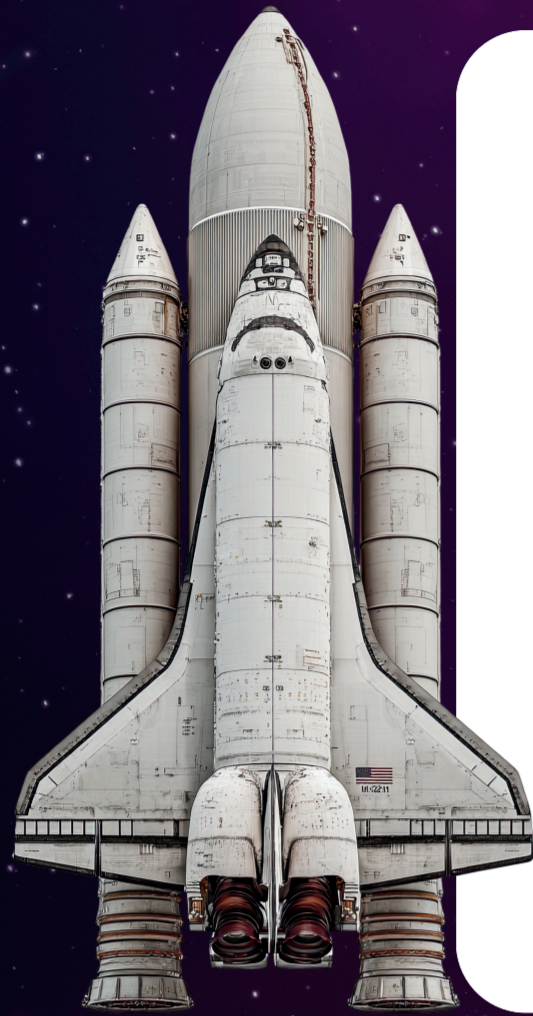


# MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING TIPS

## FOR NEURODIVERGENT WOMEN ACROSS THE LIFESPAN



### LIFTOFF: Understanding Your “Usual”

Mental health begins with understanding your own “usual”, how you typically feel, think, and function day to day.

Your “usual” (or baseline) is different from everyone else and well-being is not one single thing. It includes:

- Psychological (how you think and feel about yourself)
- Emotional (how you experience and manage feelings)
- Physical (how your body feels and functions)
- Social (your relationships and connections)
- Spiritual (your sense of meaning or purpose)

Changes in these areas can be an early sign that you may need support.

### ORBIT ONE: Early Years — Feeling Different in a World Not Built for You

Growing up neurodivergent in a largely non-neurodivergent world can lead to feeling: misunderstood, excluded, overwhelmed by social or sensory environments and, most notably, pressured to “mask” or hide parts of yourself. Masking can take significant effort and may affect mental health over time.

Early support is not about changing who you are, it’s about creating environments where you can feel safe and understood.



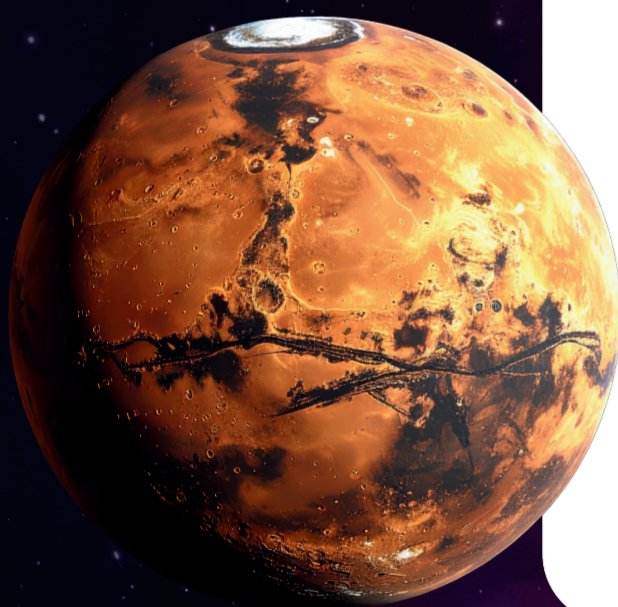
### ORBIT TWO: Adolescence — Intensifying Emotions and Experiences

As your body and environment change, mental health can feel more complex.

You may notice:

- Increased anxiety or emotional intensity
- Greater sensitivity to sensory input
- Social fatigue or pressure to fit in

Support during this time includes emotional awareness, reducing stressors, and building coping strategies that work for you.



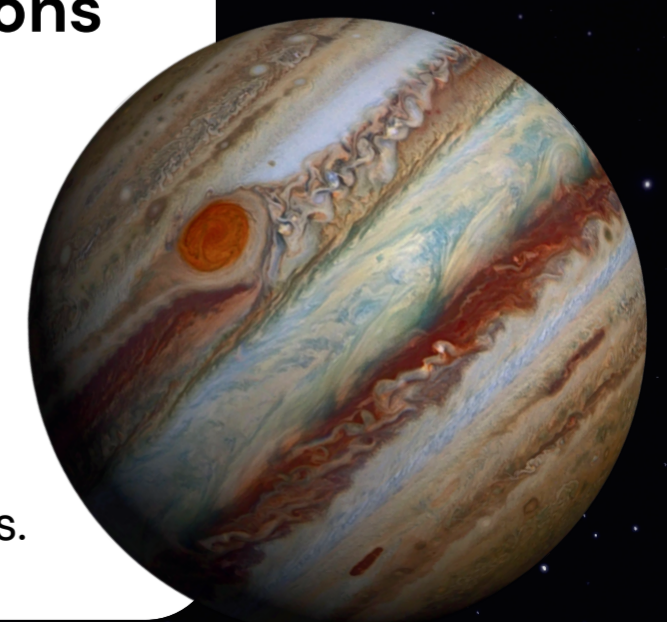
### ORBIT THREE: Early Adulthood — Navigating Demands and Expectations

Adulthood can bring increased demands that may not align with how your brain works.

Common challenges can include:

- Managing daily responsibilities and transitions
- Feeling overwhelmed by competing demands
- Experiencing burnout, shutdowns, or emotional fatigue

Self-care planning and building supportive strategies into daily life can help manage these demands.



# MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING TIPS



## ORBIT FOUR: Relationships, Sexual & Reproductive Health

Mental health, relationships, and physical health are closely connected.

For neurodivergent women, communicating clearly or asking for clearer communication is everything – this can reduce stress and misunderstanding! These tips can also be helpful:

- Respect your energy and boundaries and know it's okay to need breaks, quiet time, or a slower pace in relationships and intimacy.
- Check in with yourself and others, is consent clear? Comfort and safety matter at every step.
- Touch, environment, and timing can affect comfort—adjust what you can.
- Hormonal changes can impact mental health, energy, and sensitivity. Tracking patterns in your body and mood can help alleviate the guesswork.

## MISSION CONTROL: Communicating Your Needs in Healthcare

Navigating healthcare can be challenging, especially when communication feels difficult.

Planning ahead can help ensure your needs are understood by writing down your medical history, medications, and key concerns.

Other Simple Ways to Advocate for Yourself:

- “I process information best when it is explained step-by-step.”
- “I may need more time to understand or respond.”
- “I have sensory sensitivities—can we adjust the environment?”
- “Can this be written down for me?”



## THE ONGOING JOURNEY: Adulthood and Beyond

Well-being is something people move toward, it is not fixed, and it looks different for everyone. Different strategies will help different people when they are experiencing mental health challenges:

- Make sure you're eating and drinking enough. Keep a supply close by of 'safe' food (e.g., a food that you know you can always eat).
- Take time to recharge your social batteries. Know what activities are draining and what activities give you energy (e.g., give yourself time to rest and recover after spending time with other people).
- Spend time in a safe and comfortable environment. (e.g., somewhere that you can rest, maybe in your room or a space that is quiet and predictable).
- Have a simple goal to accomplish or routine to follow every day (e.g., put on a clean shirt; make yourself a cup of coffee in the morning).
- Find someone, or a few trusted people to be your 'safe' people (e.g., someone you trust and feel comfortable with that you can reach out to for support).
- If you don't have a 'safe person' try calling a helpline number or visit CAMH.ca for more resources.

## CO-PILOTS: Tips for Allies of the Neurodivergent Community

You can support the neurodivergent women in your life by being more accepting and inclusive of different ways of socializing, even when it can feel difficult or even sometimes uncomfortable.

- It's helpful to assume best intentions even if there may be misunderstandings.
- It's important to communicate directly rather than assuming we understand subtle social cues or norms.
- Neurodivergent people are often misunderstood when socializing, and it's so helpful when they can clarify misunderstandings, so being kind and direct is very important.