

SPACE Framework for supporting safe and effective intervention exit and support (Adapted from Doherty, M., McCowan, S. and Shaw, S.C., 2023. Autistic SPACE: a novel framework for meeting the needs of autistic people in healthcare settings. *British Journal of Hospital Medicine*, 84(4), pp.1-9.).

NEED	CLIENT	VICTIM-SURVIVOR (INCLUDING CHILDREN)
<p><b>SENSORY</b></p> <p>This is an opportunity to check, reinforce and embed non-abusive sensory needs and strategies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What changes have you made to prevent sensory discomfort at home?</li> <li>• What strategies have you developed to manage discomfort and distress in the home? (this can include adapted strategies from the intervention such as ‘time out’)</li> <li>• How do these changes/arrangements benefit others in the home? (e.g., are there also Neurodivergent children/partner at home?)</li> <li>• What negotiations have you/your family made?</li> <li>• What further support do you need to create a safe home environment and coping strategies?</li> </ul>	<p>It is important at this stage (and throughout the intervention) to continuously check in with the partner’s safety worker to ensure that any changes that have been made have not resulted from the victim-survivor being coerced or put in place unwillingly (e.g., for fear of consequences, to appease the person who has subjected them to abuse). These could have been couched as ‘care’ or ‘equal compromise’.</p> <p>There are also likely to be competing needs in the home. The needs of the person who has perpetrated abuse should not take priority or at the expense of other people living in the home.</p> <p>Sharing and gathering information at intervention exit can aim to prevent abusive and controlling behaviours taking on new forms.</p>
<p><b>PREDICTABILITY</b></p> <p>A client’s need for predictable may pose challenges regarding routines and role expectations at home.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What routines have been put in place to reduce/prevent anxiety?</li> <li>• How will you manage transitions that are potentially challenging?</li> <li>• Have you considered your partner’s/children’s needs in planning for familiarity? (e.g., care routines, eating times).</li> </ul>	<p>Neurodivergent individuals are not entitled to regulation from their partners. Neither do their partners have to structure the environment for them, be pinned down to specific routines that are not beneficial to them or the children, or take on any additional tasks, caring responsibilities or other burdens to meet the needs of a Neurodivergent partner (regardless of whether they have been abusive or not).</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are these non-abusive, equal, healthy? (e.g., they centre the needs of children, do not limit your partner's autonomy or impose on them the burden of care).</li> </ul>	<p>Sharing information with the partner's safety worker will allow them to explore whether the routines being put in place are being done willingly and benefit all of the family's needs.</p>
<p>ACCEPTANCE</p> <p>Feeling accepted for who we are regardless of our differences is important.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What self-care strategies have/can you put in place? (can include stims, time for focusing on interests/passions).</li> <li>• How/can you unmask at home?</li> <li>• What about other family members' needs (get them to consider the needs of everyone who lives in the home and what they need to feel accepted).</li> <li>• What competing needs do you all have?</li> <li>• How can you manage/plan for this to ensure a safe home for all?</li> </ul>	<p>It is important that everyone feels accepted in the home. This should be a mutual experience and no one person's needs to feel accepted should be prioritised over others.</p> <p>There may be competing needs in the home and views on what acceptance looks and feels like. Creating spaces where everyone is accepted (especially in cross neurotype homes) involves negotiation.</p> <p>It is important to understand whether the victim-survivor and/or children feel accepted and that they have played a role in creating a home where they can be themselves without abuse or coercion.</p>
<p>COMMUNICATION</p> <p>Communicating needs and resolving conflict should be done in a healthy way.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What communication strategies have you learned and/or developed to communicate with your partner? (e.g., in terms of needs).</li> <li>• What communication strategies have you learned/developed to listen to your partner's/children's needs?</li> <li>• How will you resolve conflict in an equal and non-abusive way if this arises? (e.g., around</li> </ul>	<p>Neurodivergent people may have different preferences and styles of communication. This can be particularly challenging in homes where there are cross neurotype couples.</p> <p>Neurodivergent clients will have learned several skills during the intervention to communicate and listen to their partner when things go wrong. During the intervention, individual plans may have involved embedding these skills within preferred coping strategies (e.g., perspective</p>

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	<p>conflicting needs).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can you combine any developed coping strategies with skills you have learned on the course? (e.g., active listening in a low arousal environment).</li> </ul>	<p>taking, talking to one’s partner) at a time of sensory comfort and low fatigue.</p> <p>It is important that the victim-survivor has a role in negotiating how communicating and resolving conflict (e.g., application of intervention skills<sup>45</sup>) happens within the home and that skills are not used abusively.</p>
<p>EMPATHY</p> <p>It is important to be able to listen to and understand the emotions and feelings of your partner and empathise with their position. Empathy and how this is expressed can look differently across neurotypes.</p>	<p>The double empathy problem highlights that empathy may present in different ways, and that communication and interactions can breakdown when these are mutually misunderstood.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How will you know that your partner feels heard?</li> <li>• How will you show that you have listened and understood how they are feeling?</li> <li>• What actions can/do you take to show care and understanding?</li> <li>• How do you know when your partner has heard and understood you?</li> <li>• What does this look like?</li> </ul>	<p>In intimate relationships it is important to understand how your partner feels, particularly when understanding and resolving any conflict. Key to this is being able to take each other’s perspective on what has happened, and how a particular situation made the other feel.</p> <p>However, it is also important that one partner does not force their partner to own and manage their feelings and perspectives or dominate what that should look like.</p> <p>Sharing information with the partner’s safety worker about how the Neurodivergent client says they will express and show empathy, and asking for the victim-survivor perspective, can ensure that the victim-survivor has played an active role in negotiating how this will work in the home. It will also ensure they are not saddled with the emotional labour of non-reciprocal sharing of feelings and emotions.</p>
<p>PHYSICAL SPACE</p> <p>Some Neurodivergent people may</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What strategies have you developed to prevent sensitivities to touch and proximity?</li> <li>• How will you manage this if something goes</li> </ul>	<p>It is important that the victim-survivor understands any sensitivities to physical touch or proximity the client has and that they have a say in how this is prevented and managed.</p>

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<p>be unable to tolerate touch and/or share close physical space and may need increased space.</p>	<p>wrong? (e.g., in a non-abusive way).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What say has your partner had in this?</li> <li>• Can you give me an example of when this went well/wrong?</li> </ul>	<p>Any strategies discussed by the client should be shared with the partner's safety worker to ensure they have contributed to these willingly and without coercion or fear of repercussions.</p>
<p>PROCESSING SPACE</p> <p>Neurodivergent people may need more time to process information and make decisions.</p>	<p>Processing space is important when considering communication and preventing and resolving conflict. These needs could be considered alongside skills that clients are taught on interventions. It will be useful to check in on how this is being applied in the home:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What strategies have you developed to provide you with time to process difficult conversations and negotiate solutions?</li> <li>• What say did your partner have in this?</li> <li>• Have these strategies been communicated to your children?</li> <li>• Can you give me an example of when this worked well/not so well?</li> <li>• Do you need further support with this?</li> </ul>	<p>It is important that the victim-survivor (including children) have a say in how processing time is managed in the home and that it is not solely geared towards the needs of the person who has been abusive.</p> <p>The partner's safety worker should be informed of any strategies that have been discussed with or relayed by the client to ensure they have been negotiated equally and without coercion.</p> <p>Considerations may need to consider any competing needs within the family context (i.e. if the victim-survivor and/or children are also Neurodivergent). This should include identifying appropriate advocacy for other family members.</p>
<p>EMOTIONAL SPACE</p> <p>Identifying, processing and managing emotions can be challenging for</p>	<p>Increased time and space to process emotions may be necessary when resolving difficult and emotive situations. This can be exacerbated if there is sensory overload.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What strategies have you developed to</li> </ul>	<p>As above, it is important that the victim-survivor has a say on any strategies that have been developed to manage difficult emotions (and required space to do this) within the home. This is not a one-sided need or expectation and the whole family may have specific needs and</p>

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<p>some Neurodivergent individuals.</p>	<p>manage highly emotive situations/conversations?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where will you go/what will you do to prevent escalation?</li> <li>• Where will you go/what will you do to re-regulate?</li> <li>• What say has your partner had in this?</li> </ul>	<p>preferences of their own.</p> <p>It is important that these strategies are negotiated equitably to prevent manipulation or coercion.</p> <p>Information should be shared with the partner's safety worker.</p>
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