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## *Energy, Pacing & Giving Yourself Permission to Rest*

Autistic and Otherwise Neurodivergent folks often experience fluctuating energy, burnout, and exhaustion, but our society still values productivity over wellness. This week, we're making space to *slow down*, tune into our needs, and reframe rest as radical self-care.



### *Understanding Spoon Theory*

The *Spoon Theory* was created by Christine Miserandino (2003) as a metaphor to explain what it's like to live with chronic illness or non-apparent disabilities.

Imagine you start each day with a limited number of "spoons" (units of energy). Every activity - showering, socialising, cooking, working - costs a spoon. When you're out, you're *out*.

For Autistic, neurodivergent, and chronically ill folks, managing energy is often a constant calculation. Some days we may have start your day with 10 spoons, other days just 2.

Spoon Theory gives us a shared language to say, “I’m low on spoons today” - no justification needed. What you do have is a shared understanding.

Check out:

Miserandino, C. (2003). *The Spoon Theory*. But You Don’t Look Sick.

<https://butyoudontlooksick.com/articles/written-by-christine/the-spoon-theory/>



## 🔥 ***Executive Function & Burnout***

Struggling to get started, stay focused, or complete tasks? That’s not laziness, it’s likely executive dysfunction, common in Neurodivergence and Autism. This can be intensified by burnout, overstimulation, or masking.

Signs of burnout may include:

- Feeling numb or overwhelmed
- Losing interest in special interests or routines
- Struggling with speech, memory, or motivation
- Increased sensitivity or shutdowns

### ***Helpful suggestions:***

Create *low-pressure* routines.

Break tasks into tiny steps.

Use visual supports or body doubling (having someone nearby).

*Lower internal and external expectations.* Your worth isn’t tied to your output.



## **Low-Energy Wins**

We asked community members: what helps when you're out of spoons?

Here's what came up:

*"Pre-cut veggies + frozen meals = survival."*

*"Soft lighting, noise-cancelling headphones, and a weighted blanket."*

*"Text over calls. Memes over small talk."*

*"Watching a comfort show while stim-knitting."*

*"Lists, sticky notes, and not beating myself up when I don't get through them."*

Got your own low-energy hacks?

Let us know via email or comment on our socials - we would love to share them with the community!



## **Rest Without Guilt**

Let's bust the myth that we need to "earn" rest.

Autistic and Neurodivergent bodies and brains are often working *harder* to show up. That means rest isn't a luxury, it's maintenance. Cancelled plans, naps, or quiet days don't make you flaky or unreliable - they make you wise and in tune with your own needs and capacity.

*“Rest is not a reward. It's a requirement.”*

*“Resting is not doing nothing, it is doing something productive for yourself, especially when your body needs recovery.”*

*“You are allowed to rest. You are allowed to do less. You are allowed to put yourself first.*

*Your softness is not a weakness, it is your wisdom.”*

*“Sometimes all I do is lay with my dog and listen to a stim playlist. That's enough.”*

*What does real rest look like to you?*

Let us know via email or comment on our socials - we would love to share them with the community!



## ***Regulation vs. Relaxation***

Rest isn't just about naps or Netflix, sometimes we need *nervous system regulation*. That means shifting from “survival mode” to a calmer, connected state. It might look like:

Rocking or gentle movement

Deep pressure (like a weighted blanket)

Stimming

Time in nature

Soft, repetitive activities like drawing or sorting  
Listening to music that matches your mood

The goal isn't productivity. It's *coming home to yourself*.

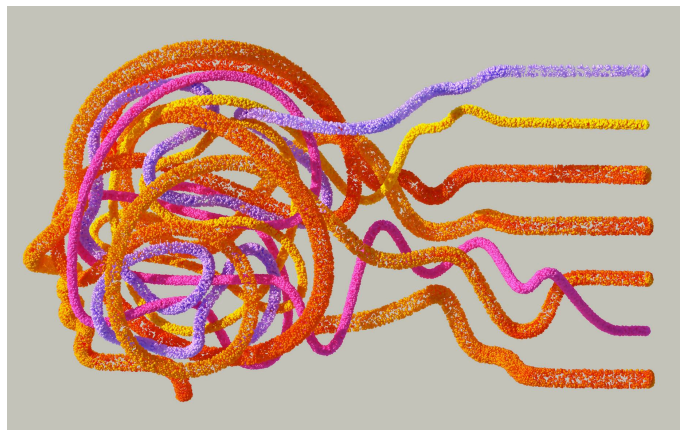


## ***Your Nervous System & Why It Matters***

When life feels overwhelming, your nervous system isn't just "in your head", it's in your whole body. For many Autistic and Neurodivergent folks and those with chronic conditions, nervous system dysregulation can show up as:

Sensory overload  
Anxiety or panic  
Shutdowns or burnouts  
Freeze responses (can't move or speak)  
Pain flares or fatigue after stress

Your nervous system is like your internal thermostat, it tries to keep you safe.  
But for many of us, it's been working overtime for years.



## **Co-occurring Conditions & Energy Drain**

Many neurodivergent folks live with co-occurring conditions - like Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome, POTS, fibromyalgia, ME/CFS, migraines, or sensory processing disorder - that drastically impact daily energy and functioning.

Common overlaps include:

- Chronic pain or joint instability
- Sleep disturbances or fatigue
- Sensory overload or emotional dysregulation
- Brain fog and difficulty concentrating
- Flare-ups linked to stress or overstimulation

**Helpful suggestion:** Understand that energy loss isn't always apparent. Believe people when they say they're exhausted - even if they "don't look sick."



## **Gentle Regulation Tools**

Regulation doesn't mean "calming down", it means returning to a place of felt *safety*, at your own pace.

Here are some small ways to support your nervous system:

- Weighted blankets or compression wear
- Noise-cancelling headphones or ear defenders
- Repetitive movements - knitting, stimming, rocking, colouring
- Breath work - try breathing, singing or sighing it out
- Grounding through your feet - press them into the carpet and wiggle your toes
- Temperature shifts - splash cold water, use heat packs, hold an ice cube
- Time with animals - pets can co-regulate with us

*“Regulation isn't a reward for 'good behaviour.' It's a human need,  
and you always deserve it.”*

What regulation tools work for you?

Let us know via email or comment on our socials - we would love to share them  
with the community!



## ***Supports That Can Help***

Everyone's needs are different, but here are some compassionate, realistic  
supports for pacing and self-preservation:

### **Low-Energy Tools**

Energy Planners or *Spoonie Trackers*

Meal Prepping when you have spoons, freeze some for later

Body doubling (a friend present while you do tasks)

Timers & chunking: Work for 5 mins, rest for 10

Visual or checklist supports: Because memory is a trickster of a companion  
sometimes!

### **Support Scripts**

Sometimes it's hard to say no, cancel, or ask for space. Try:

*“I'd love to join, but I'm out of spoons today. Can we chat later?”*

*“I want to come, but I may need to leave early or take breaks.”*

It's not rude to have boundaries, it's how we last.



## ***Words to Live By***

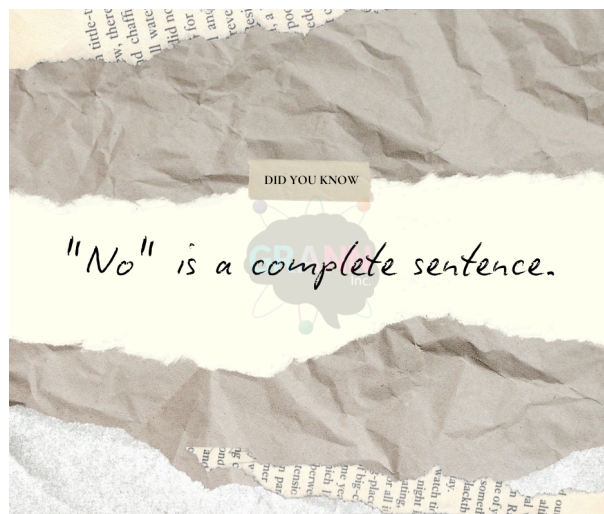
Try posting these affirmations somewhere visible this week:

*“My energy is valid, even when it’s low.”*

*“I don’t have to explain my needs to deserve support.”*

*“Rest is productive in a world that tries to burn us out.”*

*“It’s okay to do things at my own pace.”*



## ***Community Connection Corner***

### **Online Low-Energy Hangout:**

We’re planning to restart our no-pressure online body-doubling sessions soon - where cameras can be off, fidgeting is encouraged, and chat about your passions is welcome.

## **Stay tuned!**

Let's remind each other we're not alone.

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*Are you a RAD (Regional Australian Disabled) Artist?*

*Did you know that RAD artists  
are the lowest paid out of all  
artists in Australia?*

*Want to be part of a  
collective action to improve the  
payment and representation of  
and services for RAD artists?*



*We are looking for Neurodivergent, D/deaf & Disabled artists  
from across regional and remote Australia to be part of our  
Tshirt Drive on October 23, National Giving Day to the Arts.*

*Artists selected to be part of the drive will be paid  
\$10 for each tshirt sold with their artwork on it*

*Express your interest and/or submit a design  
[www.fb.me/rockabilby](http://www.fb.me/rockabilby)*

## Rockabilby & Neurokin Events- Supporting RAD Artists

Are you a RAD (Regional Australian Disabled) Artist?

Did you know that RAD artists are the lowest paid people in the Australian creative industries?

Want to be part of a collective action to improve the payment and representation of and services for RAD artists?

Rockabilby & Neurokin Events are looking for Neurodivergent, D/deaf and Disabled artists from across regional and remote Australia to be part of our Tshirt Drive on October 23, National Giving Day to the Arts.

We won't let RAD artists die from exposure!

Featured artists will be paid \$10 per tshirt sold with their design on it.

Express your interest & submit a design (they don't have to relate to disability)

**<https://forms.gle/Wcd4enEdL9sMQTsXA>**

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Heart of Agnes Community Association  
*Community Feast FREE MOTHER'S DAY BREAKFAST is back THIS  
SUNDAY!*

***CAN YOU HELP THIS SUNDAY?? VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!!***  
*If you can lend a hand for an hour, please shout out.*

Bring Mum & the whole family for an epic FREE brekkie on **Sunday, 11 May**  
at **Captain Creek Sport & Rec Club.**

Kickin off at 8am with all grills firin' till the food's gone.  
**Everyone is invited!**



Heart of Agnes Community Association Inc.  
*Community Spirit in Action!*



community  
FEAST

**FREE**  
**MOTHERS DAY  
BREAKFAST**  
**@ the Creek!**

*Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> May*  
*8am-11am*

**Captain Creek Sport & Rec**  
**111 Murphy Rd**



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**Proudly supported by:**



Captain Creek Sport & Rec Community Club



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'Mother's Day Community Feast' is proudly supported  
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## Gladstone Region Autistic & Neurodivergent Network Inc.

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