

This Person Is Affecting Me

A neurodivergent space to notice what happens around a particular person.

Sometimes one relationship or interaction repeatedly changes how your body feels, how easily you can think, or how much you have to mask. This page is not asking you to label the person or decide who is 'right'. It is a place to record what actually happens to you around them.

Start with what you notice

Their intention and your impact are two different things. You can explore the impact without having to prove what another person meant.

When they are around, I...

My body immediately...

What I wish I could say without filtering it

What Is Happening Between Us?

Describe behaviour and patterns as specifically as you can.

What they do or say

Tone, criticism, repeated questions, interruptions, teasing, correction, pressure, unpredictability, dismissing, speaking for you or moving too close.

What I start doing

Explaining too much, agreeing, becoming quiet, laughing things off, apologising, monitoring them, rehearsing words, avoiding eye contact or trying to leave.

What keeps repeating

Is there a familiar sequence? What tends to happen first, next and afterwards?

What Happens Inside Me?

The effect may be physical, emotional, cognitive and sensory at the same time.

Possible reactions include: tight jaw, racing heart, nausea, pain, shaking, heat, going blank, losing words, replaying the conversation, confusion, anger, fear, shame, frustration, exhaustion, wanting to escape, needing to stim, becoming very compliant or shutting down.

In my body

In my thoughts and feelings

After the interaction is over

What Am I Masking or Holding In?

Relationships can become exhausting when your real response has nowhere to go.

What I pretend is okay

What do you minimise, laugh off, tolerate or say 'it's fine' about when it is not fine?

What I stop myself doing

Leaving, stimming, asking for clarification, saying no, correcting them, crying, resting, asking them to lower their voice or taking more time.

What I am frightened might happen if I am honest

Conflict? Rejection? Being called difficult? Being misunderstood? Upsetting them? Losing support?
Something else?

What Do I Need From This Person?

A need or boundary can be specific, practical and respectful.

Think about what would make the interaction less costly: fewer questions, slower speech, more warning, less touch, clearer wording, no teasing, time to answer, not being spoken over, permission to leave, fewer demands, written information, predictable plans or simply more space.

I need them to STOP...

I need them to START / DO DIFFERENTLY...

I need permission to...

My Space, My Voice, My Boundaries

You can recognise an impact even when you are not ready to act on it.

A message from Maggie

Some people leave us feeling settled and able to be ourselves. Others can leave our nervous system working hard long after the conversation has ended. For a neurodivergent person, that cost may include masking, decoding tone, managing sensory discomfort, trying to answer quickly, or suppressing a natural response so the other person remains comfortable. You are allowed to notice that cost. A boundary does not have to be dramatic to matter. It might be more time, less contact, a different way of communicating, a clear no, or simply recognising that you need recovery after being with someone.

The boundary or adjustment I would like

Words I could use

Example: 'I need a little more time to answer. Please don't keep asking while I am thinking.'

Further reading

- Price, D. (2022). Unmasking Autism.
- Kapp, S. K. (ed.) (2020). Autistic Community and the Neurodiversity Movement.
- National Autistic Society — communication, sensory differences and relationships.
- Rosenberg, M. B. (2015). Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life.

If an interaction involves intimidation, coercion, threats or abuse, consider appropriate specialist or safeguarding support.