

Understanding how you work best

Recognising your strengths and navigating workplace challenges

A practical reflection resource for doctors navigating the early years of medicine.

We all have different ways of thinking, processing information, communicating and responding to our working environments.

Some environments allow us to function at our best. Others require considerably more effort and adaptation.

This resource is designed to help you reflect on your natural ways of working, recognise your strengths and identify environments and strategies that help you function at your best.

It is not intended to assess neurodivergence, encourage a formal diagnosis or place you into a particular category. You don't need a diagnosis or a label to benefit from understanding how you work best.

1. Recognising your strengths

Think about situations where you feel capable, confident and able to perform at your best.

- What types of tasks or clinical activities come naturally to you?
- When do you find it easiest to concentrate and stay engaged?
- What ways of thinking or approaching problems are particular strengths for you?
- Which rotations, teams or working environments have brought out your best?
- What feedback have you received about your strengths?

My key strengths and where I use them best:

[Space for reflection]

2. Understanding what makes work harder

Some environments and ways of working may require considerably more effort than others.

- Do frequent interruptions or competing demands make it difficult to concentrate?
- Do unclear instructions, changing expectations or unspoken social rules create challenges?
- Are there sensory aspects of the workplace, such as noise, lighting or busy environments, that affect you?
- Do certain communication styles or team dynamics require substantial effort to navigate?
- Are there situations where you feel you need to consciously change your natural behaviour to fit in?

The situations and environments I find most challenging:

[Space for reflection]

3. Recognising the cost of adapting

Sometimes we become so accustomed to adapting that we don't recognise how much energy it requires.

- Which aspects of your working day leave you most depleted?
- How do you recognise when the demands of adapting are becoming too much?
- What happens to your concentration, wellbeing or confidence when you are exhausted?
- What helps you recover and maintain your capacity?
- Are there patterns across rotations that you are beginning to recognise?

My early warning signs and what helps me manage my energy:

[Space for reflection]

4. Identifying strategies and adjustments

Small changes to how work is organised or communicated can sometimes make a considerable difference.

Workplace challenge	Possible strategies or adjustments
Unclear or changing instructions	Written instructions, clarification of priorities and agreed check-ins
Frequent interruptions	Task lists, prioritisation systems and protected time for appropriate tasks where feasible
Sensory overload	Access to quieter spaces for breaks or administrative work where available
Unspoken expectations	Explicit feedback, clear role expectations and regular conversations with supervisors
Managing competing demands	Structured planning tools and support with prioritising workload
Frequent changes in teams or routines	Early orientation, written information and preparation for upcoming rotations

These are examples rather than solutions that will work for everyone. Adjustments need to be considered in the context of clinical responsibilities and patient safety.

Three strategies or adjustments that could make the biggest difference for me:

1.
2.
3.

5. Planning for your next rotation

Before starting a new rotation, consider what you know about the environment and what might help you settle in.

- What have you learned from previous rotations?
- What aspects of the upcoming rotation might suit your strengths?
- What situations might be more challenging?
- What can you put in place before the rotation begins?
- Is there someone you could speak with about practical support or adjustments?

My plan for navigating my next rotation:

What I want to continue doing:

[Space for reflection]

What I want to approach differently:

[Space for reflection]

What support or adjustments I might explore:

[Space for reflection]

6. Thinking beyond the first two years

The first two years of medicine provide broad clinical experience, but they do not necessarily reflect the environments in which you will spend the rest of your career.

As you progress, you will have greater opportunity to explore career pathways that align with your strengths, interests and preferred ways of functioning.

- Which aspects of medicine bring out your best?
- What types of clinical work do you find particularly engaging or satisfying?
- What working environments and team structures suit you?
- Which of your individual characteristics might be strengths in particular specialties or roles?
- What would a career that allows you to use your strengths look like?

The characteristics I would like to find in my future career and working environment:

[Space for reflection]

Your next steps

You don't need to resolve every challenge immediately. Start by identifying one or two changes that could make a difference in your current or next rotation.

It may help to discuss your reflections with a trusted supervisor, mentor, coach or another appropriate support person.

If you are considering disclosing neurodivergence or requesting workplace adjustments, you may also wish to seek confidential advice about your options and how to approach these conversations.

AMA Victoria can support you.

Our Professional Development and Careers team can help you reflect on your work experiences, identify strategies and consider your career direction. Our Workplace Relations team can provide advice about workplace rights and reasonable adjustments.

We are continuing to build our understanding of neurodivergence in medicine and welcome insights from doctors willing to share their experiences and strategies.

Schedule a career call to discuss [15 Minute Career Call | AMA Victoria](#)

Remember: The environments you find difficult during early medical training do not define your future potential. Understanding how you function at your best can help you navigate the challenges of today and make more informed choices about your career tomorrow.