



# AUTISTIC BURNOUT

## INFOSHEET

A state of intense physical and emotional fatigue marked by unintentional unmasking of autistic traits, and loss of abilities. It is often preceded by extended sensory overload, prolonged exposure to stress, and a lifetime of often expended masking or camouflaging. Often mistaken for a depressive episode, it can be mild to severe and may have occurred more than once in the past.

“A state of pervasive exhaustion, loss of function, increase in autistic traits and withdrawal from life that results from continuously expending more resources than one has coping with activities and environments ill-suited to one’s abilities and needs.” - Dora Raymaker

## What does it feel like?

### Thoughts

executive and cognitive dysfunction, cannot concentrate, plan, organize, memory loss, unable to communicate verbally, slowing down of thoughts, difficulty processing information, inhibition.

### Body Sensations

sensory overload, severe fatigue requiring extended time to recover from basic activities, immobilised, auditory processing disorder.

### Actions

cannot function in everyday life because executive function is affected. Inertia or no motivation. Unable to organize different aspects of life, work, studies, living quarters. Stimming and selective mutism.

### Emotions

overwhelmed, confused, frustrated, increased meltdowns and shutdowns.

“ It shouldn't take a complete burn out to realize you're autistic. ”  
- The Chronic Couple

## Autism and Burnout



Almost every autistic person has experienced this to some extent. Burnout in the undiagnosed can lead to late-in-life diagnosis.

## Risk Factors

Not being diagnosed or aware of your neurodivergence. Masking and camouflaging autistic traits to hide differences. Being in environments that are not safe to share one's authentic identity. Not accepting autism. Stressful period at school or work triggering burnout. Not taking enough rest.

## What Helps?

### What you can do

- Taking a break from school and work to reduce demands. Asking for support with daily living activities.
- Lowering your expectations of yourself and being compassionate about what you are able to do, especially while you are experiencing burnout. Allowing yourself time to rest and take a break.
- Planning only a few goals per day or week, so that you can feel accomplished. Keeping track of how much energy your tasks take, so you know how much you can do. Setting limits on expectations of yourself.
- Spending more time engaging in your special interests.
- Meeting with a therapist or other mental health provider.
- Reducing sensory input, focusing on being comfortable.
- Having alone time or spending more time with people who make you feel good.
- Sensory activities: stimming, calming sensory gadgets.
- Accepting your Autism, trying to spend time not masking and camouflaging

### What others can do

- Accommodations in school and work, and time off school and work if needed.
- Family members and friends accepting autistic people when they stim or otherwise do not mask.
- Employers, coworkers, and friends reducing their expectations.
- Friends and family listening and providing emotional support.
- Friends and family helping with daily living tasks where possible.

### What society can do

- Reducing stigma and discrimination, which encourage people to mask and push themselves to live up to unsustainable expectations. This can be done interpersonally through how people talk about autism, masking, and productivity. It can also happen through government policy about disability discrimination and government supports.
- Government financial support for people who need time off work.
- Normalizing disability experience, and autistic burnout, through interpersonal interactions and raising awareness through media representation.
- Helping autistic people reduce shame about autistic behaviour and stimming, including children and all ages.

"Can you relate to having days you feel "more Autistic than usual"? Of course this is not true; we don't become more Autistic or less Autistic but rather we have less coping and compensatory strategies set in place because we are too exhausted to access them."

- The Autistic Life

# Resources



[Autistic burnout, explained](#)



[Antidotes to Autistic Burnout](#)



[Depression v Autistic Burnout: How to tell the Difference](#)



[Overload, meltdown, shutdown, burnout](#)



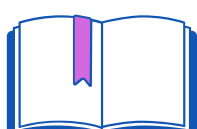
[Autistic Burnout](#)



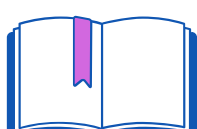
[Dora Raymaker Autism in Adulthood \(June 10 2020\)](#)



[Neurodivergent Rebel Masking, Mental Health and Burnout](#)



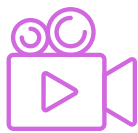
[Autistic Burnout - Tina Cox \(Self-Published Book\)](#)



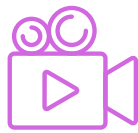
[Burnt Out Zine: How to Cope with Autistic Burnout - Etsy](#)



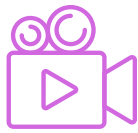
[Autistic Burnout Explained | Signs, Causes & Strategies | My Personal Experiences - Orion Kelly](#)



[Indie Andy Autism Burnout: reality, how to avoid it, tips and vs. Depression](#)



[Purple Ella Autistic Burnout - YouTube](#)



[Ask an Autistic #3 - What is Autistic Burnout? - YouTube](#)



[Autistic women twice as likely as autistic men to attempt suicide \(spectrumnews.org\)](#)



[Autistic Burnout Explained | Spectrum | Autism Research News](#)



[Antidotes to Autistic Burnout](#)



[Depression v Autistic Burnout: How to tell the Difference](#)



[Overload, meltdown, shutdown, burnout](#)



[Autistic Burnout | Specialisterne Canada](#)



["Having All of Your Internal Resources Exhausted Beyond Measure and Being Left with No Clean-Up Crew": Defining Autistic Burnout | Dora Raymaker Autism in Adulthood](#)



[Neurodivergent Rebel Masking, Mental Health and Burnout](#)