

My Mental Battery

Teacher notes



About this resource

This resource is for small group work or PSHE lessons with students from Year 8 upwards. It is designed to help students manage stress, anxiety and things that they find emotionally draining, whilst identifying things that can boost their personal resilience.

Energy accounting

The idea of energy accounting was first outlined by Maja Toudal, an autistic psychologist, speaker and author and Dr Tony Attwood, a leading autism expert. It is a commonly used tool to help autistic people manage their energy levels and avoid burnout.

This resource draws on a lot of the same principles, but rather than just looking at daily tasks that drain our energy, it also looks at thought patterns, negative beliefs and future events that can make children anxious, worried or stressed.

Our **energy accounting tracker** (see appendix) provides a more granular daily activity tracker, which some neurodiverse individuals may find particularly helpful.

Find out more about energy accounting:

dralicenicholls.com/energy-accounting-in-autistic-burnout/

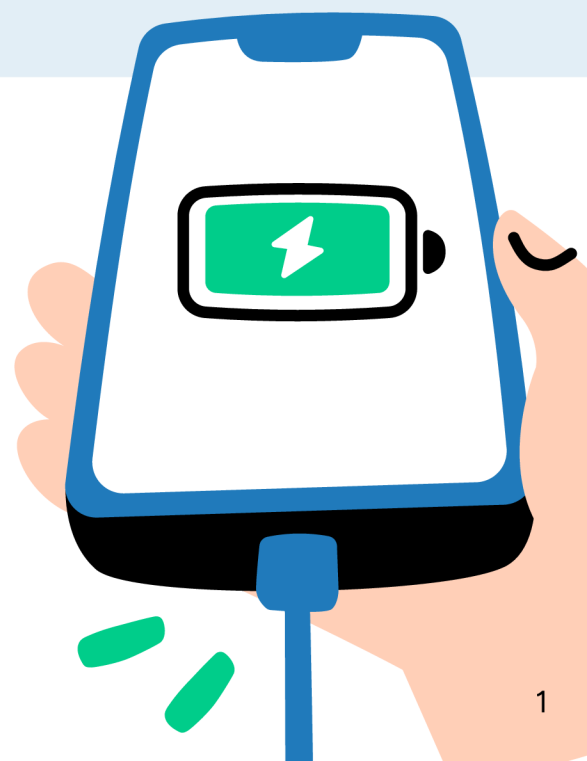
7 types of rest

This resource also broadly aligns with the concept of the seven types of rest outlined by Sandra Dalton-Smith.

Although we may think that getting more sleep will cure our mental fatigue, more often than not it's only part of the solution.

You can find out more about the seven types of rest here:

calm.com/blog/7-types-of-rest



My Mental Battery

Why our brains are like our smartphones



We all have a mental battery that can sometimes be drained by routine or unusual things happening in our everyday lives. It can also feel like we have too many apps open at one time sapping our sensory, cognitive, social and emotional processing power.

Just as when we notice our smartphone battery running low we take steps to charge it, we should do the same thing for our mental battery.



What happens when our battery gets too low?

If we don't address this, we can end up feeling overwhelmed and give in to negative beliefs about ourselves and others. Everyday activities may start to feel exhausting and can also generate conflict with friends, family or teachers - which we have to spend more energy to fix!

When it comes to restoring our energy, it might be helpful to think of the status of our smaller, interrelated batteries.



Social battery:

Our ability to navigate existing and new relationships.



Cognitive battery:

The way we learn and acquire knowledge.



Sensory battery:

Our ability to process and filter sensory input.



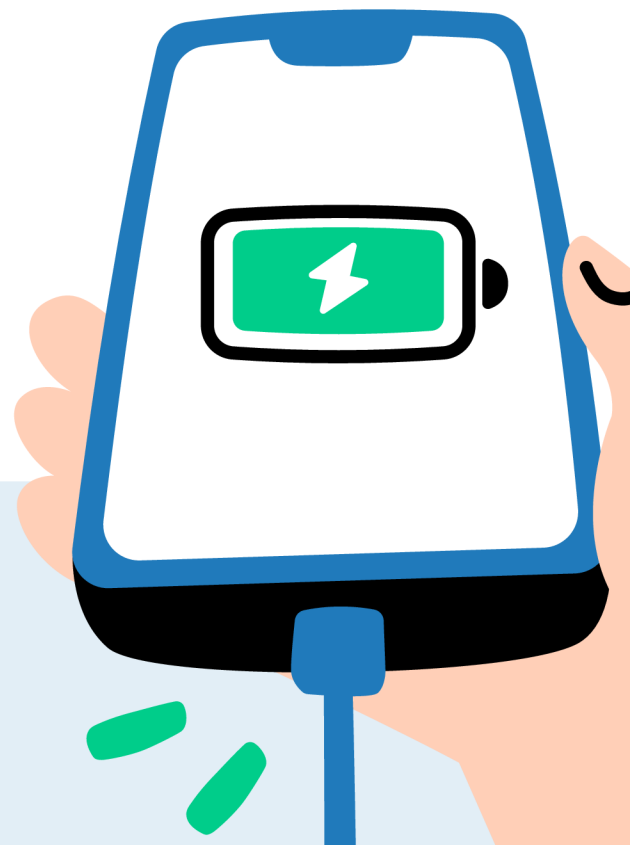
Emotional battery:

Our capacity for handling stress, regulating our own emotions, and absorbing those of others.



Every one of us is different. What drains one person's battery will not be the same as what drains another's.

It's not just about being introverted or extroverted, or neurodiverse or neurotypical, it's about our own unique brains, upbringing and social environment.



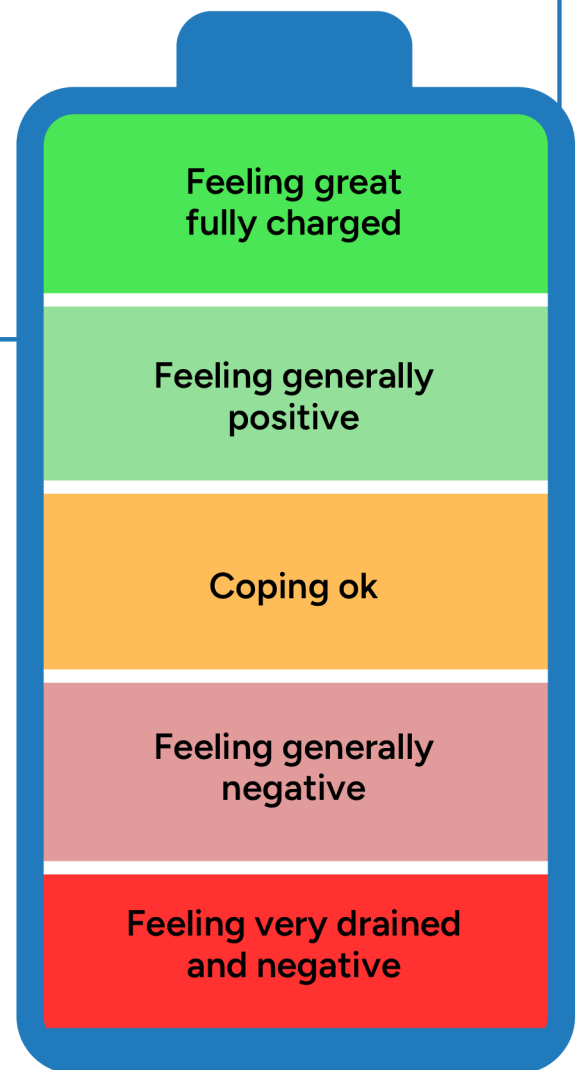
My Mental Battery

What does a high/low battery feel like?



Think for a moment what a **fully charged** battery feels like for you? You can choose one particular battery or think of your combined mood battery.

What does a **very low battery** feel like for you?
Can you think of an activity or situation when this applied?



Take a moment to think about where on the scale you feel you are right now.

My Mental Battery

Things that can drain our battery



Below are some things that can drain our batteries.
Start thinking: Do any apply to me?

Social battery

- Socialising a lot more than I'm used to
- Too much time away from my friends
- Not enough time on my own
- Being asked to present in front of a group
- Partner work with people I don't usually work with
- Pretending to be someone I'm not

Cognitive battery

- Not knowing how to get started with assignments
- Being given too many instructions at once
- Being able to finish assignments
- Difficulties with a particular subject
- Too much content to take in at once
- Starting too many projects at once

Sensory battery

- Overwhelming textures, sounds or lights
- People talking loudly or shouting
- Too much time indoors and not enough in nature
- Restrictive uniform
- Overheated classrooms
- Missing sunlight in winter time
- Taking the bus to school

Emotional battery

- Going out of our way to please other people
- Supporting friends going through tough times
- Worrying about things going on in the world
- Worrying about things going on in my family
- Anxiety over exams and deadlines
- Worrying about my appearance
- Controlling relationships or break-ups

What drains our resilience?

We all have an inherent ability to cope with stressful events. There are however certain factors that can **negatively impact** what we can normally tolerate.

Examples:

Digital habits:

Excessive time reading the news
Doom scrolling on social media

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Personal relationships:

High expectations from others
Loss of key person to confide in
Caring responsibilities
Changes at home

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Physical:

Unhelpful bodily monitoring
Smoking/drinking/drug taking
Poor diet/exercise/sleep and hunger

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Traumatic events

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Losing your sense of purpose

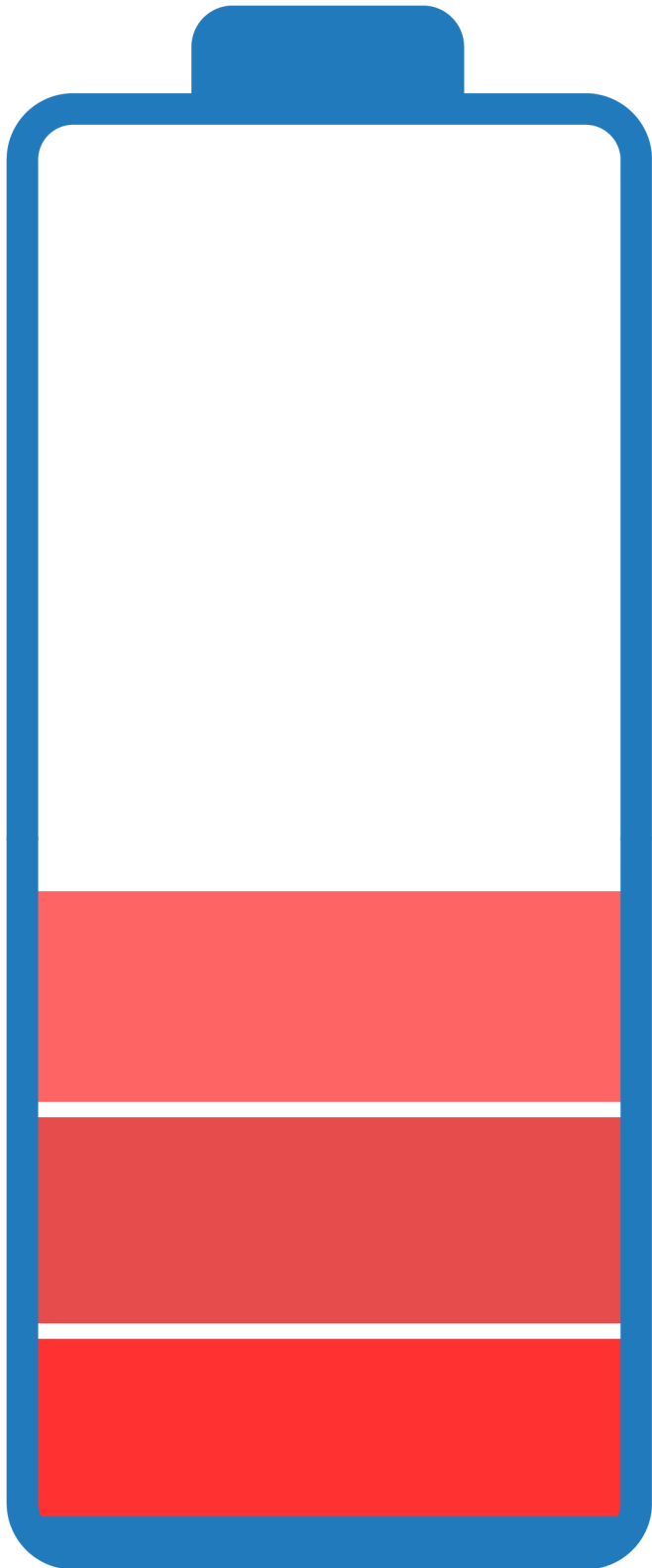
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Life events:

Last-minute changes
Difficult life transitions

My Mental Battery

What typically drains my battery?



Take a moment to **list 5 things** that typically drain your battery.

Tip - the more specific the better!

Now **list 3 things** in the past week that have drained it.

My Mental Battery

Types of rest that can charge our battery



Here are some examples of things that can charge our battery.

Put a tick in the box against any that work for you and start thinking about new things for each category.

SOCIAL REST (OR RECONNECTION)

- ☐ Having more alone time
- ☐ Spending time with people I can be myself around
- ☐ Less time with people who drain my battery
- ☐ Doing a fun activity with a group of friends
- ☐ Break from instantly replying to messages

CREATIVE CONNECTION

- ☐ Creating a song/poem/comic
- ☐ Baking or cooking for someone
- ☐ Painting/mindful colouring in
- ☐ Creating video content
- ☐ Playing an instrument

SENSORY REST

- ☐ Quiet periods
- ☐ Relaxing bath
- ☐ Stimming
- ☐ 10 minutes focusing on just one food/drink
- ☐ Phone on Greyscale

CONNECTING WITH NATURE

- ☐ Playing a new game with a pet
- ☐ Getting out in nature
- ☐ Helping in the garden
- ☐ Noticing my surroundings going to/from school
- ☐ Horse riding

INNER PURPOSE

- ☐ Volunteering in the community
- ☐ Attending a faith group
- ☐ Volunteering in school
- ☐ Listening to an inspiring podcast or book
- ☐ Doing something positive for animals or the planet

EMOTIONAL REST/RELEASE

- ☐ Being your authentic self
- ☐ 20 mins to let out your feelings in your bedroom
- ☐ Talking to a trusted adult
- ☐ Calling a close friend to express true feelings
- ☐ Spending time with your pet/animals

COGNITIVE REST

- ☐ Study breaks
- ☐ Meditation
- ☐ Making a weekly plan
- ☐ Reading a novel or listening to audiobook
- ☐ Watching a film/playing a video game

PHYSICAL REST/RELEASE

- ☐ Moderate solo exercise
- ☐ Let it out! Intense exercise
- ☐ Repetitive exercise e.g. bouncing a ball
- ☐ Getting an early night
- ☐ Yoga/stretching

My Mental Battery

What can we do to manage stress?



What is stress and how can we manage it?

When we feel under pressure, or worried about something we think is out of our immediate control, we are experiencing stress. Our body produces hormones, like cortisol, that trigger a fight or flight response.

Stress isn't always bad! It can help you stay focused or do something important, like studying for that big test, going on stage or playing a big match. This is good stress. If you experience too much stress, or feel stressed for a long time, that's when you can become unwell and should ask for help.

Physical ways to get rid of stress

- Regular exercise
- Drinking plenty of water
- Progressive muscle relaxation
- Warm baths
- Alternating hot/cold shower (30 seconds - 1 minute cold shower)
- Breathing techniques
- Starting a better sleep routine

Organisational/mood boosting tips

- Break down tasks into smaller chunks
- Create a visual map of the week(s) up until your deadline. Rank and prioritise your tasks then add them to the map.
- Time box your study periods/evening and weekends. Set-aside a certain amount of time for different types of study and relaxation tasks.
- Keep a gratitude journal
- Devote 20 minutes to organising your bedroom as well as your school bag.



IN FOCUS: Cyclic Sighing

A technique studied by Dr. Andrew Huberman and his colleagues at Stanford University.

Step 1: Inhale deeply through your nose for about 4-5 seconds.

Step 2: Just before you finish inhaling, take a short, sharp second inhale to fully expand your lungs.

Step 3: Exhale slowly and completely through your mouth for 6-8 seconds, longer than the inhale.



IN FOCUS: Positive Affirmations

Positive neuroplasticity is the idea that we can train our brain to form new neural connections throughout life that promote happiness, resilience, learning, and well-being.

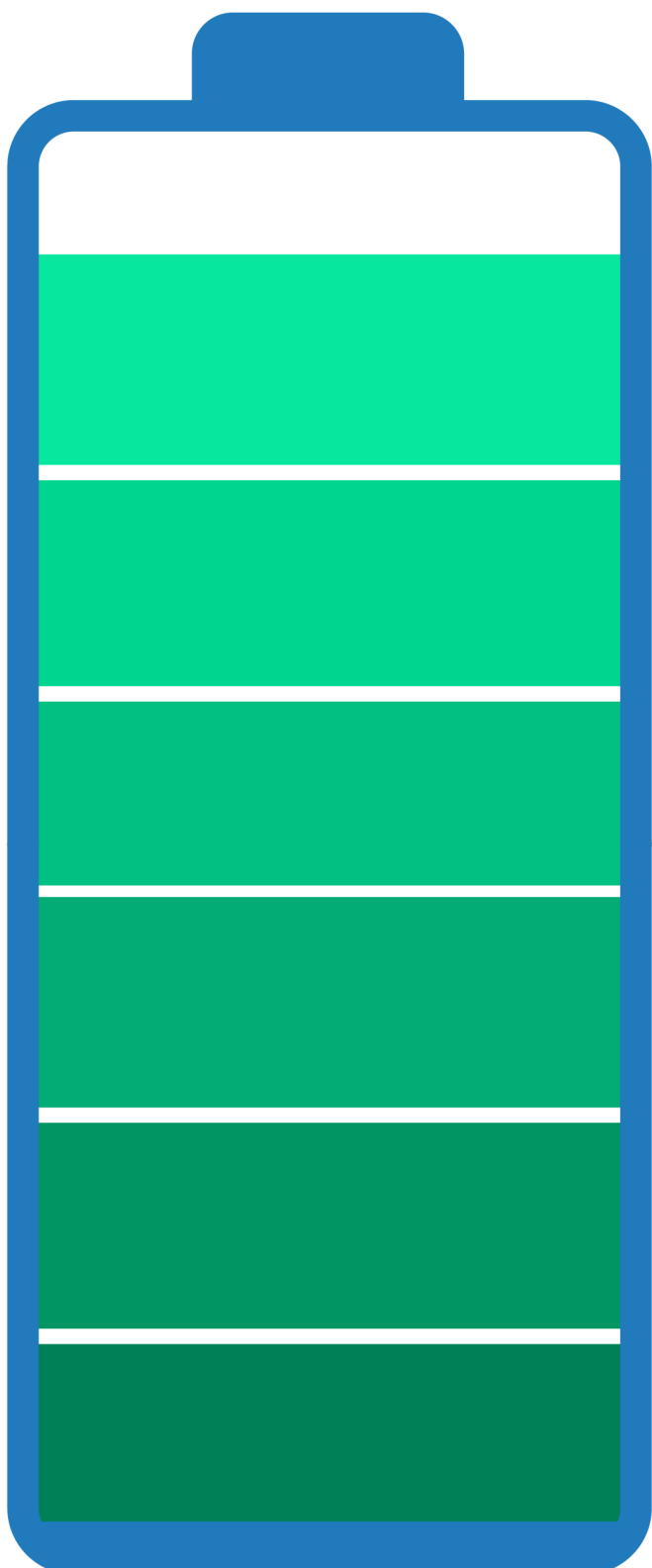
One way to do this is through regular repetition of powerful statements to build confidence.

Pick a positive affirmation that resonates with you and try to say it with meaning when you wake up in the morning and before bedtime. For example:

- "I am capable of handling challenges."
- "I am worthy of investing in myself."
- "I can learn and grow every day."

My Mental Battery

What charges my battery?



Take a moment to **list 8 things** that charge your battery.

TIP: The more specific the better! You may want to select one from each of the eight categories on page five but you don't have to.

Now **list 6 things** in the past week that have charged it.

This can be as simple as feeling the sun on your face!

My Mental Battery

Activities



Interview a friend

Get into pairs. Ask your friend if they are happy to share three things that drain their battery and four things that charge it.

Write them down on a piece of paper and then pop it into a box on the desk for your teacher. Maybe there are some recharging activities you and your partner could share with the group?

Letter to my future self

Imagine yourself in three month's time. Write a short letter to your future self and tell them what you plan to do between now and then in order to help them feel mentally energised.

New charging ideas

Pick any one of the batteries that you would like to focus on (emotional, social, cognitive or sensory) Write **3 new ideas** for ways to recharge it.

Self-help plan

Use the weekly planner templates provided. Spend one week reflecting on what drained your battery and what charged it. Jot down some notes at the end of each day. Then make a plan for some battery charging activities the following week!



IN FOCUS: Mental health apps

Time away from scrolling on our phones might be just what we need to recharge our mental battery - but we can also use phones to our advantage.

There are some great evidence-backed mental health apps that help you focus and track your wellbeing, from practising mindfulness to managing anxiety.

Take a look at:

camhs-resources.co.uk/apps-1

