



GIANCARLO CRISTEA
NEURO-AFFIRMING PSYCHOTHERAPY

Pocket Guide to Autistic Burnout

DISCLAIMER

*This guide does not constitute medical advice.
For medical guidance, kindly reach out to
a qualified healthcare professional*

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What is Autistic Burnout?

Autistic burnout is a phenomenon that is inadequately researched and frequently misunderstood. It is a condition characterised by generalised physical and mental exhaustion, increased sensory sensitivities, and an impaired ability to manage everyday activities and social interactions.

In most cases, it is brought on by a combination of factors, including chronic stress, a discrepancy between expectations and abilities, and concealment of neurodivergent traits, which ultimately results in significant difficulties in managing daily tasks and social relationships.

A number of additional factors that contribute to burnout include a lack of appropriate support, expectations that are not realistic from family, school, employment, or society in general, and the stress that comes with living in a world that is not structured to accommodate people who are neurodivergent.

It is critical to understand that burnout **is not** a conscious choice or behaviour.

An autistic person is not rejecting social norms or avoiding work because they are "tired" or "lazy". Unfortunately they will not be able to "willpower" their way back to their previous level of functioning. In reality, autistic burnout most frequently impacts those striving too hard to be "normal" or "neurotypical"

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Part 1

Warning Signs & Symptoms

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Warning Signs & Symptoms

Here are some warning signs to watch out for:

- ~ Exhaustion and chronic fatigue
- ~ Increased sensitivity to sensory stimuli
- ~ Executive function issues, impairing your brain's ability to manage your thoughts, emotions, and behaviour
- ~ Struggles with tasks like household chores, homework, job tasks, and personal hygiene
- ~ Having constant negative thoughts & a cynical outlook
- ~ An impairment in the ability to communicate verbally
- ~ Greater difficulty coping with changes than before

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Warning Signs & Symptoms

Here are some warning signs to watch out for:

- ~ Changes in eating routines and appetite levels
- ~ Lack of engagement in hobbies & special interests
- ~ Feeling emotionally numb, detached, lonely, and isolated
- ~ Difficulty with concentration and maintaining focus
- ~ Higher likelihood of occurrence of meltdowns
- ~ Other physical symptoms such as sleep disturbances, headaches, muscle pain & tension, or digestive issues

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Warning Signs & Symptoms

Here are some warning signs to watch out for:

- ~ Feeling either overwhelmed or underwhelmed
 - ~ Difficulties socialising with others
- ~ Heightened irritability and decreased tolerance towards others
- ~ Debilitating loss of skills & ability to function
- ~ Difficulty making decisions and problem-solving
- ~ Triggered/Increased suicidal or self-harming thoughts and behaviors

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Part 2

Understanding the Causes

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Understanding the Causes

**Burnout can result from various contributing factors,
such as:**

- ~ Exposure to excessive sensory stimuli
- ~ Elevated stress levels & living in stressful environments
- ~ Prolonged uncertainty in private life, at school, or at work
- ~ Limited access to support resources
- ~ Unhealthy lifestyles, such as lack of sleep and rest, or having an unhealthy diet

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Understanding the Causes

**Burnout can result from various contributing factors,
such as:**

- ~ The lack of autism awareness and acceptance in society
- ~ Masking / Camouflaging behaviour
- ~ Increased level of demands and expectations
- ~ Stressful Life Changes and Transitions
- ~ Suppressing stimming behaviours

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Part 3

Effective Coping Strategies

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Effective Coping Strategies

In order to help you cope with autistic fatigue, take into account the following recommendations:

- ~ Design a safe, comfortable, and sensory space where you can rest and recharge your body and mind
- ~ Advocate for accommodations that meet your specific needs
- ~ Unmask by allowing yourself to act naturally without worrying about your behavior, without trying to mask your neurodivergent traits
- ~ Engage in activities that spark your interest and bring you joy

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Effective Coping Strategies

In order to help you cope with autistic fatigue, take into account the following recommendations:

- ~ Feel free to watch your preferred TV shows or movies
- ~ Reducing your own expectations and demands towards yourself
- ~ Establish boundaries to preserve your energy
- ~ Don't be afraid to ask for support from those around you
- ~ Utilize alternative communication methods, such as texts, telephone, or video calls

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Effective Coping Strategies

In order to help you cope with autistic fatigue, take into account the following recommendations:

- ~ Prioritise relaxation and recovery
- ~ Spend time with people who make you feel energized
- ~ Connect with friends and loved ones
- ~ Take a break from social interactions when necessary

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Part 4

Recovery & Prevention

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Recovery & Prevention

To avoid or overcome burnout, here are some measures to think about:

~ Rest and Recharge ~

Allow yourself time to rest and recover. Prioritize activities that relax and energize you while reducing those that drain your energy

~ Unmasking ~

Celebrate your neurodivergent traits and avoid suppressing or concealing them. Embracing your individuality can be empowering and reduce stress.

~ Energy Counting ~

Manage and conserve your energy by setting limits, prioritizing your needs, and monitoring your energy levels. Respect your boundaries and avoid asking too much of yourself

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Recovery & Prevention

To avoid or overcome burnout, here are some measures to think about:

~ Small Changes ~

Make simple adaptations to your environment and routine to reduce sensory overload and stress.

Consider using earplugs, practicing meditation, taking breaks, and finding a quiet space to recharge

~ Seeking Help ~

Reach out to professionals, supportive communities, and trusted individuals in your life for guidance, understanding, and reasonable adjustments to help you cope and recover

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Part 5
Myths & Misconceptions

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Myths and Misconceptions

There are many misconceptions about autistic burnout that can be damaging and in desperate need of debunking:

Myth: Autistic Burnout is the Same as Regular Burnout

Truth: Although apparently similar, autistic burnout is caused by continuous life stress, prolonged masking, and a mismatch of expectations and abilities in daily life.

Myth: Adults are the only ones who experience autistic burnout.

Truth: Autistic burnout can occur at any age, even childhood. Many persons initially experience autistic burnout at puberty, during college, or other times of stressful transition and change in their lifetime.

Myth: Autistic Burnout is Short-Term

Truth: Autistic burnout is distinguished by pervasive, long-term (usually 3+ months) exhaustion, loss of function skills, and decreased tolerance to stimuli

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Myths and Misconceptions

There are many misconceptions about autistic burnout that can be damaging and in desperate need of debunking:

Myth: Autistic Burnout is caused by coping difficulties

Truth: This myth blames the individual rather than recognising the societal and environmental factors that contribute to autistic burnout.

Myth: You can easily get over autism burnout

Truth: It takes time to recover from autism burnout, and the adjustments to daily routines, and a reduction of expectations and tasks are crucial in the recovery process

Myth: Autistic burnout is always visible and easy to spot

Truth: Autistic burnout can be disguised or mistaken as something else, such as anxiety, depression, exhaustion, rudeness, social isolation, or regular burnout

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Part 6

Helpful Advice for Friends & Family

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Helpful Advice for Friends & Family

**Burnout can have a serious impact on an individual's health.
Here are some ways to support someone who may be
experiencing burnout:**

~ Develop a Burnout Recovery Plan Together ~

Work together with the individual to develop a recovery plan that is suited to their specific needs and includes guidance and suggestions that can be put into practice.

~ Identify the Signs of Burnout ~

It is important to educate yourself on the signs and symptoms of burnout and to offer help before the problem becomes even more severe

~ Allow Adequate Space for Relaxation and Recovery ~

Ensure the individual has enough mental and physical space to relax and recover

~ Support Their Special Interests ~

When it is appropriate, offer help and encourage them to participate in activities that they find interesting

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Helpful Advice for Friends & Family

~ Acknowledging and Responding with Empathy ~

Burnout can strike anyone, regardless of their profession or social background. To tackle this critical issue, it is essential to approach it with empathy and understanding

~ Avoid making any judgments ~

It is important to avoid making any judgments about the situation or the individual experiencing burnout. Instead, acknowledging their struggles and responding with empathy can go a long way in providing the necessary support and understanding.

**RECOVERY IS A GRADUAL PROCESS THAT REQUIRE
TIME, ADAPTATIONS AND SUPPORT**

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