Fuel for *different brains.*

A neurodivergent guide to telling needs from wants — and making room for both, without apology.

Need or want? A quick gut check

	NEED	WANT
What it does	Keeps you steady enough to function	Makes life richer and more fun
When it's missing	Stress stacks up fast — shutdown, meltdown, burnout	You feel flat, but you can still get by
Can it wait?	Not for long	Usually, for a while
For example	Earplugs at a crowded concert	Front-row seats at that concert

Heads up: a lot of what the world calls "picky," "extra" or "high-maintenance" is actually a neurodivergent need.

THE BIG SIX

What many ND brains run on

01 **Sensory breathing room**

Less noise, softer light, fabrics that don't itch.

Try: noise-cancelling headphones, sunglasses indoors, a calm-down spot.

02 **A map of what's coming**

Knowing the plan saves energy for everything else.

Try: shared calendars, a five-minute warning before switching tasks.

03 **Permission to move**

Stims, fidgets and pacing help the brain settle and focus.

Try: a pocket fidget, a standing spot, walk-and-talk chats.

04 **Refill time**

Social and sensory energy runs out. Rest is how it comes back.

Try: a no-plans evening after every big day.

05 **Say-what-you-mean talk**

Direct words land better than hints and unspoken rules.

Try: written follow-ups, extra time before answering.

06 **Brain backup**

Outside supports for memory, time and getting started.

Try: alarms, visual checklists, a body double.

Continued on back →

CHECK YOUR TANK

Catch it before you crash

Topped up

Curious, chatty, flexible. A good window for hard tasks and big conversations.

Running low

Snappy, foggy, sounds feel sharper. Time to cut input and take a break.

On empty

Shutdown, meltdown, or basic tasks feel impossible. Rest first — the rest can wait.

And the good stuff?

Wants aren't extra — they're what makes the effort worth it.

- Deep dives into favorite topics
- Something new to explore
- Hangouts that feel easy
- Cozy comforts & small treats

SAY IT OUT LOUD

Swap the apology for the ask

INSTEAD OF…		TRY…
"I'm fine."	→	"I'm overloaded. Can I have 20 quiet minutes?"
"Whatever works."	→	"Can you text me the plan so I know what to expect?"
Slipping out without a word	→	"I'm stepping out to reset. Back in a bit."
"Sorry I'm so difficult."	→	"Here's what helps me do my best: _____."
"I just can't do this."	→	"Could we break this into smaller steps?"

Your needs are information, *not an inconvenience.*

Listening to them is how you keep showing up for the people and things you love.

YOUR TURN

My top three needs right now:

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

For education and community support, not diagnosis. For personal guidance, reach out to a neurodivergent-affirming professional.