

# My Energy Budget

Understanding your capacity, noticing hidden energy costs and making choices that leave something in reserve.

*Awareness • Balance • Boundaries • Recovery*

We often plan life as though time and energy are the same thing. If there are two free hours in the diary, it can look as though there are two hours available to use. But capacity does not work like that. You can have time and still have very little physical, emotional, mental, social or sensory energy left. On another day, the same task may feel manageable. An energy budget helps you notice that difference without turning it into a judgement about effort, motivation or worth.

This is not about measuring yourself perfectly. It is about becoming more curious about what drains you, what restores you, what has a delayed cost and what helps you stay within a level of demand that your body and mind can realistically carry.

## 1. Time available is not energy available

A diary can tell you where your time is going, but it cannot tell you what each activity costs. A twenty-minute phone call, a supermarket trip, a difficult conversation, masking through a meeting, travelling somewhere unfamiliar or making several decisions can use very different amounts of energy. The cost can also change depending on sleep, stress, sensory load, health, uncertainty and what has already happened that day.

**Where do I currently assume that having time means I should have the energy?**

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## 2. My different kinds of energy

Energy is not one single tank. Physical energy may be reasonable while social energy is empty. You may be able to sit at a computer but not process another decision. You may want company but have no capacity for noise or conversation. Looking at different areas separately can make your needs easier to understand.

| Energy area | What can use it                                           | How I notice it is running low |
|-------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Physical    | movement, pain, sleep loss, illness, long days            |                                |
| Mental      | decisions, planning, remembering, switching tasks         |                                |
| Emotional   | worry, conflict, caring, uncertainty, holding feelings in |                                |
| Social      | conversation, groups, masking, being available to others  |                                |
| Sensory     | noise, light, smells, crowds, touch, busy environments    |                                |

### Which type of energy seems to run out first for me?

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## 3. The hidden cost

Some activities use more energy than anybody else can see. Preparing to leave the house, rehearsing what to say, coping with a change of plan, interpreting tone, trying not to show distress, remembering several instructions or recovering after a socially demanding event can all be part of the real cost. If you only count the visible task, you may repeatedly underestimate what you are spending.

### What are my hidden energy costs?

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## 4. Energy in and energy out

It can help to think like a budget rather than a productivity plan. Some things are necessary expenses. Some are chosen because they matter. Some are avoidable drains. Some activities restore energy, while others do not give energy back but still bring meaning, connection or enjoyment. The aim is not to remove every demand; it is to understand the pattern well enough to make informed choices.

**Things that regularly take a lot of energy from me...**

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**Things that help me recover, settle or feel more resourced...**

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## 5. The delayed bill

A common difficulty is being able to do something in the moment and only feeling the cost afterwards. You may get through the appointment, family event, workday or journey and then need hours or days to recover. That delayed exhaustion still belongs in the budget. Capacity should be judged by the whole cycle - preparation, the activity itself and recovery - rather than whether you managed to push through it at the time.

**What do I often manage at the time but pay for afterwards?**

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## 6. Overspending my energy

When we repeatedly spend beyond our capacity, the signs may appear as irritability, brain fog, tearfulness, headaches, shutting down, withdrawing, becoming unusually sensitive to noise, losing words, struggling to make decisions, feeling physically heavy or needing to cancel everything. Your signs may be different. Learning the earlier ones can give you more opportunity to respond before you reach empty.

**My early warning signs that my energy budget is getting too low...**

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**My signs that I have already gone beyond my limit...**

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## 7. Boundaries are part of the budget

Protecting energy sometimes means changing the way something is done rather than refusing it completely. You might shorten a visit, ask for information in writing, build in quiet time after an appointment, avoid stacking demanding activities together, share a household task, wear headphones, take a break before you feel desperate for one, or say that you cannot commit yet. Boundaries are practical ways of deciding where limited capacity is spent.

**One boundary or adjustment that could protect my energy this week...**

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## 8. My Energy Budget

Use this as a flexible check-in. Your budget will not be identical every day, and that is the point. Start with what you actually have rather than what you think you should have.

| Today                                 | My notes |
|---------------------------------------|----------|
| My starting energy feels...           |          |
| Essential energy spending             |          |
| Optional energy spending              |          |
| What may have a delayed cost?         |          |
| What recovery do I need to allow for? |          |
| What can wait, change or be shared?   |          |
| What do I want to keep in reserve?    |          |

### A message from Maggie

You do not have to earn rest by completely emptying yourself first. One of the most useful things we can learn is that capacity changes. The same person can have a very different amount available from one day to the next, and the same task can carry a very different cost depending on everything surrounding it.

Try to notice your energy before you automatically spend it. Ask what the whole task will cost, including the part nobody sees and the recovery afterwards. Keeping something in reserve is not wasting potential. Sometimes it is what allows you to stay connected to yourself, to the people you care about and to the parts of life that matter most.

#### Space to Breathe Therapy

Reflective & Intentional Living