

What's YOUR 'NORMAL'?

What is this toolkit?

If you are an autistic person, or know an autistic person who wants to help people around them understand what their normal is, this tool can help.

The 'know your normal' tool allows you to describe what your normal looks like, things such as how much sleep you get, how much time you spend on your interests and hobbies and how this makes you feel, so that if this changes, it's easier to explain to people who may not understand your autism that something feels different.

What is 'NORMAL'?

“One of the problems with people always looking at people with autism differently is they forget we have shared experiences. So we can get stressed out or unwell too. People spend so much time looking at what makes us different than everyone else, they might miss the signs we’re becoming unwell. And because we get told so often that our unique behaviours are a problem, we might not recognise in ourselves when something is going wrong.

It’s already hard enough for people with autism to seek help for their wellbeing; we often struggle to be taken seriously, and if we are telling people we don’t feel great, then dealing with their emotions about that can be difficult too.

And that’s why it’s so important that we, and the people in our lives, know what our normal looks like. Knowing how we normally behave when we are well, accepting that, and communicating it as our normal, is really important. It helps us and the people who care about us tell when something has changed, and makes it easier to seek help.

We want autistic young people themselves to have the tools to define and voice their own experiences, allowing them to recognise when and where to get support, be taken seriously and as a result gain independence, autonomy and be healthier.

We’ve created this tool to help with this. Everyone can use it – whether they are autistic or not – to help them explain their normal. We hope it’ll tackle the idea that we should all be the same head on, showcase the wide variety of ways we behave when we’re healthy, and make it easier to get help when we’re not.”

- Fern Adams
(Ambitious about Autism, Youth Patron)

[#knowyournormal](#)

How to use this toolkit

Once you've filled in this toolkit you can use it to:

- Let people know what your 'normal' looks like.
- Check in with yourself to see if your behaviour is changing, and what this means to you.
- Explain to people if something has changed and you think you need support to get your health or wellbeing back on track.

This toolkit is your way of putting down on paper what 'normal' looks like for you. You might want to ask a friend or someone else you trust to help you answer these questions. It can be really hard to identify what normal looks like by yourself – because to you it is just normal! Your friends will be able to help you identify the stuff that makes you, you.

This toolkit will help you build a portrait of what you are like when you are well. For that reason, it's easiest to fill in when you are feeling OK. If you aren't feeling OK now – don't wait to fill this in before seeking help – ask for help now.

If you are feeling OK, then filling in the toolkit should be pretty easy. It could take anything from ten minutes to two hours to fill in depending on how much detail you think is important.

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Filling in the toolkit

This toolkit will help you build a picture of your habits when you are well. It's important to be honest with yourself when filling it in. Probably some of your habits are unusual, or a bit unhealthy – don't worry about this too much – so are everyone else's. We'll all have things we like about ourselves, and things we aren't so proud of.

This isn't a document to sell yourself as something you aren't, or to beat yourself up about what you are.

You might decide that you don't want everyone in your life to know the answers to all the questions in the toolkit. That's fine – we designed it so you can take out slides you don't want other people to see.

This way, you can share different things with different people, from your doctor, to your girlfriend's mum; putting you in control of who knows what about you.

We've tried to build a tool that lets you:

- tell people about you as an individual;
- record some habits that you think are important;
- and record your attitude and feelings when you are well.

On the other side of this sheet we have given you an example of how to fill out the toolkit. If you have trouble filling out any questions ask a parent, teacher or friend to help you.

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EXAMPLE ANSWERS

When do I normally go to sleep and wake up?



Do I find it easy to fall asleep when I go to bed?



How happy about getting out of bed am I?



What's my normal sleep routine?
(Do I wake up in the night? Or do I have a pre-bed routine?)

I occasionally wake up in the night then go back to sleep again.

How much energy do I have during the day?



Do I like to spend time with my family? Yes No

The people in my family I'm closest to are:

My sister supports me through the hard times.

Do I like to spend time with friends or other people or do I prefer to spend time alone?



What do I like doing with friends?

Going to the cinema + getting pizza.

How does spending time with friends make me feel?



Do I have any imaginary friends? Yes No

Do I talk to myself? Yes No

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EXAMPLE ANSWERS

What hobbies and interests do I enjoy?

I enjoy painting as it calms me when I feel anxious or nervous. It's my own place where I can escape.

How many hours do I spend on my interests and hobbies in a normal week?

M T W T F S S = 45

+ + + 20 + + 25 + =

How my interests and hobbies make me feel



What do my friends and family think about my interests and hobbies?

My friends + family enjoy looking at my finished work.

What meals do I have most days?



Foods I like

pizza

Foods I dislike

Celery
broccoli

Do I enjoy eating?



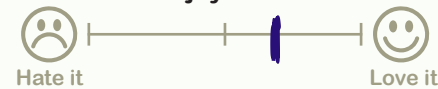
What do I do to stay healthy?



How often do I do one of the activities above?



Do I enjoy exercise?



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EXAMPLE ANSWERS

Is my appearance important to me? Yes No

Am I concerned about what other people think about my appearance?

Yes

No

How often do I shower or bathe?



Do other people have to tell me when I need to shower or bathe?

Yes

No

When do I wear clean clothes?



Do other people have to tell me when I need to change clothes or do my laundry?

Yes

No

Do I like to live in a clean and well-organised environment?

Yes

No

Do I find it difficult to make decisions? Yes No

When do I procrastinate?

Twice a day.

Do I ever feel anxious? Yes No

What makes me feel anxious?
Does this ever stop me from doing things?

Meeting new people. Yes.

How much energy do I have to do tasks?



How do I feel about talking to people I don't know?

Uncomfortable.

How do I feel about my future?



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#knowyournormal

What's
YOUR
'NORMAL'?



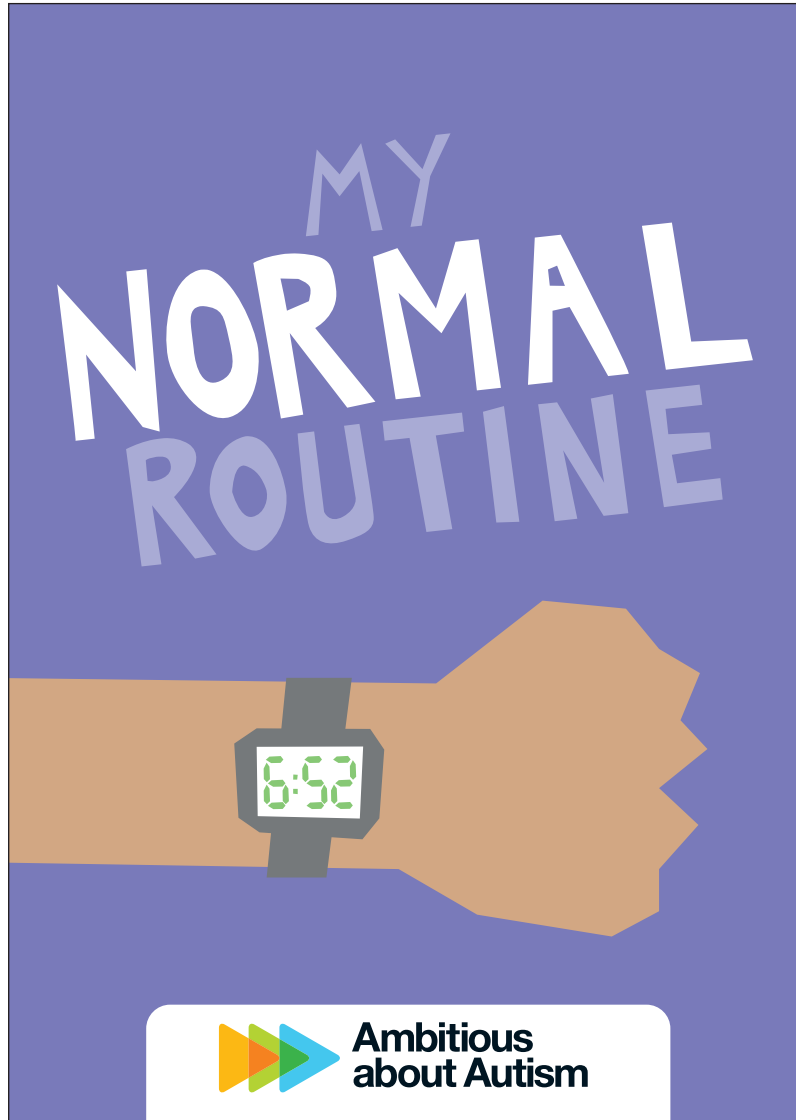
**Ambitious
about Autism**

My name

My age

A photo, drawing or description of me

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When do I normally go to sleep and wake up?




 Sleep Wake up Total hours

Do I find it easy to fall asleep when I go to bed?




 Wide awake Sound asleep

How happy about getting out of bed am I?




 Not happy Very happy

What's my normal sleep routine?
(Do I wake up in the night? Or do I have a pre-bed routine?)

How much energy do I have during the day?

No energy  Full of energy

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Do I like to spend time with my family? Yes No

The people in my family I'm closest to are:

Do I like to spend time with friends or other people or do I prefer to spend time alone?



What do I like doing with friends?

How does spending time with friends make me feel?



Do I have any imaginary friends? Yes No

Do I talk to myself? Yes No

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What hobbies and interests do I enjoy?

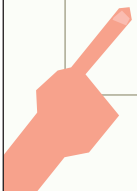
How many hours do I spend on my interests and hobbies in a normal week?

+	+	+	+	+	+	=	
M	T	W	T	F	S	S	

How my interests and hobbies make me feel

	----- -----	
Worried		Excited

What do my friends and family think about my interests and hobbies?



#knowyournormal



What meals do I have most days?

Breakfast
 Lunch
 Dinner
 Snacks

Foods I like	Foods I dislike
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Do I enjoy eating?

Hate it
 Love it

What do I do to stay healthy?

Run or walk places
 Go to the gym
 Swim
 Play team sports
 Other

How often do I do one of the activities above?

M
 T
 W
 T
 F
 S
 S

Do I enjoy exercise?

Hate it
 Love it

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Is my appearance important to me? Yes No

Am I concerned about what other people think about my appearance?
Yes No

How often do I shower or bathe?

M T W T F S S

Do other people have to tell me when I need to shower or bathe?
Yes No

When do I wear clean clothes?

M T W T F S S

Do other people have to tell me when I need to change clothes or do my laundry?
Yes No

Do I like to live in a clean and well-organised environment?
Yes No

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Do I find it difficult to make decisions? Yes No

When do I procrastinate?

Do I ever feel anxious? Yes No

What makes me feel anxious?
Does this ever stop me from doing things?

How much energy do I have to do tasks?



Work

Study

Social

How do I feel about talking to people I don't know?

How do I feel about my future?



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