



Believe and Become

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY
COUNSELLING AND PLAY THERAPY



REACH UP

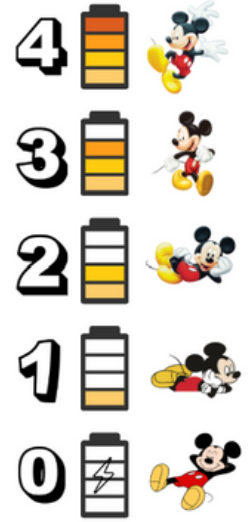
Resource · Empower · Advocate · Connect · Human rights · Upskill · Peer support

Macarthur Southern Highlands

Using energy meters and sensory tools to support regulation

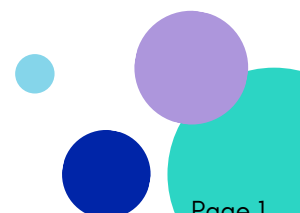
What is an energy meter?

A tool we love to use at Believe and Become to help people, children, young people and adults alike, understand and regulate their energy levels throughout their day. The concept of energy meters is relevant to ALL people, including neurodivergent people. We love to work with individuals to personalise their meter so it is meaningful to them. These are just a few examples:



Why energy regulation instead of emotional regulation?

Emotional regulation is an important concept, however it is a socially constructed one that is heavily influenced by cultural norms, societal expectations and the interactions we have with others. Autistic and other neurodivergent individuals' experiences of processing emotions and regulation needs often differ from societal expectations, making many emotional regulation programs less relevant to, or less inclusive of, their experiences. Additionally, many commonly used emotional regulation programs (for example the Zones of Regulation) have unfortunately been taken out of context and incorrectly interpreted and used as ways of highlighting certain emotional states as "good" or "bad" based on societal expectations. Focusing on energy regulation rather than emotional regulation helps to avoid value judgements about the "right" or "wrong" ways to feel, express and manage emotions. Instead it focuses on practical ways people can meet their needs across different activities and environments.



Why the battery?

Because we find it is a concept that just about everyone we have worked with understands! From very young children to older adults, people with intellectual disability, non-speaking people, and many people in between, the images of our devices' batteries being fully charged, "dead", or somewhere in between are VERY familiar to us!

How can energy meters be used?

- By discussing how different activities and different environments require different energy and regulation levels.
- By reminding us that there is no "bad" energy level (or bad emotion) - but that there can be a *mismatch* between our current energy level and what is needed to perform a task successfully. For example:
 - Having a full battery while running around during a sports match is great!
 - Having a full battery while trying to sit still in assembly, or get to sleep, is not so great!
 - Having an empty battery at bedtime is great!
 - Having an empty battery when there is an expectation to "do the thing" (whatever that may be) is not so great!
- By encouraging us to practice using sensory and other regulation tools to help us to better match our energy levels with the tasks we need to do, either by calming us (using up our battery), or alerting us (charging our battery). For example:
 - If I have a full battery at bedtime, I might listen to calming music, a sleep story, or meditate to help use up my battery and prepare for sleep.
 - If I have an empty battery when my sports match is about to start, I might have a crunchy snack, some cold water and do some star jumps to charge my battery.

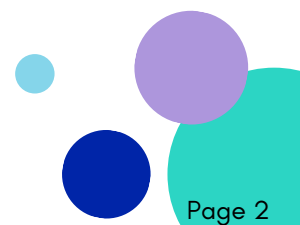
Making an individualised regulation toolbox

- What works for one person won't necessarily work for another.
- Our regulation needs and strategies may change over time.
- Use the checklist on the next page to identify a range of regulation tools you already use, or that you would like to try out.
- When testing out new tools, take note of whether they charge or drain your battery, and importantly, whether you like them! You can use the table on page 4 to keep track.
- Build your own individual regulation toolbox on page 5. Make sure to include both calming and alerting tools to help you drain or charge your battery as needed!

Useful resources

<https://alertprogram.com/>

<https://www.autismlevelup.com/#tools>



Regulation tools to try

Taste/Smell Tools

- Eat something chewy
- Eat something crunchy
- Have a snack
- Drink water
- Have a warm drink
- Have an icy drink
- Cook or bake
- Blow bubbles
- Smell your favourite scent

Touch Tools

- Massage or deep pressure
- Hug a weighted toy
- Use a weighted blanket
- Use fidget tools
- Squeeze a stress ball
- Hug a toy
- Use playdough or clay
- Play with slime
- Tear up paper
- Splash your face with cold water
- Use a sensory tray
- Pop bubble wrap

Sound Tools

- Scream into a pillow
- Use noise cancelling headphones
- Use ear plugs
- Spend time in a quiet space
- Have some alone time
- Listen to music
- Sing

Sight Tools

- Watch a sensory bottle or lava lamp
- Look through a kaleidoscope
- Look at favourite photos
- Imagine the waves at the beach
- Imagine your favourite place
- Name all the things you can see of a particular colour
- Watch the clouds

Movement Tools

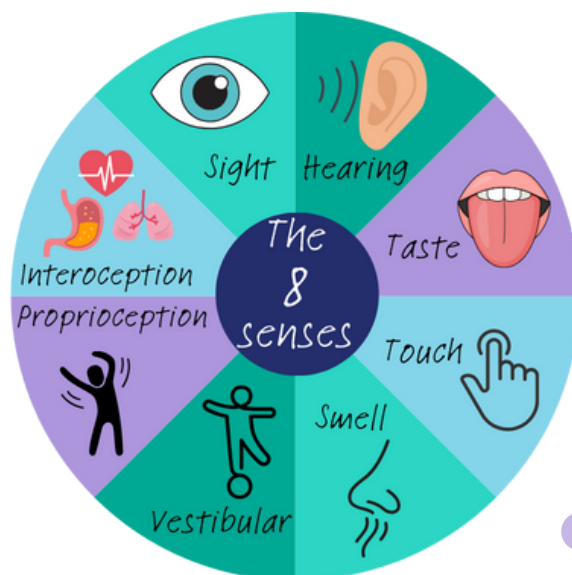
- Stretch
- Yoga
- Strength exercises
- Cardio exercises
- Go for a walk
- Go for a run
- Ride a bike or scooter
- Dance
- Kick a ball
- Bounce a ball
- Do some gardening
- Punch a pillow
- Swing
- Bounce
- Hang upside down
- Play with a balloon

Tools with others

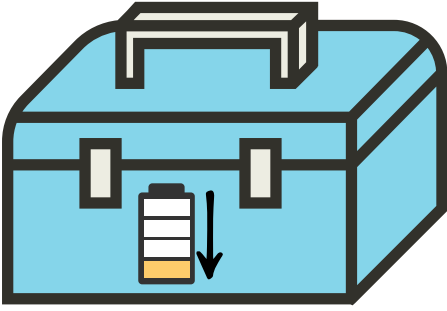
- Talk to a trusted adult
- Talk to a friend
- Hug a trusted person
- Spend time with a pet
- Ask for help
- Spend time with friends
- Spend time with family

Mindful Tools

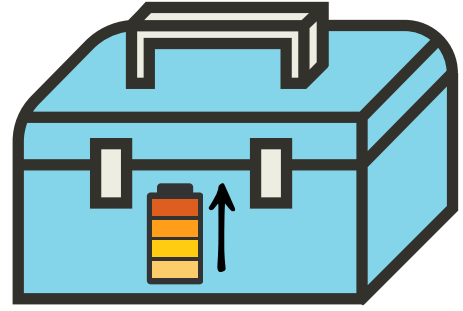
- Spend time doing your favourite hobby
- Count your heartbeats
- Count to ten
- Take deep breaths
- Trace fingers while breathing
- Meditate
- Use a mindfulness app
- Check in on your feelings
- Count your breaths
- Watch a timer
- Have a nap
- Tense and relax muscles
- Count by 5s as high as you can
- Read or recall positive affirmations
- Journal
- Read or listen to an audio book
- Do some craft
- Build with Lego
- Do a puzzle
- Play video games
- Play with favourite toys
- Watch a show or movie
- Write down your thoughts
- Take a bath
- Spend time outside
- Explore nature
- Draw
- Paint
- Colour
- Doodle



My regulation toolbox



Calming tools that drain my battery



Alerting tools that charge my battery