

## YOUR POST-QUIZ TOOLKIT

# It makes so much more sense *now*

*Let's talk about what comes next....*

A post-quiz workbook with your next steps (whether your answers leaned toward your **wiring**, your **relationship**, or **both**.) Think of it as the first few steps we would do together if you were sitting in my office. And remember: you don't need fixing. You're not broken. We're just getting curious about how your brain actually works and what you need to feel loved and seen.

## THE NEURODIVERGENT LOVE LAB

with Jenna Dalton, Psychologist (Who is AuDHD)

**YOUR BRAIN ISN'T BROKEN. IT'S BEAUTIFUL.**

## BEFORE WE BEGIN

# A note from *me*

## How to use this workbook

If you just took the quiz and felt relief and grief at the exact same time... yes. That. It's the most common reaction I see, and you're allowed to feel both at once. Relief, because you finally have a name and a reason. Grief, because you're noticing how long you went without one. Both can be true at the same time.

Okay. Before we dive into these next steps remember: this is not a test, and there are no wrong answers here. It's the closest thing I can give you to sitting across from me in a counselling session.

We're not here to fix you, because you're not broken. We're here to get curious about how your brain is wired and what your relationship needs, so you have more clarity around what your next steps are to build a healthier, happier relationship.

### **A FEW SMALL INSTRUCTIONS (ND-FRIENDLY ON PURPOSE)**

You do not have to do this in order, in one sitting, or at all right now.

Just pick one tool that matches where the quiz pointed you (next page) and start there.

Pen on paper, notes app, voice memo to yourself. You do you. Yes. Give yourself that permission to be creative and attuned to how you best learn and reflect.

If a prompt brings up a lot, that's information. Important information. If it's overwhelming, you can close the page, take a break, and come back.

**Be kind to yourself. There's no wrong way to do this.**

## YOUR STARTING POINT

# Start where the quiz *pointed* you

Four results, four potential on-ramps. Here's where to go next....

### RESULT: WIRING

#### **This is mostly about how your brain is built.**

What you're feeling leans toward your wiring: the way your brain processes the world and how you naturally show up in love. Start with Tool 03 (Find Your Real Needs) and Tool 02 (The Self-Compassion Reset).

### RESULT: RELATIONSHIP

#### **This is mostly about the space between you and your partner.**

What you're feeling leans toward the pattern between two people dancing around each other, speaking languages neither is fluent in. Start with Tool 01 (Name What's Yours) and Tool 05 (Say the Thing).

### RESULT: BOTH

#### **It's both, woven together.**

Your wiring and your relationship are braided intricately together, which is the most common result (and honestly the most relatable.) Work straight through, Tool 01 to Tool 05.

### RESULT: EXPLORING

#### **You're at the very beginning of figuring this out. Let's get started.**

You're early in the discovery phase of figuring out what's going on. Welcome, I'm so glad you're here. Start with Tool 02 (Self Compassion) and Tool 03 (Real Needs). No labels required.

## TOOL 01

# Name what's *actually* yours

## Separating your wiring from your relationship

The whole quiz rests on one deceptively hard question: is this me, or is this us? For a lot of late-identified women, that line went blurry a long time ago. When you've spent years being told you're too sensitive, too much, too needy, too intense.... you learn to just automatically assume you're the problem. So a wiring trait (needing alone time to recover and regulate) gets relabeled as a personal failing (you being selfish for taking time for yourself), and a relationship dynamic (your needs routinely coming last) gets relabeled as just how it is.

Sorting these back out matters, because you cannot meet a need you have miscategorized as a defect. Wiring is the stable stuff: how you handle sound, change, closeness, transitions, rejection, communication.... The relationship stuff is the patterns that only show up between two people: who adapts, who asks, whose comfort sets the tone.... Most struggles are an intricate braid of both. The goal is not to assign blame. It's to see the intersection of the two clearly enough to know which strands are because of wiring and which strands are because of the relationship.

### THE DESERT-ISLAND TEST

A trait is something you would still have alone on a desert island. A relationship dynamic only exists in the company of someone else. When you can't tell which one you're looking at, ask: *would this still be true if no one else were in the room?*

### REFLECT

*Take one real moment and run it through the filter.*

Think of the last time you felt "too much" with your partner. Write what happened in a sentence or two.

Which part of that was about how your brain processes the world? (wiring)

Which part was about what was happening between the two of you? (relationship)

TRY THIS

The two-column sort. Do the exercise below. On the left, list three to five things you have always assumed were your fault in relationships. On the right, re-sort each one: wiring, relationship, or a braid of both? Notice how it feels to move even one item out of the “I’m the problem, it’s me” column.

| WHAT I’VE ASSUMED IS MY FAULT | ACTUALLY: WIRING, RELATIONSHIP, OR BOTH? |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
|                               |                                          |
|                               |                                          |
|                               |                                          |
|                               |                                          |
|                               |                                          |

See how it’s rarely just utterly and entirely a you problem? Usually there’s nuance and a dance between wiring and relationship dynamics. Sure, sometimes it’s just wiring, or sometimes it’s just the relationship. But more often than not, you’re not the problem. There’s more to it and you consistently taking the blame squarely on your shoulders has been a heavy burden for a long time, hasn’t it?

I’m here to help you create a shift and build a different way of being. With yourself, and with your partner. I’ve got you.

## TOOL 02

# The self-compassion *reset*

For the inner critic that can get so very loud

Here's something that happened for me when I learned I was AuDHD right after I turned 40: there was this inner voice that said: "How did you not know? Look at all the ways it showed up all the time. Look at all the ways you got it wrong...." If that inner critic has shown up in some way for you too, you're not alone. Neurodivergent people are notoriously hard on themselves. And there's real science for what quiets our inner critics (spoiler alert: it's not the classic advice "just don't take things so personally.")

Dr. Kristin Neff is a pioneer in self-compassion research. She suggests there are three key components to self-compassion: treating yourself with the kindness you would give a friend, remembering that struggle is part of being human, and acknowledging your uncomfortable feelings without letting them consume you or be drowned by self-judgment. This includes doing the work to see your thoughts and feelings as just thoughts and feelings that aren't necessarily true or permanent.

Self-compassion is more reliably linked to wellbeing and resilience than self-esteem. And here's the really interesting part: self compassion - not self criticism - is actually scientifically shown to increase follow-through and help you reach your goals.

You may have been told to "think positively" or "challenge the negative thought." Sure, that advice is research-backed.... for neurotypical brains. For us neurodivergent ladies, trying to logic our way out of self-criticism rarely - if ever - works. Self-compassion is the way because it goes much deeper, and works on repatterning how you treat yourself in a way that calms your nervous system and moves you out of fight or flight.

### THIS IS NOT LETTING YOURSELF OFF THE HOOK OR BEING LAZY

The research points the other way. Self-compassion is the safety net that makes it possible to look honestly at a hard thing without falling apart (which is exactly what change requires.) Self-esteem is "I'm good when I do good, I'm bad when I do bad." Self-compassion is being unconditionally supportive of yourself in the face of challenges. It allows you to learn from your missteps without crumbling under the pressure to be perfect.

Also, remember that self-compassion lives on a continuum. You can move toward a higher level of compassionate responding, or toward more uncompassionate responding. Which means you don't have to be perfect. You can simply turn the dial slightly up and be a little more compassionate toward yourself, inch by inch.

You're human. Allow yourself to be human: make mistakes, do something wrong, be imperfect. It's scary. And feels impossible. I know. But stick with me. I'm here to help.

## REFLECT

*Take your time. Be kind to yourself throughout this process.*

What's your inner critic's most repeated line? Write the exact words down:

If a friend you loved said that same line about herself, what would you say to her?

### TRY THIS

The self-compassion break (ND edition.) Hand on your chest, or wherever feels grounding. Take a deep breath, and say out loud or to yourself: "This is a hard moment. Hard moments are part of being human. What do I need right now?" Then actually answer the last part, even if the answer is small. There are some ideas below....

### A FEW MORE IDEAS WHEN THE ANSWER IS "I DON'T KNOW"

A glass of water. Stepping outside for two minutes. Going for a walk. A hand on your heart and one slow exhale, longer than the inhale. Wrapping up in something soft. Calling or texting someone who gets you. Lowering the lights or the noise. A snack you actually want. Permission to put this down and come back later.

## TOOL 03

# Find your *real* needs

After a lifetime of reading everyone else's

If someone asks what you need and your mind goes completely blank, you're not being difficult or avoidant. There's a real reason this happens, especially for women. Masking, performing a more palatable version of yourself for years, slowly turns down the volume on your own internal signals. On top of that, many autistic and ADHD people have a different relationship with interoception (your ability to be in touch with what's happening inside your body.) You may also be managing alexithymia (genuine difficulty naming what you feel). So "what do you need?" can be a sincerely unanswerable question.

Here's the good news: naming needs is a skill you can learn. Truly. It's highly learnable.

But here's the truth: most of the women I work with were rewarded, for decades, for anticipating everyone else's needs and quietly shelving their own. So we start lower than deep, primary needs. We start with categories of needs, because it's far easier to recognize a need from a list than to summon one out of thin air.

### THE THREE NEEDS UNDERNEATH EVERYTHING

Self-Determination Theory, one of the most studied frameworks in psychology, says humans run on three basic needs: **autonomy** (some say over how you live your own life), **competence** (feeling capable), and **relatedness** (genuine connection and a sense of belonging). When you feel chronically depleted, one, two, or all of these needs are usually getting starved. It's worth exploring which ones are being snuffed out for you.

### REFLECT

*Jot whatever is true this week. No need to solve any of it yet. Need help? Check out the menu of needs below these questions to get started.*

Sensory: I need more, or less, of... (sound, light, touch, texture, temperature)

Recovery: after a hard day, this actually helps me feel calm or re-energized....



Emotional: the feeling I've been suppressing or talking myself out of lately is....

Relational: the thing I keep hoping someone offers without me asking is...

### A MENU OF NEEDS TO BORROW FROM

*It's okay to not know what you need. You've spent a lifetime pushing your needs aside, so that makes sense. Start here. Read these slowly and notice which ones make you exhale, tense up, or quietly go "yes, that one." That flicker is data. Underline or circle whatever lands.*

**SENSORY** *what my body needs more or less of*

quieter rooms or noise-cancelling headphones, softer or dimmer light, clothes without tags or tight seams, deep pressure like a firm hug or weighted blanket, fewer things touching me at once.

**RECOVERY** *what actually refills me after a hard day*

time alone with no demands, a slow wind-down, an early night or a nap, my special interest with no pressure to be productive, permission to cancel a plan.

**EMOTIONAL** *the feelings I keep talking myself out of*

to feel sad without rushing to fix it, to be reassured I'm not too much, to be angry without apologizing, to grieve at my own pace, to feel proud out loud.

**RELATIONAL** *what I keep hoping for without having to ask*

to be checked on (not just relied on), closeness on my own terms, to be understood without over-explaining, to feel wanted and not just needed, to be accepted while unmasked.

### TRY THIS

Take a screenshot and save this menu of needs to your phone. Set a reminder to go off once a day, then pause and check: what do I need right now? Name it. If it feels uncomfortable, you're not obligated to fix it. You're simply rebuilding the signal between your body and your awareness.

We're building a muscle that hasn't been used very much for decades. Give yourself grace and give it time to get stronger.

## TOOL 04

# Energy accounting

Because the cost of masking is real, not imagined

If you reach the end of an ordinary day feeling like you ran a marathon no one else could see, this one is for you. Masking and constant translating (reading the room, softening yourself, managing your facial expressions....) are genuinely expensive. They pull from your energetic bank account, and run your budget into the red over and over. This is a direct road to the kind of depletion our community calls burnout.

Energy accounting is simple on purpose. You stop planning your life from an imagined neurotypical baseline and start planning from your actual bandwidth. And there's a particular load women tend to carry on top of everything else. Researchers who study cognitive labor describe the invisible work of anticipating, identifying, deciding, and monitoring: the running mental to-do list that keeps a home and a relationship afloat. It rarely lands on anyone's chore chart, and it falls disproportionately on women. Naming it is not complaining. Naming it is the first move toward setting it down and giving yourself a break.

### YOU'RE NOT JUST LOW-ENERGY

You're running a second, invisible program in the background at all times: translation, anticipation, self-monitoring.... Of course you're tired. The fix is not to try harder. It's to see the program and close a few tabs (or maybe even send some of those tabs over to someone else's brain.)

## REFLECT

*Be honest, not aspirational. We want the real numbers.*

List three things that reliably drain you that other people seem to find easy:

List three things that genuinely refill you. (Not what should. What does):

Name one item on your invisible mental list that does not actually have to be yours:

### TRY THIS

The one-week ledger. For one week, keep a loose tally of what costs you and what refills you. No judgment, just data. At the end, pick one drain to shrink and one refuel to protect on purpose. You're not balancing the books overnight. You're proving to yourself that the budget is real and that change is possible.

## TOOL 05

# Say the *thing*

Turning a private need into an out-loud one

This is the hardest leap and the most worth it. There's a wide gap between knowing a need and saying it out loud to your person. If you were shaped to keep the peace and shrink your own needs in service of others, asking can feel genuinely unsafe – like you're about to be "too much" on purpose. So the need goes unspoken, hardens into resentment, and leaks out later. That's not a character flaw. That's an old survival strategy doing its job a little too well.

A clear, blame-free request protects a relationship far better than silent resentment or a request buried under ten apologies. The usual advice is to use "I feel" statements. That's research-backed, often for neurotypical brains, with a catch for us: if naming the feeling is the hard part (hello again, alexithymia), the script stalls at word two. So we start somewhere more reachable, with the observation and the need. The feeling can come later.

### A REQUEST IS NOT PROOF THAT YOU'RE TOO MUCH

It's just information your partner doesn't have yet. You're allowed to hand it to them without managing their reaction for them. Their response is theirs to have. In the moment of asking, when you feel the need to manage their feelings, simply ask yourself: Whose feeling is this? Whose job is it to manage that feeling? (Spoiler: the answer isn't "mine.")

### THE FRAME (SHORT AND BLAME-FREE)

"When \_\_\_\_ happens, I tend to \_\_\_\_\_. What would really help me is \_\_\_\_\_. Could we try that?"

*Example:* "When plans change last minute, I get really thrown, even when the change is good. What helps me is a heads-up the night before. Could we try that?"

## REFLECT

*Pick something small for your first rep.*

Choose one real need from Tool 03. Write it here:

Now write it as a request using the frame above. Keep it short. Resist the urge to apologize for it:

When is the right time to say it? (Hint: regulated and calm, not mid-spiral.)

Timing is a tool, too. Pick a low-stakes moment this week, not the middle of a fight, to test one small request. Small reps build the muscle.

## WHERE TO GO FROM HERE

# You did the *real* work

Not the performed-for-an-audience kind. The quiet, internal kind that actually shifts things. So before you close this, here's the line I end every podcast episode with:

*Your brain isn't broken. It's beautiful. And now you know how to support it better.*

If you want to keep going, here is the order I would point you in:

### LISTEN

The [Neurodivergent Love Lab podcast](#). Honest, science-backed conversations about how ADHD, autism, and AuDHD show up in relationships (and how to feel more loved and understood as your unmasked self.) New episodes weekly.

### GO DEEPER ON THE PARTNER PIECE

**How to Feel Understood in Love**, my free workbook for translating your wiring to the person you love. The natural next step after Tool 05. [jennadalton.com/lovemap](https://jennadalton.com/lovemap)

### WHEN THE SPIRAL HITS

**How to Stop the RSD Spiral**, a free mini-guide for the rejection-sensitivity moments. [Grab it here.](#)

### COME SAY HI

[@neurodivergentlovelab](#) on Instagram, where this conversation keeps going.

### IF YOU'RE IN ALBERTA

and want to talk about your relationship challenges with a psychologist, I offer a [free 15-minute consult](#).

### ONE MORE THING

If it's been a few months, [retake the quiz](#). Wiring stays steady; relationships shift.

### A NOTE

This workbook is for education and reflection. It is not therapy, diagnosis, or a substitute for individualized care. Jenna Dalton is a Registered Provisional Psychologist licensed in Alberta, Canada. If anything here opens a bigger door, please consider walking through it with a qualified professional or a trusted person in your life.