

Neuroinclusive housing edition

The Bright Ideas Book



Solutions, shared wisdom, and creative ideas for landlords, builders, developers, designers, architects, housing providers, social workers, roommates, friends, family, caregivers, and individuals.



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Authors

- Tara Connolly
- Boris Vukovic
- Mike Chong
- Katie Condon
- Taylor Robertson
- Margaret Janse van Rensburg
- Roxana-Maria Barbu

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Contact: accessibility.institute@carleton.ca

Developed by:



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A Few Things Before The Ideas

Why neuroinclusive housing matters

Everyone deserves a safe, stable, and comfortable place to call home. But for many Autistic and other Neurodivergent people, housing too often doesn't meet their needs or wants.

Most housing is designed with a general idea of how people are supposed to live. Real life is more complex than that. We all have different ways in which we can be comfortable and at home in a space. What feels right to one person, can feel overwhelming, stressful, or unsafe to someone else.

Neuroinclusive housing creates spaces and systems that are flexible, responsive and support different ways of thinking, sensing, and moving through the world. It extends beyond the physical design of a house, and is about creating homes and communities that are accessible, welcoming, and easy to live in.

Creating accessible and inclusive housing is complex work. It needs to account for access, choice, dignity, and quality of life. It also needs to be a shared responsibility. Whether you're a landlord, builder, developer, designer, architect, housing provider, social worker, roommate, friend, family, caregiver, or Neurodivergent individual, there's something you can do. Small, thoughtful changes at various levels can make a big difference!

Language, concepts, and terms

Language matters. The words we choose can make the difference in people feeling seen, respected, included, or not. Throughout this book, we've tried to be thoughtful and intentional about the language we use.

Language preferences can change over time, but we believe that inclusive language is about staying open, being responsive, and continuing to learn from one another. That spirit of listening and learning has guided the work on this book from the start.

Identity-first language

Throughout this work, many people shared that they prefer identity-first language, such as “Autistic person” rather than “person with autism.” This reflects the view that autism is a core part of someone’s identity, not something separate or negative. Therefore, we’ve chosen to use identity-first language in this book, while recognizing that preferences vary.

We also recognize that autism is one part of the broader neurodivergent umbrella. In this book, when we use the term Neurodivergent, we mean to include Autistic people, along with others who identify with that term. When sharing personal stories or quotes, we’ve used the specific language people chose to describe themselves, to respect their identity and voice.

Quotes and vignettes

We have learned a lot from people across the housing ecosystem in our conversations. The quotes and vignettes are insights that were shared with us from Neurodivergent people, their friends and family members, and a range of professionals working towards neuroinclusive housing. We share their stories to show what meaningful and inclusive housing can be and to give context to the ideas. To respect everyone’s privacy, we’ve made all quotes anonymous and used gender-neutral language.

Concepts

We use these concepts often throughout the book. Read more about them in the Appendix.

[Neurodiversity](#)

[Neurodivergence](#)

[Neuroinclusive housing](#)

[The housing ecosystem](#)

What this book *is*



Stories, strategies,
and learnings
from our work



Usable ideas that
can be adapted by
anyone thinking
about housing



Inspiration for
collaborations and
connections
in housing

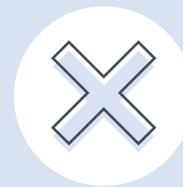
What this book *is not*



Not a checklist
for the perfect
home



Not all the
answers to
housing needs



Not a step-by-step
guide to finding
housing

Read more in “A few more things about this book”

How to use this book

We know lengthy resources can feel overwhelming, especially when your to-do list is already a mile long. That's why we designed this book with ease and clarity in mind.

Sections based on the housing journey

This book reflects parts of the housing journey. Here's the general flow:



Each section starts with a brief introduction followed by ideas and strategies. Within the ideas, there are tips, examples, resources, or tools (*note: these are not fillable digitally*).

We also have a section called [Your Home, Your Way: More Ideas for Neurodivergent People](#). *It's written specifically for Neurodivergent individuals* and includes more ideas and strategies, many of which we learned from community members.

Icons to navigate the book

We use icons and callouts to highlight the type of content. This makes it easier to scan quickly, skip around, or revisit topics as needed.

-  **Inclusivity:** A neuroinclusive perspective
-  **Insight:** Why we've included the idea
-  **Example:** A real-life example
-  **Tip:** Tips or things to consider
-  **Application:** A resource or tool for applying the idea

Index of role-specific ideas

Most of the ideas are written in a way that can be adapted across different roles and contexts. That said, we know it's helpful to quickly spot what's most relevant. So, we've pulled together a shortlist of ideas that connect closely to specific roles. Find this list in the Appendix.

Building Homes That Work

The early stages of a housing project are full of possibility. Whether it's building something new or updating an existing space, it's an ideal time to think about neuroinclusivity and how thoughtful design choices can support people at the start.

This section offers ideas for engaging the neurodivergent community in the process, along with creative approaches to designing both shared and personal spaces.

SECTION THEMES:

- 09 **Learning about neuroinclusive housing**
- 16 **Designing shared spaces**
- 19 **Designing personal spaces that meet individual needs**



Learning about neuroinclusive housing

Here we offer ideas for how people can connect, share ideas, and come up with thoughtful design choices for both shared spaces and individual homes.

Connect early with the people who will live there to get their input



Inclusivity: The principle of “nothing about us, without us” means asking, listening, and co-designing with the Neurodivergent people who will live in the space.



Insight: We heard that the earlier Neurodivergent people’s voices are brought into the conversations for new construction projects or renovations, the easier it is to build a home that fits.



Tip: Make opportunities for people to share their thoughts in different ways and more than once. Options might include hosting recurring town hall forums, offering online and paper feedback forms, having in-person chats, or making a dedicated phone line.



Example: We spoke with architects who told us how important it is to involve Neurodivergent people early in the planning process so that their real-life experiences can help shape the design.

“We make sure that we’re engaged with not just the client groups, but actually engaging with the people who are going to potentially live there to understand their lived experience and that’s super important, right? It’s kind of that nothing for us without us kind of thing.”

This engagement happens during all stages of a project, from planning, to designing, to building.

“The more that you can actually connect to the experience of individuals, it enables us to consider more things...it’s really that approach to just being open to feedback and letting the feedback change what we do.”

This process allowed the team of architects to directly connect their design to what they heard from the community.



Application: Check out our [Sample Email for Inviting Community Consultations](#). It’s an example of how to welcome neurodivergent voices and plan for accessible options to support participation.

Sample Email for Inviting Community Consultations

New Message

From: Alex Piason - Community Engagement Lead

Subject: You're Invited: Community Town Hall on Our New Housing Project

Dear community members,

We're starting a new residential building in your area, and we want to engage you right from the start. Whether you're interested in living there, know someone who might be, or are simply connected to the neighbourhood, your voice matters.

Join our community town hall to see early plans and share your ideas. Your input will help shape the project.

Town Hall details:

- Who: Anyone in the community who is connected to or interested in the project
- What: Community Town Hall
- When: June 12, 2025, 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm
- Where: Canvas Community Centre, 123 Vinyl Road, Sprouts, Alberta, T4E 7H3
(Virtual meeting option: www.web-meet.ca/3924394)
- Why: To share plans and gather feedback

 **Inclusivity:** This signals a respectful, curious, and committed approach to co-design. It invites real input, not tokenism, by showing that diverse perspectives create more inclusive designs.

We recognize that the best results come from including a range of perspectives, especially from those who may live in or near the building. Hearing from a diverse group of people early on helps us catch issues we might not notice and supports design choices that work for as many people as possible. This includes considering different sensory needs, communication styles, and ways people navigate space.

If a town hall isn't your thing, you can also:

- Fill out our online feedback form: www.survey.ca/3924394
- Fill out a paper feedback form at Fresh Homes, 38 Vinyl Road, Sprouts, Alberta, T4E 7N3
- Call us at (780) 392-4394

Please let us know if there are any supports that we can offer to help you take part in this event. We look forward to connecting with you at the town hall.

Best,
Alex Piason
Community Engagement Lead
Fresh Homes
a.piason@freshhomes.ca

 **Inclusivity:** Not everyone engages the same way. Flexible options and inclusive language help create a space where more people feel comfortable sharing their voice.

Offer tours for people to experience the physical space



Insight: We learned that a tour can be especially helpful for people who need to see or move through a space to understand about how it might work for them. It helps them give more detailed and practical feedback on what needs to be changed.



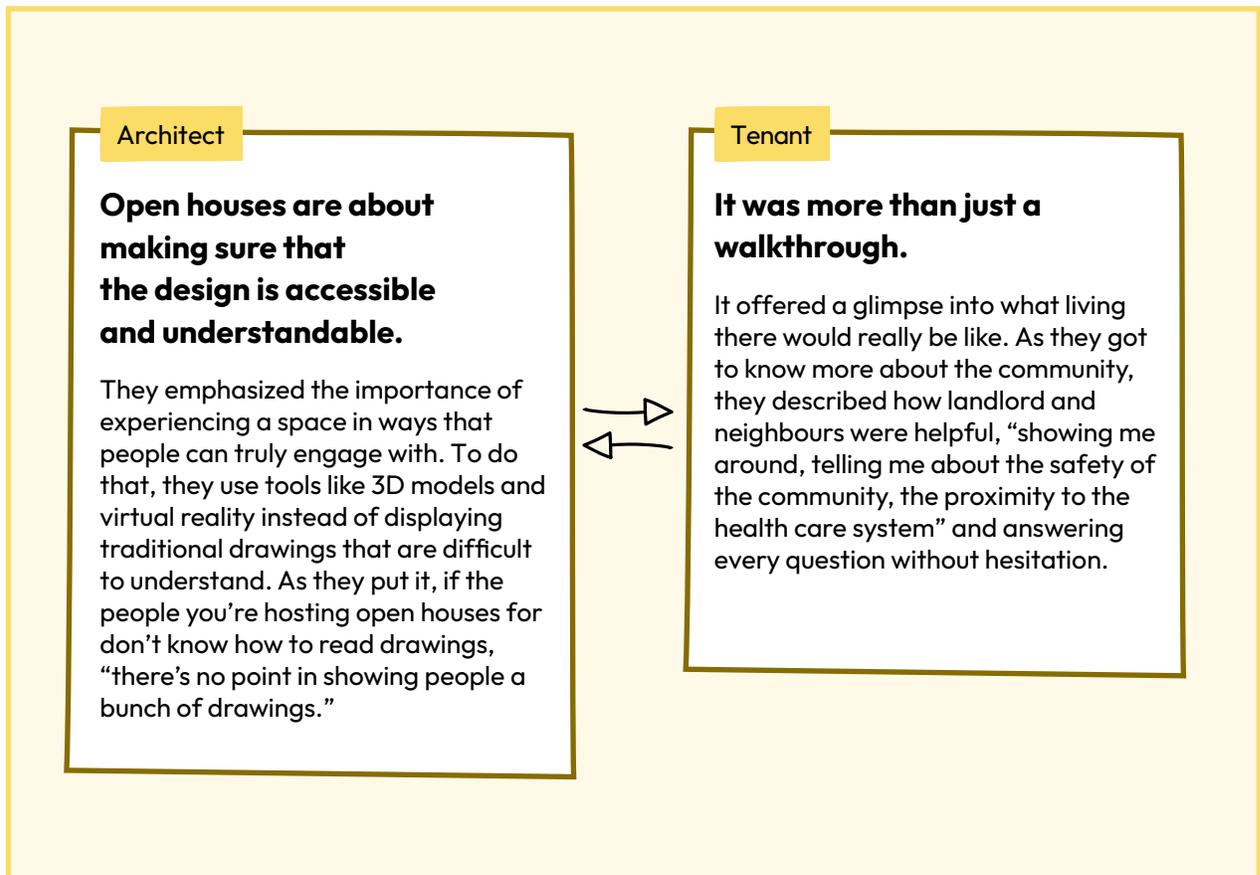
Tip: Show a similar model or layout if the exact home isn't available and explain the differences.



Tip: Create a guide for giving home tours that highlights the important features. Consult with Neurodivergent community members to learn what features they would want to be shown or highlighted.



Example: We heard from both a tenant and an architect that open houses and tours are a key part of how people understand and connect with a space.



Go beyond accessibility building codes and look for neuroinclusive design choices



Inclusivity: Meeting basic accessibility codes is just the starting point. There are many other design choices that make spaces more inclusive and welcoming. Review the current plans. Think who might still be left out and how to adjust the design to make it more accessible.



Tip: Make a short list of organizations or design leaders who focus on neuroinclusion. Follow them on social media, sign up for their newsletters, and explore their projects for inspiration.



Tip: Tour spaces that do neuroinclusive design well and pay attention to things like lighting, signage, entries, exits, shared spaces, quiet zones, or how the space flows.



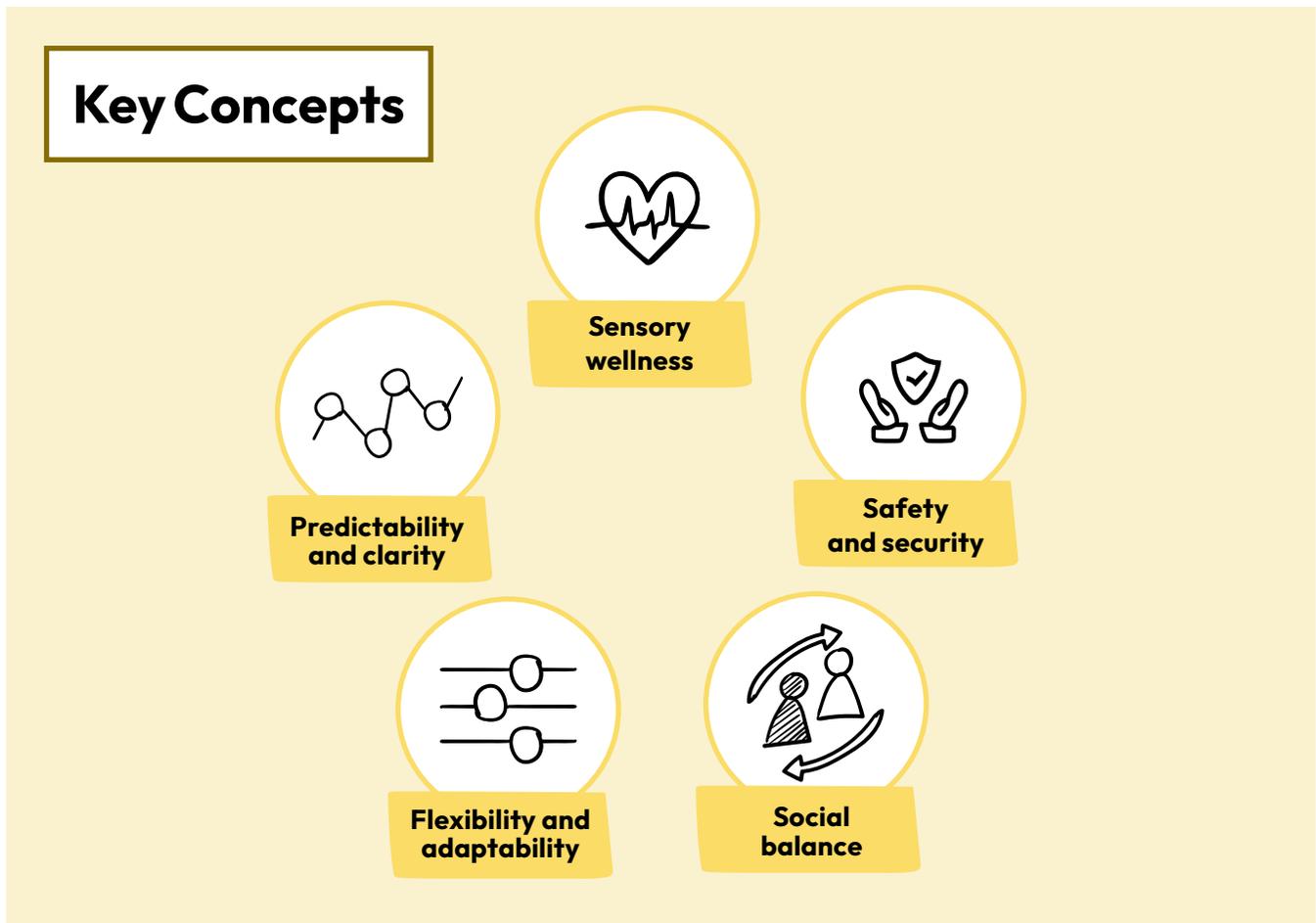
Application: Check out the sample of [Design Guides for Neuroinclusive Housing](#) we've collected.

Design Guides for Neuroinclusive Housing

Here are a few neuroinclusive design guides with ideas to consider when starting a new housing project or modifying existing spaces.

Blueprint for the Mind: Creating Neuroinclusive Architectural Spaces

From Perkins & Will, a global design company, this guide provides a range of neuroinclusive design strategies and ways to implement them, mainly in public spaces and workplaces. It focuses on 5 related concepts of the built environment that can impact Neurodivergent people.



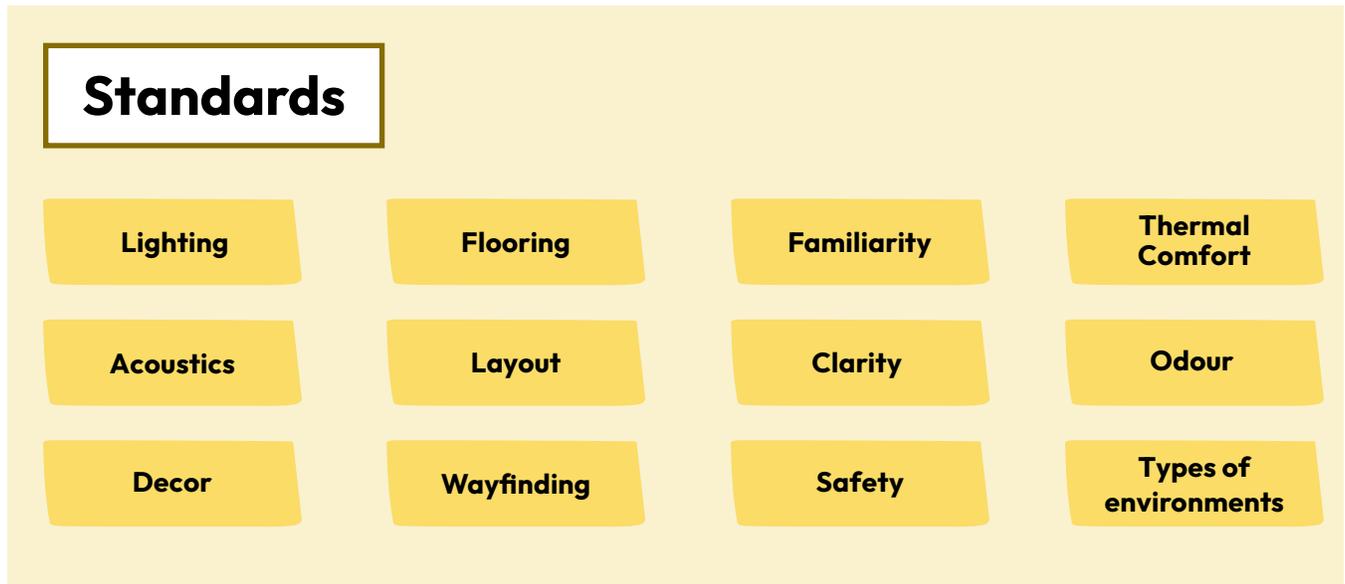
https://issuu.com/perkinswill/docs/neuroinclusion_guide



A related report and Neurodiversity Toolkit focusing more on the workplace might provide more inspiration and can be found on Perkins & Will's website: <https://research.perkinswill.com/projects/learning-from-biodiversity-to-support-neurodiversity-in-the-workplace/>

Design for the Mind. Neurodiversity & the Built Environment - PAS 6463

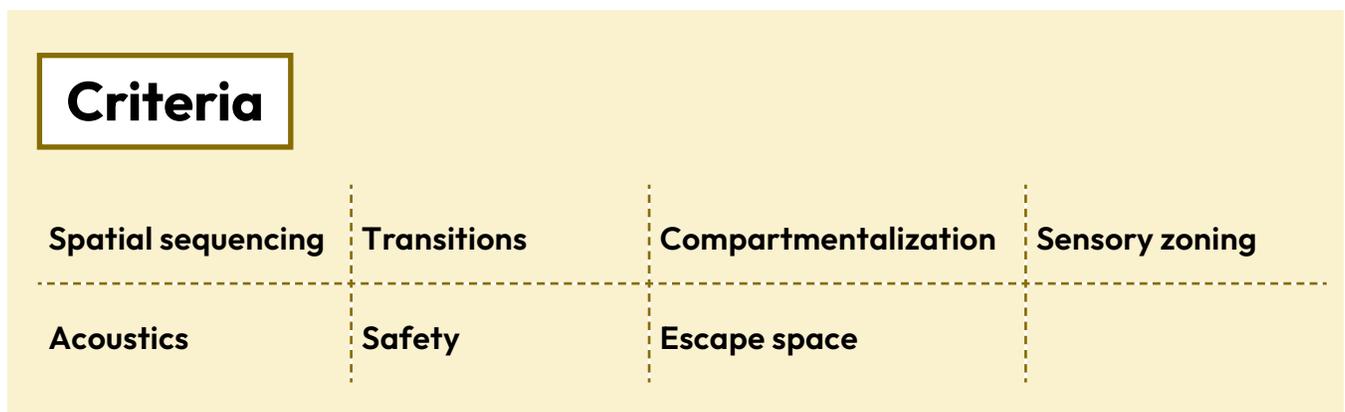
The British Standards Institution published this guide to establish standards of neuroinclusive design that can be used in wide range of spaces like housing, public areas, and businesses.



You'll need to enter some basic contact information to download the guide.
<https://www.bsigroup.com/en-GB/insights-and-media/insights/brochures/pas-6463-design-for-the-mind-neurodiversity-and-the-built-environment/>

The Autism Design Index

This autism focused guide describes 7 important criteria for built environments that can be used to design and assess spaces in homes, schools, and community buildings.



<https://www.autism.archi/aspectss>

Talk about neuroinclusion early and keep it on the agenda



Insight: We learned how easily neuroinclusion can be overlooked. It needs to be discussed at the start and frequently revisited in meeting agendas for any new housing construction or renovation project.



Tip: Invite people to review building or floor plans early and notice things like layout, lighting, or safety, and jot down what feels right or off. These notes can lead to more helpful feedback and spark better questions as plans take shape.



Example: When we spoke with architects about planning for neuroinclusion, one shared that it should be from the very beginning of a project. This architect worked closely with the engineering team on their project to advocate for neuroinclusion at all stages. Because they were involved over time, they designed for neuroinclusion meaningfully, and not just to check a box on accessibility.

They looked to design frameworks and guidelines for neurodiversity to “get a better understanding of how we could integrate that in our process from the beginning to the end rather than something that’s just sent to a third party at certain milestones.”



Designing shared spaces

Whether it's a shared home, a condo, or a multi-unit building, common areas like hallways, patios, pools, gyms, kitchens and so on, need to be designed with care so they feel comfortable and give people options.

Here are some ideas to make shared spaces feel more flexible, calm, and welcoming, allowing for choice in how and when to connect with others.

Use open sightlines in common areas



Insight: We learned that not being able to see what's ahead, like around corners or down hallways, can make people feel anxious or unsafe. Clear sightlines let people know what to expect.



Tip: Design high-traffic areas like entrances and elevator landings with a nearby side paths or quiet seating alcoves to give people a way to step aside if the space feels crowded or overwhelming.



Application: Check out the sample of [Design Guides for Neuroinclusive Housing](#) we've collected. Find it on page 13.

Make it easy to get around



Inclusivity: Good wayfinding supports independence, lowers cognitive load, and helps people feel more confident as they move through a building, and get where they need to go.



Tip: Design pathways with clear signage, lighting, and layouts to easily guide people to important areas like exits, elevators, and washrooms.



Tip: Use clear and consistent signage. Think about size, placement, symbols, contrast, and plain language.



Tip: Try painting wayfinding cues like arrows, right on the walls or floors. It's a simple and effective strategy that's used in many settings.



Tip: Offer building maps or floor plans ahead of time, so people can see the space in advance and feel more prepared and confident getting around. It can reduce stress, especially in large or unfamiliar spaces.

Offer different levels of engagement and sensory input



Inclusivity: Shared spaces can help people feel connected, but not everyone wants social interaction all the time. It's important to create environments that support different comfort levels, sensory needs, and energy levels.



Tip: Design shared spaces like patios, gyms, or pools with possibilities for both connection and quiet. Include spots for socializing and areas for alone time, so people can choose how they want to engage.



Tip: Schedule times for specific use of spaces, such as low light, reduced capacity, or open conversation hours.



Example: We spoke with a few designers about how fixtures and furniture could change spaces from being more open and social versus more private.

They talked about having a mix of seating options with one designer describing a modular couch that transforms into different arrangements depending on what's needed for the people and space.

We also heard about using planters, pergolas, or benches to create natural separation between social and private spaces.



Application: Check out our [Tips for Creating Neuroinclusive Spaces That Support Participation](#) for ideas.

Tips for Creating Neuroinclusive Spaces That Support Participation

We made a list of ideas and tips shared by Neurodivergent people for creating neuroinclusive spaces that foster participation and inclusion.

It can be a starting point for designing, building, or renovating spaces. It can also be used for hosting activities and gatherings.

Try incorporating some of these tips:

1

Offer alternatives to verbal participation.

Virtual chat features, sticky notes, and art-based options like drawing, painting, or music are options that are inclusive of diverse communication and participation styles.

2

Before the event or gathering, share written and visual agendas.

People can review information beforehand and know what to expect.

3

Plan for various sensory needs.

Creating sensory zones within a space or activity provides choice. Remember to include options for sensory seekers too.

4

Share walkthrough videos and photos of the space.

People can navigate the space with more familiarity when they arrive.

5

Invite people to unmask and show up as their authentic selves.

People appreciate it when the aim is to make safer spaces where everyone is welcome.

6

Discuss and post visible guidelines or “ground rules”.

This reduces the pressure to navigate and interpret unspoken expectations and social norms.

Ask Neurodivergent people what helps them feel supported and like they belong. They are the experts of their own experiences, and their feedback is valuable. The key is to create a space where they feel safe sharing honestly.

Designing personal spaces that meet individual needs

For many Neurodivergent people, sensory needs are a big part of whether or not a space feels safe, calm, and livable. These needs vary from person to person and even from day to day.

Here we offer ideas for how to create a flexible home environment where people can choose and control elements to match their needs.

Make thoughtful material choices



Insight: We heard that the right materials not only make a space more comfortable, but they also make cleaning easier, reduce upkeep, and minimize unpleasant sensory experiences.



Tip: Make cleaning easier by selecting durable and easy-to-clean materials and finishes.
Try:

- Spot-free appliances and fixtures
- Non-carpeted flooring
- Toilets that flush well the first time
- Cabinets with adjustable organizers



Tip: Reduce strong odours and improve air quality. Try:

- Paints that don't release gases into the air
- Good ventilation systems that improve clean air circulation
- Cabinets and furniture made without harsh glues or chemicals

Create ways for people to control their own lighting



Insight: We learned that many people have sensory needs related to brightness, colour, and types of lighting.



Tip: Use adjustable features like dimmers or smart bulbs so people can set the lighting level that works for them.

Design with sound and acoustics in mind



Tip: Try designing with materials like acoustic panels, soft furnishings, insulation, or carpets to reduce echo and background noise.



Tip: Try pairing devices to headphones or hearing aids for individualized volume control.

Offer ways to adjust temperature



Tip: Use zoned heating and cooling systems so people can control the temperature in different parts of the home.



Tip: Have fans, baseboard heaters, or windows that open to give people more control over airflow and temperature.



Tip: Place hooks around the home so extra clothing layers are always easy to reach when needed.



Application: Check out our menu of options for [Modifying Spaces for Sensory Needs](#), with many ideas of small, low-cost changes that make spaces more comfortable and accessible for different sensory profiles.

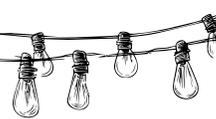


Modifying Spaces for Sensory Needs

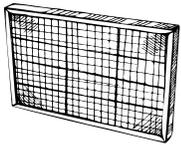
We learned that small changes to a space can go a long way in making it more inclusive. Being mindful of different sensory needs and recognizing that these can change from day to day is an important part of accessibility. There are many ways to adjust a space to feel more calming or more engaging. Below, we’ve created a short “menu” of options to explore.

The most important strategy shared with us was to try different things and figure out what aligns with preferences and the unique environment.

Light: Change the type of lighting, brightness, or colour.

 <p>Motion sensing</p>	 <p>Colour LED</p>	 <p>String light</p>	 <p>Dimmable light</p>
 <p>Double layer curtain</p>	 <p>Blackout curtain</p>	 <p>Bubble tube light</p>	 <p>Wall light</p>
 <p>Table lamp</p>	 <p>Sunglasses</p>	 <p>Black tape seal around windows</p>	 <p>Cardboard over windows</p>

Sound: Use technology or do-it-yourself options to dampen or increase acoustics in your home



Foam Panels



Static sound makers



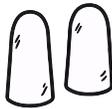
Noise-cancelling headphones



Wooden wall panels



Headphones for music



Earplugs



Wall tapestries



Noise machines



Live plant wall

Motion: Find fixtures that can give a sense of movement



Sensory ball



Rocking chair



Indoor or outdoor swing

Temperature: Use technology or do-it-yourself options to set up temperature-controlled zones in the home



Smart thermostat



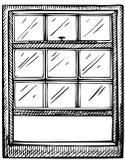
Portable fan



Extra throws or blankets



Heated pads or blankets



Plastic wrap over windows

Touch: Put in a variety of textured elements in the home



Plush blankets



Textured pillows



Weighted blanket



Textured rugs



Humidifier or dehumidifier



Adjustable shower nozzles



Beanbag chair

Navigating The Housing Process

Looking for a new place to call home can be exciting but it often involves a lot of planning and coordination.

This section offers ideas for making the process more manageable, like sorting out finances, connecting with supports, and finding a good housing fit.

SECTION THEMES:

25 Figuring out the money side of housing

28 Getting supports in place for the new home

34 Finding a good housing match



Figuring out the money side of housing

Sorting out the financial side of housing can make things more manageable and sustainable in the long run.

Here we offer ideas for building money skills, exploring funding options, and setting up systems or supports that help build confidence managing housing finances.

Put together a list of housing-related funding



Inclusivity: Taking the time to create a list of potential financial supports for housing can be a helpful and important first step to understand what options might be available and to keep track of the process.



Insight: We heard that accessing funding can be complex. There are a lot of different types of funding such as rent subsidies, moving grants, or utility supports. There can also be complex eligibility requirements in each province or territory.



Tip: Take this idea further by including details on the list about when and how to apply for funding.

Expand money management skills and knowledge



Insight: We heard that learning to create a workable housing budget and managing bills is very important when moving out for the first time. It often involves new routines, skills and systems that need to be built up gradually.



Tip: Use real-life housing examples to explore money concepts like rent, interest, credit, and savings.



Tip: Explore apps or online tools that track things like rent payments, savings, or bills. Finding the right one to use sometimes takes a few tries, so explore the options available. But be mindful about sharing personal and financial information.

Set up systems for automatic deposits and payments



Inclusivity: Setting up automated banking can make it easier to manage money day to day. But it may involve using new technology or coordinating with banks and service providers, which can take some extra effort up front. It can be helpful to work with a trusted support person to get everything set up. Just be mindful not to assume who is or isn't comfortable using tech tools.



Insight: We learned that managing bills can be repetitive and it can be hard to keep track of different deadlines. Automated deposits, recurring transfers, and bill payments can reduce the cognitive load and avoid missed bills or late fees.



Example: We chatted with several Neurodivergent people about how funding can make their home a better fit. But an important point came up about first needing to know how to access and use funding.

One Autistic person shared that their support worker helped them navigate and manage their funding. Their caseworker reviewed their funding and noticed that it wasn't used. They asked the person about using it and they said, *"I have no idea how. So, they showed me, but it's been great having help with this. They have really, really, been amazing."*



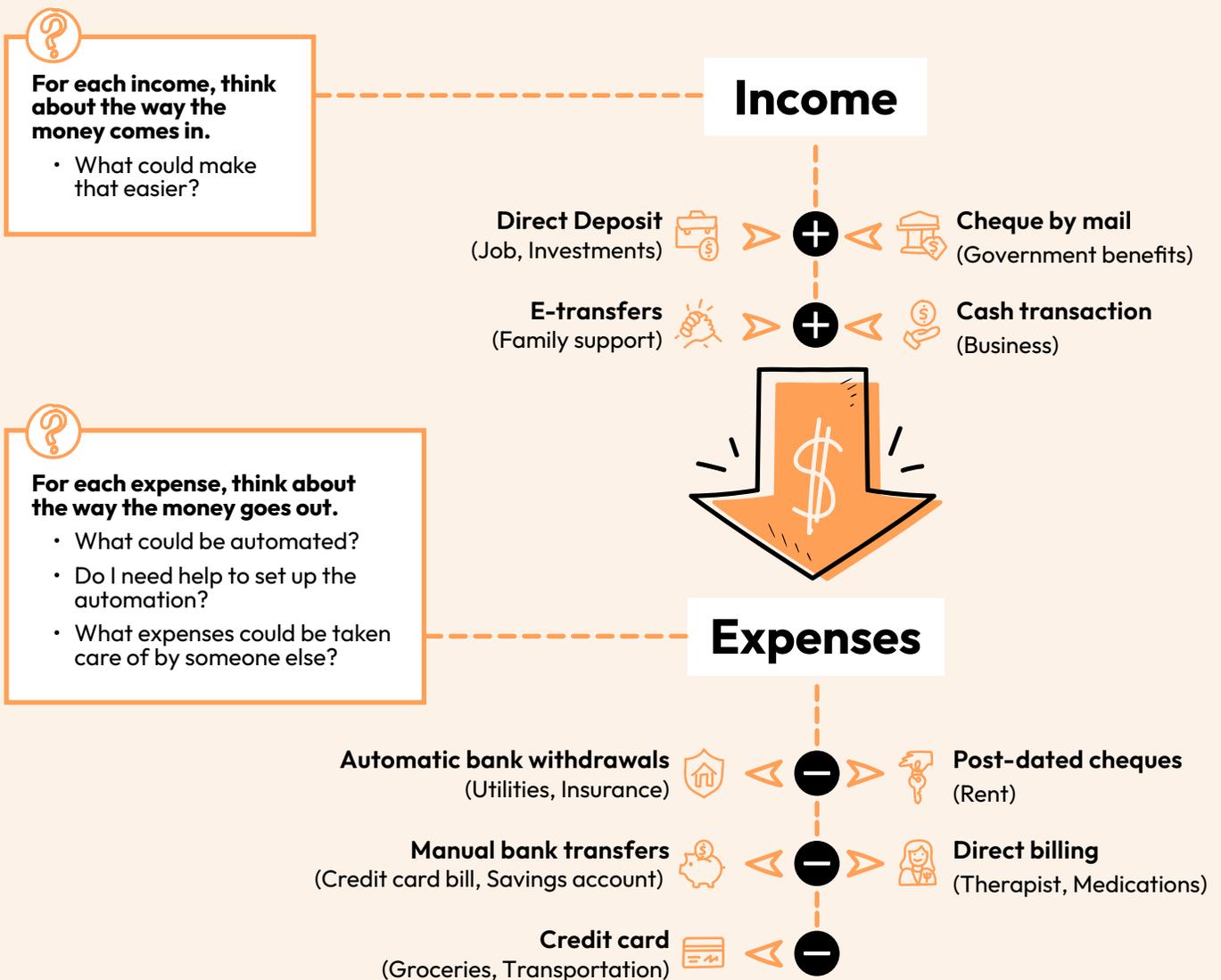
Application: Check out our [Money Flow Diagram](#), a visual tool to help Neurodivergent people map how money moves in and out of an account and spot opportunities to simplify or automate financial tasks.

Money Flow Diagram

Visualizing how money flows in day-to-day living can keep you organized and reveal opportunities for simplifying or automating some of your financial responsibilities.

Here is an example of money flow for someone who has several sources of income and many expenses. Use this example to create a diagram that reflects the unique financial situation that you or someone you're supporting has.

We realize that managing finances and budgeting requires understanding of financial concepts. Ask a financial advisor or a trusted person who has done this before to learn more.



Getting supports in place for the new home

Moving can bring a lot of change so it's important to make sure that the level of supports that are already in place will transition through the move, and that any new or replacement supports needed are ready to go.

Here are a few ways to plan ahead while navigating the housing process.

Make a list of current and future supports



Insight: We learned that lots of people help with daily life in small ways, even if someone will be living alone. Having a list of them can be a useful reference. For example, the list can include friends, family, and service providers like caseworkers, day program staff, therapists, medical professionals, or personal care services.



Tip: View our [Housing Ecosystem Map](https://nihouse.ca/ecosystem/) (<https://nihouse.ca/ecosystem/>) to learn about different roles in the housing ecosystem and how they can support neuroinclusive housing.



Application: Check out our template, [Keeping Track of Your Supports During a Move](#), to stay organized and connected with supportive people and services.

Keeping Track of Your Supports During a Move

Moving is a big change, and it can be easy to lose track of important details. This template is designed for organizing and staying connected with supportive people and services.

It can be used by an individual, or with a trusted family member, friend, or support worker.

Inclusivity: This snapshot of current supports can help shape housing choices or plan for a move.



Keep track of the following details:

1. The support and their contact information.
2. Think about the amount of the support needed in the new home. Will the support not be needed, or will there be less, the same, or more needed?
3. Add details about what changes need to be made.
4. Add details about how the changes will be made, including who will do it and when they need to be done.

We included a few examples of what the cards and this support tracker might look like. There is a blank version to use as well.

Example: Transit

MetroBus support, (123) 456-7890

How much of this support will I need in my new home?	<input type="radio"/> Not needed <input type="radio"/> Less <input type="radio"/> Same <input checked="" type="radio"/> More needed I am not in walking distance to my doctor's office anymore.
What changes need to be made? Add details	Update address and reschedule pickup on Tuesdays.
How will changes be made? By whom and when	I will update my address in my online portal. Mom will call and reschedule my pickups. Done by Jun 24.

Example: Occupational Therapist

Mika, mika@email.com

How much of this support will I need in my new home?	<input type="radio"/> Not needed <input type="radio"/> Less <input type="radio"/> Same <input checked="" type="radio"/> More needed I will be cooking and cleaning for myself.
What changes need to be made? Add details	Update address and plan for new daily routines.
How will changes be made? By whom and when	I will email my caseworker and tell them. Do tomorrow.

Example: Meal delivery

Pami, meals@email.com

How much of this support will I need in my new home?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Not needed <input type="radio"/> Less <input type="radio"/> Same <input type="radio"/> More needed
What changes need to be made? Add details	Cancel deliveries.
How will changes be made? By whom and when	I will email Pami to cancel it as of next month. Do next Wednesday.

Example: Social visits with my friend Lin

Lin, (234) 567-8910

How much of this support will I need in my new home?	<input type="radio"/> Not needed <input type="radio"/> Less <input checked="" type="radio"/> Same <input type="radio"/> More needed
What changes need to be made? Add details	Tell Lin my new address.
How will changes be made? By whom and when	I will tell Lin during our next visit. Do next Thursday.

Additional considerations:

- Do you need to discuss these changes with someone?
- Will you need different supports that aren't currently in place? Add them to the template to be organized before the move.

Blank version

Type of support:

Contact info:

How much of this support will I need in my new home?	<input type="radio"/> Not needed <input type="radio"/> Less <input type="radio"/> Same <input type="radio"/> More needed
What changes need to be made? Add details	
How will changes be made? By whom and when	

Type of support:

Contact info:

How much of this support will I need in my new home?	<input type="radio"/> Not needed <input type="radio"/> Less <input type="radio"/> Same <input type="radio"/> More needed
What changes need to be made? Add details	
How will changes be made? By whom and when	

Know what services are available in the new location



Insight: We learned that checking out the area around a home and seeing how well the available services match a person's needs can help them decide if it's a good place to live.



Tip: Create a list of key support contacts like therapists, coordinators, or caseworkers that will be used in the new neighbourhood. This list can also be used to communicate needs across care teams or with new service providers.

Inclusivity: During transitions, it's easy for support systems to become disrupted. Keeping an up-to-date list can help maintain continuity and support shared planning.



Finding a good housing match

Finding a good housing match is much more than picking an available house. It should meet real needs, reflect what matters, and feel like home.

Here are ways to assess housing options, connect with potential roommates, and set up clear and manageable housing searches.

Compare features of different housing styles



Inclusivity: The type of housing that works best is different for everyone. For example, some people prefer co-living with family or roommates, while others prefer living alone.



Tip: Use visual guides, tours, or checklists to help compare different housing options. Include details about the sensory environment, accessibility, nearby supports, and cost to help determine the best fit.



Application: Check out our [Comparison of Housing Styles](#) example to think about important features.

Housing styles

Ownership: Individually owning a home or in a form of partnership.

Family home: Living in a home owned or rented by family members.

Group home: Living in a home that is supported with staff.

Rental: Renting a home from a landlord, family, or corporation.

Community housing: Living in a subsidized rental home.

Features

- 1. Number of people living together in the home:** With ownership, the person can usually choose how many people will be living in the house. With other types of housing, there will often be more people in the same household space.
- 2. Independence in the home:** Group homes typically have the least amount of independence for the person because of more rules in the home and the staffed environment.
- 3. Privacy in the home:** Ownership often provides the most privacy because it gives the person more control of the amount of social interaction in the home. Privacy decreases with more people in the home like renting with a roommate or living with family.
- 4. Cost of the home:** The cost of the home for the person is often less in a family home or community housing as the housing costs are divided among more people or subsidized by government.
- 5. Housing maintenance responsibilities:** When owning or renting a home, there is often more housework and maintenance that the person needs to do themselves, such as cleaning, mowing the lawn, or fixing plumbing. Sometimes these tasks can be done by paid professionals.
- 6. Availability of supports:** While the availability of supports can vary in all housing styles, it is usually more accessible in group homes that are staffed or community housing that has support workers checking in. And don't forget the natural supports in a family home.
- 7. Availability of amenities:** Amenities such as entertainment rooms, fitness equipment, or outdoor space can vary within the housing styles. However, in community or group settings, they can cost less to maintain and shared with everyone living there.

Comparison of Housing Styles—Example

From our research and community conversations, we created a chart of important features to consider when finding a good housing match. We filled out the chart with an example of what it could look like when thinking about different housing options.

We also learned that housing options also vary, for example, a family home for one person will be different than a family home for another. That’s why we encourage people to use the blank version to start a discussion about what these different housing styles would mean for them.

Example Chart	Housing Styles				
	Ownership	Rental	Family home	Community housing	Group home
1. Number of people living together in the home	Low	Medium	Medium	High	High
2. Independence in the home	High	High	Medium	Medium	Low
3. Privacy in the home	High	Medium	Medium	Low	Low
4. Cost of the home	High	Medium	Low	Low	Low
5. House chores and maintenance responsibilities (e.g., cooking, cleaning, lawn care)	High	Medium	Medium	Low	Low
6. Availability of supports (e.g., personal support workers, maintenance staff)	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	High
7. Availability of amenities (e.g., fitness equipment, gardens, laundry facilities)	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium

Low:  Medium:  High: 

Comparison of Housing Styles—Template

1. Write the features that are important. The 7 features from the example are included, but space is provided to add more.
2. Fill-in what housing styles are available. For example, ownership, rental, family home, community housing, or group home.

Feel free to be more specific about the housing style.

3. Rate or describe how well each housing style matches with needs and priorities.

Blank version	Housing Styles (e.g., Rental, family home)		
Features			
1. Number of people living together in the home			
2. Independence in the home			
3. Privacy in the home			
4. Cost of the home			
5. House chores and maintenance responsibilities (e.g., cooking, cleaning, lawncare)			
6. Availability of supports (e.g., personal support workers, maintenance staff)			
7. Availability of amenities (e.g., fitness equipment, gardens, laundry facilities)			
Other			
Other			

Think about co-living options



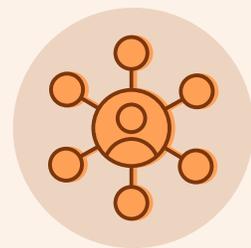
Insight: We heard that co-living could mean sharing a home with roommates, family, friends, or in a group setting. When living with adult siblings or relatives, it must be centred on mutual respect, clear boundaries, and shared responsibility.



Tip: Organize casual meetups for potential roommates to get to know each other before moving in. This provides an opportunity for people to figure out what's a good fit.



Example: When we talked to Neurodivergent students about their housing journeys, some said that post-secondary institution advisors connected them to different co-living housing options. These advisors also considered the location, potential for roommates, accessibility needs, and nearby services.



Consider getting assistance to find housing



Inclusivity: Finding housing can take time and come with challenges. Sometimes it can be easier with help from professionals or family and friends.



Tip: Consider connecting with a housing support worker, service coordinator, or housing navigator. They are professionals who help match people with housing options that fit their needs.



Insight: We learned that these people are often found in community agencies, housing services, developmental services, mental health organizations, or housing-focused non-profits.



Tip: Consider getting help from a trusted friend or family member to communicate with landlords, book viewings, and ask questions.

Preparing For A Move

The lead-up to a move can bring mixed feelings. It can be exciting, but there's also a lot of logistics to work through.

This section offers ideas on what can help during this time, like managing payments, building routines, practicing skills, and lining up the right supports.

SECTION THEMES:

- 40 Understanding rights and responsibilities
- 45 Managing housing payments
- 47 Building confidence with everyday tasks
- 48 Setting up support systems ahead of time



Understanding rights and responsibilities

Clear information and communication can instill confidence, support decision making, and help prevent misunderstandings.

Here we offer tips to make rental agreements and tenant rights and responsibilities easier to understand.

Get familiar with the housing agreement



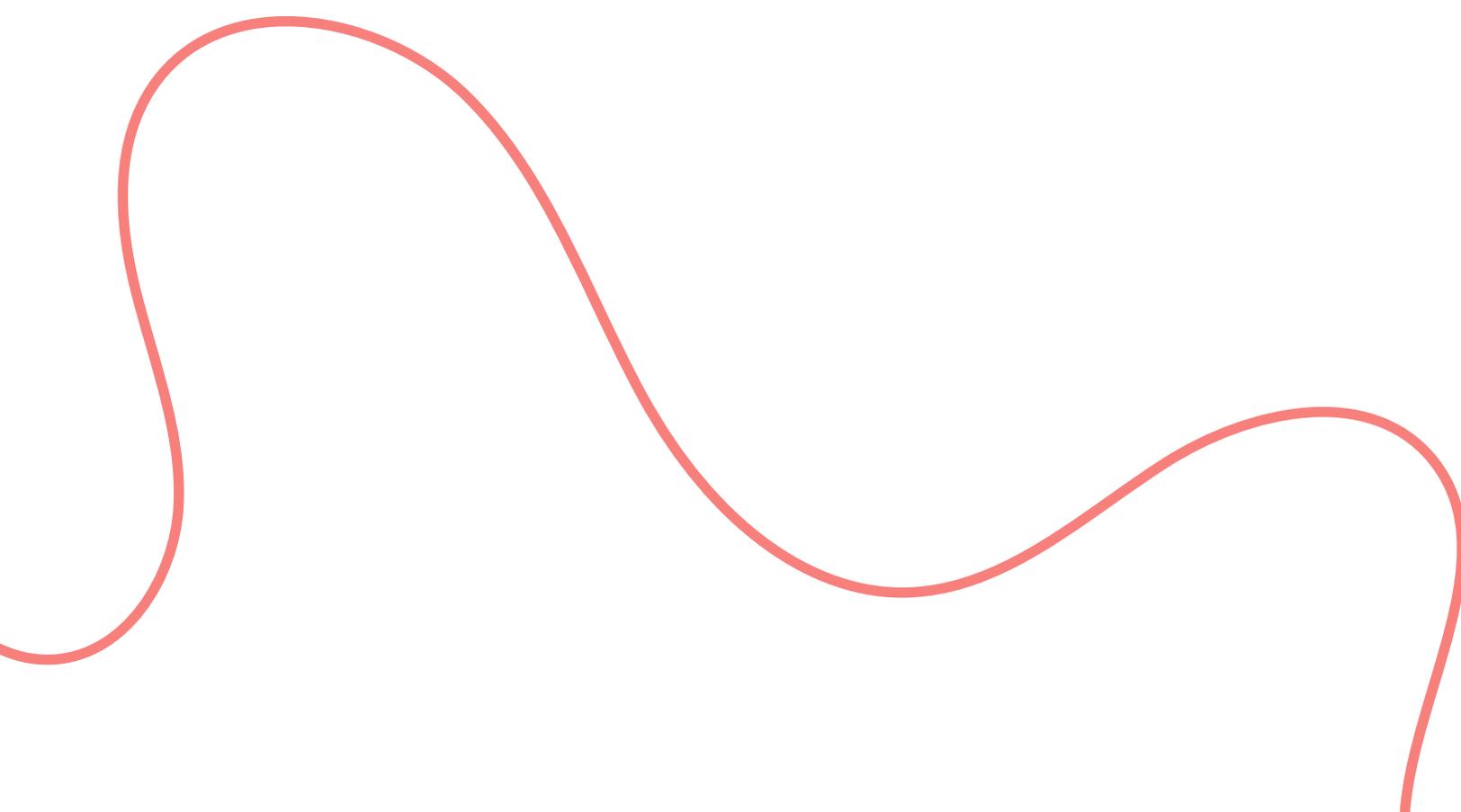
Insight: We heard it's important for property managers, landlords, and tenants to take time to understand and familiarize themselves with the full rental agreement. It's a key legal document and knowing what's in it helps everyone understand the responsibilities, and roles from the start.



Tip: Connect with a housing advocate or legal aid service for support to understand your lease, your rights as a tenant, and fair housing laws. They can also help with resolving disputes or addressing concerns around accessibility and discrimination.



Application: Check out our tips on [Understanding Rental Agreements](#), a tool that explains key elements of a rental agreement in a simple way.



Understanding Rental Agreements

Rental agreements can be confusing and overwhelming because they often include complex language, legal jargon, and small details that vary depending on the province and housing provider. For many Neurodivergent renters, this can create barriers to understanding expectations, asserting their rights, or feeling confident in the decisions they're making.

Using clear, plain-language explanations and taking the time to walk through key points can go a long way in building trust, reducing misunderstandings, and supporting successful tenancies.

Here is an example of how common details in most rental agreements can be communicated in a clear, simple way.



What you'll pay and what's included:

- Rent is usually due on the 1st of each month.
- You may be asked to pay first and last month's rent upfront before moving in.
- Landlords can't ask for extra deposits for things like pets or cleaning fees.
- You can ask for a rent receipt at any time.



What landlords are responsible for:

- Keeping the home in good repair, for example, maintaining heat, plumbing, and smoke alarms.
- Making sure important services like hot water and electricity are working.
- Giving at least 24 hours' notice before entering the home (unless it's an emergency)



What you are responsible for:

- Paying rent on time and in full.
- Keeping the home clean and avoiding damage.
- Letting the landlord know if something breaks.
- Following basic rules like quiet hours or no smoking areas.



Moving out or being asked to leave:

- You usually need to tell the landlord in advance if you plan to move.
- Landlords need a legal reason to ask you to leave and must follow a formal process.
- Landlords can't lock you out or shut off your utilities.
- You have the right to a hearing if an eviction is being considered.

Need help or have questions?

- Have another person go over the lease too, just to make sure everything makes sense
- Contact a legal clinic or tenant support line for free advice
- Visit the provincial Landlord and Tenant Board website to learn more

Encourage clear communication about housing agreements and contracts



Inclusivity: Contracts and agreements often contain a lot of legal terms. Making these documents easy to understand by offering them in accessible formats, writing in plain language, and providing visual guides benefits everyone.



Tip: Review lease agreements with a trusted support person or housing coordinator who can explain key terms and answer questions.



Tip: Make sure the housing agreement explains what happens if a tenant misses a payment or ends the lease early, since these common situations can involve fees, notice periods, or legal steps.



Application: Check out our [10 Tips for Communicating in Plain Language](#).



10 Tips for Communicating in Plain Language

1

Know who will be reading or using the document

2

Separate the content into small sections with headings

3

Use short and simple words

4

Put the most important information first

5

Only have one idea in each sentence

6

Don't use different words to describe the same thing

7

Avoid abbreviations and acronyms

8

Leave space between sentences and paragraphs

9

Use pictures to explain the content

10

Ask people who will use the documents to review it

Managing housing payments

Managing money can be one of the trickiest parts of maintaining a home. That's why it's useful to do a bit of prep before moving in, to build skills and routines. Whether it's setting up reminders, automating payments, or talking through how life changes affect budgets, these strategies build confidence and reduce stress.

Create a plan for rent and bill payments



Inclusivity: Having a plan for paying bills before taking on that responsibility can prepare people for managing future bills, avoiding late fees, and keeping essential services like heat and water running.



Tip: Create a visual guide to understand the amount, timing, and method of each payment. For example, identify whether the bill is paid online, in-person, or through a service provider.

- Use calendar reminders or a checklist to review scheduled payments regularly.
- Set reminders to update billing addresses or cancel payments to previous services when moving.
- Set end dates for pre-authorized transfers to avoid overpayments.

Talk about how life changes can affect budgets



Insight: We heard that life events like starting a new job, going back to school, or changes to benefits can impact income and monthly costs.



Tip: Discuss how income, bills, and other essential supports might change. Using real-life examples can make it easier and more relevant to talk about.



Application: Check out our [Starting a “Just in Case” Fund](#) conversation prompts to help you think through and talk about building a small emergency fund.

Starting a “Just in Case” Fund

Life happens. Sometimes unexpected things like needing time off work, a surprise utility bill, or something breaking down at home can cause stress, especially when money is already tight.

That’s where a small “just in case” fund can help. This doesn’t have to mean saving a huge amount. Start with what feels doable. Even setting aside \$10 a week can make a real difference over time.

We get that saving isn’t always easy, especially with the financial barriers many people face. Therefore, this isn’t about doing it perfectly, it’s about making a simple plan and taking steps.

Suggested prompts for personal reflection or family conversations

It’s okay to not have all the answers. These prompts can support planning ahead in a way that feels doable.

What would count as a “just in case” moment when we could use it?

Where would we keep the money so it’s easy to access but not tempting to spend?

What could this look like for me or for my family?

Would it help to check in monthly or quarterly to talk about it?

Is there a way to make this automatic, like a recurring transfer?

How can we avoid dipping into it for other reasons?

How much could we realistically set aside on a weekly or monthly basis?

Is this scheduled every payday or when benefits come in?



Building confidence with everyday tasks

Daily routines like cooking, laundry, and cleaning can feel more manageable when they're broken into smaller steps. Practicing ahead of time can build comfort and confidence, making the move into a new home feel smoother and less stressful. Here are practical ways to build those everyday skills and routines.

Practice skills like cooking, cleaning, or laundry before the move



Insight: We heard that building comfort with day-to-day tasks can ease stress during housing transitions. This might look like practicing meal planning, building a grocery list or learning to use an appliance.



Tip: Break tasks into steps and practice them in the current living space.



Tip: Try the Pomodoro technique to break tasks into focused work and rest periods. It involves choosing one task to work on for a set time, like 25 minutes, followed by a short 5-minute break. You can use a visual timer or search “Pomodoro timer” online to help keep track.

Talk through what daily activities might look like in the new space



Insight: We learned that it can be helpful to discuss what might be new or different in a new environment. Part of this should include talking about daily activities like cooking, getting ready, or managing chores.



Tip: If possible, visit the new space and plan how to set it up to make daily routines easier. For example, when thinking about cooking, consider what supplies are needed and where to store them to support the flow of the task.

Setting up support systems ahead of time

Moving to a new home often means setting up or adjusting supports. Here we offer practical ways to make sure the right services are in place, from healthcare and transportation to meal prep or daily living. Planning ahead can prevent gaps and reduce stress.

Make a checklist of support services to transition to the new home



Insight: We learned that not all supports automatically transfer to the new home location. That means that gaps in supports might happen if they are not coordinated in advance.



Tip: Ask current support providers about what needs to happen to ensure a smooth transition of the services.



Application: Check out our template, [Keeping Track of Your Supports During a Move](#), to stay organized and connected with supports. Find it on page 32.

Add supports to match the needs in the new home



Inclusivity: A new home often means new routines and new support needs to help with daily tasks. This can be especially true in the first few months of the transition.



Example: We spent a lot of time with Autistic people talking about supports when moving into a new home to make sure that daily living and household needs were being met.



“I can’t use meal delivery services anymore, and I can’t always find someone to drive me to the grocery store, so someone who comes in and stops you from falling through the cracks is integral.”



They also shared that a local community program geared towards independent living taught them how to use the bus system, organize their house, and cook simple meals.



“A friend of mine who just stays next door and in case of any issues which need fixing like maybe under the sink, or furniture and such, that friend of mine is there and can help me.”



They shared how having someone to assist with small household maintenance tasks was very helpful when they moved out on their own for the first time.

Talk to health professionals who support people in their home



Inclusivity: Some health and support professionals can help people set up their home in ways that work better for their daily routines. For example, occupational therapists can spot areas where changes or tools can make a big difference in day-to-day life.



Tip: View our [Housing Ecosystem Map](https://nihouse.ca/ecosystem/) (<https://nihouse.ca/ecosystem/>) to learn about different roles in the housing ecosystem and how they can support Neurodivergent people.



Tip: Ask healthcare providers or local health services for referrals.

Connect with the local community before the move



Insight: We heard that feeling connected to a community plays a big role in how happy people are with their housing. Being able to recognize familiar places and faces can make the new surroundings more comfortable.



Tip: Arrange to meet local service providers, tour the neighbourhood, or attend nearby events.



Tip: Seek out someone who can show people around the neighbourhood, and guide them to places like medical clinics, libraries, grocery stores, or fitness centres.



Application: Check out our [Web of Connections](#) template to think about the people and places that are part of daily life and housing experiences.

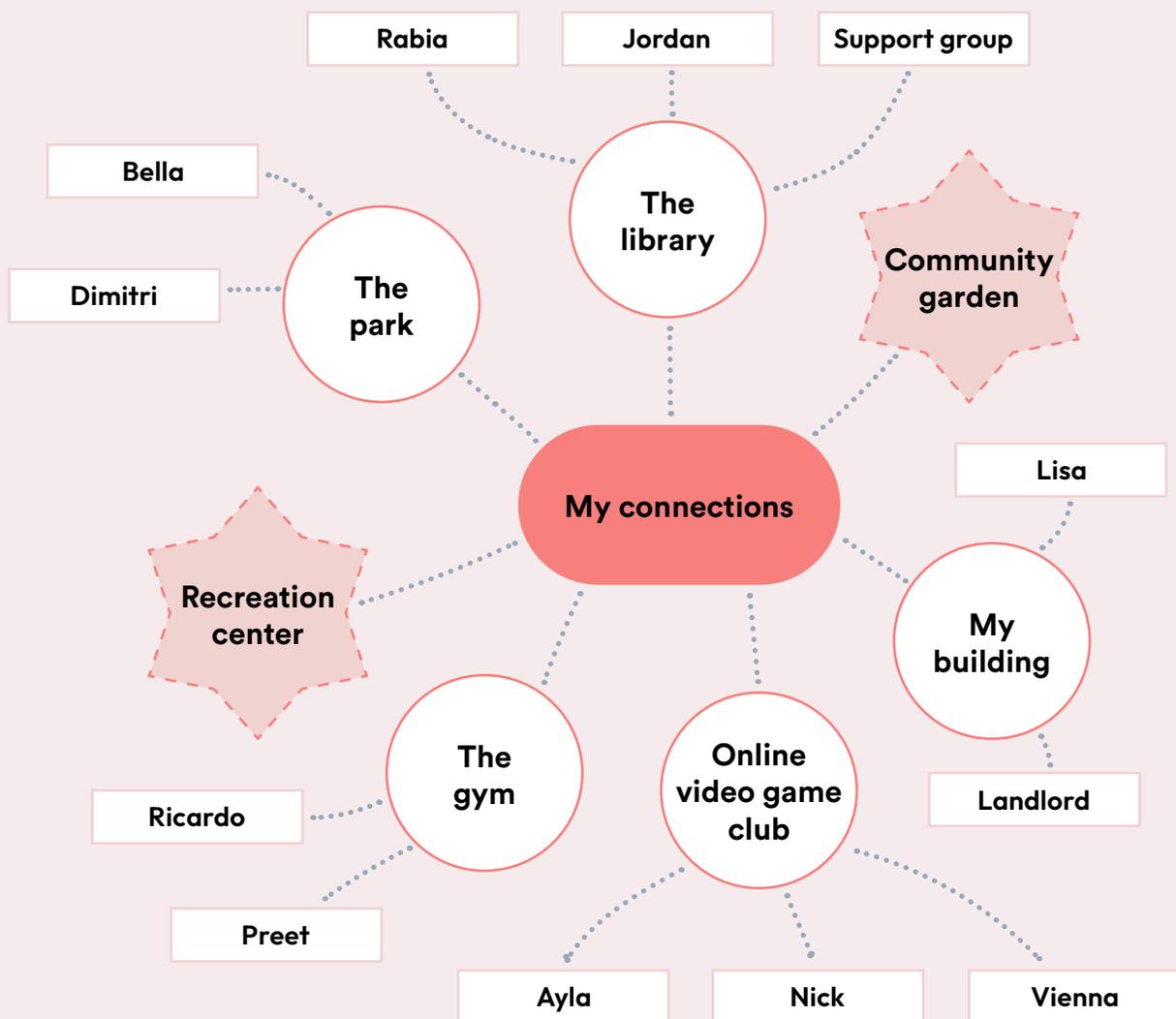
Web of Connections

Thinking about the people and places that make you feel connected can be useful in your current or new home. That’s why we created this tool for mapping out and exploring your current connections, with the potential for adding future connections too.

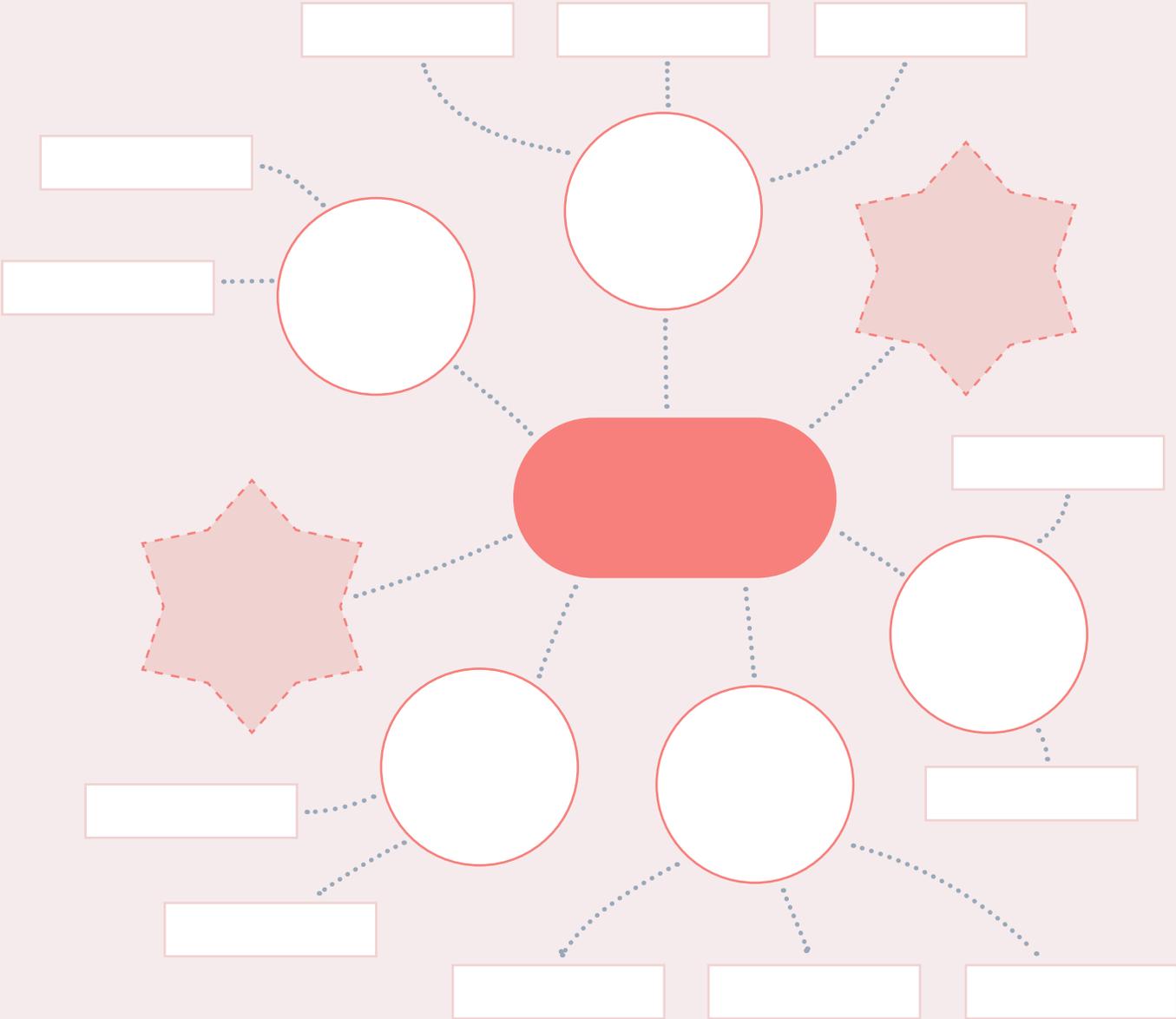
We started with circles to show the places we felt connected to. Then, we used lines and boxes to link those places to the people we connect with there. We used stars to identify places in our community that we haven’t explored yet, which are opportunities to make new connections.

We’ve included an example of a completed Web of Connections, along with a blank template.

You don’t have to use circles, boxes, or stars for your own Web of Connections. Use whatever symbols, shapes, and drawings you like to represent the places and people you connect with.



Blank version



Living Well At Home

Once the boxes are unpacked, the focus turns to what helps the home feel good and keeps everything running smoothly day to day.

This section includes ideas for getting along with housemates, taking care of chores, sharing space, and supporting wellness.

SECTION THEMES:

- 54 **Building and maintaining positive relationships**
- 65 **Doing household tasks**
- 73 **Sharing spaces**
- 79 **Keeping mentally, emotionally, and physically healthy**



Building and maintaining positive relationships

Feeling settled at home includes having positive relationships with other people in and outside the home. In relationships, clear communication, healthy boundaries, and a sense of connection make a big difference.

Here we offer ways to strengthen relationships with housemates, support workers, neighbours, community members and others.

Talk openly about housemates' needs and preferences



Insight: We heard that having conversations with roommates about accessibility needs, sensory preferences, routines, and stress triggers can help everyone live together more easily.



Tip: Find the right time, space, and tools to have these discussions. Prompting questions can help get the conversations started. The goal is open, ongoing two-way communication.



Application: Check out our [Getting to Know Me](#) reflection tool to spark open conversations and help roommates understand each other's needs and preferences.

Getting to Know Me

Use this page to think about and share what makes you to feel comfortable and supported in your home.

This template can be used by an individual for self-reflection, or with their support worker, family member, or friend. It can also be used by two people considering living as housemates to learn more about one another.

After you are done answering the questions below, consider if there are any solutions or compromises that might help you feel your best in your home right now.

What supports me at home:

These are things that make you feel calm, safe, and happy.

Example: No noise after 8pm, a clean bathroom, no scents, spending time together

.....

.....

What doesn't work well for me:

These are things that make it difficult to feel good at home.

Example: Unexpected guests, loud noises, messy areas, not having a private space

.....

.....

My "makes or breaks" and non-negotiables:

These are things you absolutely must have, can't live with, or can't compromise on.

Example: Need my cat, no smoking, no parties

.....

.....

Anything else I'd like someone to know about me:

.....

.....

Set guidelines on having guests or visitors to support everyone's comfort



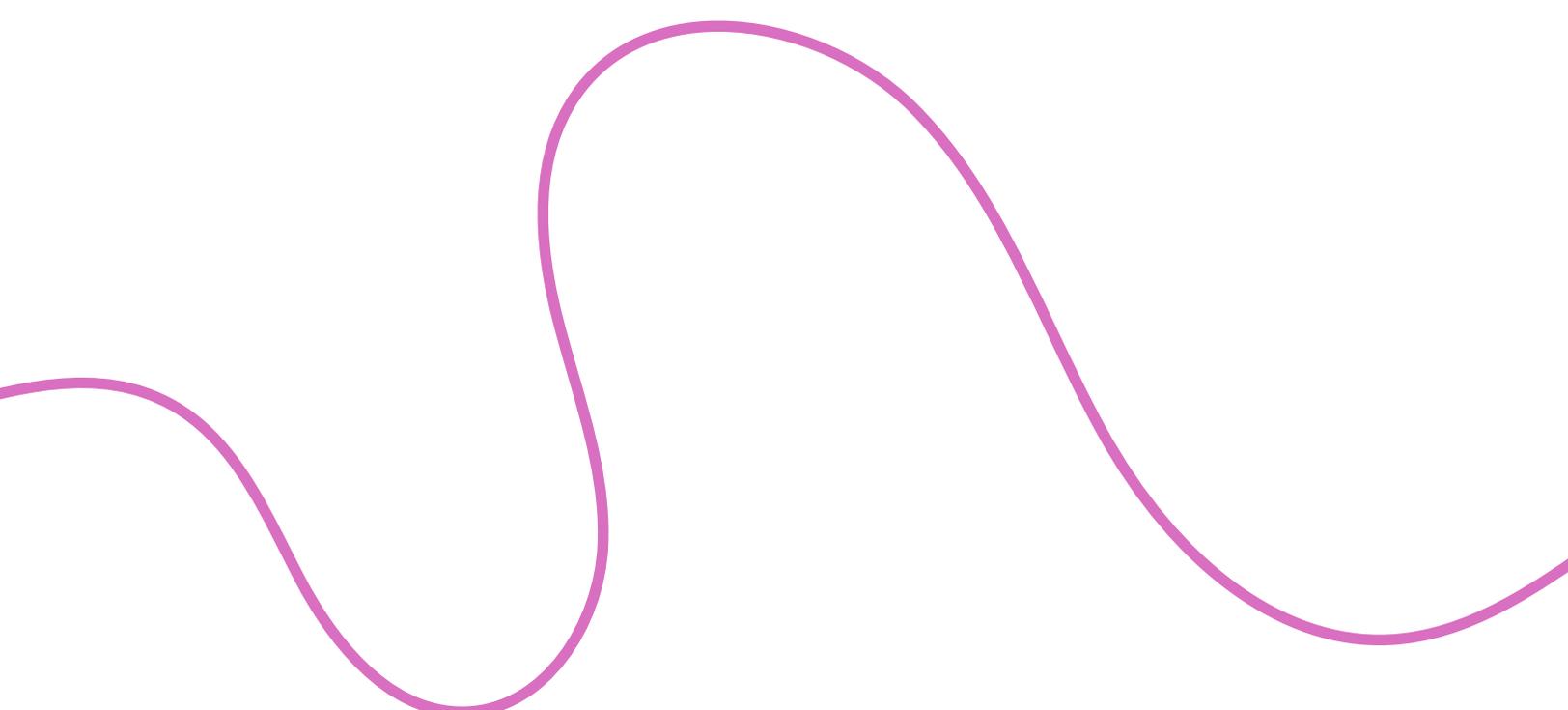
Insight: We heard that roommates feel more comfortable and relaxed at home when there are clear agreements about things like quiet hours, using shared spaces, and having guests over.



Tip: Include specific windows of time guests are welcome, areas of the home guests are allowed in, and set what is off-limits to guests. This can make their visits more predictable.



Application: Check out our example [Roommate Agreement Form](#), which sets clear expectations around chores, guests, and quiet hours. It's easy to use and leaves room for important details that some forms might miss.



Roommate Agreement Form

Some roommate agreements rely only on checklists, which can be helpful for clarity and simplicity, especially for people who prefer short, direct communication. But checkboxes can leave out important details. On the other hand, some forms are packed with legal language or long explanations that are hard to follow.

This sample agreement aims to balance clarity and detail. It uses plain language, along with checkboxes and short written prompts, to help everyone understand what they're agreeing to. Remember this is just an example. Use it as a starting point, and adjust it to fit your living arrangement, needs, and communication preferences.

Roommate agreement

This agreement is between:

Roommate 1:

Roommate 2:

Address:
.....

Bedrooms:

Roommates will decide together who uses which bedroom. This can be revisited each year or if there's a change in need or preference.

Roommate 1 will take the following bedroom:

Roommate 2 will take the following bedroom:

Cleaning and shared chores:

Within the first week, roommates will create a simple cleaning plan (e.g., list, calendar, or chart) that feels fair.

Each roommate is responsible for keeping: (Check all that apply)

- Their own room clean
- Shared kitchen tidy
- Shared bathroom tidy
- Shared living room tidy
- Other:

Common chores include: (Check all that apply)

- Taking out garbage, organic waste, and recycling
- Doing dishes or running the dishwasher
- Wiping down kitchen surfaces
- Wiping down living room spaces
- Vacuuming or sweeping shared spaces
- Cleaning the bathroom regularly
- Other:

If someone can't do a task (due to illness, stress, or other reasons), they will let the others know and work together to adjust the plan.

Roommates share the cost of basic cleaning supplies.

A third-party cleaner can be hired if agreed upon, and the person hiring them covers the fee.

Guests and gatherings:

Guests are welcome with consent from all roommates. If a roommate becomes uncomfortable, permission can be withdrawn.

Individual guests may stay up to number of nights in a row and no more than number of nights per week.

Larger social gatherings should be discussed at least days in advance. All house rules still apply.

Support people (e.g., PSWs, case workers, therapists) may visit with prior notice when they are there to help a roommate.

Roommates agree to talk openly if guest visits start to feel overwhelming or disruptive.

Quiet hours:

Quiet hours support rest and routines.

Weekdays: to

Weekends: to

During this time, in shared areas, the following activities should be avoided: (Check all that apply)

- Loud music
- TV
- Vacuuming
- Group conversations
- Phone calls
- Other:

Roommates can adjust quiet hours together if schedules or needs change.

Safety

Doors should stay locked. Windows can be left open when someone is home but should be closed when the home is empty.

Substance use

Roommates: (Check all that apply)

- Do not feel comfortable with others bringing recreational substances into the house.
- Agree to other roommates storing and using the following substances in the house:
 - Alcohol
 - Cannabis
 - Tobacco
 - E-cigarettes or vape products

Guests require prior consent each time they wish to bring in recreational substances.

If permitted, the items must be stored safely and out of shared spaces. Substances will only be used in ways that respect others' comfort and safety.

Any concerns about use will be discussed respectfully, and adjustments will be made as needed.

Pets

- Pets are not allowed
- Allowed with consent from all roommates and must follow lease terms.

Pet owners take full responsibility and agree to keep pets out of others' private spaces.

Parking

Number of parking spaces assigned in the lease:

The person using it covers any associated costs.

Each roommate is responsible for securing parking for their overnight guests.

Personal and shared property

Roommates agree not to use each other’s personal items (e.g., food, hygiene products, electronics) without permission. Items in shared spaces, like furniture and appliances, are for everyone’s use.

Exceptions for items in shared spaces:

Exceptions for personal items:

Moving out or ending the agreement

If someone wants to move out, they will inform their roommate first and help find a replacement if needed.

If a roommate is having trouble following this agreement, the first step is to talk about it together. Everyone agrees to approach concerns with curiosity and respect, and to work towards a solution that considers each person’s needs.

If something serious happens, or if repeated efforts to sort it out don’t lead to a resolution, the issue may be brought to the landlord or another trusted third party to figure out next steps.

Signatures

Witness name: Signature: Date:

Roommate 1 name: Signature: Date:

Roommate 2 name: Signature: Date:

Review household agreements on a regular basis



Insight: We learned that going over the household agreement regularly helps everyone stay on the same page and speak up if something needs to change.



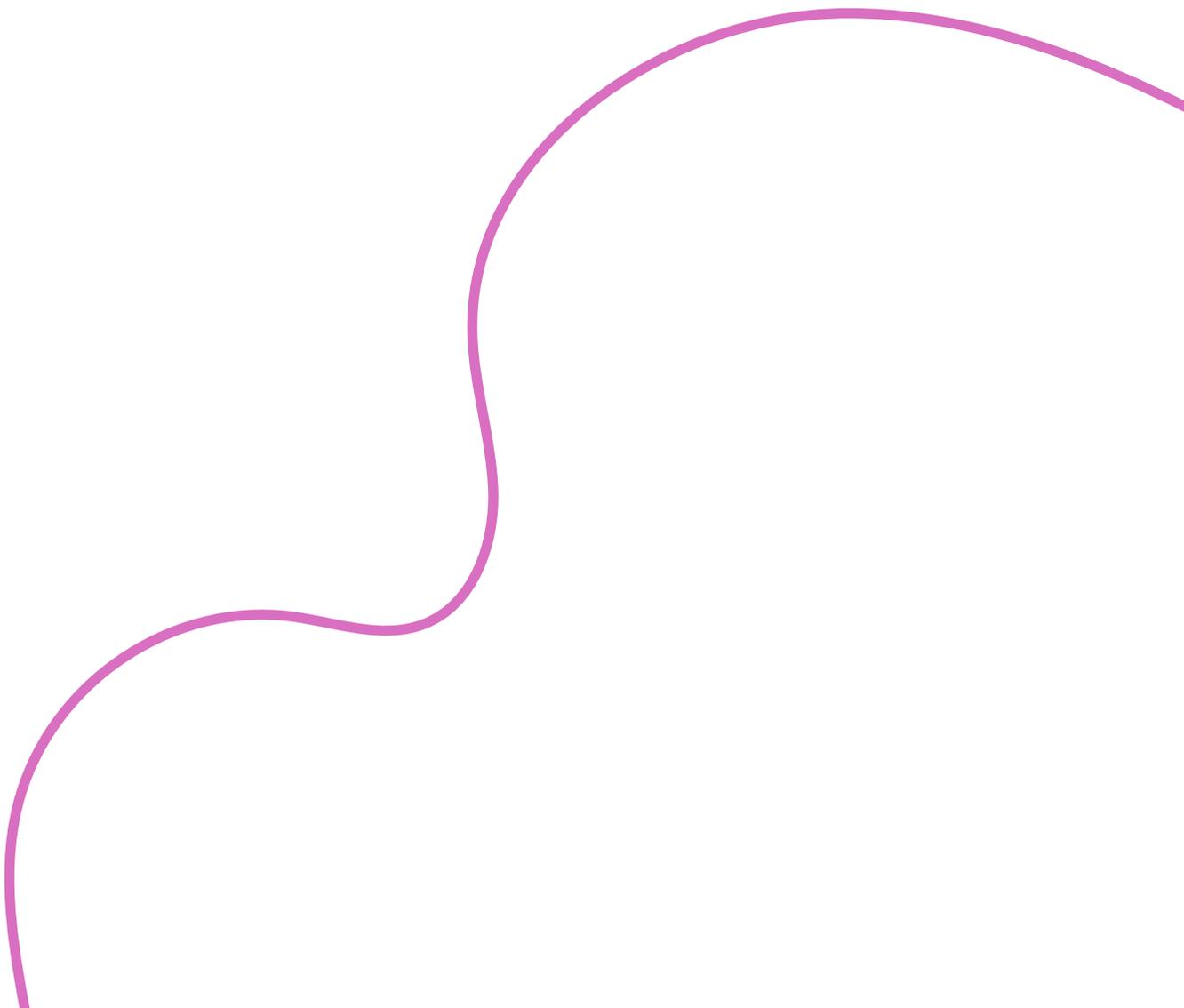
Inclusivity: How often a review happens depends on everyone's preferences. It might be done once every month, once a year, or when someone new moves in.



Tip: Start a relaxed chat about what's working and what could be better. Pick a comfortable setting, like sitting on the porch or having a coffee together. Keeping it informal can help people feel at ease and speak openly.



Application: Check out our guide, [Welcome Package for New Tenants](#). It's a friendly way to share the housing agreement, invite communication preferences, and help people feel welcomed and supported from the start.



Welcome Package for New Tenants

Many landlords or housing providers offer their tenants a welcome package to orient people to their new home and establish a positive dynamic. It's also a great way to communicate a lot of info they need in a way that's easy to understand.

Drawing from some of the great welcome package ideas out there, here are some potential items you could include.

Welcome letter: A friendly note to say “Welcome!” and share a little about the space.

Clear communication process: Simple instructions for how to request help or report issues.

Personal preferences and communication card: A simple card for tenants to share preferences on how the landlord can best communicate with them.



Inclusivity: They can improve comfort and establish boundaries while reducing anxiety or stress about landlord-tenant interactions.

Emergency contacts and procedures: List important contact info such as for fire, police, or repairs, and when to reach out.

How-to sheets: Easy guides with clear, visual instructions for things like using appliances safely or setting up alarm and garage door codes.



Inclusivity: They provide clear action and information, which supports safety and confidence.

Sensory guide: Provide tips for managing lighting, noise, temperature, and ventilation in the home.



Inclusivity: It offers flexibility and options to support people's comfort and preferences.

Map of the community: Highlight key spots like grocery stores, parks, and public transport.

Gift card: A small gift card to a local restaurant or coffee shop to invite them to explore the area.



Inclusivity: These resources promote community engagement and connection.

Weekly calendar or planner: Mark key dates like rent due dates, garbage pick-up, and community events.



Inclusivity: This information helps people build schedules and routines.

Copy of the rental agreement: Highlight details like rent amount, payment dates, lease terms and conditions for ending or renewing the lease.

House rules and guest policies: Provide a clear list of house rules and guest guidelines to establish clear expectations.



Inclusivity: This can be a starting point for conversations around unspoken rules and expectations and avoid potential conflicts.

Small kit of essentials: Toilet paper, paper towels, cleaning supplies, and a couple of drinks and snacks to get started.



Inclusivity: This makes the move-in process go a little smoother by ensuring people have some essentials on hand.

Encourage people to bring someone they trust to community events



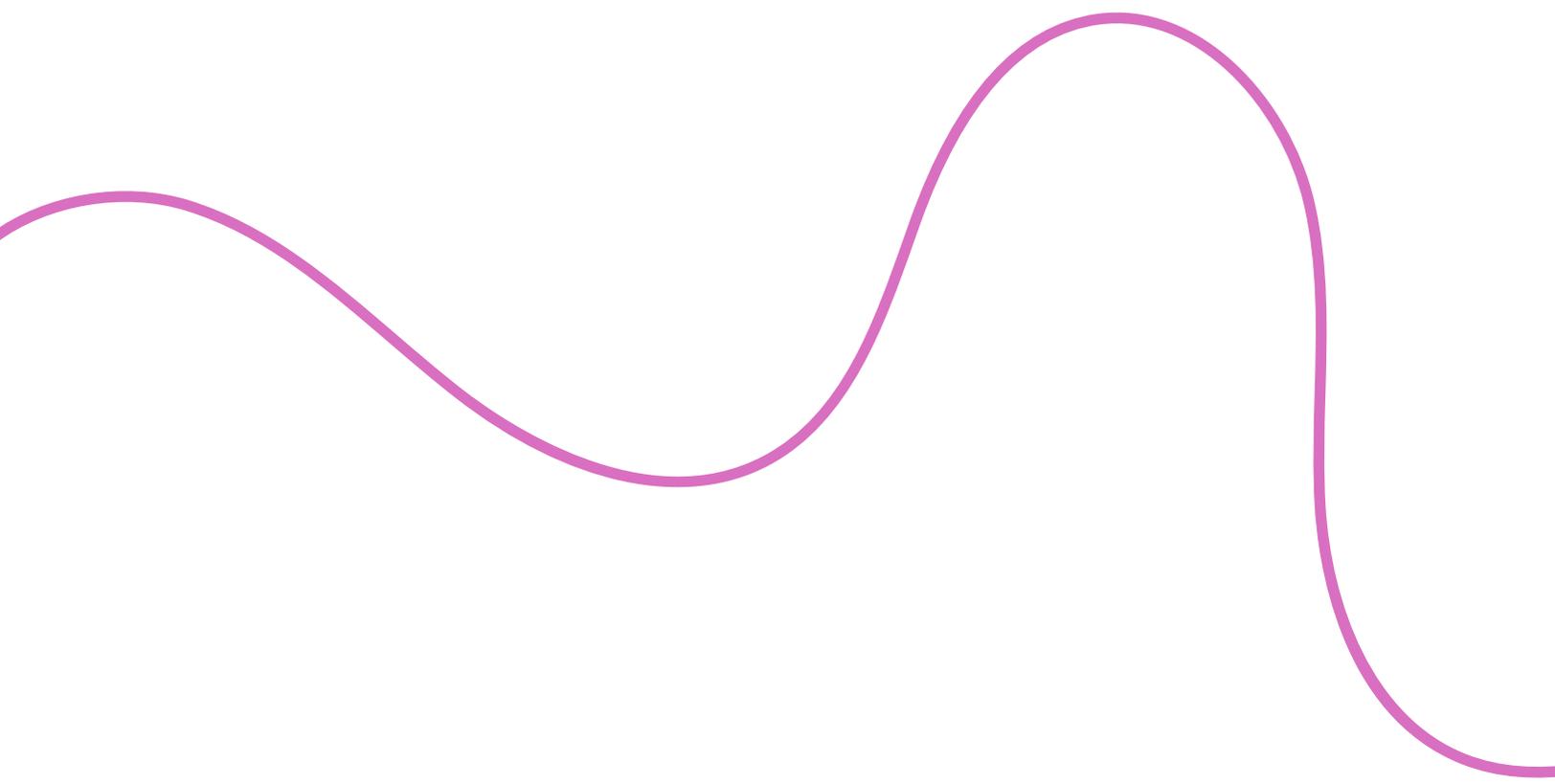
Insight: We heard that joining events with a friend, family member, or support person made people feel more comfortable in social situations.



Inclusivity: Letting people know they are welcome to bring someone with them to community events like a rooftop BBQ, game night, or garden project can ease social stress and support inclusion.



Tip: Try adding a sentence to event invitations that people are welcome to bring someone with them.



Doing household tasks

Housework and maintenance are a necessary part of daily life. People we connected with had lots of different ideas for doing household tasks. Here are some practical ways to make these tasks easier and more manageable.

Get things done together by coworking or body doubling



Inclusivity: Body doubling means doing tasks alongside someone else, it can increase motivation and make it easier to get started and stay engaged. This can be helpful for people who live alone and need external motivation to complete household tasks.



Tip: Try pairing up in person or virtually while doing chores. It could be with a roommate tidying their own space, a friend on video call, or even a casual phone chat while folding laundry.



Example: We spoke about body doubling with someone who used it as a strategy with their Autistic family member.

They shared, *“We body double all the time. Sometimes when they were writing essays, they would phone me as I was cooking dinner and doing other things around the house.”*

And it didn't need to just be with them. They explained that the Autistic person also body doubled with their housemate, and that the two of them share a *“symbiotic relationship that works quite well for them in an interesting way.”*



Application: Check out our [Body Doubling Guide](#) to learn how this strategy can offer a structure to help people start and finish household tasks.

Body Doubling Guide

Body doubling is a strategy where two people work side by side on individual tasks, in person or virtually, to help increase focus, motivation, and follow-through.

We heard from many people, especially those with neurodivergent experiences, that this approach can be helpful because it adds structure, gently supports momentum, reduces distractions, and makes tasks feel more manageable.

Of course, everyone's needs and preferences are different. Body doubling might work well for some tasks, some days, or with certain people, but not always. It's something to try out and adapt.

Why it can help

- Provides structure**▶ A scheduled time and shared space can make it easier to start and stick with a task.
- Encourages follow-through**▶ Having someone nearby can increase commitment to the task, not out of pressure, but out of shared presence.
- Reduces distractions**▶ It's often easier to stay focused when anchored by someone else who is also working.
- Eases overwhelm**▶ Sharing space, even silently, can make solo tasks feel less daunting.
- Boosts motivation**▶ For some, showing up for another person helps them also show up for themselves, especially when done in a supportive, low-pressure way.

Tips for getting started

- Choose the right person**▶ Someone who understands how to body double and can work calmly alongside you.
- Clarify your task**▶ Define what to work on and break it into smaller steps ahead of time if possible.
- Set a clear start and end time**▶ Keep it manageable and consider building in breaks to recharge.
- Pick a good environment**▶ Try to choose a space that supports focus and has everything that is needed within reach.
- Communicate expectations**▶ Let the body doubling partner know what you plan to work on, for how long, and what might be supportive.
- Reflect and adjust**▶ After the session, think about what worked well and what to tweak next time.

Lean into strengths to do household tasks



Inclusivity: When living alone, start by doing the household tasks that feel the easiest or most enjoyable to build momentum. Use routines, devices, or support strategies like body doubling or the Pomodoro Technique to help get through the ones that feel more challenging.



Tip: Use tools like robot vacuums, slow cookers, or dishwashers to help shorten the to-do list. If they fit within the budget, they can save time and energy.



Inclusivity: In co-living arrangements, chores don't always need to be split evenly. Some people prefer to stick with tasks they're good at or don't mind doing. That's okay, as long as the overall workload feels fair, and the less-liked tasks are shared or rotated.



Tip: Have a chat about who would like to be responsible for what tasks instead of assigning them randomly.



Example: We talked with several Neurodivergent people about how they split up tasks with their housemates. A successful way was to figure out who had the time and energy for certain tasks.

While talking about meal prep and finances, one person shared, *“it’s been really hard for me to clean and take care of things while I’m doing full-time work.”* And because their housemate has more free time, *“they handle all the food, and I handle all the money stuff. That’s the arrangement we have right now.”*

Importantly, they said that this setup can change, but for now, it meets both of their needs without things feeling unbalanced or overwhelming.



Create task lists to organize household responsibilities



Insight: We learned that household tasks can feel never-ending. Lists are a way to organize responsibilities and remember when tasks need to be completed.



Tip: Break chores into small steps and try spreading them out across the week. A written plan, app, or reminder can help keep things from piling up.



Tip: Try putting tasks into one list for housemates and another list for property managers. For example:

Housemates:

- Washing dishes
- Laundry
- Vacuuming

Property managers:

- Vent cleaning
- Gutter maintenance
- Pest control



Tip: Put tasks on lists that are easily forgotten or tasks that might be harder to keep up with.

Use scheduling tools to organize who does what and when



Insight: We learned that it's easy to forget about household tasks like checking smoke detectors or cleaning the oven. These things don't come up every day, but they matter for safety and maintenance. A simple schedule or reminder can help keep them on the radar.



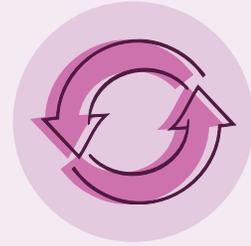
Tip: Try out a wall calendar or whiteboard to write down and visualize who's doing what household tasks, and when.



Tip: Ask a friend or family member to set reminders in their calendars to check-in or offer a nudge.



Example: In one of our research interviews, an Autistic person shared how much they valued having a housemate to rotate tasks with. They took turns cleaning and cooking, rotating daily. They felt that having another person made things “*way better than if I’m doing it all by myself.*” They added, “*it doesn’t feel like big work for me if we’re doing it together. The fact that I have someone, it doesn’t feel heavy on me. I feel even happy to do it.*”



Support home maintenance with clear guides and helpful tools



Insight: We learned that it is useful when landlord and property managers share a home maintenance guide that includes contact info for repairs, emergencies, and local services.



Inclusivity: Easy-to-follow guides can take the guesswork out of tasks and give people more confidence in managing their space.



Application: Check out our [Planned Property Maintenance List](#) example of communicating about upcoming tasks, which helps tenants know what to expect and can plan around scheduled work.

Planned Property Maintenance List

Knowing what and when seasonal maintenance tasks will be done keeps everyone on the same page. Clear expectations and predictable schedules are helpful for anyone, but especially for Neurodivergent tenants.

Knowing when someone might be entering the space, when there may be extra noise or activity, or when sensory input could increase lets people prepare for these regular maintenance tasks.

Here's a short list of seasonal tasks that might be completed. Sharing something like this with clear communication about what will happen during the task can go a long way in reducing stress and building trust.

Spring



Inspect roofs and gutters: Check for damage or blockages that could cause leaks.



Trim bushes and clean up gardens: Improves security and prevents pests.



Check roof for damage: Look for missing shingles or leaks.



Service air conditioning: Ensure it's ready for summer.



Example communication:

I plan to be visiting the property next Tuesday from 2:00-4:00 pm, and there will be some noise as I use trimming equipment in the garden.

Summer



Mow lawn and trim trees: Keep the garden tidy and maintained.



Clean air conditioner: Ensures it runs efficiently.



Clean exhaust fans: Improves airflow and air quality.

Fall



Seal gaps around windows and doors:
Prevents drafts and improves insulation.



Service furnace:
Prepare it for cold weather.



Winterize outdoor pipes:
Prevents freezing and pipe bursts.



Example communication:

A service company will send 2 workers to the home next Wednesday between 9:00 and 11:00 a.m. They will apply caulking to the window seams, both outside and inside. This work may involve some noise and a mild smell. The workers will knock and ask to come inside to do the indoor part of the job.

Winter



Clear snow and ice:
Keep paths safe.



Check for ice dams: Prevents water
damage when ice melts.

Regular maintenance



Test fire alarms and fire extinguishers:
Ensure they're working.



Change air filters: Improves air quality
and HVAC efficiency.



Check for pests or mould:
Improves health and quality of life.

Link cleaning to a social visit



Insight: We heard that sometimes inviting a friend to the home for a social visit creates a little motivation and is enough to prompt a quick tidy-up.



Example: In an interview with an Autistic self-advocate, they shared, *“Being around friends is good, especially cause I’ll want to invite them over and then when I invite them over, I’m like, okay, I want to tidy up at least the bathroom and make sure there’s space for them to sit. So, it kind of helps me look after my house in that way.”*



Sharing spaces

Living with others can be a good thing. It can mean support, shared tasks, and social time. But it also takes some work to make sure everyone's comfortable sharing the space.

Here are ideas to make co-living smoother, such as setting up routines, talking about sensory stuff, and finding the right balance between alone time and connection.

Explore shared living with another Neurodivergent person



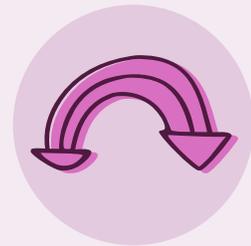
Insight: We heard from some people that living with another Neurodivergent person felt more comfortable and like a good fit because they did not have to explain themselves.



Inclusivity: Remember that even if both people are neurodivergent, their needs can differ.



Example: We chatted with a Neurodivergent person about what it was like to live with another Neurodivergent person. They felt it that it was a positive experience, sharing, *“we’re both Neurodivergent, we both understand each other on a cellular level. And just learning more about how much space I need, and like, emotional space as well.”*



Be aware of sensory zones in the home



Insight: We learned that sensory needs are a big part of living well at home and that they are different for everyone. Openly discussing sensory needs can support everyone's comfort at home.



Example: During our research work, many Neurodivergent people talked about the sensory zones in their home. Sometimes, it was from other people doing household things, as one Neurodivergent person said, *“For instance, if they’re turning on the blender because they make smoothies and other things, they’ll let me know so that we both aren’t in sensory hell from that.”*



Tip: Think about all the senses and how activities might be associated with sensory discomfort. For example, vacuuming, phone calls on speakerphone, fans, open or closed windows, sticky counters, fragrances, cooking scents, or cleaning products.

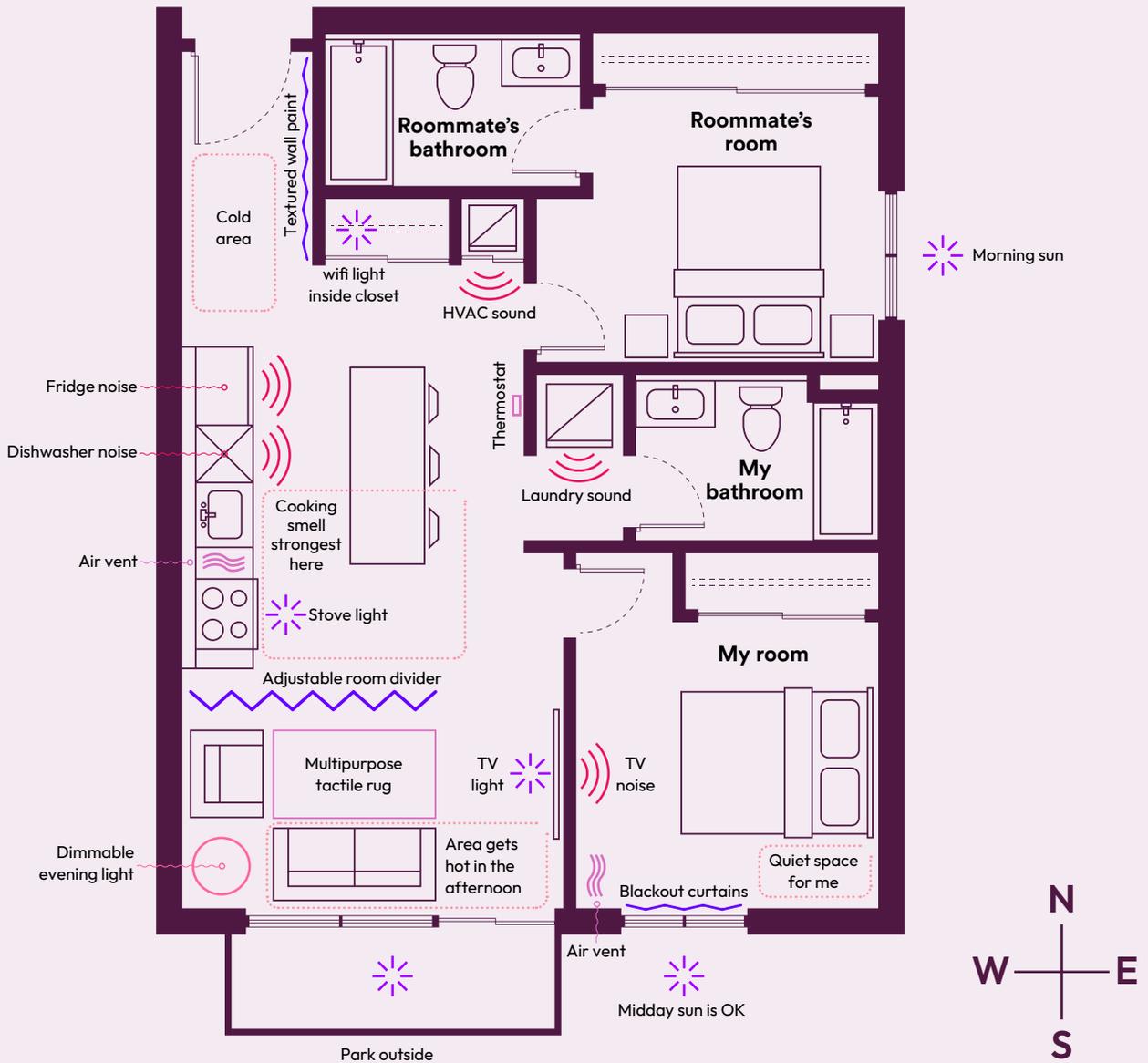


Application: Check out our [Sensory Zone Map](#) example to help create one and use it to talk about sensory needs with roommates.

Sensory Zone Map

Draw or print out the home layout and mark areas that have sensory inputs. Use this example scenario to get started.

In this scenario, Andy lives with a roommate in an apartment with a 2-bedroom, 2-bathroom setup. Andy's roommate has the room with the private, ensuite bathroom because they like the morning sun coming in from the east window, while Andy does not. Andy marked areas in their home where light, sound, touch, temperature, and smells were good, or not so good, or neutral.



Make space for both privacy and connection



Inclusivity: Having a private space in a shared home gives people room to recharge, lower stress, and feel a sense of balance.



Tip: Share spaces by time if there isn't a separate room. For example, someone might use the living room for quiet time in the afternoon, and someone else uses it later in the evening.



Tip: Schedule regular times for social connection, like watching a show together or chatting over a meal.

Post clear and visible guidelines for common areas



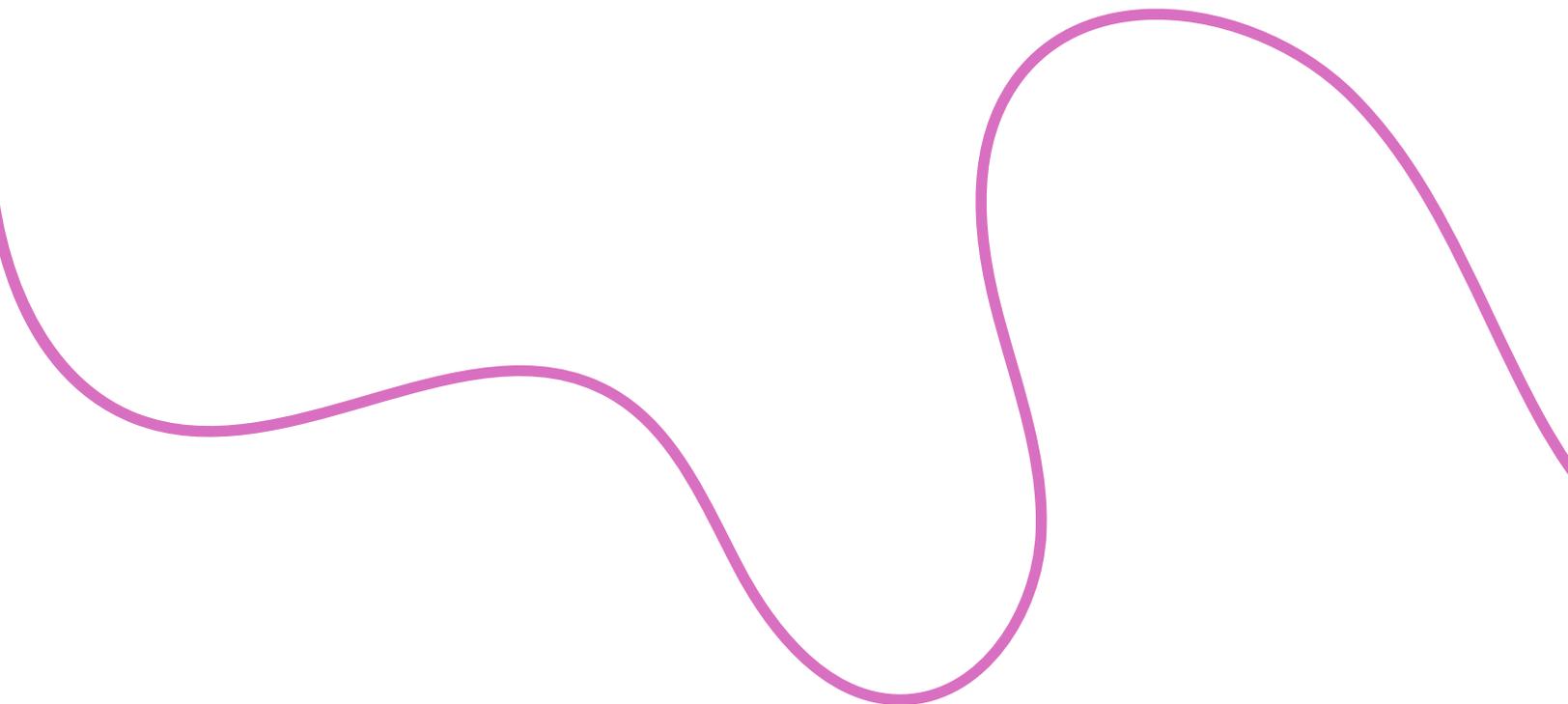
Insight: We learned that clear guidelines in shared areas like laundry rooms, gyms, or patios reduces guesswork and avoids confusion about unspoken rules. This makes everyone feel more comfortable and confident using the space.



Inclusivity: Good signage and messages have a positive tone and use simple text and visuals. It should also be in multiple formats, for example, posters, digital notices, or flyers.



Application: Check out our examples of [Common Area Signs](#) for ideas on making clear signage that calls out unspoken rules and expectations.



Common Area Signs

Posting clear, visible guidelines for common areas like laundry rooms and living rooms can be a helpful reminder when sharing spaces. Guidelines like this are more than “how-to’s” because they can call out unspoken rules and expectations.

These guidelines can be created by anyone, such as housemates, landlords, or with support workers. We have included a few samples. Feel free to adapt or create versions to fit different needs and situations.

House Rules

We want to make our shared living space a great place for everyone to be. Please remember:

 <p>Use headphones and keep noise to a soft-speaking volume after 8pm.</p>	 <p>Do not move or use other people’s things without asking.</p>	 <p>Avoid using strongly scented items in the living room. We are a scent-free space!</p>
 <p>When other people are home, please ask before turning on the big light or any loud appliances.</p>	 <p>No surprise visitors! Check-in with the other housemates before having guests over.</p>	 <p>Always pick up your trash and clean up after yourself. Leave the space as you found it!</p>

**If you’re unsure, just ask!
We can work through it together.**



Laundry Room Guidelines

- ✓ Schedule your desired time to do laundry on the shared house calendar.
- ✓ Do not overload machines, or else they make a loud banging noise. See the weight guidelines on the inside of the washing machine door.
- ✓ Please do not use heavily scented detergents or dryer sheets in the shared laundry machines.
- ✓ Set timers and empty the machines when your load is completed. If not, other people might need to move your clothing so they can do their laundry. See the cycle times sheets above the washer and dryer.
- ✓ Empty the lint trap in dryer after each cycle. If you need, there are tongs for you to use on the hook below.

**If you need assistance,
call or text 123-456-7890**

Keeping mentally, emotionally, and physically healthy

Feeling safe, and comfortable at home and in the neighbourhood is important.

Here are some practical strategies to support key elements like physical safety, self-care, nutrition, and everyday comfort.

Plan ahead for physical safety in emergencies



Insight: We heard that staying physically safe at home includes being ready for emergencies. Whether it's a fire, power outage, or medical situation, having a plan can protect health, reduce stress, and make sure everyone knows what to do.



Inclusivity: A good emergency plan considers how people communicate, what kind of support they might need, and what helps them stay calm in stressful situations. Plans should be clear, easy to follow, and shared with everyone who might be involved in supporting safety.



Tip: Put together an emergency kit, which includes:

- A visual guide with essential actions to take during an emergency
- A contact list with important phone numbers
- A bag packed with necessary supplies and comfort items for self-regulation



Tip: Consider having different methods to signal an emergency in addition to auditory alarms, such as flashing lights or spoken words.



Application: Check out our [Tips for Making an Emergency Evacuation Plan](#) to create or adapt one that is accessible and supportive of different processing needs.

Tips for Making an Emergency Evacuation Plan

There is a responsibility to make sure emergency information is clear and usable for everyone. People process information in different ways with some needing visuals, step-by-step instructions, or extra time to understand what's happening.

In an emergency, these differences matter. That's why tools like evacuation exit maps for things like a fire or gas leak must be created and shared in ways that are truly accessible. This helps people navigate an emergency in a way that is safe and makes sense to them.

These tips can be used to create a new plan or add information to existing plans.

Tips

- ✓ Create a simple visual map that illustrates how to get out of the home.
- ✓ Use pictures or icons to show what to do, for people who process images more easily.
- ✓ Make a digital copy, ideally something that is also compatible with a mobile phone.
- ✓ Be clear and direct, saying exactly what you mean. For example, "Go to the door on the left" is better than "head toward the exit."
- ✓ Keep it short and easy to follow. Write one step at a time.
- ✓ Break actions down into small parts.

Making it easy to read and use

- ✓ Use dark text on a light background.
- ✓ Don't use all caps or italics. Bolded text is best for important info.
- ✓ Pick simple fonts like Arial or Aptos, size 12 or bigger.
- ✓ If using images, add text descriptions so screen readers can explain them.

Pair it with complementary products

- ✓ Include a customizable identification card someone can fill out and have in their home with pertinent information such as sensory needs, communication preferences, and contact information.
- ✓ Provide a list of who to contact in an emergency like a fire or gas leak.
- ✓ Create a door sticker to let responders know if extra support is needed.

Use reminders to support self-care and nutrition



Insight: We learned that self-care including eating, drinking water, or staying warm outside can be forgotten when people get busy. Setting up gentle reminders can keep routines on track.



Example: Pets can be great natural reminders. Their routines often prompt self-care like getting outside, taking breaks, eating, and exercise.

“I still need to make sure they’re fed and drinking water. So, my cat kind of helps hold me accountable to my own health as well because, like, I’ll get up and get them water, and then I’ll get me water kind of thing.”



Make mealtimes easier with prep-ahead options



Inclusivity: When living alone, it can be hard to feel motivated to cook, for one person. Having meals prepped ahead of time makes it easier to eat well, especially on days when energy or focus is low.



Tip: Try making larger portions and saving leftovers for another meal. Meal delivery services can also be an option if it is within the budget.

Offer transportation supports to access community spaces



Insight: We heard that access to community spaces for hobbies, learning, or social connection is very important. Places such as libraries or recreation centres are great additions to a community. However, getting to these spaces is still a common barrier.



Tip: Try helping someone plan routes, book rides, or provide travel training to their preferred activities.



Tip: When planning an event, set aside time, staff, or funds for transportation to help make getting there easier.

Thriving At Home Over Time

Finding a safe and affordable housing option that feels like the right fit can be life-changing but staying housed and well over time isn't always easy. Many Neurodivergent people face challenges not only in finding the right home but in staying in it.

This section offers ideas to help people stay well in their home over time by creating a supportive home, building community connection, planning for renovations and strengthening awareness and inclusion within one's circle of influence.

SECTION THEMES:

- 83 **Maintaining supportive environments**
- 88 **Adapting to life changes**
- 89 **Considering future renovations**
- 94 **Support housing stability over the long-term by enhancing awareness**



Maintaining supportive environments

A home needs to keep working for someone over time as needs or abilities change. When the environment is set up well, people are more likely to stay and thrive in their home.

Here are some ideas for making sure things continue to work, such as pet care, accessing supports, and connecting with others.

Support wellbeing by making it easier to keep pets



Insight: We learned that pets support Neurodivergent people by offering companionship and encouraging structure and consistent timing for daily self-care activities like eating, going outside, and exercise.



Tip: Connect people to local pet support programs that help with health care and emergency needs.



Tip: Share information about places that provide free or low-cost pet food or pet supplies because taking care of a pet can be challenging when money is tight.

Check-in with supports to keep things working well



Inclusivity: Support people can give suggestions for changes that might be needed as a person lives in a place over time. These regular check-ins can catch necessary changes early before challenges appear.



Example: We spoke to many people who explained the need to make sure that technology is working well. A common example was that reliable internet is an essential technology to complete daily tasks, access remote supports, and stay socially connected. It can be an important part of a system that helps people live independently and feel less isolated.



Application: Check out our [Is My Living Situation Working Well](#) tool to reflect on the current housing situation and start the process of making any necessary changes.

Is My Living Situation Working Well

Use this tool as a check-in to reflect on the current housing situation. It can guide conversations about what is going well or not well and start the process of making any necessary changes.

There is a spot to write the date of this check-in and a future date at the bottom of the page to revisit this again in the future.

Inclusivity: This is a person-centred tool. It can be used by an individual, potentially with the support of a caregiver, professional, or between housemates.



Decide on a rating scale that works best for the situation. This might be numbers, emojis, a sliding scale, checkboxes, colours, words, or something else that best represents the feeling. Here are some examples of different rating scale options:

Words	Faces	Emojis	Numbers	Colours
Never			0	Red
Sometimes			1	Orange
Often			2	Yellow
Always			3	Green

Rate and reflect on how you feel about each of the following:

Area	Question	Rating	Are there any exceptions or considerations to this?	Ideas for changes
Support needs	How often do you feel like your support needs are being met?			
Safety and security	How often do you feel emotionally and physically safe and secure in your home?			
Choice and control	How often do you feel comfortable advocating for your own wants and needs?			
Personal space and privacy	How often do you feel like you have enough personal space and privacy in your home?			
Sensory needs	How comfortable is your home environment for your sensory needs?			
Communication	How do you feel about the current level and style of communication between you and people in your home environment?			
Daily routine	How often does your home support your daily routines?			
Other area:				
Other area:				

Date of this check-in:

Date of next check-in:

Share info about options for hobby groups and community events



Insight: We learned the importance of creating opportunities for people to connect with others, to feel supported and to have a sense of community where they live.



Example: In our research, we asked Neurodivergent people what opportunities they had to connect with other people in their communities.

They described participating in a variety of activities, like fitness classes, sports, book clubs, and community events in their building.

Autistic person

For one person, joining a local social group for Autistic people meant that “we can talk of personal issues that are affecting us, and no one judges you. There’s no stigma, we can just share things openly.”

Service provider

For a community day program organizer hosting an art workshop, designing it to encourage all levels of engagement and trying to “not make assumptions about what people enjoy” was important.

Set up regular visits with a trusted friend, neighbour, or support person



Inclusivity: Close, interpersonal relationships can reduce isolation, help people feel understood and support a sense of belonging. This is particularly important when living alone.



Tip: Social visits can be virtual like gaming or watching online movies together. Virtual hangouts with cameras off can be an option too, if that supports comfort and unmasking.



Tip: Try making a visual calendar to highlight who's been connected with lately and who might be due for a visit.



Example: We spoke with many people about the importance of social connection and heard some inspiring stories.

Autistic person

"I wasn't alone, there were so many others going through the same things."

They recalled how much it meant to be part of a peer support group in high school and how the group brought together family members and caregivers too.

"We were a family that understood each other. We really supported each other."

Parent

"There was no opportunity for shared experience, no way to just be with other people who understand. It was just easier to stay at home".

After reaching out to other families in the community, they began meeting up.

"It gave us a reason to leave the house. To share a few moments. To ask about each other."



Inclusivity: Caregivers play an important role supporting some Neurodivergent people. And they need social connection too. Making space for their social well-being helps reduce isolation, offers emotional support, and can make it easier to sustain stable housing for the people they care for.

Adapting to life changes

Life changes, sometimes slowly, sometimes all at once. Things like health and income can shift, and a living situation that once worked well might need adjustments. Planning ahead and being ready to adapt makes it easier to stay housed and supported through ups and downs.

Support access to therapists, psychologists, or other mental health providers



Inclusivity: Changes to mental health are expected throughout life and finding support when it is needed is essential.



Tip: Offer assistance with making or attending appointments, so that people can get the support they need.

Explore care options, financial supports, or community programs early to plan for aging



Inclusivity: Getting support like funding, home care, or services can take time, and there may be waitlists or system barriers. Planning early doesn't fix everything, but it gives you more time to explore options and find flexible solutions.



Insight: We heard that when people take time to look into care and support options early, it's easier to get the right help in place and to adapt it when a person's needs start to shift.

Considering future renovations

Over time, homes will need renovations and repairs to improve accessibility. These building renovations should align with the changing needs of the people who live there and support them staying in the place long term.

Here we offer ways to consider the needs of Neurodivergent people when planning to carry out renovations or repairs.

Check-in before doing renovations or repairs



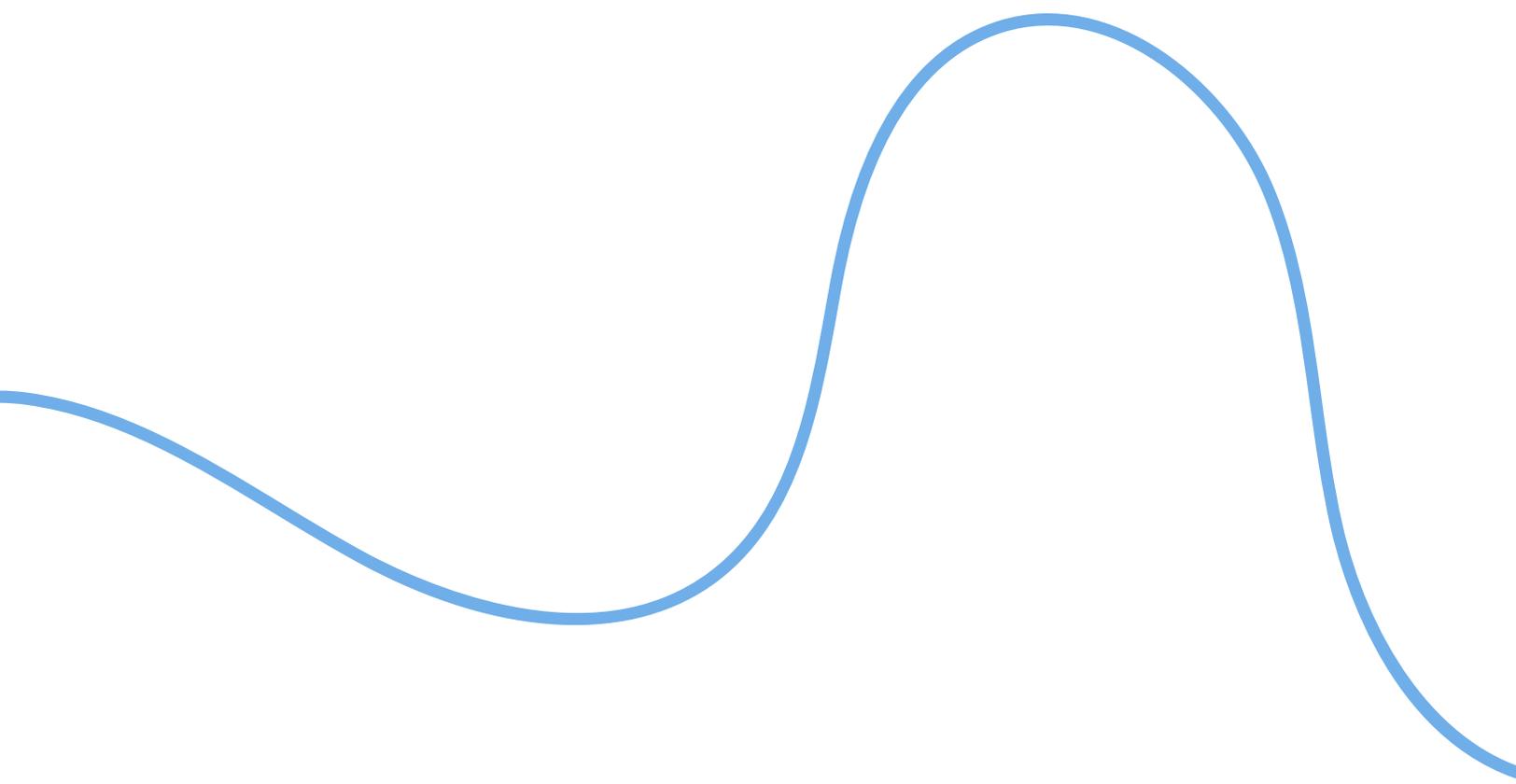
Inclusivity: Consulting people who live in the space before renovations or repairs reduces disruptions and makes the changes better meet the needs of people who live there.



Tip: Consider the timing, sensory considerations, and who will be involved while planning for renovations.



Application: Check out our [Work and Disruption Notice](#) template that can be used and shared with people before making renovations or repairs to prepare them for disruptions and help them plan ahead.



Work and Disruption Notice

It's important to have clear notices to residents when renovations are being done in common areas or outside the buildings. Like construction notices issued by cities, these notices let people know what to expect from the work. Property management, landlords, and families can use this when planning renovations in and around the home.



Inclusivity: People benefit from knowing in advance that renovations are happening and what to expect. It empowers them to make choices and set themselves up for success during those times.

What: Share a description of the work.	
Where: Share where the work will be completed.	<i>For example, in all common areas or a specific site.</i>
Entries, pathways, and exits that will be impacted:	
Why: Share why this work needs to be done and what benefits it will have.	
Who: Share who will be doing the work.	<i>For example, one person or entire crews and contractors.</i>
When: Share when this work will take place. Include specific dates and times.	
Potential irritants	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Noise: Share what light or heavy machinery will be making noise or vibrations.	<i>For example, drills, saws, or hammers.</i>

- **Smell:** Share what materials or products will emit strong odors.

For example, asphalt or paint.

- **Air:** Share what potential allergens or air irritants there will be.

For example, dust or gases.

- **Other**

Contact for questions: Share multiple ways to contact people working on the project.

- Name:

- Phone:

- Email:

- Online form:

Offer clear processes to request home modifications



Insight: We heard that home modifications are often needed over time and that the process to ask for them can be unclear or slow.



Tip: Provide opportunities to make some adjustments to rental homes such as wall paint colours, cabinet knobs, or storage shelving.



Example: In our research, we talked with people who tried or made modifications to their homes to better suit their needs.

- But making changes can sometimes be challenging, especially for renters. One person shared that it is often unclear what you can or cannot change without a landlord's permission.
- For small changes, several people explained that they tried renter-friendly options. For example, attaching foam soundproofing panels to the walls to improve the noise levels in their home.
- For larger things that cannot be easily modified, such as overhead light fixtures and ventilation systems, people chose smaller-scale fixes like floor lamps and fans instead.



Create or improve access to outdoor space



Insight: We heard that green space supports physical and mental health and helps many people stay well in their homes over time.



Tip: Try to:

- Add seating in outdoor spaces
- Make balconies more usable
- Create paths connecting to nearby parks

Provide opportunities for physical activity



Insight: We heard that safe and accessible spaces for physical activity are beneficial for people as they age in place.



Tip: Consider including or improving fitness spaces in long-term renovation goals.



Example: In our conversations with Neurodivergent people, opportunities to keep active supported physical health.

Autistic person

They shared that organized programs and leagues in their community, like bowling were a great option to keep active. For them and their family, bowling was a way to move, connect, and stay engaged.

Family member

They were part of a programming hub that provided activities such as interactive games, boxing and yoga classes, and lower-impact exercise equipment.

Importantly, people shared that these sports, interactive games, and structured classes can be designed or adapted to work for different needs and interests.

Support housing stability over the long-term by enhancing awareness

Inclusive spaces don't happen by accident. When people work together to grow awareness around accessibility, neurodivergence, and inclusion, we build environments where more people feel safe, respected, and able to thrive at home.

Offer training for first responders on neuroinclusion to build understanding



Inclusivity: First responders need to be prepared to support Neurodivergent people during an emergency. This includes understanding responses to different sensory situations such as alarms, sirens, or verbal instructions.



Tip: Attend educational events or webinars to learn about neuroinclusivity.

Include community members in building management or advisory boards



Inclusivity: This step brings neurodivergent voices to decision-making and creates housing where people are invested in staying and shaping the place they call home.



Tip: Include community members in service provider organizations too.



Application: Check out our readiness quiz on [Including Community Voice](#) to start thinking about what organizations can do to include Neurodivergent people in decision-making in meaningful ways.

Including Community Voice

Test your knowledge of how building management councils, tenant groups, and other organizations can include community voice in their decision-making and advocacy. Check your answers on the next page.

Ask for feedback from community members after drafting plans for a building.	True <input type="radio"/>	False <input type="radio"/>
Have more than one Neurodivergent person in a tenant group.	True <input type="radio"/>	False <input type="radio"/>
Lived experience can identify gaps in supports that organizations might miss.	True <input type="radio"/>	False <input type="radio"/>
Including community voice can empower people and lead to better housing outcomes.	True <input type="radio"/>	False <input type="radio"/>
Setting rules and expectations in council meetings limits participation from Neurodivergent people.	True <input type="radio"/>	False <input type="radio"/>
Create multiple ways for Neurodivergent people to provide feedback.	True <input type="radio"/>	False <input type="radio"/>
Having community input once a year is sufficient for making community-informed decisions.	True <input type="radio"/>	False <input type="radio"/>
Doing everything that the Neurodivergent members request is the best way to incorporate community voice.	True <input type="radio"/>	False <input type="radio"/>

<p>Ask for feedback from community members after drafting plans for a building.</p>	<p>True <input type="radio"/> False <input checked="" type="radio"/></p> <p>Answer: False. Get feedback before, during, and after making plans.</p>
<p>Have more than one Neurodivergent person in a tenant group.</p>	<p>True <input checked="" type="radio"/> False <input type="radio"/></p> <p>Answer: True. Each person’s experience differs and their perspectives matter.</p>
<p>Lived experience can identify gaps in supports that organizations might miss.</p>	<p>True <input checked="" type="radio"/> False <input type="radio"/></p> <p>Answer: True. Lived experience means personal and direct knowledge gained from experiencing an issue or identity.</p>
<p>Including community voice can empower people and lead to better housing outcomes.</p>	<p>True <input checked="" type="radio"/> False <input type="radio"/></p> <p>Answer: True. Including community voice prevents assumptions and encourages decision-making by the people who will be living in the home.</p>
<p>Setting rules and expectations in council meetings limits participation from Neurodivergent people.</p>	<p>True <input type="radio"/> False <input checked="" type="radio"/></p> <p>Answer: False. Clear expectations that are communicated in easily understandable ways can facilitate discussion by reducing surprises.</p>
<p>Create multiple ways for Neurodivergent people to provide feedback.</p>	<p>True <input checked="" type="radio"/> False <input type="radio"/></p> <p>Answer: True. Supporting different communication preferences makes it possible for people to fully participate.</p>
<p>Having community input once a year is sufficient for making community-informed decisions.</p>	<p>True <input type="radio"/> False <input checked="" type="radio"/></p> <p>Answer: False. The amount of engagement depends on the Neurodivergent people involved, the need, and the project.</p>
<p>Doing everything that the Neurodivergent members request is the best way to incorporate community voice.</p>	<p>True <input type="radio"/> False <input checked="" type="radio"/></p> <p>Answer: False. Not all requests can be promised or done, but they can all be addressed.</p>

Capture your work in neuroinclusive housing and share it with other organizations



Inclusivity: When people share out their work in neuroinclusive housing through social channels, studies, events, or by other means, it generates momentum and leads to more people adopting good practices, improving standards, and creating new ideas.



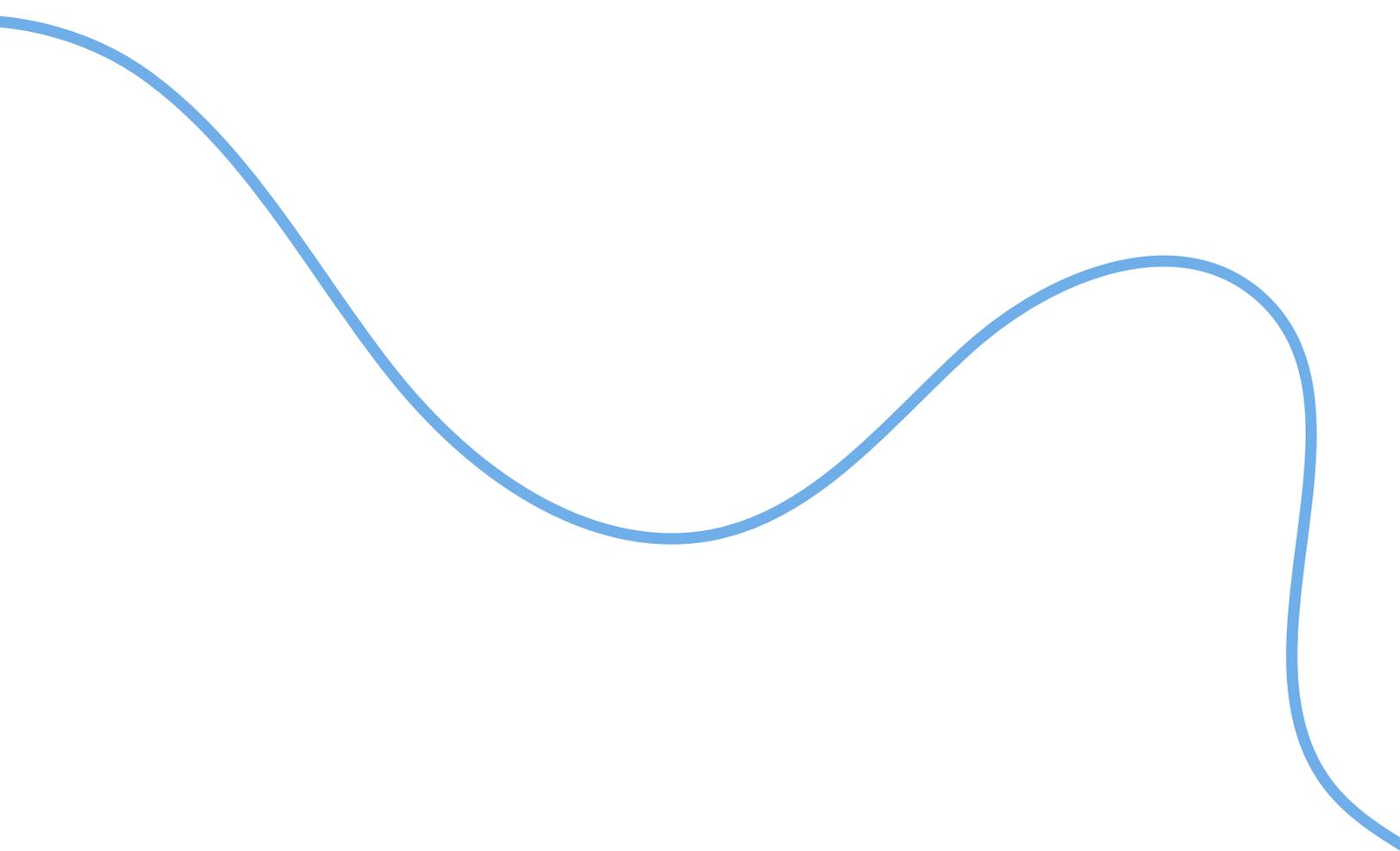
Tip: Track what works in neuroinclusive housing. Real examples spread awareness and support solutions that keep people housed.



Tip: Document specific changes that support neuroinclusive housing, like design tweaks or program shifts.



Tip: Share educational materials about neuroinclusion with housing organizations to reduce stigma.



Your Home, Your Way

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

SECTION THEMES:

100 **Getting to know what works for you**

104 **Setting up routines and supports**



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 to 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



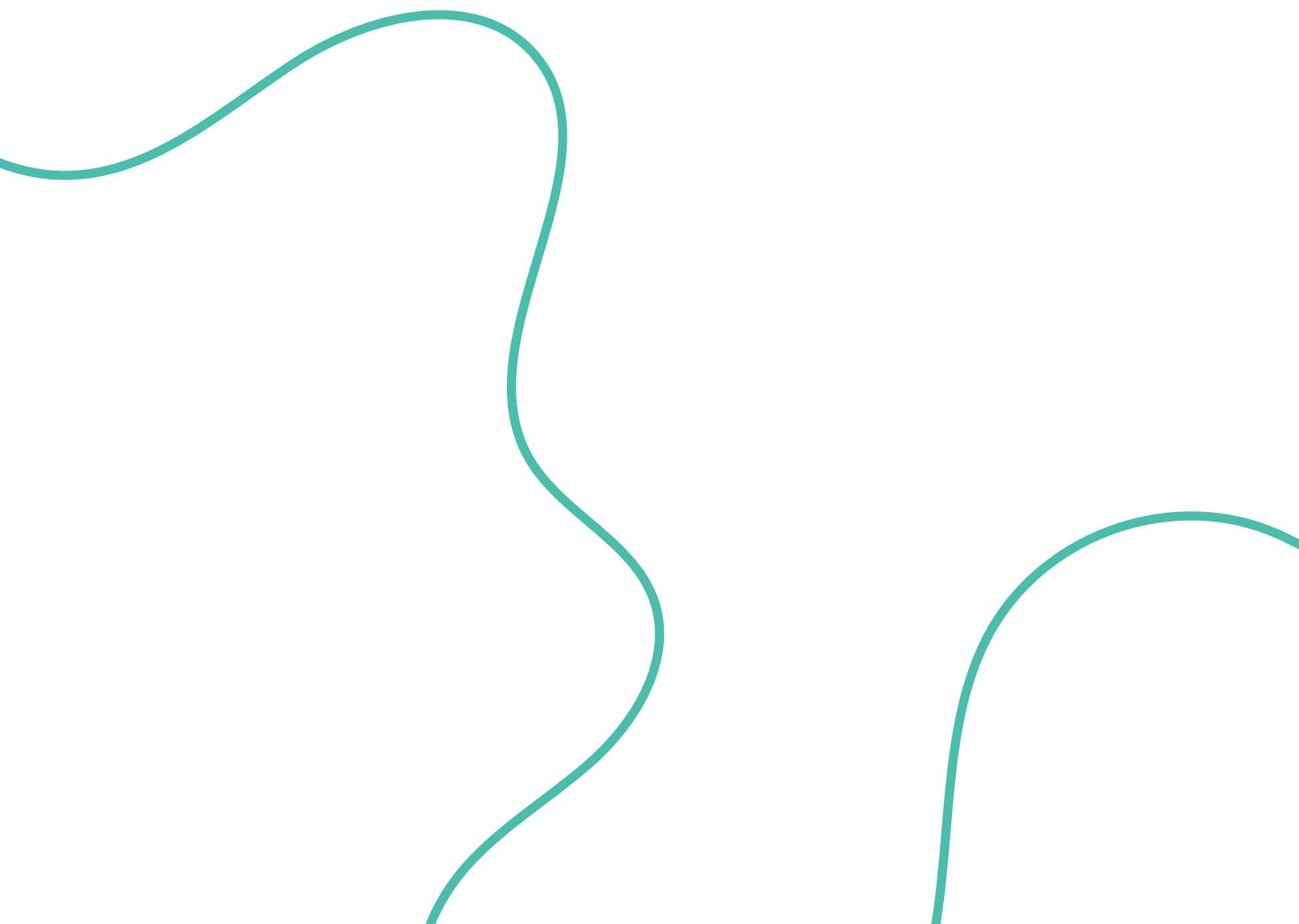
Insight: Using the idea of *spoon theory* helped some people plan their day based on how much energy, or how many “spoons,” they had.



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?

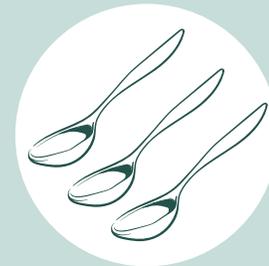
Think of energy like spoons. You start each day with a certain amount of energy, in other words, a certain number of spoons.



Getting dressed?
That might use
1 spoon.



Making a meal?
Possibly 2 spoons.



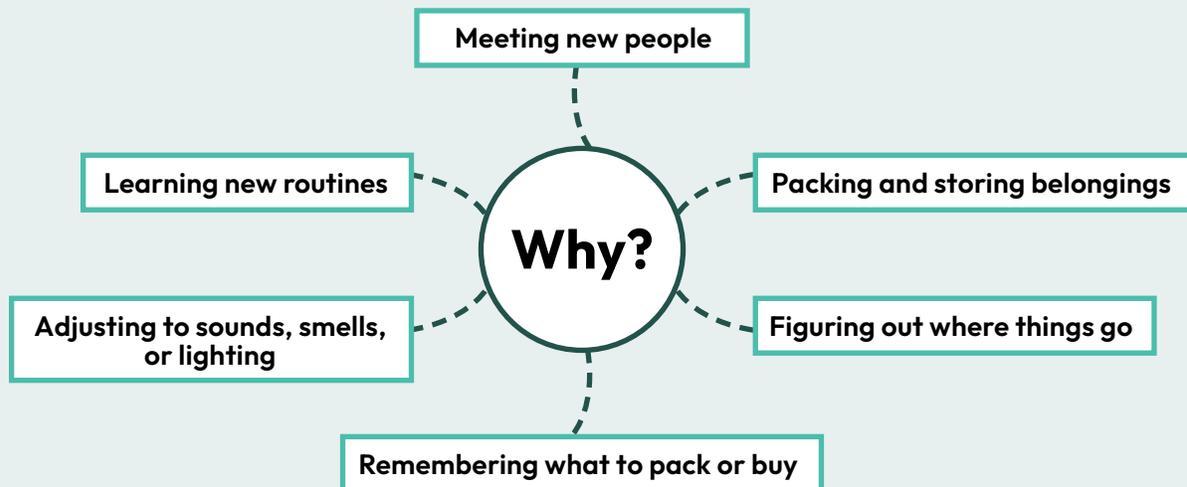
Talking to someone new?
Maybe 3 spoons.

**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 template, [Keeping Track of Your Supports During a Move](#), to stay organized and connected with supports. Find it on page 32.

A Few More Things About This Book

Land acknowledgment

At Carleton University's Accessibility Institute, we live and work on the unsundered and unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinaabe people.

We're committed to listening, reflecting, and taking thoughtful action in a way that honours Indigenous histories, cultures, and ways of knowing.

As we share ideas about inclusion and housing, we recognize that Indigenous Peoples have long built and cared for communities in ways that centre relationship, reciprocity, and respect.

Housing journeys can be difficult

We've shared a lot of strategies and ideas in this book that can make housing more neuroinclusive, supportive, and stable. But to be clear, housing journeys can also be incredibly hard for many Neurodivergent people.

Moving isn't always an exciting time, nor is it always a transition into a great new home. Unfortunately, moving can sometimes mean leaving a good home behind. It can happen because of a loss, crisis, or major life change. Other times, safe or suitable housing just isn't available.

There are still many barriers to housing for Neurodivergent people. These barriers can stack up and deeply affect people, especially if they already experience discrimination based on race, disability, income, or gender.

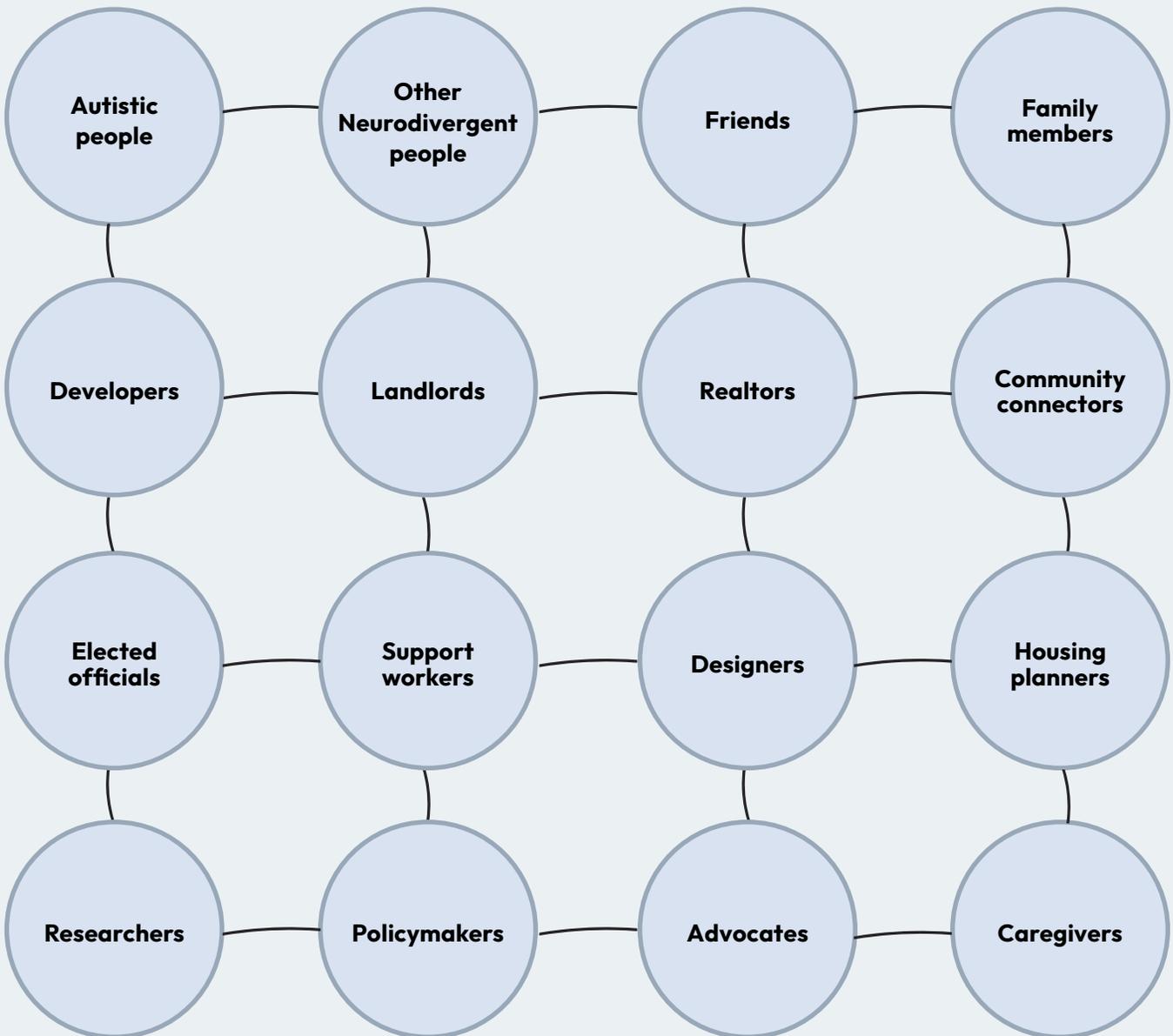
It can be scary to move into a home or community that doesn't meet needs or feels unsafe, isolating, and unwelcoming. That's why we need to talk about these realities too. Not to discourage action, but to ground our ideas and solutions in lived experience.

While the strategies in this book can support better outcomes, we know real change takes more than good ideas. It takes listening, collective effort, and a commitment to doing better.

Acknowledgements

The people behind the initiative

This book is the result of shared work. It's shaped by real stories and strengthened by a community of people who know this matter well. We engaged with and listened to many people, who shared their time, experience, and ideas with us. Their voices supported us in understanding what's working, what's not, and where change is possible or already happening.



Partners

This was a collaboration between Carleton University's Accessibility Institute and The Sinneave Family Foundation. Both teams care deeply about accessibility and inclusion, and we believe the best way to move forward is by listening, learning, and working together.

Housing Ecosystem Professionals Working Group

The members of the working group brought a wealth of insight from their roles as housing providers, community connectors, architects, and municipal staff. They grounded our work in real-life experience, sharing where things are going well and where there were opportunities for change. They also connected us to other great people and projects working towards more inclusive housing.

Neurodivergent Advisory Committee

We are especially grateful to members of our Neurodivergent Advisory Committee. Their lived experience, thoughtfulness, and guidance helped shape this initiative and emphasized the importance of neuroinclusivity in research. The principle of *nothing about us without us* was considered throughout.

Research participants and other connections

We want to thank everyone who took part in our research or connected with us during meetings, at events, or over coffee chats. This book reflects what we've learned from them, and we were delighted to have so many enthusiastic people from across the housing ecosystem support our initiative.

What this book *is*

This book is a collection of ideas, tips, and things we've learned from our initiative on Neuroinclusivity in Housing. We've pulled together stories, strategies, and real-life examples to encourage thinking differently about housing and to support more neuroinclusive practices.

It's meant to be useful, adaptable, and easy to take up. For the wide range of roles in housing, including landlords, builders, developers, architects, support workers, policymakers, roommates, friends, family members, or individuals on a housing journey, there's something relevant in here.

Some of the ideas in this book might feel directly useful. Other ideas might inspire thinking in a new way. Either way, we hope that they spark action and creativity and encourage people to bring a neuroinclusive lens to the work they're already doing.

These strategies can be tweaked or built on in ways that make the most sense for different contexts. But remember, solutions are created by or with Autistic and Neurodivergent people, not for them.

This book is also about collaboration and connection. While reading, think about who else could benefit from these ideas. Who's already doing great work? Who's trying to do better? Share this with them. Talk it through. Reflect together. Tweak, adapt, and grow.

What this book *is not*

This book isn't a checklist. It's not a step-by-step guide. It's not legal advice for housing. And it doesn't have all the answers.

Housing is complex. So are people. There's no one-size-fits-all approach that will work for everyone, in every place. What we're offering here is a starting point. It's one way to start thinking about housing more inclusively.

We think that the book is mostly suited to people who are just starting to think about housing through a neuroinclusive lens. For those who have been in this work for a while, some of the ideas may feel familiar or introductory, but we hope it will be useful to share this with others who are newer to the conversation. The more people we bring into this work, the stronger our collective impact can be.

Thanks for being here

Thanks for engaging with this book. We hope it sparked a few new ideas or offered encouragement to think about and make housing more neuroinclusive.

Throughout this project, we connected with people across the housing world. Neurodivergent people, families, support workers, landlords, developers, architects, and policymakers all brought different perspectives. What stood out most was their openness to share what they knew, being energized by new ideas, and learning from one another.

This book was shaped by that same spirit. The strategies and ideas inside can be adapted and used in different contexts. Some might be useful right away. Others might shape future plans or spark new conversations.

Change is already happening

Local action makes a difference. The choices being made, the relationships being built, and the ideas being shared can have a real impact. At the same time, we know that many of the housing challenges people face are connected to systems that weren't designed with neurodiversity in mind. That's why broader changes are also needed, such as more inclusive policies, flexible funding, better housing options, and stronger supports.

And while these bigger shifts can take time, we're seeing real momentum. People across the country are testing new approaches, building diverse and stronger networks, and sharing their success stories. We hope this book adds to that momentum and helps more people feel ready to take the next step.

Thanks for showing up, for caring about this work, and for helping to build housing that works better for everyone.

Appendix

Concepts

Here are important concepts and terms that we've used in the book. We aim to provide a shared language for readers, especially those who may be just joining in the conversation.

Neurodiversity

The term neurodiversity acknowledges that all brains are different. Differences are a natural and valuable part of being human. Just like we vary in height, interests, and culture, people also experience and process the world differently.

Neurodiversity reminds us that there is no single “right” way for a brain to function, and that our society is stronger when we embrace cognitive diversity.

Neurodivergence

Neurodivergence is a word we use to describe people whose brains work in ways that are different from what a society often expects. It can shape how someone thinks, learns, feels, moves, or communicates.

Neurodivergence includes a wide range of experiences, like autism, ADHD, dyslexia, anxiety, or other ways of processing the world.

Neurodivergence isn't good or bad, it is a natural part of human diversity. Challenges can arise when systems, spaces, and expectations do not account for neurodiversity.

That's why it's important to listen to a diverse set of voices and design in ways that work for a variety of needs.

Neuroinclusive housing

Neuroinclusive housing means creating homes and housing systems that work well for people with different ways of thinking, sensing, and moving through the world, including Neurodivergent people.

It considers accessibility, safety, communication, sensory needs, flexibility, and choice. At its core, neuroinclusive housing reduces barriers, supports well-being, and helps people feel truly at home. When spaces are designed with a wider range of people in mind, they become more welcoming, respectful, and easier for everyone to live in.

The housing ecosystem

Housing is shaped by a whole network of people, systems, and services. It's complex and influenced directly and indirectly by many people. Because of this, many people may not even realize they're part of it.

We use the term housing ecosystem to describe this mix of people. It includes people like builders, landlords, designers, housing providers, support workers, community groups, advocates, policymakers, tenants, families, caregivers and more. All these people play a role in how housing is planned, built, accessed, and lived in.

When we begin to recognize how these roles interconnect, we start working together more intentionally to create neuroinclusive housing solutions.

Index of role-specific ideas

This book's content was designed to be flexible, with most ideas written in a way that can be adapted across different roles and contexts. We invite you to consider how each idea might apply to your work, even if it wasn't written explicitly for your role.

That said, we know it's helpful to quickly spot what's most relevant. So, we've pulled together a shortlist of ideas that connect closely to specific roles. You'll find a few strategies listed under each one, along with page numbers to help you jump right in.

This index is just a starting point. You might see your role show up in a few different places or come across something listed under another role that sparks a new idea. That's the goal. These ideas aren't fixed. They're meant to be shared, adapted, and used in ways that work best for you.

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