

# Your Home, Your Way

This section is written **to speak directly to Neurodivergent people who are preparing for a housing transition.**

## SECTION THEMES:

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## What does housing transition mean for you?

It could mean many different things like moving out on your own, joining a group home, trying a co-living arrangement, getting a new roommate, or finding a different place to rent or buy.

Whatever your situation, housing transitions can feel very big and come with a lot of change. You might be figuring out what kind of support you need, what routines will help you feel settled, or how to make a new space feel like your own.

We gathered many ideas about what helped during housing transitions, from the people we connected to in our work, including Neurodivergent community members. Some of these ideas might be useful for you while others might not be relevant to your current situation. Use them to think about what's most important, who you want around, and how to make your home feel safe and comfortable.

## Getting to know what works for you

Understanding what you'll need to support comfort, routines, and day-to-day life in your home is beneficial even if it's somewhere you plan to stay short term.

These strategies encourage you figure out what you like, experiment a little, and speak up about what matters most in your living situation.

### Explore your sensory needs



**Inclusivity:** Everyone's sensory profile is different. It takes time, curiosity, and trial and error to figure out what works best for you.



**Insight:** We heard that light and sound needs are often the first things that get modified, but that other senses really matter too. Temperature, movement, pressure, and texture were also important for feeling comfortable.



**Tip:** Pay attention to what feels calming, energizing, or overwhelming when you are in different spaces. It could be places like cafés, stores, waiting rooms, or other people's homes. Take a quick note when you notice something helpful or uncomfortable.



**Tip:** Watch videos of sensory-friendly spaces. Search online for “sensory rooms” or “sensory setups” to learn from people who have personalized their space. Notice what you like or what you want to try.



**Example:** In our research, we interviewed one Neurodivergent person who said they never would have thought to try a rocking chair, but it turned out to be a great way to regulate their nervous system.

*"I stumbled upon it somewhat by accident but quickly realized that rocking or swinging isn't just enjoyable; it's a form of stimming for me that brings a profound sense of peace and comfort. There's something about the rhythmic motion that just grounds me and helps me regulate my emotions and sensory input. On difficult days, it's my go-to spot to find balance and calm. It's like this chair understands me in a way that nothing else does. It's more than just furniture; it's a sanctuary."*



**Application:** Check out our menu of options for [Modifying Spaces for Sensory Needs](#), with many ideas to try out. Find it on page 21.

## Try to visit the space before you decide on moving there



**Insight:** We learned that it's a good idea to ask to visit a space, if possible, to understand if it's the right fit for you. Some new builds, rental units, or group homes may offer an opportunity to view the space or host open houses in a unit with a similar layout.



**Tip:** Think about the features that you liked and disliked in other places you've lived. Consider things like layout, laundry facilities, heating, and cooling. Make a list to guide your visit and focus your attention on what's important to you.



**Tip:** Ask questions about how things work or if changes can be made. Sometimes changes can be made and sometimes they can't. You can always explore and advocate for what you need.



**Tip:** Visit available places even if you're not ready to move yet. It can give you a sense of what's out there, and help you figure out what layouts, features, or environments feel right for you.



**Tip:** Bring a support person with you to the visit if you want to. Some people shared that this made the visit more comfortable and less overwhelming.

## Make small scale changes to your space



**Insight:** We heard from many people that small scale, low-cost adjustments worked well for them and added flexibility in how they used their space. Small adjustments had large, positive impacts.



**Example:** We spoke with several people who used or suggested having a tent in their room as a quiet zone for themselves. It's a creative way to create a private space within another space. Plus, it can be affordable and easy to set up.

*"When I used to live with a lot of roommates and stuff and I didn't really have that space, I used to create them in my closet or like create tent forts, you know, that type of thing almost so I could have a space that was quiet and dark and felt like I was being, I don't know, hugged by the space around me."*



**Tip:** Add a cozy chair, soft lighting, or a favourite blanket to create a more comfortable space.



**Tip:** Have some items handy in a basket or bag, such as clothing layers, sunglasses, headphones, sensory supports, snacks, or water. This can make it easier to adjust to temporary changes in your environment, especially when you're sharing space that isn't designed for your needs.

## Think about the community space around the home



**Insight:** We heard that the area around a home can be just as important as the home itself. Being close to places like work, school, the grocery store, or a pharmacy can make day-to-day routines easier.



**Example:** In many conversations with Neurodivergent people, we heard that they felt better when they lived near parks, nature, or welcoming community spaces. They found it difficult when their hobbies, group activities, and green spaces were far away or tough to get to.



**Tip:** Think about what you need from a neighbourhood to feel comfortable. Are there quiet parks, places to walk, or spots to do your favourite activities? Does it feel safe to you? Would you want to spend time there?



**Tip:** Explore or ask someone you trust to guide you through things like access to public transit, walkable paths, or bike routes that would be right for you. This is a good idea even if you have a car.

## Learn from others but trust your own opinion



**Insight:** We learned that talking to others about their housing experiences can surface helpful details, raise new questions, and make the planning process feel a little easier. Just keep in mind, what worked for one person might not work for another, and that's okay.



**Inclusivity:** Just because someone else had a tough housing experience doesn't mean you will too. Everyone's needs and situations are different.



**Tip:** Talk to people who've been through similar housing experiences to what you'd like to have. Ask what worked for them, what didn't, and how they figured out if a living situation was a good fit.

## Setting up routines and supports

Living in a new home isn't just about moving into a new space, it's also about setting up routines and supports that suit your daily life.

The following strategies can help you keep things manageable, plan around your energy, and get the support you need.

### Make everyday tasks feel more doable



**Insight:** We heard that household tasks can feel overwhelming, but that Neurodivergent people had different ways to make these big, recurring jobs feel more approachable.



#### Break big jobs into smaller steps

For example, instead of "clean the kitchen," try breaking it down into:



Wipe the counters



Take out the garbage



Load the dishwasher

#### Pair tasks with something enjoyable such as:



Play some music



Listen to a podcast



Plan a small reward for yourself

#### Gamify your tasks, like:



Set a timer and race the clock



Give yourself points



Turn it into a mini challenge

#### Use a body double

Ask someone to sit with you while you do the task. They don't have to do the tasks, just being there can make it easier to get started.

#### Think of chores as a form of self-care

Tidying up can be a way to support your future self and create a more comfortable space.

## Plan for your energy, not just your to-do list



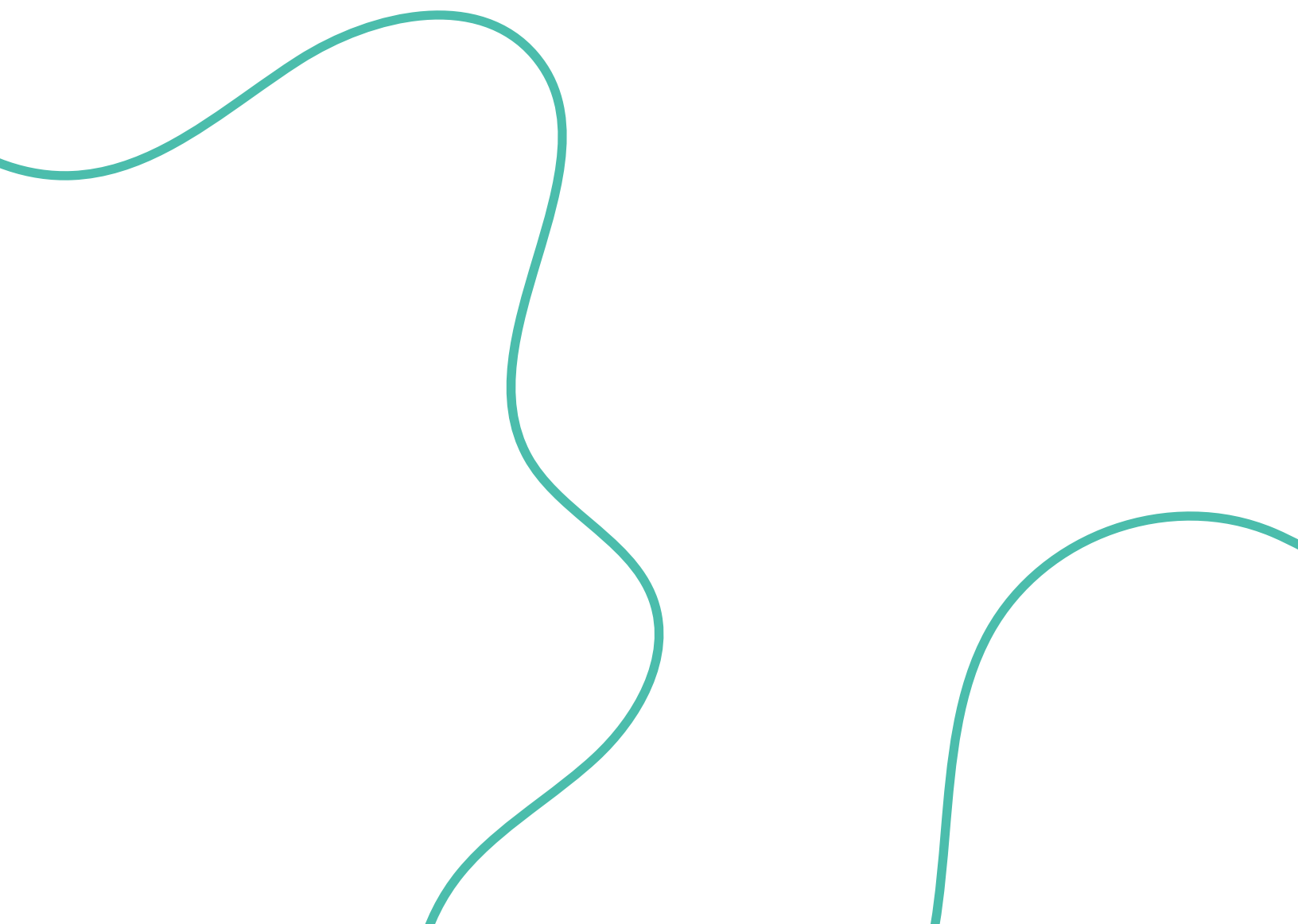
**Insight:** Using the idea of *spoon theory* helped some people plan their day based on how much energy, or how many “spoons,” they had.



**Tip:** Create a low-energy backup plan, like doing just one small task or asking someone for help.



**Application:** Check out our [Spoon Theory and Housing Transitions](#) tool to understand how energy levels can fluctuate, and how to plan tasks, pace yourself, and avoid burnout.





## Spoon Theory and Housing Transitions

Spoon theory, developed by Christine Miserandino, is one way to think about energy. You can use it to plan your day based on how much energy you have, especially during big changes like moving.

### What is spoon theory?

Think of energy like spoons. You start each day with a certain amount of energy, in other words, a certain number of spoons.



**Getting dressed?**  
That might use  
1 spoon.



**Making a meal?**  
Possibly 2 spoons.



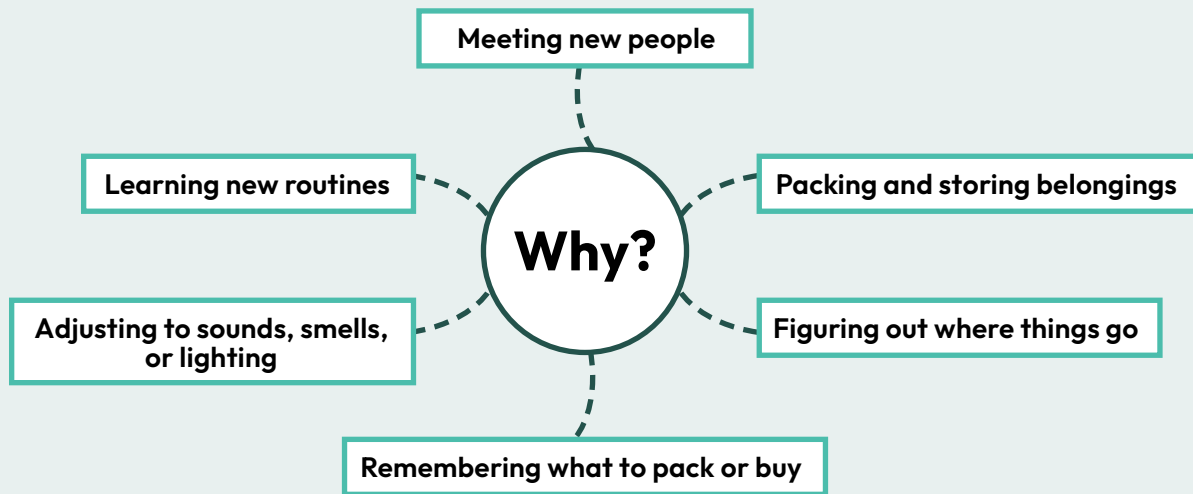
**Talking to  
someone new?**  
Maybe 3 spoons.

**When you run out of spoons,  
it's harder to do things, even small ones.**

### Your energy can change day to day

- Some days you might start with 10 spoons. Other days, only 3.
- Sleep, stress, sensory input, and how you're feeling all affect your spoon count.
- New or unpredictable tasks usually use more spoons.

## A move can take a lot of spoons



### What can you do?

- Expect lower energy during transitions, so give yourself permission to rest or do less.
- Build in recovery time by planning breaks before and after high-energy tasks.
- Ask for help from supports like delivery services or a trusted person.
- Take note of your patterns because some tasks are easier at certain times. Then, plan around that.

**You don't have endless spoons and that's okay. Planning with your energy in mind gives you more control, makes tasks less overwhelming, and brings you more comfort in your new space.**

## **Plan for supports that fit your needs at home**



**Insight:** We learned that moving can mean changes to your current support needs.



**Tip:** Think about what is helping you now. What routines or supports make your days easier? What might be different in your new home?



**Tip:** Write down and talk about supports with someone to spot changes early and figure out what new supports you might need.



**Tip:** Ask a social worker, peer support worker, or service navigator, if possible, to plan or connect to services with you.



**Application:** Check out our fillable template, [Keeping Track of Your Supports During a Move](#), to stay organized and connected with supports. Find it on page 29.