing limits more finely and adjusting in time** (recognising a crash before it really crashes). A more realistic view of the battery’s starting level: working with their **own body** instead of against “the norm”
- ↗ From evaluating afterwards → planning and buffering in advance (making parties smaller, staying for a shorter time, calling in more help)
- ↗ More nuance: seeing and naming both costs and gains within the same activity
- ↗ Actively using supporters (partner, team) as co-regulation and an “external charger”

Deeper effects & take-aways for care professionals

Deeper therapeutic effects

- **Self-image**: from “I should be able to do that” → “I’m allowed to look after my energy and limits”
- Less **guilt** about resting, asking for help and saying ‘no’ – more gentleness and room to grieve
- **Assertiveness** grows: setting limits at home and at work more clearly and earlier
- More **self-acceptance** of autism and physical vulnerability → less masking, more authenticity
- The **battery lens** filters through to the family: a gentler attitude towards children, achievement and “shoulds”



Lessons for care professionals

- **The Battery**, and **growth** with it, **flourish** in a **safe context**: acknowledgement, room to remain a beginner, support in setting limits. Where possible, work with the system: partner and colleagues as co-guardians of the battery
- **“I am a learner”** as a protective identity against perfectionism and over-demanding
- Watch out for the **double empathy problem** in interactions with others: their battery is a complex factor too
- **Don’t see struggles as failure**, but as **data**: every challenge is information about battery costs and leaks

Inspiration list: categories

Variables that also play a part: time of day – energy at the start of the day – location – duration – etc.

Energy drainers

- Obligatory activities
- Emotions (all)
- Compulsive behaviour
- Organising/planning
- Worrying
- Physical complaints
- Sensory load
- Changes

Mixed

- Sensory input
- Emotions (all)
- Achieving goals
- Surprises
- Communication
- Predictability
- Social interaction
- Social activities
- Busy activities
- Work, sport

Energy givers

- Favourite activities, special interests, passions/hobbies
- Positive emotions
- Positive thoughts
- Rest/doing nothing
- Having nothing you must do
- Habits/routine
- Predictability
- A good night’s sleep

The categories above are for inspiration. Of course, for the person themselves they may fit in a different box; everyone differs in this. The client always decides, based on their own experience, feelings and trying things out, whether something gives or costs more energy. It is always interesting to look at whether the same activity still varies in how it shifts energy; curiosity is worth its weight in gold here.

Neurodivergent tips

Keep the worksheet in the same place. Give it a home.

Keep a pen at hand to fill it in. Give that a home too.

Make this home in a clearly visible place.

Make this home a comfortable, sensory-friendly environment.

Add a reminder to your phone/calendar to fill it in.

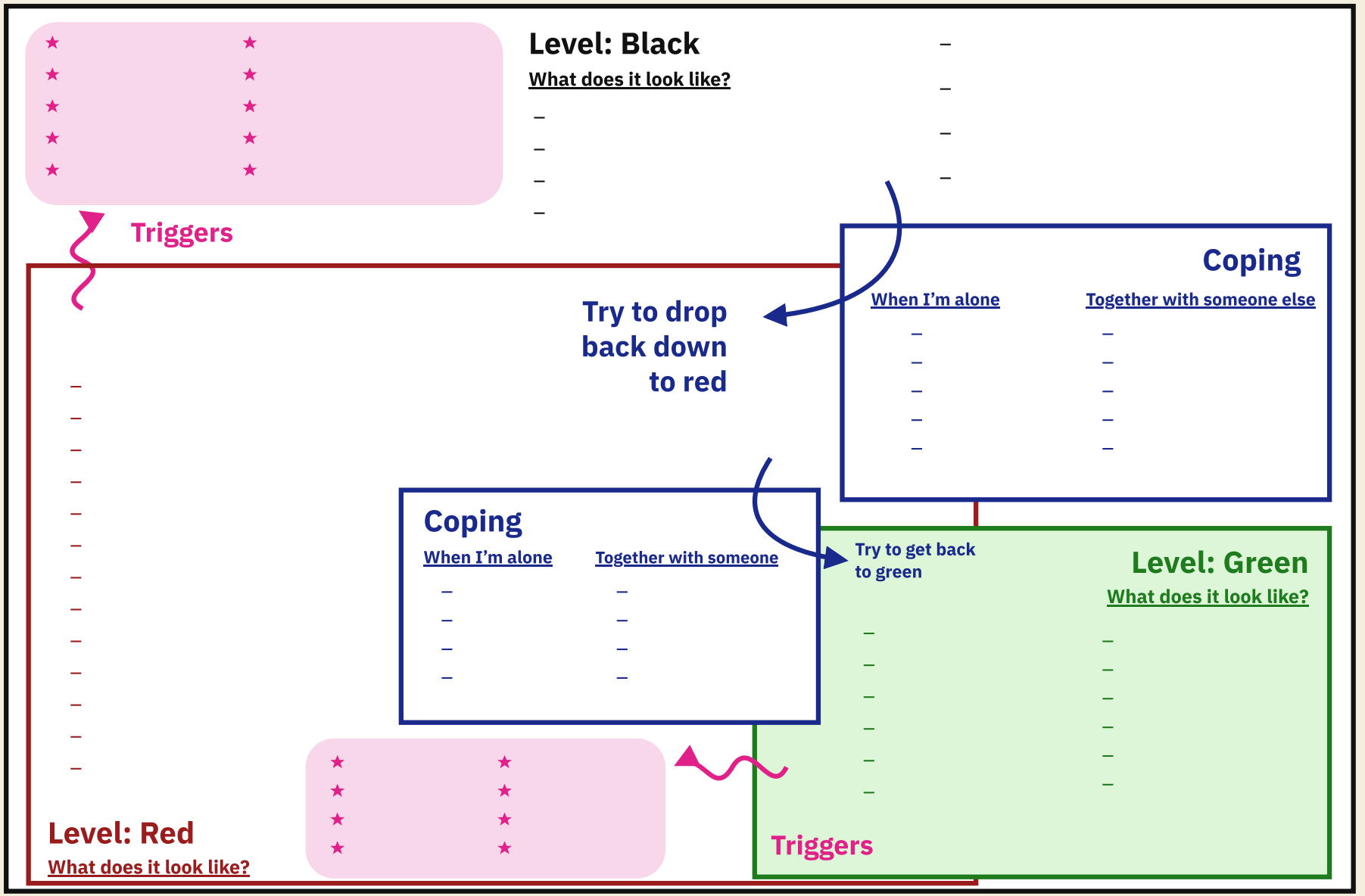
Add the exercise to an existing routine, or do it every day at the same time.

Filling in part of your day is better than filling in none of it.

If the exercise feels too big to start, plan breaks between the steps.

Ask for help with filling it in if you have trouble starting or finishing the exercise.

Signal Awareness Plan



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