

the Burnout Support Toolkit

A COMPASSIONATE GUIDE TO
NOTICING AND SUPPORTING
YOURSELF THROUGH BURNOUT.



YOURSTORY

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Introduction

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If you have found your way here you are probably way beyond tired - maybe your mind feels foggy, simple daily tasks feel impossible, your body is heavy and you are disconnecting from life and those around you.

Burnout is not a failure - it is a natural response to being under too much pressure for too long without enough support or understanding.

If you are neurodivergent, then perhaps the daily demands of masking, sensory overload and constant adapting have made burnout a frequent visitor.

Wherever you find yourself - it is okay to just pause.

This toolkit isn't here to fix you - it's been designed to support you by helping you understand what is happening and finding small, compassionate ways to respond and prioritise rest.



‘THE CRUCIAL ASPECT IS NOT HOW YOUR REST ALIGNS WITH SOCIETAL NORMS, BUT WHETHER IT REJUVENATES AND RESTORES YOU.’

DR MEGAN ANNA NEFF

Understanding Burnout

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Burnout is a state of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion caused by prolonged stress or overexertion. It often builds gradually — at first, you might just feel “off,” then slowly, even things you once enjoyed can start to feel heavy or meaningless.

It isn't a personal weakness or lack of resilience. It's the body and brain hitting their capacity limits due to demands exceeding resources for too long.

Burnout affects your whole system. For Neurodivergent people, burnout can also feel like:

- Increased **sensory sensitivity** or **overwhelm**.
- Struggles with **executive function** (planning, initiating, completing tasks).
- Feeling **disconnected** from identity or interests.
- **Emotional drain**: irritability, flat mood, tears
- **Cognitive crash**: forgetfulness, brain fog

Early Warning Signs

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PHYSICAL

ENERGY STARTS TO DIP
CAPACITY FOR BASIC
TASKS IS REDUCED
MUSCLE TENSION
HEADACHES
DISRUPTED SLEEP
DECREASED APPETITE
FREQUENT ILLNESS &
SLOWER RECOVERY



EMOTIONAL

FEELING NUMB,
IRRITABLE OR TEARFUL
LOSS OF JOY
FEELING DETACHED
& ALONE
FEELING FRUSTRATED
LOW MOTIVATION
DAILY MELTDOWNS



COGNITIVE

BRAIN FOG
FORGETFULNESS
CANCELLING MORE
OFTEN
DECISION FATIGUE
HARSH INNER CRITIC
INCREASE IN NEGATIVE
AUTOMATIC THOUGHTS



BEHAVIOURAL

WITHDRAWING FROM
FRIENDS
STOPPING INTERESTS
OVERWORKING TO
AVOID FEELING
DOOM SCROLLING
STRUGGLING TO EAT
STRUGGLING WITH
HYGIENE

Reflection

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**DO YOU VIEW EARLY
WARNING SIGNS AS THREATS
OR GENTLE REMINDERS TO
PAUSE AND TAKE CARE OF
YOURSELF?**

**WHAT ARE YOUR EARLIEST
CLUES THAT BURNOUT MAY
BE APPROACHING?**

**WHAT TENDS TO SHOW UP
FIRST IN YOUR BODY,
EMOTIONS OR HABITS?**



Support Toolkit

You don't have to overhaul your life to start feeling supported. The goal is not 'fixes' but ways you can choose something small that helps you feel more grounded and softens the crashes.

Start by learning your patterns

Do you crash at weekends? Is midweek the toughest? Do you need buffers around events?

Once you know your patterns, you can build in a pacing system, such as Spoon Theory, to better manage and protect your energy levels.



Support your body

Small wins and one step at a time. Wash your face. Make a bowl of cereal. Nap as often as you can. Move gently, breath deeply, add a few stretches. Soothe your senses by dimming lights, calming sounds and feeling soft textures.

Try to make your peace with the sheer amount of rest you need - rest without guilt is difficult, but a crucial aspect to recovery is sufficient rest.

Make room for your Emotions

This is not about *fixing your feelings* - but creating space for your nervous system to settle.

Consider ways to release your emotions safely, allowing yourself to name what you are feeling without judgement.

Reflect on how you can *tune in*, rather than *push through*.

Share with someone who listens without trying to fix - a good friend, a family member or therapist.

Consider micro pauses to help your emotions surface without flooding you.

‘What’s one word for how I feel right now?’

Cognitive Support

Cognitive support needs to be gentle, simple and realistic.

Make small decisions automatic: same breakfast, clothes or rigid routine.

Use visual reminders, lists, or timers to reduce mental load.

Reduce choices wherever possible to support with decision fatigue - wear simple outfits, rotate meals, default settings and make good enough the goal.

Micro tasks - put dishes in sink, wipe one counter, tidy space at front door.

Reframe **negative automatic thoughts**:

- I am allowed to do less
- I can meet my own needs
- I’m doing the best I can



Connections Support

Reach out using micro connections: low-pressure messages:

“Hey, I’m a bit drained right now. No need to reply quickly — just wanted to stay connected.”

Choose gentle forms of socialising (a short call, a quiet walk, shared silence, online space where interactions are light).

Spend time in places, with people or with pets who make you feel calm rather than “on.”

Body Doubling may feel low pressure, calming and restorative.

You can communicate your capacity simply:

‘I’m a bit burned out right now - replies will be slow.’

‘I’m really tired, but I still care.’

‘I can’t talk for long, but can check in for a few minutes.’

‘I just need some gentle company, no solutions’

Let others support you!

Let them choose the plan.

Accept offers of help.

Ask for clarity.

Simplify - ‘I’ll show up if I can.’

Reflection

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Pause and reflect with kindness.

Prompts to explore:

- What helps me feel safe enough to rest?
- What is one gentle boundary I could set to protect my energy?
- Who or what helps me reconnect when I start to feel detached?

You might jot these answers in a journal, or simply notice what arises as you read them.



Resources & Next Steps

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If you recognise yourself in these pages, you're not alone.

Burnout is common, especially for those who care deeply, think deeply or have had to navigate systems not built for them.

You deserve support that honours your humanity.

- Support from a therapist familiar with burnout and neurodivergence
- Building daily micro-rest rituals (5 minutes counts)
- Reading up on Burnout and increasing your knowledge

Books to Consider:

The Autistic Burnout Workbook — by Dr Megan Anna Neff (who is autistic-ADHD). This is very practical, with exercises to help identify burnout triggers, manage sensory overload, and build a recovery plan

Healing Autistic Burnout — By Sharon Kaye O'Connor. A compassionate guide to reconnecting with your true self, understanding needs and advocating for what you need to recover.



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