A TOM TOM UNIVERSE FREE RESOURCE

Growing Up Neurodivergent

MY DIFFERENT BRAIN, MY WAY

A gentle, creative workbook to help children and young people understand themselves, share their needs and celebrate the different ways minds work.

BRIAN'S	The thoughts and voices in my mind
WAVES	The feelings and signals I notice
CIRCLES	The routines and familiar things that help
BRIDGES	The people, interests and actions that connect me

My name (or my chosen name): _____

By Counsellor Tomass J. Wood | Tom Tom Universe

Free to print for personal, family and educational use.

GETTING STARTED

Welcome to your workbook

There is no right way to be neurodivergent, and no right way to fill in these pages. Your answers belong to you.

You can write, draw, colour, use stickers, choose pictures, speak your answers, point, sign, use AAC or ask somebody you trust to help. You may skip any question. You never have to share something private.

Choose how you would like to use this workbook

☐ By myself	☐ With somebody I trust
☐ One activity at a time	☐ Drawing instead of writing
☐ Talking or using AAC	☐ Taking breaks whenever I need

A grown-up can help by...

Offering choices • listening without judgement • accepting “I don’t know” • asking permission before writing an answer • not correcting the child’s experience.

Today I would like...

☐ A quiet place	☐ Music or sound
☐ Movement breaks	☐ Something to hold
☐ Help reading	☐ To do it another day

MAKE YOUR OWN WORKBOOK SYMBOL OR DECORATION

TOM TOM THOUGHT *You decide what goes on these pages. It is okay to change your mind.*

THE FOUR PILLARS

Four ways to understand me

The Four Pillars are tools for getting curious about thoughts, feelings, routines and connection - not boxes that every child has to fit into.

01	**BRIAN'S** Thoughts, questions and different inner voices *What is my mind trying to tell me?*
02	**WAVES** Feelings, energy and overwhelm *What am I feeling, and what do I need?*
03	**CIRCLES** Familiar patterns, routines and predictability *What helps me feel safe or prepared?*
04	**BRIDGES** Interests, people and pathways towards connection *What can help me move towards the next step?*

Which pillar would you like to explore first?

☐ Brian's	☐ Waves
☐ Circles	☐ Bridges

Why did you choose it? (You can leave this blank.)

TOM TOM THOUGHT *A pillar is something to lean on, not a rule you must follow.*

DISCOVERING ME

Hello, this is me!

You are more than a label, a diagnosis or the things you sometimes find difficult.

MY NAME / NAME I LIKE	THREE WORDS ABOUT ME	SOMETHING I ENJOY

Here are some things that make me, me

☐ I am curious	☐ I am imaginative
☐ I notice details	☐ I like music
☐ I enjoy moving	☐ I love making things
☐ I care about others	☐ I have my own strengths

DRAW YOURSELF, YOUR FAVOURITE THINGS OR A SYMBOL FOR YOU

Something I want people to know about me

TOM TOM THOUGHT *There is no single way to look, feel or act neurodivergent.*

DISCOVERING ME

My interests and strengths

Sometimes the things that light up our minds become our best bridges to learning and connection.

What makes you curious?

☐ Animals or nature	☐ Stories and books
☐ Music or rhythm	☐ Science and space
☐ Building and making	☐ Games and puzzles
☐ Art and drawing	☐ Something else entirely

I COULD TALK OR THINK ABOUT THIS FOR AGES...	I FEEL PROUD WHEN I...

Different strengths can look different

A strength might be noticing a tiny detail, remembering facts, being kind, inventing stories, solving problems, or asking brilliant questions.

DESIGN YOUR OWN “MY STRENGTHS” BADGE

TOM TOM THOUGHT *Your passions do not have to look important to somebody else to matter.*

PILLAR 1: BRIAN'S

Meet my Brian’s

In Tom Tom’s world, different Brian’s help us talk about the many thoughts that can show up in our minds. You can make up your own.

☐ Curious Brian	☐ Worry Brian
☐ Excited Brian	☐ Safety Brian
☐ Creative Brian	☐ Quiet Brian
☐ Questioning Brian	☐ Tired Brian

Today, a Brian in my head might say...

A BRIAN THAT HELPS ME	A BRIAN I SOMETIMES FIND HARD

Invent a brand-new Brian

My Brian is called... and it wants me to know...

TOM TOM THOUGHT *Thoughts can be loud, quiet, confusing, funny or all mixed together.*

PILLAR 1: BRIAN'S

Let Brian have a conversation

There can be more than one thought at the same time. Give them each a turn to speak.

Imagine something new is happening tomorrow

Examples: visiting somewhere new, starting an activity or meeting a new person. You can use your own example.

CURIOUS BRIAN SAYS: “I WONDER...”

WORRY OR SAFETY BRIAN SAYS: “WHAT IF...”

KIND OR HOPEFUL BRIAN SAYS: “MAYBE...”

What could a trusted person tell my Brian’s?

TOM TOM THOUGHT *Two different thoughts can both deserve to be heard.*

PILLAR 1: BRIAN'S

Giving Brian a voice

If words are difficult to find, you can use these starting points - or point to a choice instead of speaking.

☐ I have a question.	☐ I need some time.
☐ I need to know what comes next.	☐ I am not ready yet.
☐ I want to explain differently.	☐ Please show me instead.
☐ I need you to listen.	☐ Can we do this together?

Something I wish I could tell a grown-up

MY MESSAGE - WORDS, SYMBOLS, PICTURES OR AAC

I FIND IT EASIER TO COMMUNICATE WHEN...	PLEASE DON'T ASSUME THAT...

TOM TOM THOUGHT *Being heard is about understanding, not just spoken words.*

PILLAR 2: WAVES

My feelings weather report

Feelings can change like the weather. All feelings are allowed; we can choose what helps us move safely through them.

Today my inside weather feels like...

☐ Sunny / calm	☐ Cloudy / unsure
☐ Windy / restless	☐ Rainy / sad
☐ Stormy / overwhelmed	☐ Mixed weather
☐ I cannot tell yet	☐ My own weather: _____

My wave right now

Small 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 Big (or choose your own way to show it)

DRAW OR COLOUR YOUR WAVE - ANY SHAPE, SIZE OR COLOUR

What is this feeling asking for?

☐ Space	☐ Connection
☐ Food or drink	☐ Movement
☐ Rest	☐ Reassurance
☐ Information	☐ I am not sure

TOM TOM THOUGHT *A feeling is information. It does not make you good or bad.*

PILLAR 2: WAVES

Where do I notice my waves?

Sometimes we notice a feeling in our thoughts, our bodies, our energy, or somewhere we cannot explain.

WHEN I FEEL EXCITED, I MIGHT NOTICE...	WHEN I FEEL WORRIED, I MIGHT NOTICE...

WHEN I FEEL OVERWHELMED, I MIGHT NOTICE...	WHEN I FEEL CALM, I MIGHT NOTICE...

Signals I might notice (choose any, or none)

☐ Fast thoughts	☐ Tapping or rocking
☐ A tight tummy	☐ Wanting quiet
☐ Talking more	☐ Wanting to leave
☐ Feeling very still	☐ Something different

What helps me notice a feeling before it gets very big?

TOM TOM THOUGHT *No two people feel emotions in exactly the same place or way.*

PILLAR 2: WAVES

My big-wave support plan

Big feelings can need support. Make a plan for the moments when talking or thinking is hard.

Things that sometimes help me

☐ Quiet and lower lights	☐ A familiar object
☐ Stimming or moving	☐ Water and a snack
☐ A trusted person nearby	☐ A clear choice
☐ Time without questions	☐ Breathing only if I like it

FIRST: I CAN NOTICE...	NEXT: I CAN TRY...	THEN: SOMEBODY CAN...

When I have a big wave, please...

DRAW / WRITE WHAT SUPPORT SHOULD LOOK LIKE

Safety reminder: If you might hurt yourself or someone else, ask a trusted adult for immediate help. You deserve support, not shame.

TOM TOM THOUGHT *Regulation is not about hiding feelings. It is about meeting needs safely.*

PILLAR 3: CIRCLES

My circles of comfort

Circles are familiar patterns, routines and safe things that help life feel more predictable. You can have lots of circles, just one, or none you want to name.

MY MORNING CIRCLE	MY AFTER-SCHOOL / DAY CIRCLE	MY EVENING CIRCLE

The little things I enjoy repeating

☐ A favourite song	☐ Eating something familiar
☐ A regular route	☐ A bedtime routine
☐ An object I hold	☐ A familiar activity
☐ A repeated question	☐ Something else

If I could keep one part of my day familiar, it would be...

TOM TOM THOUGHT *Familiar things can make room for curiosity and confidence.*

PILLAR 3: CIRCLES

When my circle changes

Changes can feel easy, hard or somewhere in between. Knowing what to expect may help.

A change that might happen

DESCRIBE OR DRAW THE CHANGE

WHAT WILL STAY THE SAME?	WHAT WILL BE DIFFERENT?	WHAT COULD HELP ME PREPARE?

Which support would I choose?

☐ A picture schedule	☐ Knowing in advance
☐ A first / then plan	☐ Two choices
☐ A familiar object	☐ More processing time

Words I can use: “Please tell me...”

TOM TOM THOUGHT *Flexibility grows best with preparation, choice and trust.*

PILLAR 4: BRIDGES

The bridges that help me

A bridge can be a person, interest, activity, object, place or small step that helps you connect with something important.

My possible bridges

☐ A kind grown-up	☐ A friend or sibling
☐ An animal	☐ Music
☐ Drawing or crafting	☐ A special interest
☐ Movement or fresh air	☐ An object that comforts me

A BRIDGE THAT HELPS ME FEEL SAFE	A BRIDGE THAT HELPS ME CONNECT

DRAW YOUR BRIDGE. WHAT IS ON EACH SIDE?

What makes this bridge special to me?

TOM TOM THOUGHT *Connection does not always mean talking or making eye contact.*

PILLAR 4: BRIDGES

Build a bridge, one step at a time

You do not have to leap across a big change. A small, chosen step counts.

Something I would like to try or understand

WHERE I AM NOW	ONE TINY STEP I CHOOSE	MY BRIDGE OR HELPER

I might need...

☐ More time	☐ Someone alongside me
☐ A demonstration	☐ A visual plan
☐ A quieter space	☐ Permission to stop

CELEBRATE THE STEP, NOT JUST THE FINISH!

TOM TOM THOUGHT *You can try, pause, return, or choose a different path.*

KNOWING MY NEEDS

My senses, my way

Our senses help us take in the world. Sounds, lights, textures, smells, tastes, touch and movement can feel different at different times.

Things I enjoy / things I might need to change

SOUNDS AND NOISES	LIGHTS AND WHAT I SEE

TOUCH, CLOTHES OR TEXTURES	SMELLS AND TASTES

MOVEMENT AND BODY SPACE	PEOPLE, CROWDS OR BUSY PLACES

One sensory choice that helps me is...

TOM TOM THOUGHT *Someone can support your sensory needs without needing to experience them.*

KNOWING MY NEEDS

Movement can be part of listening

Some people think best while moving, rocking, doodling, fidgeting or changing position. Some people prefer stillness. Your way matters.

When I am thinking, I sometimes like to...

☐ Rock or sway	☐ Tap my feet
☐ Hold a fidget	☐ Doodle
☐ Stand or stretch	☐ Walk for a moment
☐ Be very still	☐ Do something else

WHAT HELPS ME PAY ATTENTION?	WHAT MAKES IT HARDER?

My helpful learning setup

DESIGN A SPACE WHERE YOU CAN THINK OR LEARN COMFORTABLY

TOM TOM THOUGHT *How someone listens may be different from how listening looks.*

BEYOND BEHAVIOUR

What someone sees is not the whole story

An action can have many possible meanings. Instead of guessing, adults can ask or offer ways to explain.

Choose a situation to explore

☐ I ask the same question again	☐ I move around while someone talks
☐ I go quiet or leave	☐ I hold an important object
☐ I say “no” to a new task	☐ I do not look at someone’s eyes

WHAT SOMEBODY MIGHT THINK IS HAPPENING	WHAT MIGHT REALLY BE HAPPENING FOR ME

A kind question someone could ask me

How I would prefer to answer

☐ Talking	☐ Writing
☐ Pointing	☐ Showing a picture or AAC
☐ Taking time first	☐ With help from someone I trust

TOM TOM THOUGHT *Curiosity about behaviour is kinder and often more useful than a quick judgement.*

TOM TOM'S WORLD

What might be happening underneath?

In the Growing Up Neurodivergent story, Tom Tom remembers music, movement, questions, strong attachments and the comfort of familiar things. Let us be curious about what those actions could mean.

Choose one moment from Tom Tom's world

☐ Tom Tom keeps tapping his feet while listening	☐ Tom Tom asks the same question again
☐ Tom Tom holds a familiar comfort object	☐ Tom Tom finds a surprise change difficult

A grown-up might notice...

Tom Tom might be thinking or feeling...

A kind way to help could be...

NOW THINK OF YOUR OWN EXAMPLE - DRAW OR WRITE, OR SKIP THIS

TOM TOM THOUGHT *Looking beneath an action can be the beginning of understanding.*

LEARNING MY WAY

Different pathways to learning

Being curious about the way you learn can help adults offer options, not demand one perfect method.

Learning feels easier when I can...

☐ See a picture or example	☐ Hear an explanation
☐ Read at my own pace	☐ Try it with my hands
☐ Ask lots of questions	☐ Connect it to an interest
☐ Take movement breaks	☐ Do one step at a time

SOMETHING I LEARNED IN MY OWN WAY	SOMETHING I WOULD LIKE HELP WITH

My idea for a better way to learn

DRAW A NEW WAY OF LEARNING - THERE ARE NO WRONG DESIGNS

TOM TOM THOUGHT *Needing a different pathway says nothing about your worth or potential.*

SHARE WITH MY GROWN-UPS

My “please understand me” passport

Only share this page if you want to. You can choose which parts are private.

The things that help me feel understood

My Brian’s can get busy when...

A big Wave might look like... and what helps is...

A Circle that matters to me is...

One Bridge I trust is...

Please do not assume I am not listening, that I am being difficult, or that I have to speak to communicate. You can ask me what support I want.

TOM TOM THOUGHT *My voice deserves time, choices and respect.*

TELL YOUR STORY

My four-pillar story

Make up a story, tell a real one or use a mixture. You can start with any box, not only the first.

1 BRIAN'S	WRITE OR DRAW HERE
What was the character thinking or wondering?	

2 WAVES	WRITE OR DRAW HERE
What feeling or body signal appeared?	

3 CIRCLES	WRITE OR DRAW HERE
What felt familiar, or what changed?	

4 BRIDGES	WRITE OR DRAW HERE
What person, object, interest or step helped?	

My story is called...

TOM TOM THOUGHT *You choose the beginning, middle and ending. There are many ways to tell a story.*

FOR TRUSTED ADULTS

Be curious before you assume

A companion page for parents, carers, educators and anyone helping a child to complete the activities.

Begin with connection

Follow the child's pace. Treat their choices, communication and boundaries as meaningful. Do not use a completed page as proof of a diagnosis, a behaviour assessment or a test.

Try language such as...

☐ "What do you think is happening?"	☐ "Would a picture help?"
☐ "Do you need me near or far?"	☐ "Shall we do this later?"
☐ "Which part is hardest?"	☐ "What helps you feel ready?"

The four pillars in everyday life

BRIAN'S: Ask which thought needs listening to, without assuming there is only one.
WAVES: Notice body clues and support regulation before problem-solving.
CIRCLES: Make routines visible, and prepare for changes with kindness.
BRIDGES: Start with interests, safe relationships and small steps chosen by the child.

If a child uses few or no spoken words

Offer pointing, objects, photos, drawing, signing, AAC, a yes/no choice, or quiet time to respond. Do not insist on eye contact or speech as evidence of understanding. Respect refusals, uncertainty and the child's right not to share.

If a child describes being unsafe, harmed or very distressed, respond calmly, take them seriously and follow appropriate safeguarding or professional support procedures. This workbook is a reflective resource, not a medical or diagnostic tool.

TOM TOM THOUGHT *Children are experts in their own experiences. Adults can be curious partners.*

BRING IT TOGETHER

My own four-pillar plan

You can take this page to a trusted person, keep it private, or revisit it whenever something changes.

BRIAN'S: MY THOUGHTS NEED...	WAVES: MY FEELINGS NEED...

CIRCLES: I FEEL STEADIER WITH...	BRIDGES: I CAN CONNECT THROUGH...

One thing I would like an adult to do differently

One thing I feel good about today

TOM TOM THOUGHT *Small changes in understanding can make a big difference.*

CUT-OUT RESOURCE

My four-pillar communication cards

Cut these cards out if you want to, or point to one on this page. A trusted adult can help make the print larger or add pictures.

BRIAN'S **I have a question.**	BRIAN'S **Please give me time to think.**
WAVES **This feeling is getting big.**	WAVES **I need help feeling safe.**
CIRCLES **What happens next?**	CIRCLES **Please tell me about a change.**
BRIDGES **Can we start with something I like?**	BRIDGES **Can you do the first step with me?**
MY CHOICE **I want a break.**	MY CHOICE **I would rather point or write.**
MY CHOICE **I don't want to answer yet.**	MY CHOICE **Thank you for listening.**

You can make extra cards in your own words, symbols or pictures.

TOM TOM THOUGHT *Communication is about choice and being understood.*

REFLECT AND REVISIT

I am still learning about me

There is no finish line to understanding yourself. You can return to these pages when you grow, change, or notice something new.

A discovery I made about myself

A way I would like someone to support me

Something I am proud of

A MESSAGE TO MY FUTURE SELF - DRAW OR WRITE

Different brains. Different pathways. Equal opportunities.

Created for Tom Tom Universe by Counsellor Tomass J. Wood
www.tomtomuniverse.co.uk