

Interoception challenge mapping

Interoception is our ability to notice what's going on in our body and the signals that it is sending us.

Below are some common areas of interoception difficulty that many neurodivergent people (including autistic and ADHD individuals) may experience. These difficulties relate to noticing your body's internal cues, interpreting them accurately, and responding in the right way.

Tick each example that you often experience. Add notes to explain when or how each difficulty affects you.

Hunger, fullness and thirst

- Difficulty recognising when hungry until intense discomfort arrives
- Not noticing fullness, leading to overeating or undereating
- Eating by routine rather than body cues
- Not noticing thirst until dehydrated
- Forgetting to drink for long periods
- Drinking excessively without noticing satiety

Notes

Temperature regulation

- Not noticing being too hot or cold
- Being over- or under-dressed
- Delayed reaction to environmental changes

Notes

Heart rate and breathing changes, anxiety

- Difficulty perceiving fast heartbeat during stress or exertion
- Lack of awareness of anxiety until physical symptoms escalate
- Reduced awareness of shallow, rapid, or held breath
- Difficulty using breathing exercises because cues are unclear

Notes

Toileting needs

- Reduced awareness of needing the toilet
- Feeling urgency only when it is very strong
- Difficulty identifying bladder or bowel signals

Notes

Pain sensations

- Under-sensitivity to physical pain
- Over-sensitivity to physical pain
- Difficulty locating pain or describing its intensity
- Delayed awareness of injury or illness

Notes

Tension and muscle state

- Not noticing tight shoulders
- Not noticing clenched jaw
- Not noticing other body tension eg hands
- Not noticing restlessness
- Difficulty sensing posture or fatigue in muscles

Notes

Fatigue and energy levels

- Not feeling tired until physical shutdown
- Difficulty pacing activity
- Trouble noticing signs of overload, shutdown or burnout

Notes

Emotional state through body signals

- Difficulty sensing physical signs when anxious, overwhelmed, or excited
- Feeling irritable or shut down without knowing why
- Not aware when exhibiting strong emotions
- Needing external signals (e.g., others noticing behaviour changes)

Notes

Nausea or digestive sensations

- Difficulty interpreting gut discomfort
- Unclear whether discomfort relates to hunger, anxiety, illness, or sensory overload

Notes

Early indicators of dysregulation

Difficulties spotting:

- Fast breathing
- Fast heartrate
- Sweating
- Feeling cold
- Tight chest
- Dry mouth
- Restlessness
- Anxiety

Notes