



# Non-Negotiables in Neurodivergent Relationships



## What Are Non-Negotiables

Non-negotiables are your bottom-line needs and values in a relationship. They are the things you must have (or must not have) for the relationship to feel safe, respectful, and aligned with who you are.

These are not preferences – they are core boundaries or values that protect your wellbeing. Non-negotiables aren't about being inflexible or demanding. They are about self-awareness and self-respect. That is, knowing what you need to feel safe, fulfilled, and respected in your connections.

## Types of Non-Negotiables (with examples)

### 1. Emotional Safety

- I must feel safe expressing my emotions without being dismissed or mocked.
- I cannot be in a relationship with someone who uses yelling, shaming, or stonewalling.

### 2. Communication Style

- I need clear, kind, direct communication.
- I cannot manage constant sarcasm or passive-aggressive behaviour.

### 3. Values & Beliefs

- I need alignment on major values (e.g., views on honesty, monogamy/non-monogamy, parenting, social justice).
- I cannot be in a relationship with someone who belittles my beliefs or identity.

### 4. Lifestyle & Boundaries

- I need personal space and regular quiet time to recharge.
- I cannot live with someone who ignores my sensory or scheduling needs.

### 5. Sexual and Intimate Needs

- I need a partner who respects my pace and boundaries around intimacy.
- I cannot be with someone who pressures me for sex or doesn't listen to consent cues.

### 6. Support & Effort

- I need mutual effort and willingness to work through challenges together.
- I cannot carry all the emotional labour alone.

## For Neurodivergent Folks...

Your non-negotiables might include things others don't notice or understand—like needing time to info-dump, routine around social energy, or support in sensory-friendly environments. That's valid. You deserve relationships that get you or are willing to learn.

# Activity: What Are YOUR Non-Negotiables

Use the prompts below to reflect and write. This can be done solo, with a therapist, or with a partner/friend.

## Step 1: Past Reflections

Think of a past relationship (friendship, family, romantic) that felt wrong, unsafe, or draining.

- What was missing?
- What crossed a line for you?
- What did you ignore or tolerate that you wish you hadn't?

## Step 2: Values Clarification

Circle or list 3-5 things you must have in a relationship.

Now list 3-5 things you cannot accept or tolerate.

Examples:

- Must have: open communication, shared responsibilities, alone time respected.
- Cannot accept: yelling, manipulation, avoidance of hard conversations.

## Step 3: Your List of Non-Negotiables...

Must Have	Cannot Accept

You're allowed to update your non-negotiables as you grow and learn more about yourself. Your needs are valid, even if they're different from others. In therapy or relationships, naming your non-negotiables clearly can prevent hurt and build stronger foundations.

# Non-Negotiables

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 Website: <https://www.crushtherapy.com.au/>

 Email: [admin@crushtherapy.com.au](mailto:admin@crushtherapy.com.au)

 Instagram: [@crushtherapy.au](https://www.instagram.com/crushtherapy.au)

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