Finding your needs

a quick-reference resource

How do you find your needs?

For some, the process of understanding what support they need at work is clearer than for others.

In this guide, we recognise that understanding your needs can be a complex journey, especially if you are neurodivergent.

For many, discovering or receiving a diagnosis later in life can mean you haven't had the chance to fully explore or understand your needs, or what accommodations might be standard for someone in your situation.

If you were diagnosed earlier in life, you might have received reports detailing your needs and recommended accommodations. These reports can be helpful, but it's important to remember that your needs can evolve over time and might not always fit neatly within those earlier recommendations.

In addition, you needs can fluctuate depending on your environment. For example, starting a new role, being promoted, or taking on more responsibility within your current role can all impact what support you may need to thrive.

This guide aims to provide tools and strategies to help you explore and articulate what you might require to support your well-being and success.
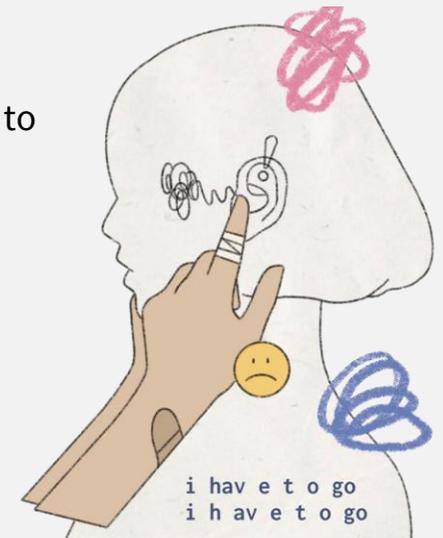
Support needs self-assessment

How to use the questions

On the following pages you will find a series of support needs self-assessment questions created by neurodivergent individuals.

Use it independently or with others to identify and express workplace needs.

This tool includes key questions which can be asked to others (e.g., managers or trusted colleagues) to help you understand more about your strengths and support needs.

It serves as a practical guide for meaningful discussions on workplace needs and accommodations.

Topics covered

- Sensory environment

- Communication

- Cognitive Load and focus

- Meetings and collaboration

- Breaks and rest

- Social interactions and networking

- Managing emotions

- Reflection

auticon

Strengths

- In what aspects of my work have you noticed the most positive impact or results?

- What do you see as my key strengths in my current role?

- Can you share examples of situations where you felt I performed exceptionally well? And why?

- What qualities or skills do you think set me apart from others in similar roles?

- Are there any tasks or projects where you think I excel the most?

- In what situations do you think I am at my most productive and engaged?

Support needs

- What are some areas where you believe I could improve or grow?

- What strengths could I develop further to progress in my role?

- Can you provide specific examples of situations where my performance could have been stronger?

- What feedback have you received from others that might highlight areas for my improvement?

- What communication style do you think works best for me?

auticon
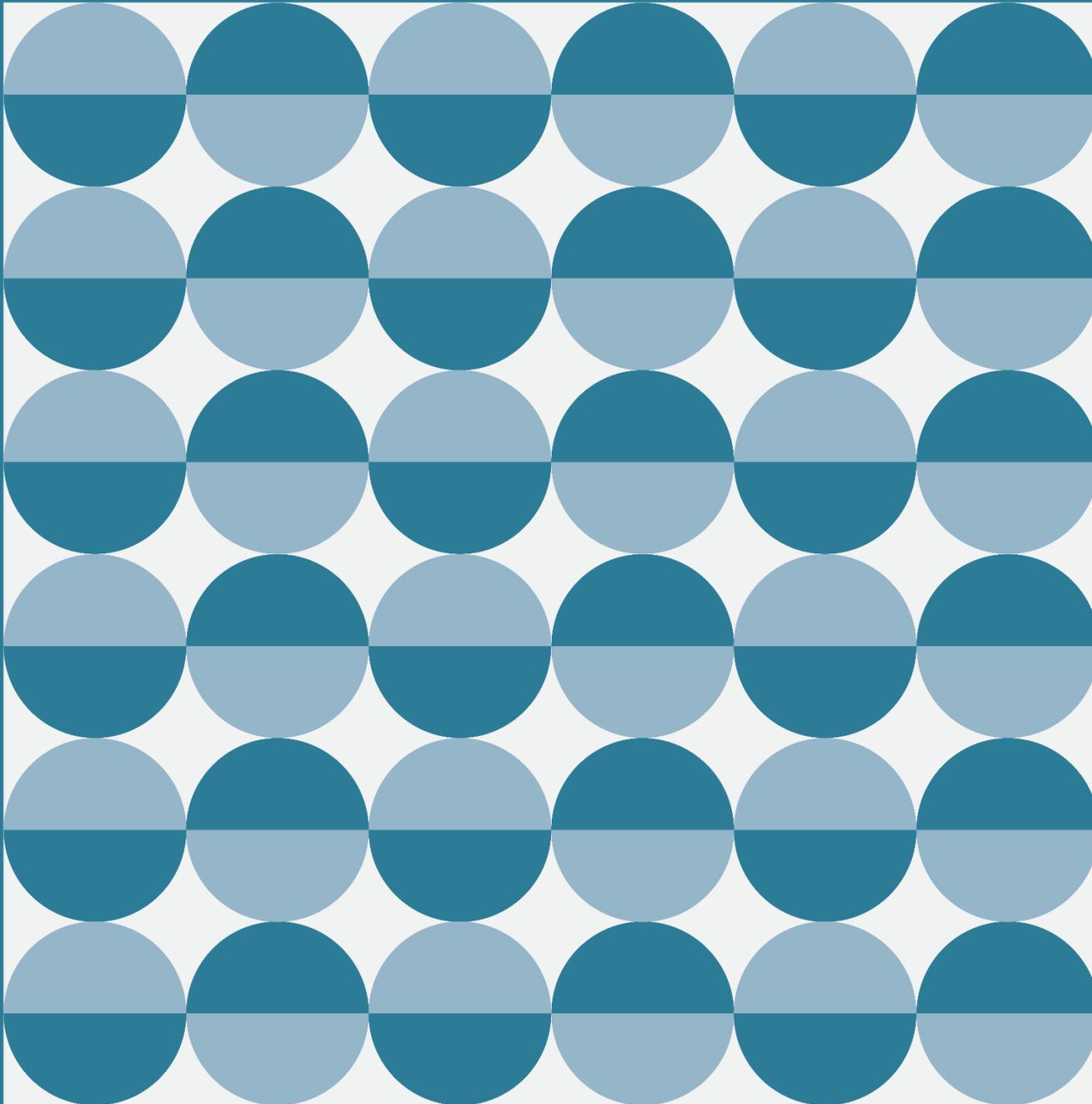
Sensory environment

a quick-reference resource

Sensory environment

We are asking these questions to better understand your preferences and needs regarding your work environment and lighting settings. Some neurodivergent people are sensitive to sensory inputs like lighting. By answering these questions, you may get a better idea about whether this is something that affects you.

Ideal environment

- Can you describe an ideal work environment for you? What elements are most important (e.g., lighting, noise level, seating)?
- What sensory experiences do you find particularly calming and/or overwhelming in your daily life?
- Have you experienced any discomfort or distraction from specific sounds, textures, or lighting conditions?
- Do you notice any physical symptoms like headaches or fatigue when exposed to certain sensory inputs?
- When feeling overwhelmed, do you seek out quiet, calm environments or prefer sensory-rich distractions?

Lighting

- When you are relaxed, do you tend to sit in a darkened room, prefer softer lighting or bright lighting?
- Have you noticed any discomfort or changes in mood when exposed to different lighting conditions? (bright lights, LED lights, sun behind clouds…)
- Do you find yourself squinting when overhead lights are on?

Sensory sensitivity indicators

- When feeling overwhelmed, do you seek out quiet, calm environments or prefer sensory-rich distractions?
- When in crowded or noisy environments, do you find yourself feeling exhausted or drained quickly?
- When eating or drinking, do you find yourself avoiding certain foods due to their texture or taste?
- Are you startled easily by sudden noises or unexpected touches?

auticon

Sensory environment

We are asking these questions to better understand your preferences and needs regarding your work environment and lighting settings. Some neurodivergent people are sensitive to sensory inputs like lighting. By answering these questions, you may get a better idea about whether this is something that affects you.

Travel preferences

- Do you prefer driving, public transport, walking, or cycling?
- Have you experienced any challenges related to your daily commute?
- Do you find business commuting stressful or energising?
- When reflecting on past travel experiences, what arrangements have helped reduce stress and improve comfort?
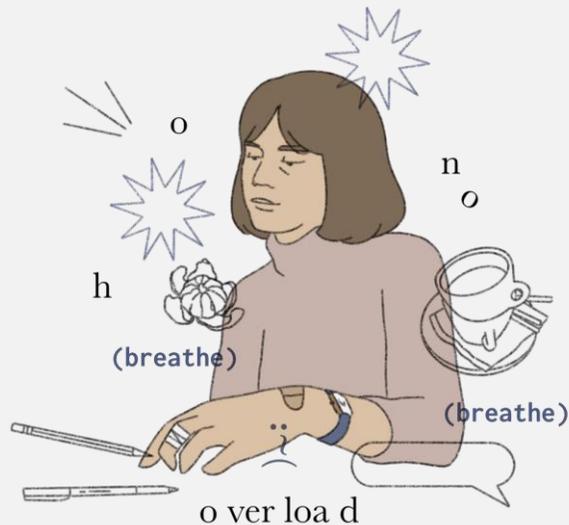
Workspace comfort observations

- How have you arranged your personal workspace to promote comfort and productivity?
- Have you experienced any discomfort or strain related to your workstation setup?
- Do you notice any improvements in focus or posture when specific ergonomic adjustments are made?
- When reflecting on your ideal workspace, what elements contribute most to your physical well-being?

Workspace spatial boundaries

- How do you feel about sharing your workspace with colleagues? Do you prefer a more private or open setup?
- Have you found it challenging to maintain personal space in a busy office environment?
- Do you find it helpful to have clear boundaries and designated areas for work and relaxation?
- When reflecting on your ideal workspace, what arrangements help you feel most secure and focused?

Sensory environment

We are asking these questions to better understand your preferences and needs regarding your work environment and lighting settings. Some neurodivergent people are sensitive to sensory inputs like lighting. By answering these questions, you may get a better idea about whether this is something that affects you.

Clothing

- How do you choose your clothing for work? E.g. Do you prioritise comfort, style, or both?
- If you wear a uniform, do you prefer it to fight tighter or looser?
- Have you experienced any discomfort or distraction from specific types of clothing or fabrics?
- Do you find formal dress codes stressful or restrictive? What adjustments would make them more comfortable for you?
- When reflecting on your ideal work attire, what elements contribute most to your comfort and confidence?

Eating habits at work

- How do you manage your diet and nutrition during the workday? E.g. Do you prefer bringing your own meals or eating out? Eating at your desk, canteen or going outside?
- Do you prefer to eat alone or with your work colleagues?
- What time would you ideally take your lunch?
- When reflecting on your dietary needs, what support or accommodations would be most beneficial?

Managing noise

- Do you prefer a quieter or more dynamic environment?
- Have you found certain sounds or noise levels distracting or comforting while working? E.g., keyboard tapping.
- Do you use tools like headphones to manage auditory distractions?
- When reflecting on your ideal auditory environment, what elements contribute most to your focus and comfort?

auticon
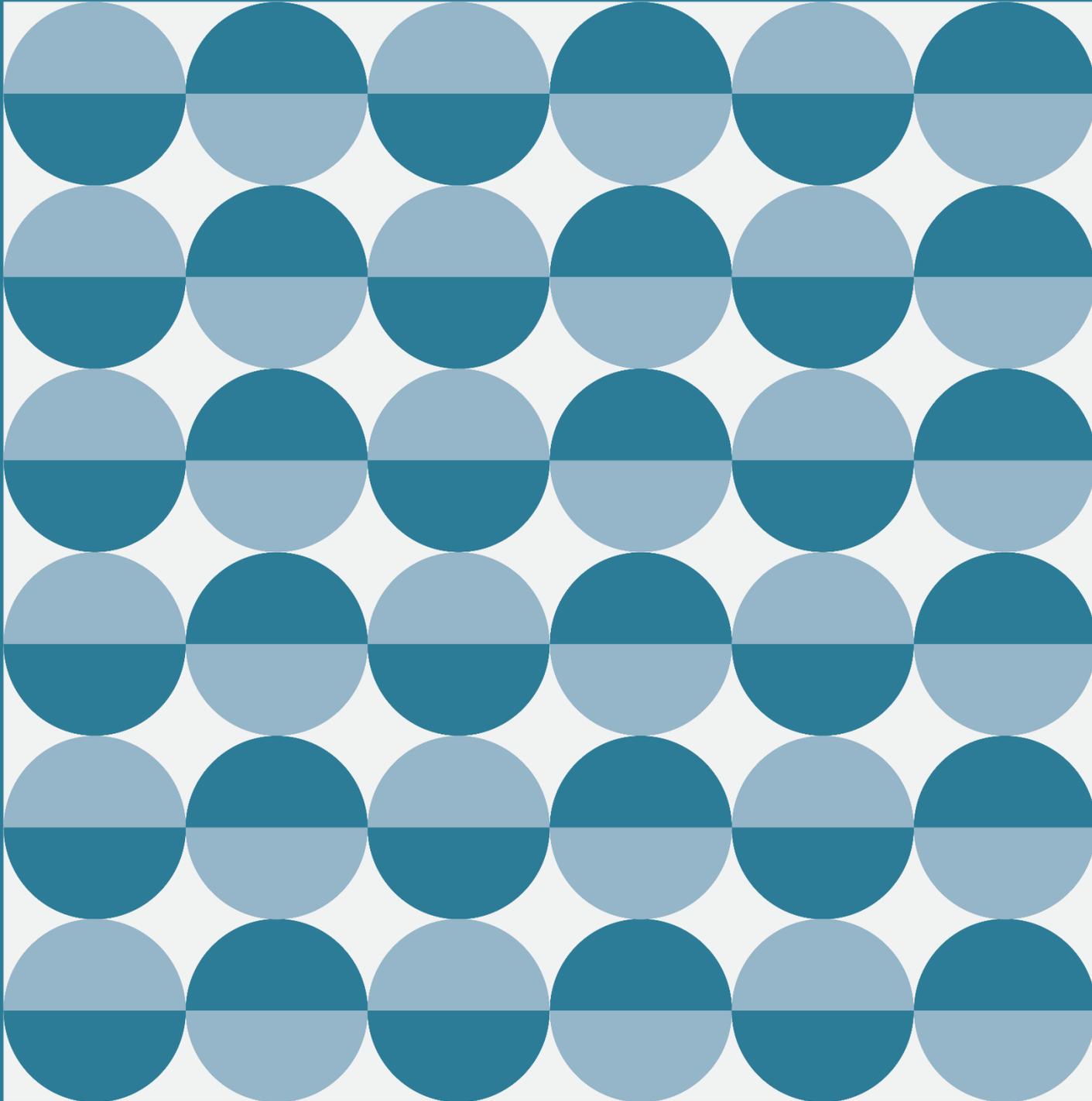
Communication

a quick-reference resource

Communication

We are asking these questions to understand your communication preferences better. By answering these questions, you may get a better idea about what methods work best for you.

Communication preferences

- How do you prefer to receive information and instructions (e.g., written, verbal, visual aids)?
- Are there particular communication methods or tools (e.g., email, chat, in-person meetings) that you find more effective?

Preferred information delivery

- In your personal life, how do you usually prefer to receive information or instructions?
- Have you found certain communication styles more effective or less overwhelming? E.g. direct or rejection-sensitive aware?
- Do you tend to feel more comfortable with written, verbal, or visual communication cues?
- Do you prefer more detailed explanations or simplified summaries?
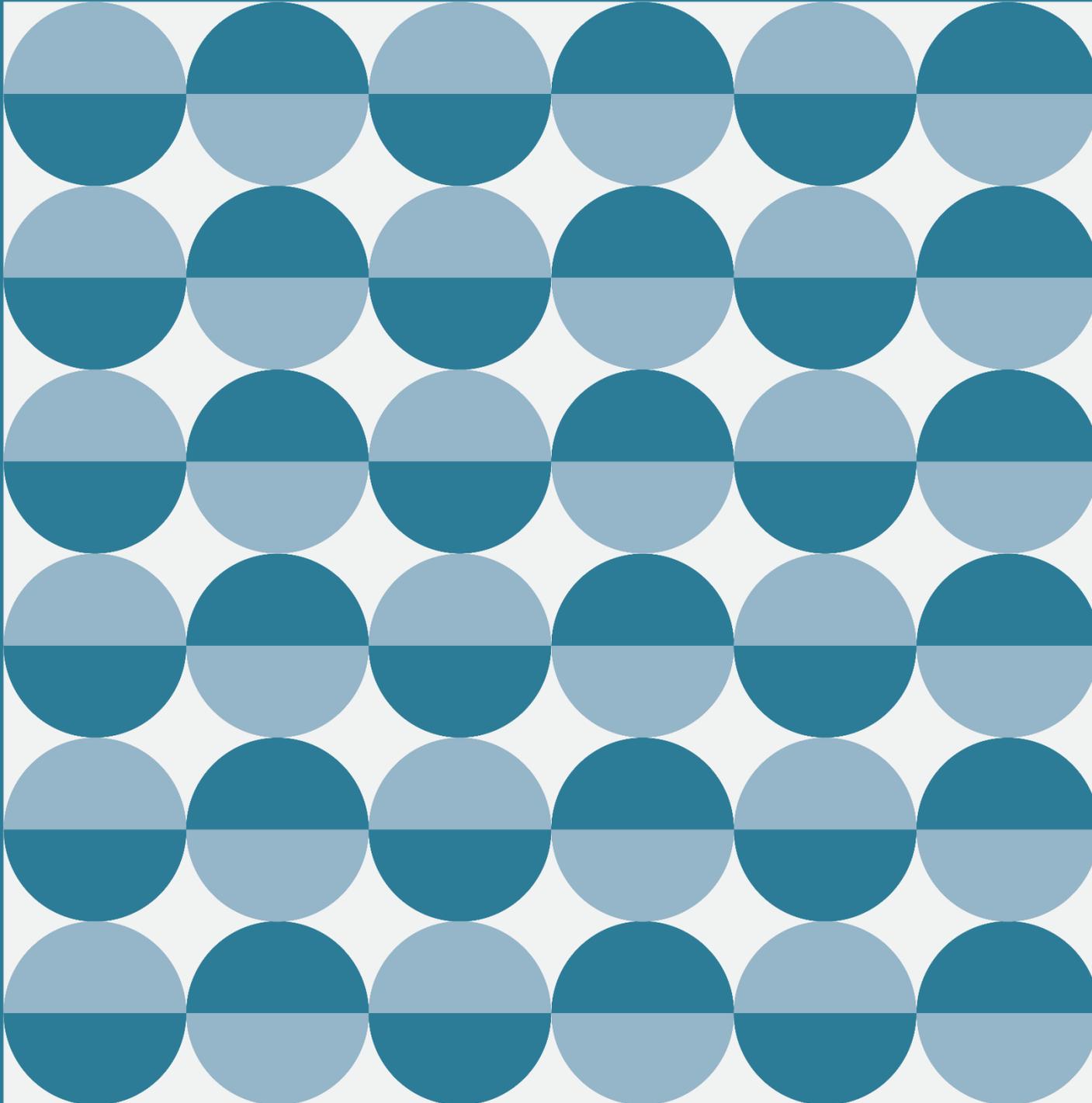
Cognitive load
and focus

a quick-reference resource

Cognitive load and focus

We are asking these questions to understand your executive function skills. Some neurodivergent people have different ways of processing information. By answering these questions, you may get a better idea about what methods work best for you.

Multitasking and focus

- Have you noticed any strategies that help you maintain focus and avoid distractions?
- Do you feel overwhelmed when juggling multiple tasks, or do you thrive on variety?
- When reflecting on past work experiences, what approaches have helped you stay focused and productive? (i.e. playing music in the background, having undisturbed silence)

Deadlines and time management

- Generally, how do you feel about tight deadlines? Do they motivate you or cause stress?
- Have you found specific strategies that help you manage your time and meet deadlines effectively?
- Do you tend to work on tasks well ahead of deadlines or closer to the due date?
- When facing multiple deadlines, how do you prioritise your tasks to manage your workload?

Task management and organisation

- What tools or systems help you stay organised and on track with your tasks (e.g., calendars, task lists, project management software)?
- Do you find it helpful to break tasks into smaller, manageable steps?

Personal organisation methods

- Can you describe how you naturally organise tasks or responsibilities in your personal life?
- Do you find it easier to focus on one task at a time, or do you prefer multitasking?
- How do you approach large projects? Do you have a system that works for you, or do you ask others for help?
- When reflecting on past experiences with task management, what strategies have been most successful for you?

auticon

Cognitive load and focus

We are asking these questions to understand your executive function skills. Some neurodivergent people have different ways of processing information. By answering these questions, you may get a better idea about what methods work best for you.

Managing cognitive load

- How do you manage with tasks that require intense concentration and focus?
- Have you found certain times of the day more conducive to deep work or focused tasks?
- Do you use any tools or techniques to help manage your cognitive workload effectively?
- When reflecting on your work habits, what strategies help you maintain high levels of focus and productivity?

Adapting to changes

- How do you feel about changes in your work environment or routine? Do you find them stressful or invigorating?
- Have you developed any strategies to help you adapt to changes more smoothly?
- What helps you when adapting to new processes or environments?
- When reflecting on past changes, what approaches have helped you adapt and thrive?

Technology and tools

- How do you feel about using technology and tools for your work tasks? Do they enhance your productivity or pose challenges?
- Have you found certain software or tools particularly helpful or difficult to use?
- Do you prefer to learn new technologies through guided tutorials, self-study, or hands-on practice?
- When reflecting on your use of technology at work, what support or training has been most beneficial?

auticon
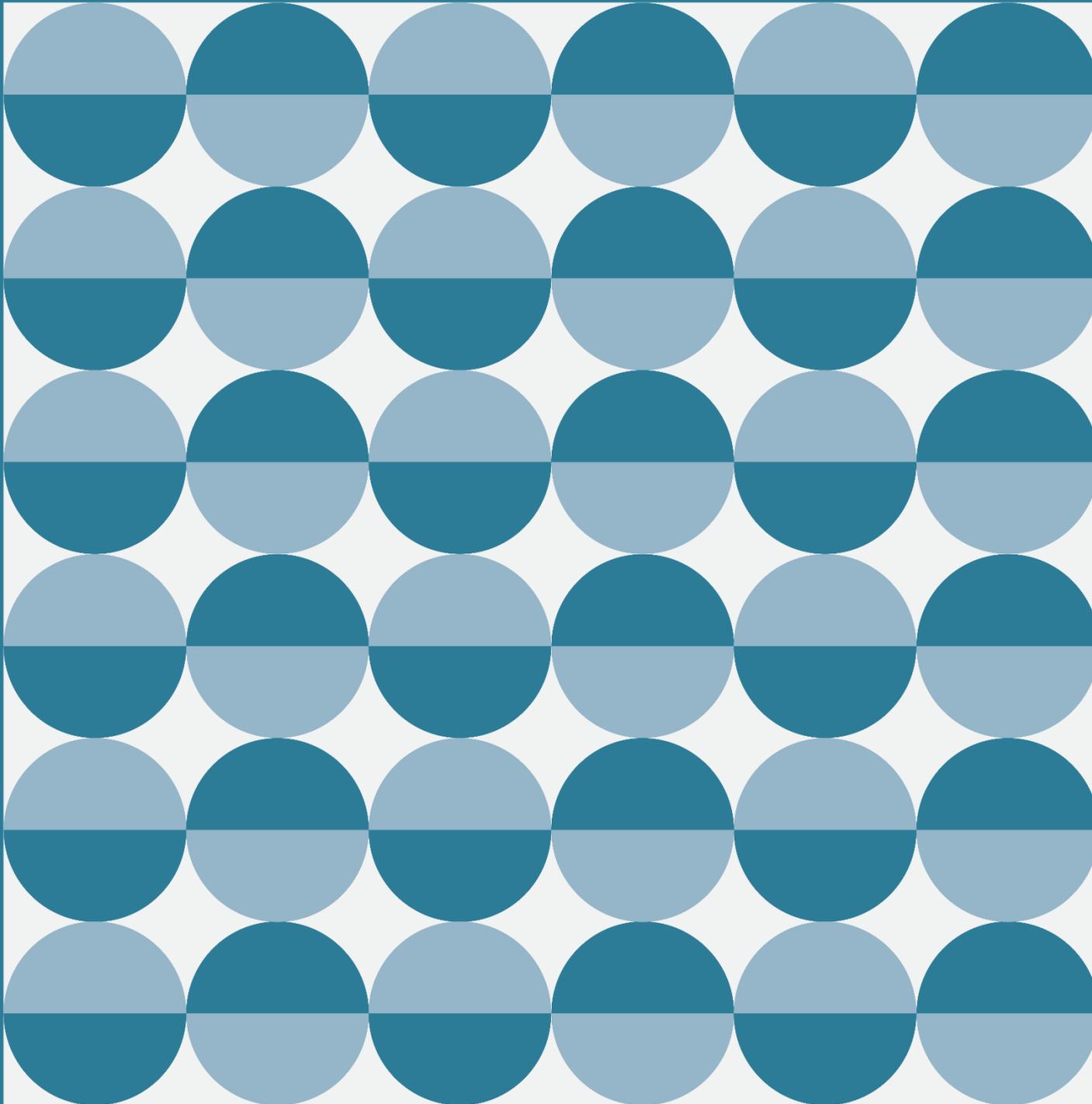
Meetings and collaboration

a quick-reference resource

Meetings and collaboration

We are asking these questions to understand your preferences and needs in various aspects of your work, such as meetings, collaboration, and task management. By answering these questions, you may get a better idea about what methods work best for you.

Meetings and collaboration

- Do you have any preferences for how meetings are conducted (e.g., providing agendas in advance, keeping meetings short and focused)?
- Are there any specific accommodations that would help you participate more effectively in meetings and collaborative projects?

Meeting participation preferences

- In social situations outside of work, do you tend to actively participate or prefer observing?
- Do you feel more comfortable contributing ideas in smaller group settings or one-on-one conversations?
- When discussing complex topics, do you prefer more time for reflection or immediate discussion?

Contribution in meetings

- Do you feel comfortable contributing ideas during meetings, or do you often feel anxious about speaking up?
- Have you ever felt unsure about when it's appropriate to jump into a conversation during a meeting?
- Do you worry about interrupting others when you want to share your thoughts in meetings?
- When reflecting on past meeting experiences, what strategies have helped you feel more confident in contributing?

Collaboration and team dynamics

- In team settings, do you tend to take on leadership roles or prefer to contribute as a team member?
- Have you noticed any communication or collaboration styles that enhance team dynamics and productivity?
- Do you find strict team structures or more casual and informal more conducive to your participation and engagement ?

auticon

Meetings and collaboration

We are asking these questions to understand your preferences and needs in various aspects of your work, such as meetings, collaboration, and task management. By answering these questions, you may get a better idea about what methods work best for you.

Receiving instructions

- How do you prefer to receive instructions or information at work (e.g., written down, verbally, voice notes, messaging apps)?
- Have you found certain methods of receiving instructions more effective or less confusing?
- Do you feel more comfortable with step-by-step written instructions or a brief verbal overview?

Understanding expectations

- How do you ensure you understand what is expected of you for a task or project?
- Have you found it helpful to ask for clarification or additional details when given an assignment?
- Do you prefer to confirm your understanding of expectations through a follow-up email or meeting?
- Would you find it helpful to have regular check ins to ensure that you have understood the task once you've started? (some people process the task once they begin…)
- When reflecting on past experiences, what approaches have helped you meet expectations more effectively?

auticon

Meetings and collaboration

We are asking these questions to understand your preferences and needs in various aspects of your work, such as meetings, collaboration, and task management. By answering these questions, you may get a better idea about what methods work best for you.

Feedback and performance reviews

- How frequently do you prefer to receive feedback on your performance?
- How do you feel about receiving feedback on your work? Is it generally a positive or stressful experience for you?
- Have you found it helpful to receive feedback immediately after completing a task, or do you prefer scheduled reviews?
- Do you feel more comfortable receiving feedback in private or in a group setting?
- When reflecting on past feedback experiences, what types of feedback have been most useful in improving your performance?

Feedback reception style

- In work, personal or academic settings, how do you prefer to receive feedback or constructive criticism?
- Have you found certain feedback delivery methods more motivating or demotivating?
- Do you feel more comfortable with immediate feedback or prefer scheduled feedback sessions?
- When reflecting on past feedback experiences, what approaches were most helpful in your growth?

Preferred learning formats

- Reflecting on past learning experiences, what formats or methods have been most engaging for you?
- Do you find hands-on, experiential learning more effective or prefer theoretical concepts?
- When exploring new topics or skills, do you tend to learn better through self-directed study or structured courses?

auticon
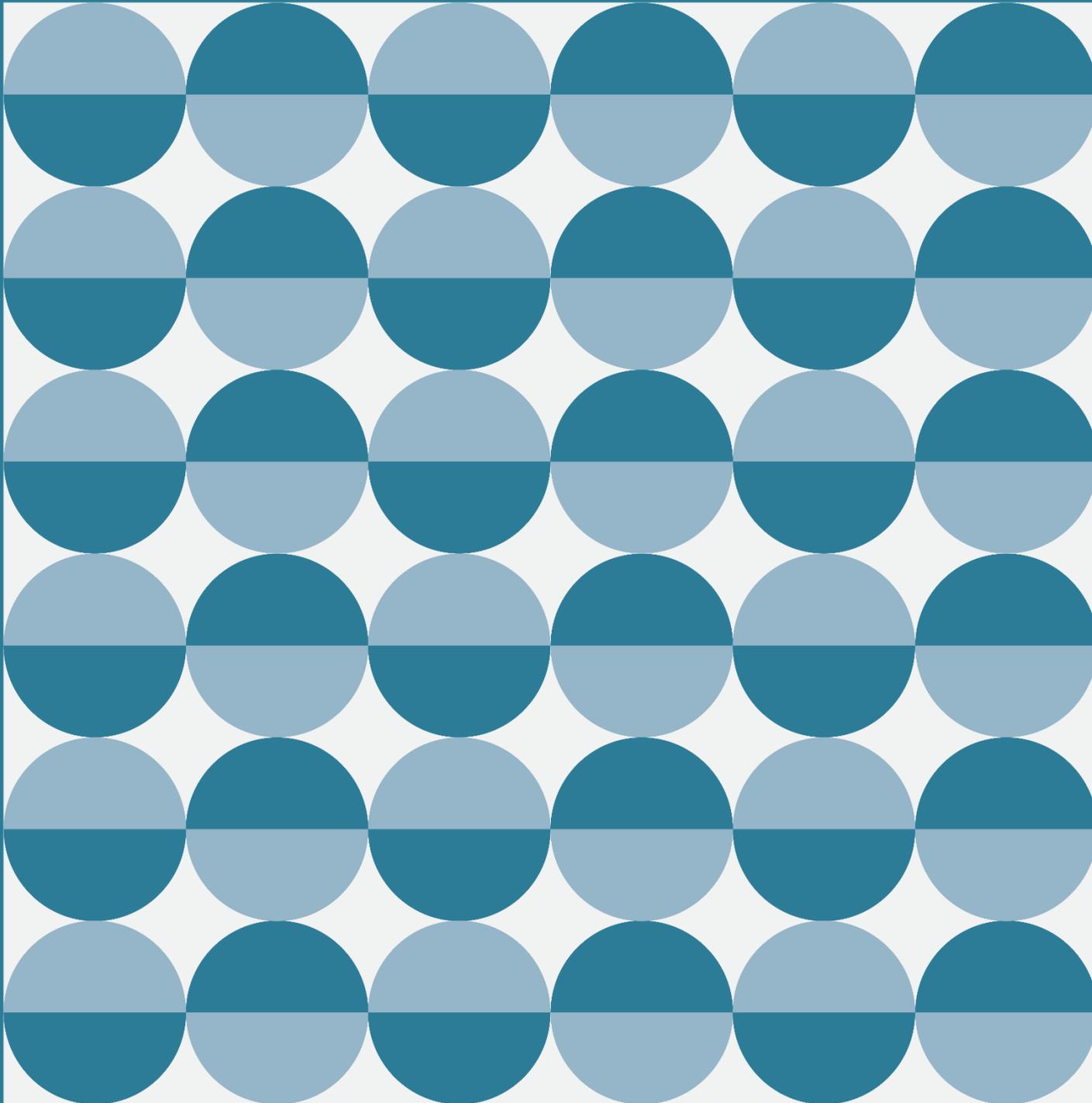
Breaks and rest

a quick-reference resource

Breaks and rest

Understanding your preferences regarding breaks and downtime is essential for your wellbeing, productivity and mental health.

Breaks and downtime

- How do you prefer to take breaks during the workday? Do you need more frequent or longer breaks to maintain productivity?
- Are there particular break activities or environments that help you recharge (e.g., quiet rooms, outdoor areas)?

Recharging practices

- When feeling overwhelmed, how do you typically recharge or take breaks?
- Are there specific activities or environments that help you relax and reset?
- Do you find short, frequent breaks throughout the day more beneficial, or do you prefer longer breaks?
- When given time for downtime, do you prefer to be alone or in the company of others?

Effective breaks

- Have you noticed any specific activities that help you recharge during breaks (e.g., walking, meditation)?
- Do you find it helpful to have access to a quiet or designated rest area at work?
- When reflecting on your break needs, what arrangements have helped you feel most refreshed and productive?

Work-life balance

- How do you manage your work-life balance to ensure both professional success and personal well-being?
- Have you found any specific strategies that help you maintain this balance effectively?
- When reflecting on past experiences, what adjustments or supports have helped you maintain this balance?
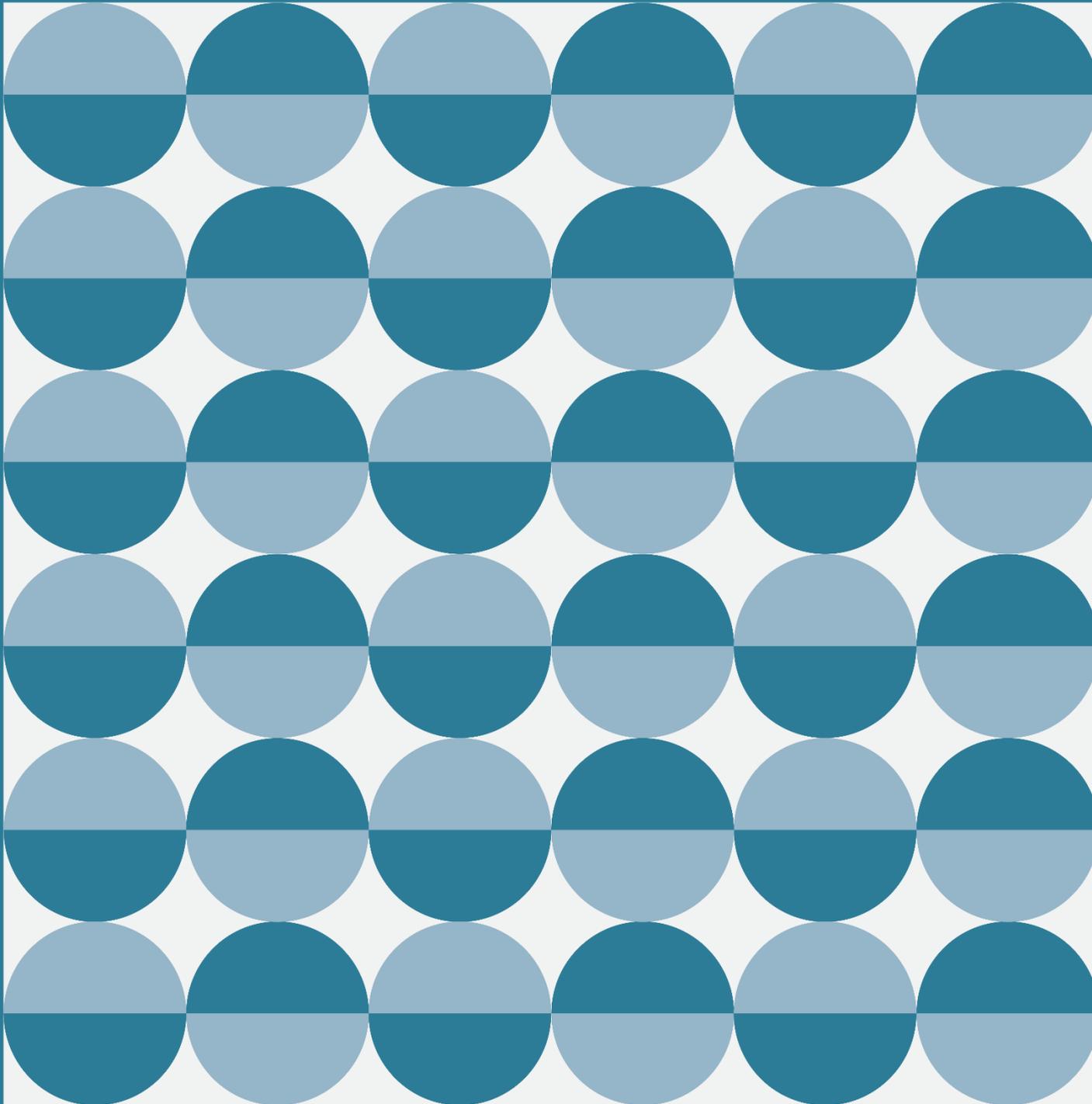
Social interactions and networking

a quick-reference resource

Social interactions and meetings

Understanding your social interaction preferences and emotional responses in the workplace is crucial for creating a positive and supportive environment. By answering these questions, you may get a better understanding of your communication styles and conflict resolution strategies.

Receiving and giving feedback

- How do you typically react to receiving constructive feedback at work?
- Have you found certain ways of giving feedback to others that are more effective and well-received?
- Do you feel comfortable providing constructive criticism to colleagues or supervisors?

Communication style

- How do you ensure your communication is clear without coming across as too blunt?
- Have you found it challenging to balance assertiveness and diplomacy in your interactions?
- Do you find it hard to assert yourself?
- When reflecting on your communication style, what strategies have helped you express yourself effectively?

Social engagement patterns

- In social settings outside of work, do you typically initiate conversations or prefer to listen?
- Have you noticed any specific communication styles or cues that make social interactions easier for you?
- Do you find small group discussions or one-on-one interactions more comfortable than larger gatherings?
- When reflecting on past social experiences, what approaches have helped you feel more included and engaged?

Social interactions and networking

- How do you typically approach social interactions and networking opportunities at work?
- Do you find informal social events (e.g., team lunches, office parties) enjoyable or overwhelming?
- When reflecting on past social interactions, what strategies have helped you build and maintain professional relationships?

auticon
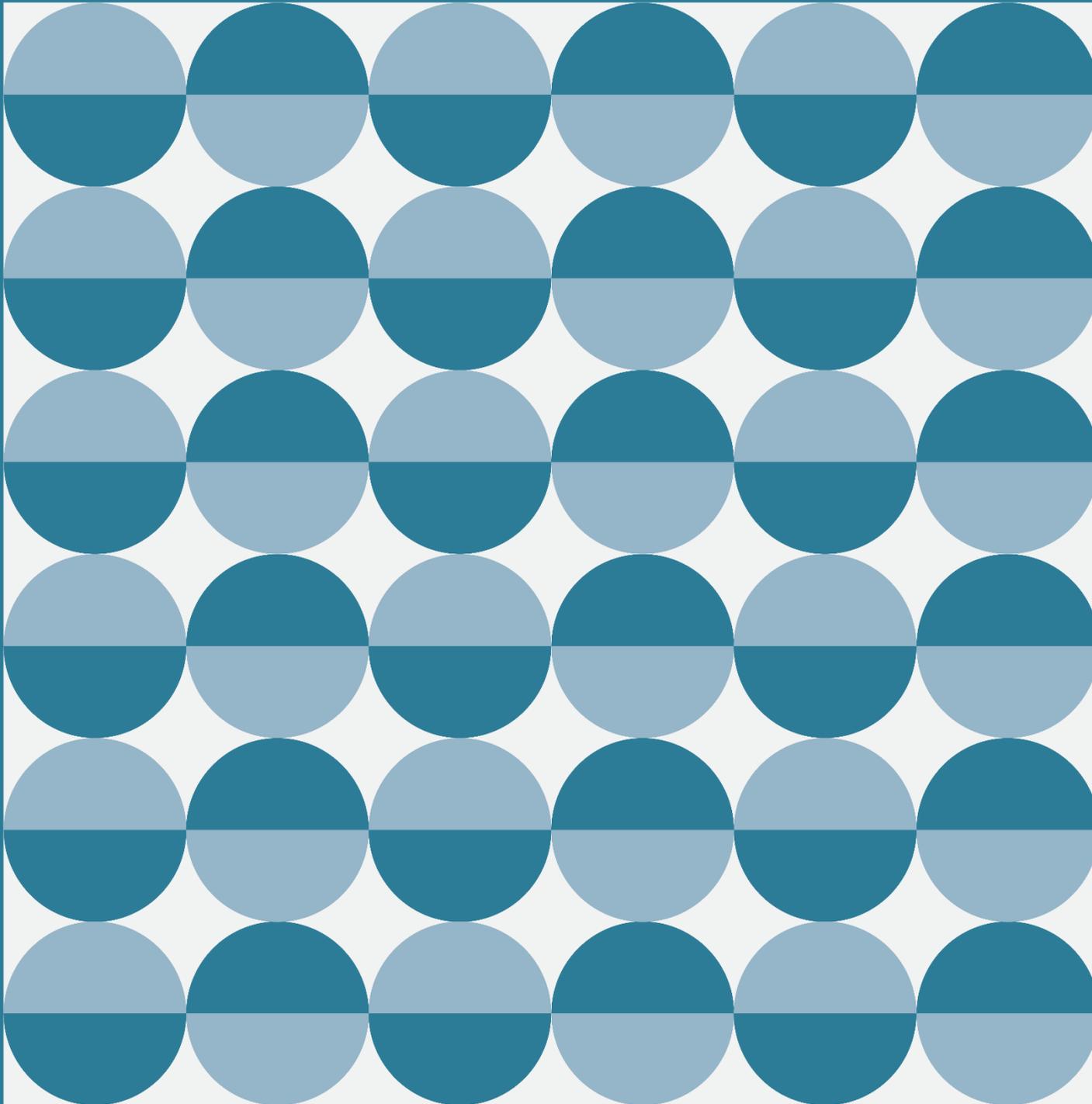
Managing emotions

a quick-reference resource

Managing emotions

Understanding your emotional responses in the workplace is crucial for creating a positive and supportive environment. By answering these questions, you may get a better understanding of your emotional reaction styles and conflict resolution strategies.

Managing emotional responses

- Can you identify situations at work that commonly trigger strong emotional responses for you?
- Have you found specific strategies that help you manage these emotional triggers?
- How do you typically react to stressful or high-pressure situations at work?
- When reflecting on past experiences, what approaches have helped you maintain calm and composure?

Regulating emotions

- How do you maintain a consistent mood throughout the workday?
- Have you noticed any patterns in your mood fluctuations related to work activities or environments?
- Do you use any techniques to help stabilise your emotions during the day (e.g., mindfulness, breaks)?

Managing conflict

- How do you usually handle conflicts or disagreements in the workplace?
- Have you found certain conflict resolution strategies that work best for you?
- Do you feel more comfortable addressing conflicts directly or through mediation?
- When reflecting on past conflicts, what methods have helped resolve issues constructively?

Personal stress management techniques

- How do you typically cope with stress or pressure in your personal life?
- Have you noticed any triggers or patterns in your stress response in the workplace?
- When reflecting on past stress management experiences, what approaches have been most effective for you?
- Do you find it helpful to talk about your stress with a colleague or supervisor?
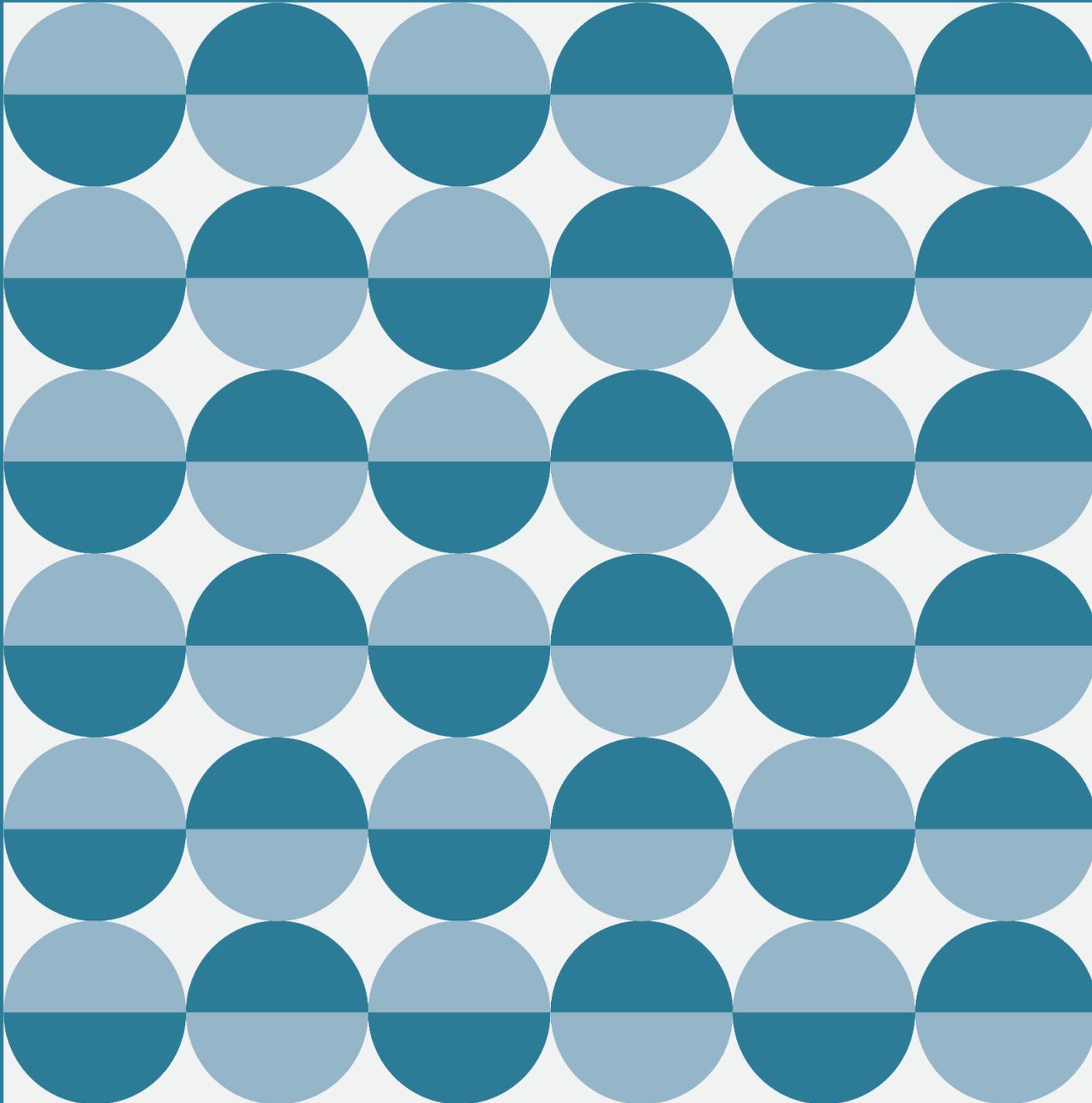
Reflection

a quick-reference resource

Reflection

Reflection is a powerful tool for personal and professional growth. It can support greater self-awareness by reflecting on past experiences and taking time to understand your thoughts feeling and actions with more clarity. By taking the time to recognise your strengths and challenges you can develop your own strategies, solutions and goals focused on your own individual needs.

- What have I learned about my needs and preferences through this journaling process?

- What strategies can I use to communicate my needs more effectively to others?

- How can I create a supportive network of friends, family, or colleagues who understand and respect my needs?

auticon

auticon

We empower organisations to become authentically neuroinclusive by delivering expert guidance and exceptional IT solutions from our own neurodivergent talent.

To find out more about our work visit us online or on your preferred social media:

@auticon_uk

@auticon-ltd

auticon.com/uk