



NeuroHacks for High-Performance Care

Practical workbook for energy, focus and calm under pressure



For the people who sustain care.

Use this workbook during the keynote and take it back to your team. It is designed to hold the tools, prompts and next steps so your brain does not have to hold all of it.

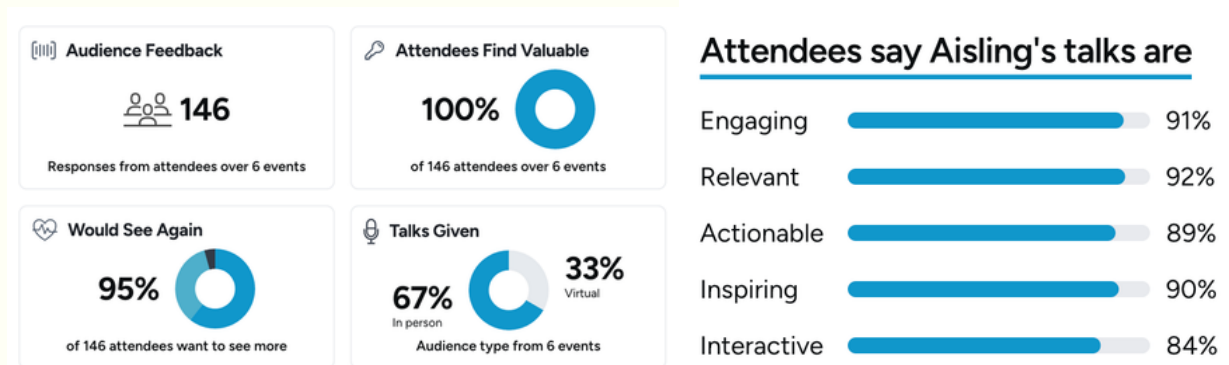
Aisling Smith | NeuroProductivity Solution | NeuroHacks

What Aislings Clients say

Aisling illuminates workplace neurodiversity through "relevant and meaningful" presentations that captivate and enlighten audiences. She weaves heartfelt stories that open minds to differences, delivering eye-opening insights about ADHD and neurodivergent strengths that leave attendees feeling both validated and inspired. Her neuro-inclusive roadmaps provide actionable strategies that empower employers to create more accepting environments where creativity flourishes.

Key Outcomes:

- Participants gained practical knowledge they can apply immediately.
- Attendees felt more aware and accepting of neurodiversity in the workplace.
- Employers felt empowered to create more inclusive and productive environments.
- Attendees felt a sense of personal resonance and validation, particularly those who suspect they have ADHD.



It was a great session!
Informative and empowering.
The session has helped me
better understand how I can
find my footing as someone
who is neurodivergent and
early career.

Ash Smith was a fantastic and
engaging presenter who
covered the topic in a good
amount of detail in the time
available. Would love to see
more from Ash.

The presenter, Ash Smith was
one of the best presenters in
this field, talking from lived
experience both as a
neurodivergent person and as
a parent of a neurodivergent
child. It was fantastic.

Ash was a fantastic presenter
who spoke from experience
and with compassion on the
topic. She highlighted strengths
while addressing challenges in
a positive way.





The question every tool answers

How do we sustain the people who sustain care?

Not by asking people to push harder. By supporting the energy, focus and calm that make high-performance care possible.

Energy

Protect capacity to care

Focus

Map the next useful step

Calm

Return to choice under pressure

Core promise:

I see what you carry. I respect what you do.

Here are practical brain-based tools to help you keep delivering high-performance care - without losing yourself or your teams in the process.



The pillars of a regulated, high-performing brain

Happiness, high performance and a regulated nervous system are not random. They are built through conditions.

1**STATE**

What nervous system state am I in?

2**ENERGY**

Do I have capacity?

3**ATTENTION**

What is my brain focusing on?

4**CONNECTION**

Do I feel seen and supported?

5**REHEARSAL**

Have I mentally mapped the path?

Today we turn these pillars into three practical NeuroHacks:

- Energy Traffic Light,
- Map the Markers and
- Pressure Pause.

Opening reflection: Map the markers

When the task is too big, the brain can panic at the size of the mountain. The high-performance move is to make the path visible.

**I could not carry the whole race at once.
So I mapped the markers.**

The mammoth task in front of me is...

The first marker is...

The support point / water stop is...



Part 1: Energy

Energy is capacity, not cheerfulness.

Energy is the capacity available in your nervous system to think, regulate, communicate and care.

Impact

When capacity leaks, people can become reactive, forgetful, sharp, withdrawn or less able to recover.

Science spark

Stress can reduce access to prefrontal functions like planning, working memory and emotional regulation.

Industry proof:

2024 aged care worker survey respondents reported an average of **26.4 paid hours** and **6.5 unpaid hours** in the week before completing the survey.

WORKBOOK MOMENT

Energy Traffic Light(TM)

What state are we in?



GREEN

I have
capacity.



AMBER

I am
stretched.



RED

I need support
or recovery.

Use these three questions:

- ☐ What colour am I? _____
- ☐ What colour is my team? _____
- ☐ What support does this colour need? _____

Team language:

'What colour are we today - and what support does that colour need from us?'

Energy Traffic Light at work

Use this when capacity needs to be visible before it becomes conflict, mistakes, shutdown or exhaustion.

Use it in...

- ☐ Shift huddles
- ☐ One-to-ones
- ☐ After intense conversations
- ☐ Post-incident debriefs
- ☐ Before high-pressure meetings

Mini script

'Before we begin, let's do a quick capacity check.
Green, amber or red?
No judgement - just data.
What support would help us today?'

My workplace version:



Part 2: Focus

The brain panics at a mountain. It can work with a marker.

When everything feels urgent, the brain needs a visible path and one meaningful next step.

Problem

Compliance, staffing, families, risk, documentation and reform can all feel urgent at once.

Solution research

Process visualisation - rehearsing the steps - can improve planning and reduce anxiety.

Focus protects safety, dignity and connection.

It helps the task list stop swallowing the older person.

WORKBOOK MOMENT



Map the Markers(TM)

How do we move through the task?

Workbook Moment

1

Name the mammoth - What feels too big right now?

2

Break it into markers - What are the next smaller stages?

3

Find support points - Where are the water stops?

4

Rehearse the route - What will we do when it gets hard?

5

Take the next useful step - What matters most in the next 10 minutes?

My first marker:

Process visualisation script

Do not just visualise the finish. Rehearse the path. Use this before a meeting, difficult conversation, new process, compliance change or overwhelming task.

The outcome I want is...

Example: a calmer handover, a safer conversation, a clearer decision.

The first marker is...

What is the first visible step?

The hard part may be...

What pressure point do I need to rehearse?

When that happens, I will...

What is the response I want to practise?

The support point is...

Person, pause, checklist, template, recovery moment, evidence.

Focus at work: the older person stays at the centre

In aged care, focus is not just productivity. Focus is remembering the human mission under the operational load.

At the centre is an older person.

Not a task. Not a number. Not a bed.

A person with history, dignity, preferences and meaning.

Care is communication across difference.

What might we need to make clearer so people do not have to guess?

- ☐ What matters most?
- ☐ Who needs to know?
- ☐ What can wait?
- ☐ What needs to be written down?

One communication improvement I can take back:



NEURO
EMPOWERMENT
SOLUTIONS



PRESSURE PAUSE™
HOW DO WE STAY STEADY UNDER PRESSURE?

Part 3: Calm Under Pressure

Calm is not the absence of pressure. It is the return of choice.

A regulated brain can listen, decide, communicate and act more clearly.

Problem

Pressure can narrow attention, speed up assumptions and make communication sharper.

Solution research

Exhale-focused breathing practices have been studied for mood, anxiety and respiratory rate.

Pressure Pause asks:

what is happening in my body, what is the story I am telling, and what is the next safe step?

Sources: Balban et al., 2023; Stanford Medicine cyclic sighing summary; Safe Work Australia key WHS statistics.

WORKBOOK MOMENT

Pressure Pause(TM)

How do we stay steady under pressure?

1

Exhale first

Longer out-breath. Let the body know there is a pause.

2

Name the state

This is pressure. My body is mobilising.

3

Find the next safe step

What matters most now?

4

Check the story

What might I not be seeing?

Try it:

Take a breath in.

Sneak in a small second inhale.

Long slow exhale.

Repeat twice.

Then ask: what is the next safe step?



Connection Cue(TM): language that steadies the room

I know this is a lot.

I can see how hard you are working. Let's find the next safe step together.

Names reality

We do not pretend pressure is not there.

Recognises effort

The person feels seen, not judged.

Moves to action

The next safe step becomes visible.

Where I could use this language:

Recognition is regulation

Sometimes the nervous system does not need another instruction.
Sometimes it needs evidence that it is not alone.

Media moment: Hopeline Radio

A public-support campaign turned messages of gratitude and encouragement for NHS frontline workers into a 24/7 radio station.

Talk in twos: One thing I wish people understood about the pressure in my role is...

Listener's job: listen, do not fix.

Takeaway:

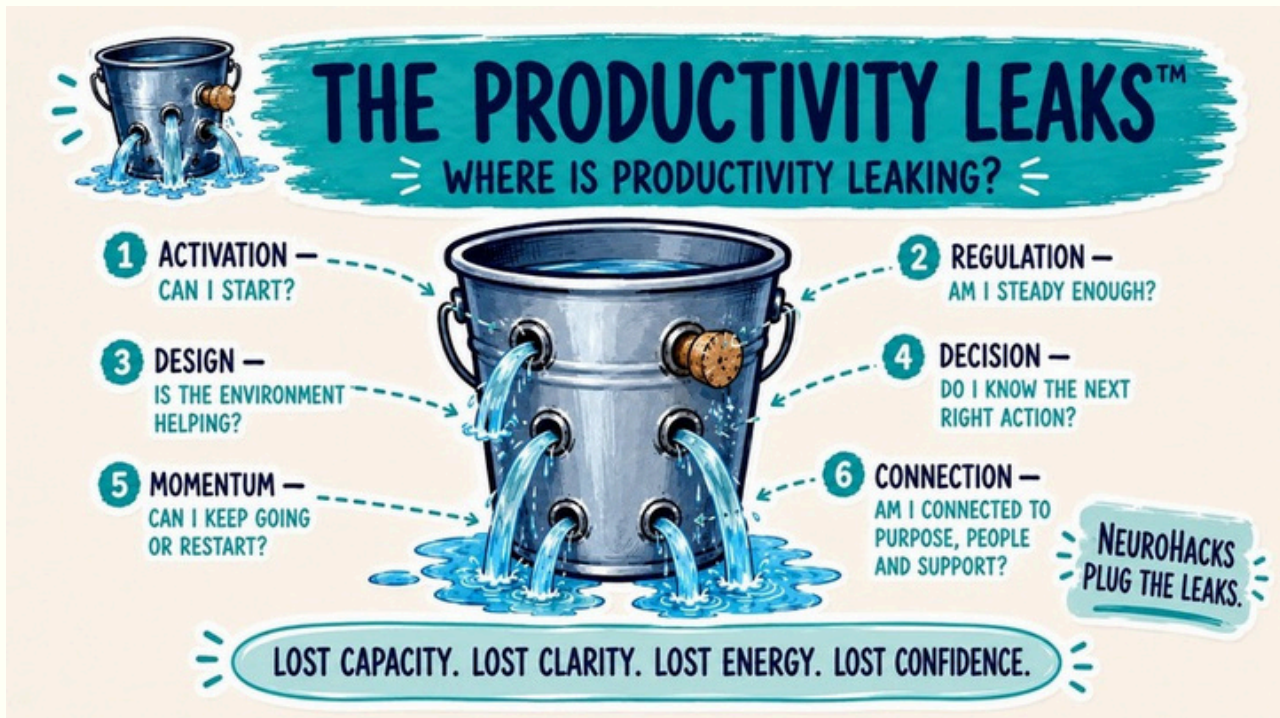
A problem shared is a problem halved.

A purpose shared becomes progress.

WORKBOOK MOMENT

The NeuroProductivity Leak Finder(TM)

When performance drops, **do not start** with judgement.
Start with diagnosis: where is capacity leaking?



Find the leak. Choose the NeuroHack.

Your lowest score is not your failure point.
It is your next NeuroHack.

Score your leaks



Score each area from 1 to 5.

1 = leaking badly. 5 = strong support.

Circle your lowest score.

1

Activation - Can I start?

1

2

3

4

5

2

Regulation - Am I steady enough?

1

2

3

4

5

3

Design - Is the environment helping?

1

2

3

4

5

4

Decision - Do I know the next right action?

1

2

3

4

5

5

Momentum - Can I keep going or restart?

1

2

3

4

5

6

Connection - Am I connected to purpose, people and support?

1

2

3

4

5

My lowest score is:

From leak to NeuroHack



Once you find the leak, choose the smallest useful support.
Do not redesign the whole organisation before lunch.
Start with the next marker.

1

Activation -

Map the Markers:

identify the first marker.

2

Regulation -

Pressure Pause:

exhale, name the state, next safe step.

3

Design -

Change the environment:

clarify, externalise, simplify.

4

Decision -

Map the Markers:

what matters most in the next 10 minutes?

5

Momentum -

Reduce restart friction:

visual cues, huddles, templates.

6

Connection -

Connection Cue:

name reality, recognise effort, move to action.

My next NeuroHack experiment:

I will try... _____

With... _____

By... _____



10-minute team huddle: use the tools tomorrow

Use this as a simple team moment after the keynote. It keeps the tools practical and gets people talking without making anyone overshare.

1

Name the purpose - We are going to make pressure easier to navigate.

2

Ask the colour - Green, amber or red? What support does that colour need?

3

Map one marker - What is one thing that feels too big? What is the first marker?

4

Pressure Pause - Exhale first. What is the next safe step?

5

Connection Cue - Who needs to feel seen, supported or clearer today?

Remember:

The goal is not to fix everything in ten minutes. The goal is to make the next useful step visible.

My 7-day NeuroHack experiment

Choose one tool and try it in a real situation.

Small, repeatable moves create culture.

- ☐ Ask the colour
- ☐ Map the marker
- ☐ Use the Pressure Pause
- ☐ Say the Connection Cue
- ☐ Use the Leak Finder with a team or colleague

Situation I
will use it in

The tool I
will use

The words I
will say

How I will
know it helped

**A problem shared is a problem halved.
A purpose shared becomes progress.**

Final reflection



The people who sustain care must also be sustained.

What is one small action that could help bring colour, capacity or connection back to your team?

Evidence and source notes



These sources support the statistics and science included in the keynote and workbook. Final URLs/permissions for media clips should be checked before publication.

Aged care workforce	Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care. Aged Care Worker Survey 2024 Report Summary.
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Stress and prefrontal cortex	Arnsten, A.F.T. (2009). Stress signalling pathways that impair prefrontal cortex structure and function. <i>Nature</i>
-------------------------------------	--

Task switching	American Psychological Association. Multitasking: Switching Costs.
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Process visualisation	Pham, L.B. & Taylor, S.E. (1999). From thought to action: Effects of process-versus outcome-based mental simulat
------------------------------	--

Breath and regulation	Balban et al. (2023). Brief structured respiration practices enhance mood and reduce physiological arousal. <i>Cell</i>
------------------------------	---

Recognition and retention	Gallup / Workhuman. Employee Retention Depends on Getting Recognition Right.
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Workplace inclusion	Deloitte Australia. Disability Inclusion @ Work 2024.
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Mental health claims	Safe Work Australia. Key Work Health and Safety Statistics Australia 2025.
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Hopeline Radio	LBB Online. Problem Solved: Creating a 24/7 Radio Station to Support Frontline Workers.
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Note: This workbook is designed for education and workplace reflection. It is not medical or psychological advice. For mental health concerns, seek support from a qualified professional or relevant workplace service.



Neurodivergent Professionals Deserve Better Workplaces

We Build
The Operating System
for **Workplace NeuroInclusion**.

Scan the QR Code to take your Snapshot

This free tool is used by
Organisations to move
from **Awareness to**
Measurable
Performance.



How **NeuroInclusive** is your Workplace?

Use our **The Workplace NeuroInclusion Readiness Snapshot** to Measure Your Workplace NeuroInclusion Intelligence.

You'll be able to get your organisation's:

- NeuroInclusion Readiness Score
- Capability gaps & blind spots
- Risk & opportunity profile
- PLUS Strategic next steps

The NeuroInclusion Intelligence System



Protect • Align • Transform

About Aisling Smith

Aisling Smith is an international **keynote speaker, best selling author** and founder of NeuroEmpowerment Solutions, leading the global movement in **Workplace NeuroInclusion and Employee NeuroEmpowerment**.

Ash works with **organisations** and **governments** to build psychologically safe, high-performing workplaces by designing and embedding **intelligent, scalable systems** that unlock the full potential of neurodivergent talent.

She is the creator of **The NeuroInclusion Matrix** and The Workplace NeuroInclusion Journey, frameworks designed to measure, implement, and scale neuroinclusive workplaces.

Book a Call with Ash to discuss;

- Speaking
- Corporate Training
- Enterprise Solutions



Measure The NeuroInclusion Matrix

Discover the true scale of your workforce, leadership, systems, impact, sustainability & employee experience.

Transform The Workplace NeuroInclusion Journey

A structured pathway guiding organisations from:
Awareness → Implementation → Capability Building

Embed Governance & Systems Integration

Where change becomes sustainable

Integrate neuroinclusion into: Leadership, Policies & processes, Hiring & performance, Workplace design

Scale The NeuroEmpowerment Academy

Build internal capability through accredited courses & programs like; e-learning, champions training, coaching certification, and leadership development.



**"When you change the way you
look at things, the things you
look at change "** *Dr Wayne Dyer*



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