

I Give Myself Permission to Cry

A safe space to release big feelings and let the tears flow

Crying does not always mean sadness.

Tears can arrive with grief, frustration, sensory overload, relief, anger, exhaustion, rejection, joy, confusion or after holding yourself together for too long. For some neurodivergent people, crying is one of the ways the nervous system releases accumulated pressure.

This guide is about removing shame from tears. You do not have to justify why you are crying, make the feeling smaller for somebody else, or stop simply because another person is uncomfortable with emotion.

I am allowed to cry before I have the words. I am allowed to cry even when I cannot explain why.

What tears might be saying

This hurts. I am overloaded. I have tried too hard for too long. I am disappointed. I feel misunderstood. I am grieving. I am relieved. I need comfort. I need space. I cannot keep masking this. I need the demands to stop.

Space to Breathe Therapy

Why crying can feel complicated

Many people learn early that tears should be hidden. They may have heard 'stop crying', 'you are too sensitive', 'there is nothing to cry about', or been praised for appearing calm. Over time, this can turn a natural emotional response into something associated with embarrassment or failure.

Neurodivergence can add additional layers

Sensory overload may create tears even when you do not feel conventionally sad. Difficulty identifying internal states can mean tears arrive before you know what emotion is present. Rejection, sudden change, social misunderstanding, demand overload or the effort of masking can also produce a strong physical release.

Crying after the event

Sometimes the tears do not come during the difficult moment. You may function through work, school, appointments or social interaction and cry only once you reach a familiar or safer environment. That delay does not make the emotion less genuine. Your system may simply have waited until it had enough safety to release.

Tears do not need a courtroom argument. A feeling can be real without being proved.

Things I notice before tears

A tight throat; burning or heavy eyes; pressure behind the face; holding the breath; a shaky voice; irritability; wanting to escape; going quiet; losing words; feeling suddenly young or vulnerable; needing somebody to stop asking questions.

Letting myself cry safely

There is no requirement to make yourself cry, and there is no correct amount of crying. Permission means allowing what is already there rather than forcing or suppressing it.

Create less demand

Move somewhere quieter if possible. Reduce conversation. Dim harsh lighting. Get comfortable. Remove irritating textures. Let yourself sit, lie down, curl up, pace or rock if that is what your body needs.

Choose connection or privacy

Some people want somebody nearby; others cannot cry while being watched. You can ask for silent company, a hug if touch is welcome, practical help, or complete space. Your preference can change from one occasion to another.

Do not rush the explanation

If words are difficult, try a short phrase: 'I am overloaded', 'I cannot talk yet', 'please stay', 'please give me space', or 'I don't know what I feel yet'. You can explain more later if you want to.

My crying support plan

When tears start, I would like: _____

Please do not: _____

Sensory things that help: _____

If I cannot speak, I can communicate by: _____

Afterwards I usually need: _____

MY CRY PAGE

No fixing it. No explaining it. No telling yourself you should be over it.

LET THE TEARS HAVE SOMEWHERE TO GO

SAD HURT OVERWHELMED

I DON'T HAVE TO HOLD IT TOGETHER
HERE

I CAN CRY. I CAN FEEL IT.

What is underneath my tears?

Write, scribble, draw, use one word repeatedly, or leave this space blank and simply sit with what is happening.

Right now, my body needs...

quiet • comfort • space • movement • less sound • less light • water • rest • somebody nearby • no questions
• something else

After the tears

Crying can leave the body tired, headachy, thirsty, shaky, numb or calmer. Your eyes may feel sore and you may have very little capacity for conversation. Recovery can be deliberately low-demand.

Gentle aftercare

Drink something if you can. Rest your eyes. Reduce sensory input. Choose familiar clothing and surroundings. Eat a manageable food if you are able. Delay difficult conversations until you have more capacity. If crying has been intense, allow yourself to recover rather than immediately returning to productivity.

What contributed?

Later, not necessarily immediately, consider what your tears may have been responding to. Was there too much sensory input? A change? Conflict? Rejection? Grief? Exhaustion? A demand you could not meet? Did you need a boundary or adjustment earlier?

My early warning signs

I notice: _____

The situations that often precede tears are: _____

One thing I can reduce sooner is: _____

One thing I can ask for sooner is: _____

I do not have to be ashamed of the way my body releases emotion.

A message from me

If you have been called too sensitive, you may have learned to apologise for your tears before you even understand why they are there. You may wipe them away quickly, turn your face, laugh them off, or try desperately to keep functioning so nobody sees how much something has affected you.

I want this page to give you another option. You can let the tears come. You can stop explaining for a moment. You can recognise that your body may be releasing something your words have not caught up with yet.

Crying does not mean you are weak. It does not mean the situation was objectively enormous. Sometimes it means your nervous system has been carrying an enormous amount.

You are allowed to need comfort. You are allowed to need privacy. You are allowed to cry and still be strong, capable and completely yourself.

Books and useful reading

Devon Price — *Unmasking Autism*. Explores autistic masking, identity and the cost of continually suppressing authentic needs.

Luke Beardon — *Avoiding Anxiety in Autistic Adults*. An autism-informed exploration of anxiety and environmental factors.

Barry M. Prizant with Tom Fields-Meyer — *Uniquely Human*. Encourages understanding autistic behaviour as meaningful communication.

Evidence-informed references

NICE CG142: Autism spectrum disorder in adults: diagnosis and management. NICE CG170: Autism spectrum disorder in under 19s: support and management. National Autistic Society resources on sensory differences, meltdowns, shutdowns and emotional regulation.

This resource is educational and supportive and does not replace individual medical or mental-health assessment. Persistent or unexplained changes in crying, severe distress, or concerns about safety deserve appropriate professional support.