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Scripts, worksheets, and support resources for healthcare, work,
and everyday life.

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Disclaimer & Clinical Notice

Informational Notice: This toolkit is authored by clinical specialists in neurodiversity-affirming care and is intended for informational and empowering self-advocacy purposes only. It is not a substitute for professional medical, legal, or psychological advice. Autistic adults, supporters, and clinicians should consult qualified professionals regarding specific healthcare diagnoses, legal protections, or individual employment accommodations.

A Note from the Author

As a clinician and author who has worked alongside the autistic community for decades, I have witnessed the transformative power of self-advocacy. Society often constructs environments without accounting for neurodivergent sensory and processing realities. This toolkit is designed to provide you with concrete language, structured worksheets, and actionable strategies to help you articulate your needs, establish sustainable boundaries, and thrive on your own terms.



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Chapter 1: Why This Toolkit Exists

Self-advocacy means understanding your own needs, sensory preferences, and communication styles, and then communicating them clearly to receive the support, accommodations, and respect you deserve. It is not about asking for "special treatment"; it is about establishing conditions where you can participate, work, and live sustainably.

For many autistic adults, healthcare systems, workplaces, and social settings are designed around non-autistic norms. Self-advocacy bridges this gap by providing tools to articulate what helps you thrive.

The Three Core Pillars of Self-Advocacy:

- **Self-Awareness:** Recognizing your strengths, sensory limits, processing speeds, and energy limits.
- **Support Awareness:** Identifying tools, environments, and adjustments that make life manageable and fulfilling.
- **Clear Communication:** Sharing your needs using the formats that work best for you (spoken notes, email scripts, or digital cards).



The Reality of Neurodivergent Masking

Many autistic adults spend years masking—suppressing natural stimming, forcing eye contact, and enduring sensory pain—to fit into neurotypical environments. Masking leads to chronic burnout, anxiety, and exhaustion. Self-advocacy is the antidote to masking: it asserts that your baseline needs are valid and worthy of accommodation.

Core Affirmation for Your Journey: "My sensory limits are not flaws; they are biological realities. Asking for what I need is a valid act of self-preservation."



Chapter 2: Part 1 – Knowing Yourself and Your Needs

Effective self-advocacy starts with self-knowledge. You do not need to have everything figured out at once; mapping your internal patterns takes time and patience. Consider reflecting on three key areas:

- **Sensory Preferences:** Notice how sounds, lighting, textures, smells, and movement impact your energy levels throughout the day.
- **Communication Style:** Determine whether you communicate best verbally, via email, or with written agendas and preparation time.
- **Energy Limits (Executive Function):** Identify tasks that drain your cognitive battery versus those that help you recharge.

Mapping Your Internal Battery

Understanding how your energy fluctuates throughout the day allows you to advocate for rest and pacing before reaching the point of meltdown or shutdown.

Questions for Daily Self-Reflection:

1. Which environments leave me feeling depleted after 30 minutes?
2. What specific sounds or visual stimuli trigger my irritation or fatigue?
3. What communication format allows me to feel most articulate and calm?



Chapter 3: Part 2 – Speaking Up in Health-care Settings

Healthcare visits can be overwhelming due to loud waiting rooms, bright lights, fast-paced questioning, and unfamiliar environments. Advocating for yourself ensures you receive clear, accessible, and respectful care.

Practical Strategies Before and During Your Visit

1. **Prepare Ahead:** Write down your top symptoms and questions in order of importance.
2. **Communicate Needs Early:** Let the receptionist know when scheduling that you are autistic and require specific adjustments (e.g., quiet waiting areas).
3. **Use a Medical Info Card:** Carry a physical card summarizing your diagnosis, communication preferences, and sensory needs.



Navigating Sensory Overload in Clinical Spaces

Medical offices frequently feature glaring fluorescent lighting, beeping monitors, and stark waiting areas. You have the right to request accommodations before you step foot in the examination room.

Clinical Access Checklist:

- Request to wait in your vehicle or a quiet side office until the provider is ready.
- Ask to turn off or dim overhead examination lights if they cause sensory strain.
- Request written instructions or diagrams for complex medical procedures.



Ready-to-Use Scripts for Healthcare

When Scheduling Your Appointment:

"Hello, I am scheduling an appointment and wanted to let you know that I am autistic and have specific sensory and communication needs. It helps me significantly if the waiting area is quieter and if the provider can explain procedures slowly and provide written notes of instructions afterward."

At the Start of Your Appointment:

"It takes me a little extra time to process spoken information, especially in new environments. Please give me a moment to think after you ask a question, and if possible, could you write down key diagnostic points or treatment steps for me to take home?"



Chapter 4: Part 3 – Work, Accommodations, and Communication

Requesting workplace accommodations is a standard, professional way to level the playing field so your actual skills can shine. Accommodations do not lower performance standards; they remove unnecessary obstacles.

Categories of Workplace Accommodations

- **Sensory:** Overhead lighting adjustments, noise-cancelling headphones, or low-traffic seating.
- **Communication:** Written task instructions, meeting agendas provided 24 hours in advance.
- **Structure:** Predictable daily routines, flexible start times, and designated focus periods.



Navigating Disclosure in the Workplace

Deciding whether and how to disclose your autism diagnosis to HR or management is a personal choice. Focus on functional needs rather than diagnostic labels when requesting specific adjustments.

Key Principles for Workplace Discussions:

- Frame requests around productivity, retention, and accuracy.
- Keep written documentation of all accommodation agreements.
- Utilize local disability protection laws (e.g., ADA) when formal backing is needed.



Ready-to-Use Scripts for Work

When Requesting Accommodations:

"I want to make sure I am contributing at my highest level. I've noticed that I do my best work when tasks are clearly documented in writing and when I have a predictable daily routine. Because I'm autistic, verbal instructions without notes can sometimes lead to misunderstandings. Could we try sending task lists by email and sharing meeting agendas a day in advance so I can prepare?"



Chapter 5: Part 4 – Everyday Boundaries & Support

Self-advocacy applies just as much in everyday life with family, friends, and roommates. Establishing clear relational boundaries protects your mental health and preserves your social energy.

- **Setting Social Limits:** "I can join for 45 minutes today, after which I need quiet time to decompress."
- **Sensory Compromises:** Agreeing on times or spaces where strong scents or loud music are minimized.
- **Expressing Processing Needs:** "I heard what you said, but I need 10 minutes to process before I can respond."



Everyday Boundary Script

"I value our relationship and want to be fully present when we talk. Right now, my sensory battery is empty, so I need 30 minutes of quiet time before we discuss this further."

Maintaining Relational Harmony: Setting boundaries is not selfish; it ensures you can engage in relationships authentically without experiencing resentment or burnout.



Chapter 6: Part 5 – Worksheets & Practical Templates

A. Healthcare Preparation Worksheet

Purpose of Visit / Provider Name:

Top Symptoms / Concerns to Address:

Specific Accommodations Requested:



B. Workplace Accommodations Planner

Work Tasks That Are Most Demanding:

Proposed Environmental / Sensory Accommodations:

Proposed Communication / Structural Adjustments:



C. Self-Knowledge Reflection Worksheet

1. My Core Strengths & Special Interests:

2. Environmental Triggers / Sensory Barriers:

3. Tools and Supports That Recharge Me:



D. Medical Info / Accommodations Card Template

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AUTISM SELF-ADVOCACY MEDICAL CARD

Name:

Diagnosis: Autistic Spectrum

Key Sensory Needs: Dim lighting preferred; sensitive to loud sounds and unexpected tactile contact.

Communication Preferences: Requires slow-paced verbal communication; processing time after questions; written discharge instructions.

Emergency Contact:



Chapter 7: Taking Next Steps with Autism-Hearts

You do not have to navigate self-advocacy alone. Use AutismHearts to find:

- Adult autism services and local community programs.
- Neurodiversity-affirming therapists and counselors.
- Employment support, coaching, and peer support groups.

Explore more tools, directories, and guides tailored for autistic adults at:

autismhearts.com

