

NeuroEmpower

Teacher Self-Care & Resilience Checklist

Supporting others starts with supporting yourself

Introduction

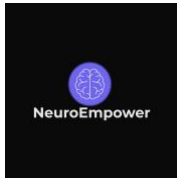
Teaching is one of the most rewarding and demanding professions. Whether you are supporting neurodivergent learners, managing sensory-rich classrooms, or navigating systemic challenges, you invest enormous emotional and physical energy every day.

This checklist is not about adding another task to your list. It is about reclaiming the small, non-negotiable moments that keep you grounded, energised, and genuinely resilient. Self-care is not selfish; it is essential maintenance.

"Burnout is not fixed by a weekend away. It is fixed by daily choices to protect your energy. I started small, just 10 minutes of silence before school. That changed everything." — Sarah, SENCO, Brighton

Section 1: Physical Wellbeing

Your body holds stress. Attending to physical needs is the foundation of all other resilience strategies.



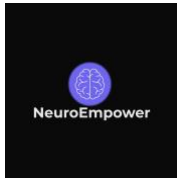
- ☐ Sleep: Aim for consistent sleep and wake times, even at weekends. Sleep deprivation amplifies stress and reduces your ability to regulate emotions.
- ☐ Movement: Do something that moves your body most days—a walk, stretching, dancing, swimming. Movement metabolises stress hormones.
- ☐ Hydration & nutrition: Keep water nearby and eat regular meals. Skipping meals destabilises mood and energy.
- ☐ Sensory breaks: If you are sensory-sensitive (many teachers are), protect your sensory environment—quiet spaces, dim lighting, noise-reducing earplugs in the staffroom.
- ☐ Screen time boundaries: Limit work emails and marking to set times. Screens after 8 p.m. suppress melatonin and disrupt sleep.

"I realised I was eating lunch at my desk while chasing emails. Now I eat away from the classroom with a colleague. Twenty minutes. That simple boundary reduced my anxiety by half." — Marcus, Primary Teacher, Manchester

Section 2: Emotional Regulation & Mental Health

Teaching is emotionally labour-intensive. Building regulation practices into your day, not just after crisis, keeps you resilient.

- ☐ Daily pause practice: Use breathing, grounding, or mindfulness for 5–10 minutes. (Try: 4-7-8 breathing, body scan, or the 5-4-3-2-1 sensory technique.)
- ☐ Name your emotions: Emotional granularity- knowing if you are frustrated, overwhelmed, or anxious—helps you respond effectively, not react.
- ☐ Connect with others: Share the load with colleagues. Debriefing a difficult lesson reduces isolation and normalises struggle.



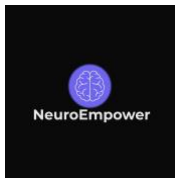
- ☐ Professional support: If anxiety, low mood, or burnout persists, speak to your GP. Teacher-specific counselling services exist (see Resources).
- ☐ Celebrate small wins: Note one positive thing you notice each day—a student laugh, a lesson that flowed, progress you have made.

"I used to blame myself for feeling low during winter. My GP diagnosed seasonal affective disorder (SAD). With a light box and vitamin D, everything shifted. I wish I had asked for help years sooner." — Jo, Secondary English Teacher, Scotland

Section 3: Boundaries & Workload Management

Boundaries are not selfish. They are how you sustain your capacity to show up for your students long-term.

- ☐ Work hours: Set a finish time and protect it. Mark a few books thoroughly rather than all of them perfunctorily.
- ☐ Email protocol: Check emails at set times, not constantly. Respond to non-urgent messages within 48 hours, not immediately.
- ☐ Say no strategically: You cannot say yes to everything. Ask: "Does this align with my priorities and wellbeing?" If not, it is okay to decline.
- ☐ Delegate & collaborate: Sharing the load is not weakness. Pair-planning, shared resources, and splitting supervision duties help everyone.
- ☐ Plan your breaks: Do not wing your holiday or free time. Structure rest into your calendar so you actually take it.



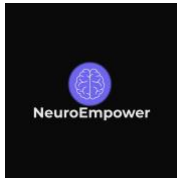
"I used to mark until midnight. My partner said, "Your students do not need perfect marks. They need a teacher who is not exhausted." That hit me. Now I stop at 5 p.m. The work did not suffer. I did." — Priya, Primary Maths Lead, London

Section 4: Professional Development & Peer Support

Feeling competent and connected to your professional community builds resilience and purpose.

- ☐ Continue learning: Attend a training day, webinar, or course on neurodiversity. Knowledge reduces anxiety and builds confidence.
- ☐ Join a teacher community: Online groups, local SEND forums, or professional networks provide peer support and practical resources.
- ☐ Reflect on practice: Regular reflection (even in a journal) helps you notice what works and celebrate progress.
- ☐ Ask for feedback: Constructive feedback from colleagues or leadership can clarify your strengths and growth areas.
- ☐ Mentor or be mentored: Mentoring relationships provide mutual support, accountability, and renewal of purpose.

"I started a peer observation group with two other teachers. We watch each other teach and debrief over coffee. It sounds vulnerable, but it is the most supportive thing I have done. We caught problems early and celebrated together." — Amelia, Secondary History Teacher, Bristol

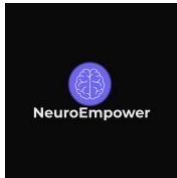


Section 5: Workplace Accommodation & Self-Advocacy

Many teachers are neurodivergent themselves (autistic, ADHD, dyslexic, etc.). You deserve the same accommodations you provide your students.

- ☐ Know your rights: The Equality Act 2010 protects you from discrimination. If your neurodivergence or disability impacts work, you may be entitled to adjustments.
- ☐ Request reasonable adjustments: This might include a quiet workspace, flexible start times, written instructions, or role-specific support. Put requests in writing.
- ☐ Talk to occupational health: If you have a long-term condition or disability, occupational health can advise on adjustments and support.
- ☐ Get formal diagnosis if needed: If you suspect neurodivergence, ask your GP for a referral. Understanding yourself helps you manage your needs and model self-acceptance for students.
- ☐ Document everything: Keep records of adjustments requested, agreed, and implemented. This protects you if challenges arise later.

"I was diagnosed with ADHD at 42, mid-career. Everything suddenly made sense. I asked for bullet-point agendas and a quiet marking space. My school said yes. I am a better teacher now and I finally understand why I struggled before." — David, PE Teacher & Autism Assessor, East Midlands



Resources & UK Signposting

Mental Health & Wellbeing Support

- ACAS Workplace Wellbeing: acas.org.uk
- Mind: mind.org.uk – Free resources on stress, anxiety, and coping strategies.
- Samaritans: 116 123 (24/7, free) – Crisis support if you are struggling.
- Your GP: Ask about teacher-specific counselling, CBT, or occupational health referrals.

Neurodiversity & SEND Support

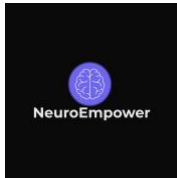
- National Autistic Society: autism.org.uk – Information, training, and teacher resources.
- ADHD Foundation: adhd.foundation.org.uk – Support for ADHD in adults and children.
- British Dyslexia Association: bdadyslexia.org.uk – Dyslexia support and workplace guidance.
- SENDIASS (Special Educational Needs and Disability Information, Advice and Support): Contact your local authority for free, impartial advice on your rights.

Professional & Workplace Rights

- Equality Act 2010: Guidance on your rights to reasonable adjustments.
- CIPD (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development): cipd.co.uk – Guidance on workplace wellbeing and employee rights.
- Your school occupational health service: Confidential support if you have a health condition or disability.
- Teacher unions (NEU, NASUWT, ATL): Provide legal support and advocacy if workplace issues arise.

Practical Tools & Training

- NeuroEmpower: neuroempower.org/resources – Free training and guides on supporting neurodivergent learners.



- Headspace, Calm, or Insight Timer apps: Free or low-cost meditation and mindfulness.
- Lunchbox Theatre: Free, teacher-designed resources for teaching about emotions and resilience.

"Resilience is not about never struggling. It is about knowing when to ask for help, doing small things to care for yourself, and believing you deserve to be okay." — Toni Horn NeuroEmpower Director

This checklist was created by NeuroEmpower to support teacher wellbeing and resilience. It is not a substitute for professional medical or mental health advice. If you are experiencing significant distress, please speak to your GP or contact a crisis service.

Resources & more information: neuroempower.org/resources | info@neuroempower.org