

National Autistic Society

Know yourself series

A graphic consisting of two overlapping circles, one pink and one purple, positioned in the bottom right corner of the cover.

**A guide
to energy
accounting**

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Welcome

Welcome to the **energy accounting** guide from our ***Know yourself series***.

This guide will explore how to manage your energy levels using a technique called **energy accounting**.

We know how important it is to hear directly from others just like you when learning about yourself; that's why all resources from our *Know yourself series* are written and led by autistic people.

How this guide will work

Firstly, if you haven't already seen our video on energy accounting from our autistic young ambassadors, then it's the best place to start.

Check it out by [clicking here](#) (or visit www.autism.org.uk/Knowyourself)

Throughout this guide we share some information, followed by worksheets for you to choose from to explore how energy accounting could help you.



Introduction

Everyone has things in their life that use up lots of energy when you do them (this could be things you enjoy or things you find stressful). There will also be things that can give you energy (this could also be things you enjoy or things that are important to do to help you have energy). This booklet is going to introduce the idea of energy accounting (how to manage your energy levels) to support you to live the life you choose.

Energy accounting is an idea developed by autistic psychologist, Maja Toudal.

It uses the idea of a bank account, where the withdrawals and deposits are energy rather than money.

Many autistic people find this idea useful as it provides a way of thinking about managing stress and energy levels. Energy accounting is something that you can use yourself, or that others around you can help you with.

Here's some of the things that our young ambassadors told us about their energy accounting:



"I can think of my day as having a battery... so if I'm having meetings, that's going to take a lot of my battery, or if I'm speaking or watching Netflix, that will take very little and help recharge that battery."

Zeze

"I have different colour coding in my calendar.

So I know that if there's a social event, which is in red, then the next day I need time to recover.

But if it's a green event, which is personal, I know it won't exhaust me as much, and I can schedule as many of them as possible."

Izzy

"Some things that exhaust me also energise me quite a lot."

Max

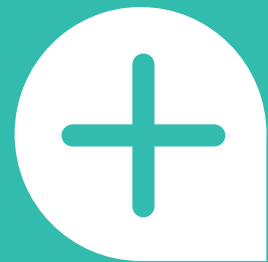
Energy accounting

Energy accounting means **working out what gives or takes away your energy**. The aim of this is to allow you to manage your energy by making sure you are not doing too many of the things that could lead you to becoming overwhelmed or exhausted.

Everyone collects energy and 'recharges their battery' in different ways.

Things that give me energy:

- walks and nature
- quiet time alone
- listening to train and bus sounds
- being in an environment I feel comfortable in
- watching Netflix.



Things that reduce my energy:

- being in noisy places
- switching between tasks
- masking
- smiling all the time and being nice
- being out of the house.



There are many ways to do energy accounting, some might use **colour-coded systems**; others might use **number rating systems**.

If you are using one of these energy accounting systems, **it is important to end your day with either a positive number or more green events** than red.

As you get older, having an occasional red or negative number day might be ok for you, as long as you build up your energy again as soon as possible.



What makes you anxious?

Anxiety is a part of life, everyone gets anxious at times. Anxiety is a feeling of worry, fear or nervousness.

Anxiety can be a useful state in the short term as it alerts you to potential dangers or threats and lets you respond quickly. Anxiety can happen when things are uncertain or when you feel things are out of your control.

Being anxious for longer periods of time can have a negative impact on your mind and body, so it's important to be able to understand when you are anxious and how you can support yourself. Learning what happens to your body when you are anxious can be a good place to start.

This could help you to work out what situations you find difficult, or what triggers your anxiety. Understanding this can be a good first step in learning how to manage your anxiety.

These are some things that can happen to your body when you are getting anxious or overwhelmed:

- heart beating faster
- a churning feeling in your stomach
- breathing gets faster
- feeling restless or unable to sit still
- shaky hands
- headache or stomach ache
- feeling worried
- sweating.

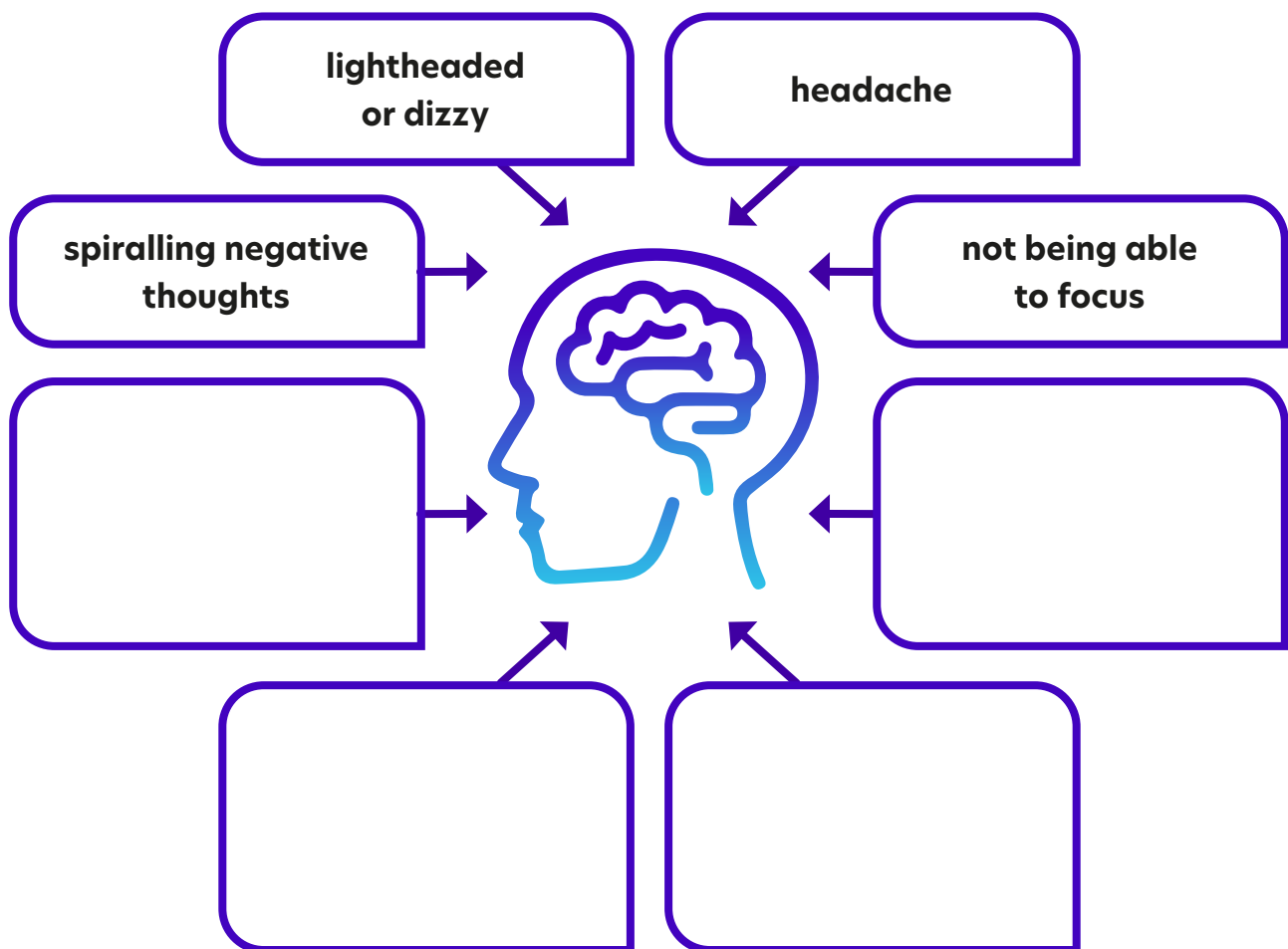
It can be useful to spend some time thinking about what physical signs you notice that show you are getting anxious. Try also asking a parent, sibling, friend or other adult whether they notice anything when they can see you are getting anxious.

You can then use this to help when you are looking at energy accounting.

Worksheet

What happens to my brain when I'm anxious?

- Look at the brain outline below and circle the descriptions that you notice happen to you when you are anxious (and maybe also ask a trusted person to do this with you too).
- You can add other signs that happen to you to the empty boxes.



Worksheet

What happens to my body when I'm anxious?

- Look at the body outline below and circle the descriptions that you notice happen to you when you are anxious (and maybe also ask a trusted person to do this with you too).
- You can add other signs that happen to you to the empty boxes.

The worksheet includes a central blue outline of a human figure. To the left of the figure, there are six boxes with arrows pointing to the body. The first four boxes contain the following text: "grinding teeth or nail biting", "heart beating faster", "stomach discomfort", and "restless or unable to sit still". The last two boxes are empty. To the right of the figure, there are six boxes with arrows pointing to the body. The first four boxes contain the following text: "breathing faster", "pains in chest", "sweating", and "stimming more". The last two boxes contain "needing the toilet more" and "leg bouncing or pacing". The final box at the bottom right is empty.

grinding teeth or
nail biting

heart beating
faster

stomach
discomfort

restless or unable
to sit still

breathing faster

pains in chest

sweating

stimming more

needing the
toilet more

leg bouncing
or pacing

How: Using numbers to energy account

Assigning number ratings to your withdrawals and deposits

Energy accounting can involve creating two lists. A list of things that use energy up (energy withdrawals) and a list of things that give you energy (energy deposits).

When writing these lists, think about all these things:

- activities
- places
- people (family, friends, teachers, staff)
- different parts of your day.

Look at your lists and see if you can put a number value on how much energy each item takes from you, or how much energy it gives to you.

Energy withdrawals

1 = 'only takes a little bit of energy'

10 = 'uses up a lot of energy'



Energy deposits

1 = 'gives me a little bit of energy'

10 = 'gives me lots of energy'



Example

Energy accounting rating scale example:

This is an example of energy accounting with number ratings:

Withdrawal	Deposit
not sleeping (8)	walking (2)
school (9)	reading (9)
crowds (7)	painting (3)
noise (8)	origami (5)
shopping centres (5)	time alone (8)
hot days (5)	time with pets (7)
rushing (7)	cross-stitch (2)
pain (9)	time with mum (5)
change (9)	music (5)
sport (7)	LEGO (9)
social events (8)	noise-cancelling headphones (5)
appointments (7)	weighted sensory items (5)

Once you have created your lists, the idea is you can look at your day and try to make sure that you are putting in enough energy deposits to balance out the energy withdrawals.

Worksheet

This sheet is for you to create your two lists and try and put a number rating for how much energy they take or energy they give.

You should add up your total and aim to end your day on a zero or a positive number to make sure you are managing your energy.

Energy withdrawals 	Number rating
eg going to the supermarket	-6
eg going to school assembly	-3

Energy deposits 	Number rating
eg spending time watching my favourite film	7
eg taking my dog on a walk alone	4

You may want to use something similar to this but in another format such as a spreadsheet.

How: Using colours to energy account

Rating your day into red, amber and green

Energy accounting can also involve trying to work out which parts of your day you enjoy, which parts you find a bit difficult, and which bits you find really difficult. You can do this by rating them into red, amber or green.

You could start by looking at a particular part of your day or week, for example:

- your school timetable
- before school
- after school
- weekends
- weekdays (if you are not at school)
- holiday times.

Rating scale:

Green rated: Things give me energy

Amber rated: Things that use some of my energy

Red rated: Things that use up a lot of my energy

It can really help to look at this alongside an adult who knows you well.

Once you have listed all parts of the week you are looking at, add a colour rating to them, then start looking at the red ones and think about:

- What is it about that activity/task that you don't like?
- What might be the reasons why?
- Is there anything about it that could be changed to make it better (or be able to change it to an amber rating)?

Once you have done that, you could also look at where you could build more green activities into that part of the week – this would be a way of building more energy accounting activities in.

You can use the worksheet below as a starting point or make your own.

Worksheet

This worksheet can be used to look at your day and see if you can make sure you have a balance of energy withdrawals and energy deposits. In this worksheet you can use colours to write down all the things that impact your energy and make sure you are ending with an equal amount to balance at the end of the day.

Uses energy



Gives energy



Colour-coded energy accounting

eg gym class

eg bus to school

eg horse riding
after school

Worksheet

This sheet can be used to look at your week and see if you can make sure you have a balance of energy withdrawals and energy deposits.

Weekly energy accounting

Monday							
Tuesday							
Wednesday							
Thursday							
Friday							
Saturday							
Sunday							

How: Build yourself up when you are already low on energy

Alongside trying to work out how you can do energy accounting, it is also important to make a plan for what you can do when you are already low on energy.

No matter how organised you try to be with energy accounting, there will be times that are out of your control, that can leave you low on energy.

A good starting point can be either creating a list of things that you can do to boost your energy, having a break, or distracting yourself during these times.

Here are some suggestions to get you started:

- reading a book alone in my room
- playing Minecraft for a while
- doing some research into my hobby or interest
- walking my dog
- spending time with my pets
- crafting.

Worksheet

This sheet can be used to create your own reminder cards of things you can do when you feel yourself getting low on energy.

go for a walk in the park	

Summary

We hope you found this resource useful for exploring your energy needs, the things that increase and decrease your energy levels and what you can do to support yourself when you need more energy.

It's important to understand that you won't always be able to keep an even balance of energy. Although this is good to aim for, you also need to have a plan for when life has got busy or challenging and energy levels will be lower. What can you do to increase your energy in times of need?

As with everything, we are all unique and you will need to explore what works for you. There are no set rules to energy accounting, it's just about finding what works best for you.





**National
Autistic
Society**

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