

# I Need to Get Away

A neurodivergent space for the urgent feeling of needing distance, quiet or escape.

Sometimes your whole system says: I need to leave. The urge can arrive because of sensory overload, conflict, too many people, demands, touch, being watched, feeling trapped, uncertainty or simply reaching the end of your capacity. This guide helps you notice what the urge may be communicating.

## Needing distance can be information

You do not have to decide whether your reaction is 'reasonable' before noticing what is making your nervous system ask for space.

I need to get away from...

The urge feels like...

What I wish everyone would understand right now

# What Am I Trying to Get Away From?

Name the input, situation or pressure rather than blaming yourself for reacting.

## SENSORY

Noise, light, smell, touch, temperature, clothing, movement, crowds or competing input.

## PEOPLE / INTERACTION

Conflict, questions, criticism, proximity, being watched, misunderstanding, pressure or too many voices.

## DEMAND / SITUATION

Decisions, waiting, uncertainty, changed plans, expectations, loss of control, being unable to leave or too much happening at once.

# What Is My Body Doing?

The body may move towards escape before your thinking brain can explain why.

Possible signs include racing heart, shallow breathing, nausea, heat, shaking, jaw tension, pain, buzzing, pacing, scanning for exits, covering ears, crying, losing words, becoming irritable, freezing, pushing things away, needing to run or urgently needing nobody to touch you.

**The strongest physical reaction**

**What my body is trying to do**

**What makes the urge stronger**

# If I Could Leave Right Now...

Imagine the kind of space your nervous system is asking for.

## WHERE WOULD I GO?

Outside, another room, home, the car, a quiet corner, bed, somewhere dark, somewhere familiar, or simply farther away.

## WHAT WOULD BE DIFFERENT THERE?

Less noise? No questions? More space? Lower light? Familiar surroundings? Nobody touching you? More control?

## WHO — IF ANYONE — WOULD I WANT NEARBY?

Alone may feel safest. Or you may want one trusted person nearby without talking, questioning or touching.

# What Would Make This Space Safer?

Sometimes leaving is needed; sometimes changing the environment reduces the urgency.

Think about the actual load. What could change now — sound, lighting, number of people, conversation, physical distance, touch, demands, information, temperature, ability to move, access to an exit or knowing what happens next?

Something that needs to STOP

Something that needs to CHANGE

Something that would help me STAY — if I want to

# Please Don't Chase Me With Questions

Support can mean giving space without withdrawing care.

When someone is trying to get away from overload, following them, blocking the exit, demanding explanations, touching them unexpectedly or repeatedly asking 'what's wrong?' can increase the pressure. What helps will vary from person to person.

## PLEASE DON'T...

Follow me, touch me, block me, raise your voice, keep asking, demand eye contact, insist I explain immediately — or something else.

## PLEASE DO...

Give me space, lower your voice, tell me I can leave, keep an exit clear, text instead, wait nearby, reduce demands or let me come back when ready.

## HOW WILL YOU KNOW I AM READY?

What signal, message, action or amount of time might show that contact is okay again?

# Distance Can Be Part of Regulation

The aim is to understand what your nervous system is trying to protect you from.

## A message from Maggie

That sudden feeling of 'I need to get away' can be incredibly strong. Sometimes it is your nervous system recognising overload before you have words for it. You may need less sound, fewer people, no touch, more predictability or simply enough distance to think again. You do not have to stay in an overwhelming situation just to prove you can cope. Where it is safe to do so, creating space can be a sensible adjustment. The important part is learning what your body is responding to, what helps the intensity come down, and how the people around you can support you without adding more pressure.

### What I have learned about my need to get away

### Words I can use

Example: 'I am overloaded and I need to leave this space. Please give me time before asking me to explain.'

### Further reading

- National Autistic Society — sensory differences, meltdowns and shutdowns.
- Price, D. (2022). Unmasking Autism.
- Kapp, S. K. (ed.) (2020). Autistic Community and the Neurodiversity Movement.
- Raymaker, D. M. et al. (2020). Autistic burnout and exhaustion of internal resources.

For reflection and support. If you are in immediate danger, prioritise safety and seek appropriate urgent help.