

# Introduction to Interoception

*Understanding the body's internal signals*

## What Is Interoception?

Interoception is our internal sense, the ongoing feedback from inside the body that tells us things like hunger, thirst, temperature, needing the toilet, a racing heart, or muscle tension. It's a key ingredient in noticing and naming emotions, since many emotions are first felt as physical sensations.

## Why It Matters

Reliable interoceptive awareness supports self-care (knowing when to eat, drink, rest, or use the toilet) and emotional regulation (noticing early body signals before a feeling becomes overwhelming). When interoceptive signals are faint, delayed, or come through differently, it can be harder to notice these needs and feelings in time to respond to them.

## A Neuroaffirming Perspective

Differences in interoception are common, particularly for many neurodivergent people, and are a difference in how the nervous system processes internal signals, not a lack of effort, awareness, or self-control.

## Building Body Awareness at Home

- Naming body sensations alongside emotions in everyday conversation ('my shoulders feel tight, I think I might be frustrated').
- Building predictable routines around eating, drinking, and toileting rather than relying solely on noticing the urge.
- Pausing for brief body check-ins at natural points in the day.
- Avoiding pressure or shame around missed signals, this isn't a discipline issue.

## Where OT Fits In

Occupational therapists can support the development of interoceptive awareness as part of broader self-regulation and daily living goals, tailored to the individual.

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