My Calm and Regulation Plan

Understanding overwhelm and recognising my needs

Understanding overwhelm

Overwhelm may build gradually or arrive suddenly. Sensory input, uncertainty, social demands, accumulated stress, pain, fatigue or feeling unsafe can reduce our ability to process and respond. This is not a personal failure.

Possible triggers and early signals

Sensory input
Noise, light, smells, touch or busy spaces

Too many demands
Several tasks, decisions or interruptions

Uncertainty
Unexpected changes and unclear expectations

Social pressure
Masking, conversation demands or conflict

Body needs
Hunger, pain, fatigue or poor sleep

Safety and emotion
Anxiety, memories or feeling trapped

My early warning signs might include:

Situations or environments that tend to increase overwhelm:

A useful plan starts with noticing what is difficult, not judging yourself for finding it difficult.

Gentle Regulation Strategies

Find what supports you before, during and after overwhelm

1. Grounding and orientation

Notice your surroundings or a familiar object. Breathing exercises are optional; skip anything that increases discomfort.

2. Sensory support

Reduce noise or light, change your environment, use a familiar texture or sensory tool, and allow movement or quiet.

3. Reduce the demand

Pause, break down tasks, delay non-urgent decisions, or agree a simple signal meaning you need a break.

4. Accessible communication

Use writing, gesture, communication cards or extra processing time. Speaking may be difficult during overwhelm.

5. Recovery without pressure

Rest, predictable activities, gentle movement and less stimulation may help. Recovery times differ.

My regulation toolkit

Things that help me feel more settled:

Things other people can do to make this easier:

My Calm and Regulation Plan

Before, during and after overwhelm

BEFORE OVERWHELM

What are my early signals? What can I change in advance?

What might help me reduce the pressure?

DURING OVERWHELM

What should happen immediately to reduce demands?

How can I communicate if words are difficult?

AFTER OVERWHELM

What recovery time or environment might help?

What should others understand about checking in?

My reminder

I can pause, ask for support, adjust demands and take time to recover. Regulation is individual, and I do not have to do everything at once.

If overwhelm brings immediate safety concerns, follow an appropriate safety or crisis plan. In a UK emergency, call 999. This workbook is educational and not a substitute for individual medical or psychological support.