# Understanding My Stress Responses

Notice how stress affects you and recognise when additional support may be helpful.

Stress is a natural response to demands. When pressure continues or becomes overwhelming, it can affect concentration, energy, emotions and physical comfort. Responses differ from person to person.

### Stress signals I might notice

- [ ] Difficulty concentrating or making decisions
- [ ] Feeling mentally overloaded
- [ ] Muscle tension or headaches
- [ ] Changes in sleep or energy
- [ ] Increased sensory sensitivity
- [ ] Feeling irritable or more emotional
- [ ] Needing more time to recover

### What are my earliest signs of stress?

### What situations or demands tend to increase my stress?

### How do I recognise when I need additional support?

There is no single correct way to experience stress. Your signals and support needs are personal.

# Creating Predictability

Consider routines and expectations that could make your day easier to navigate.

Predictability can reduce uncertainty and the effort of repeatedly working out what comes next. A helpful routine can be flexible rather than rigid.

**What helps my day feel manageable?**

- [ ] Knowing what to expect
- [ ] Having a flexible routine
- [ ] Planning transitions between activities
- [ ] Breaking tasks into smaller steps
- [ ] Allowing time to prepare
- [ ] Using reminders or visual prompts
- [ ] Knowing which tasks matter most

**Which parts of my day feel most unpredictable?**

**What small changes could make these situations easier?**

**What routines or reminders already help me?**

A routine should support your needs. It is okay to change it when your energy or circumstances change.

# Supporting My Sensory Needs

Identify sensory demands and adjustments that could make environments more comfortable.

Sound, light, movement, temperature and other sensory experiences can add to stress. Noticing which environments affect you may help you plan changes.

**Sensory demands that may affect me**

- [ ] Bright or flickering lighting
- [ ] Background noise or interruptions
- [ ] Crowded environments
- [ ] Strong smells
- [ ] Temperature changes
- [ ] Uncomfortable clothing or textures
- [ ] Too much visual information

**Which sensory experiences increase my stress?**

**What changes help me feel more comfortable?**

**Where might I need additional sensory support?**

Reducing sensory demands is a valid support strategy. Different environments work for different people.

# Making Space for Recovery

Recognise when you need rest and what genuinely helps you recover.

Recovery may mean rest, lower demands, movement, connection or time alone. What helps can vary from day to day, and rest does not need to be earned.

**Ways I might recover**

- [ ] Quiet time or fewer demands
- [ ] Gentle movement or stretching
- [ ] Time outdoors
- [ ] Rest without expectations
- [ ] Time with supportive people
- [ ] Enjoyable or absorbing activities
- [ ] Reducing sensory input

**How do I recognise when I need recovery time?**

**Which activities genuinely help me feel restored?**

**What would make recovery more accessible?**

If demands are unsustainable, changing the demands may matter more than adding another coping activity.

# Finding Helpful Grounding Strategies

Choose supportive approaches that feel comfortable and realistic for you.

Grounding can help some people orient themselves during stress. You can adapt or skip any approach that feels uncomfortable. Breathing exercises are optional.

**1. Notice your surroundings**

Identify something you can see, hear or feel.

**2. Change your environment**

Move somewhere quieter or more comfortable, if possible.

**3. Release physical tension**

Adjust your posture or try gentle movement.

**4. Reduce immediate demands**

Focus on one manageable action or pause a task.

**5. Connect with support**

Ask for reassurance, practical help or additional time.

**Which approaches feel comfortable for me?**

**Are there any approaches I would prefer to avoid?**

**What could I try when stress begins to increase?**

# My Personal Stress Support Plan

Bring together your early signs, helpful adjustments and manageable next steps.

Use this page as a personal reference. You can complete it digitally, print it or revisit it whenever your needs change.

### My early stress signals

### My main stressors

### What helps me feel prepared

### My sensory adjustments

### My recovery strategies

### My next steps

This plan can change with you. Asking for support or reducing pressure is a meaningful next step.