

Understanding and Overcoming Autistic Burnout

1. Acknowledge Your State

- Reflect on your current energy levels and symptoms.
- Understand that burnout is not a failure but a sign of prolonged struggle.

2. Identify Stressors

- List what drains you, from environmental factors to personal obligations.

3. Prioritize Rest

- Find moments to rest and recharge. Remember, rest is essential, not a luxury.

4. Simplify Tasks

- Reduce stress by eliminating non-essential tasks and simplifying routines.

5. Seek Positive Experiences

- Identify activities that restore you, known as 'Glimmers', and make time for them.

6. Create a Sustainable Life

- Adjust your life to prevent future burnout by balancing energy-draining and restoring activities.

7. Release Shame

- Let go of societal pressures and embrace your unique needs and strengths.

Remember, You Are Not Alone

Burnout is a common experience among Autistic individuals, but healing is possible with the right support and strategies. Build a life that nurtures rather than depletes you.

Reach out for support when needed. You are not alone in this journey.

Escaping the Inferno: A Guide to Emerging from Autistic Burnout

Autistic burnout is not a moral failing. It is not a sign of weakness. It is the natural, inevitable consequence of existing in a world that was not built for you. If you are here, reading this, then you are likely exhausted- physically, mentally, emotionally. You may feel lost, overwhelmed, or trapped in a cycle that seems impossible to break. But let me tell you this: escape is possible. Balancing your wellbeing is possible. And no, it will not be immediate, nor will it be easy. But step by step, with knowledge, understanding, and self-compassion, you can build a life that does not break you.

1. Take Stock of your energy sources

Before you can move forward, you must first understand where you are. How bad is it? Burnout is not a switch flipped overnight, it is a slow erosion, the gradual depletion of your reserves. Take a moment to assess your current state. On a scale of 0 to 10- where 0 is your best self and 10 is the depths of exhaustion- where do you stand?

Struggling to quantify it? That's natural. Consider keeping a record: a list of symptoms, a journal entry, or a voice note. Observe yourself without judgment. Acknowledge the weight of what you carry. Burnout is not weakness. It is not failure. It is evidence that you have been fighting too hard for too long in a world that demands too much. A world that is not built for you.

2. Identify the Sources of the Fire

What is draining you? Be honest, be relentless. Write it down, record it, map it out. Perhaps it is the ever-present background noise of your environment, the fluorescent lights, the ceaseless chatter, the hum of too many conversations or whitegoods at once. Perhaps it is the weight of obligations, the crushing expectation to perform, to mask, to engage in a way that does not come naturally.

These stressors do not exist in isolation. They compound. The meeting at work, the unanswered emails, the group chat that will not stop pinging, the unwashed dishes, the unread messages, each one a stone in your pocket, dragging you further into exhaustion. And here's the truth: just because something did not bother you before does not mean it is not breaking you now. Burnout is cumulative. The baseline has shifted. Recognize that. Accept it.

3. Find Breathing Room- However You Can

The instinct will be to say, "I can't take a break. There's too much to do." And I will tell you this: you must. Rest is not a luxury; it is a necessity. It does not need to be earned. It is the only way out.

Can you take time off work? Do it. Can you delegate tasks? Do it.

Can you carve out ten minutes, just ten (which may seem demanding for some), to sit in silence and simply exist? Then do it. If your survival depends on pushing through, then do so. But take any moment of respite you can grasp.

Burnout will not resolve if you continue running on empty.

4. Reduce the Load, One Stone at a Time

Look at your list of stressors. What can be removed? What can be minimized?

Start with the easy wins: noise cancelling headphones for noise, sunglasses for harsh light, ready-made meals instead of elaborate cooking. Give yourself permission to let things go. Do you truly need to respond to that email today? Do the floors need vacuuming right now? What would happen if you simply... let it wait?

This is not about giving up. This is about survival. Prioritize the battles that matter. The rest can wait.

5. Replenish With Glimmers

Not all things deplete you. Some things restore you. What are they? We can call these 'Glimmers'. A walk in the woods? A favourite book? A moment of silence, undisturbed? Identify them. Seek them out. If nothing feels enjoyable right now, that's okay. Keep resting. Balancing your wellbeing takes time.

If you are feeling 'nothing'- no joy, no reprieve- consider that you may not just be burned out but also depressed. This is not a failure; it is a sign that you may need additional support. Seek it.

6. Build a Life That Does Not Destroy You

This is the long game. It is about structuring your life in a way that does not lead you back here. The question is not 'how do I push through?' The question is 'how do I create a world in which I do not have to?'

Monitor your energy. Think of it in units- spoons (for fellow spoonies out there, or utilise the whole cutlery drawer), batteries, whatever metaphor works for you. Track what drains you, track what restores you. If every day ends in exhaustion, something must change.

There will be non-negotiables- work, family, obligations that cannot be escaped. But within those confines, adjustments can be made. Perhaps you need fewer social obligations. Perhaps you need a job that does not erode your soul. Perhaps you need to let go of the impossible standards you have set for yourself.

7. Release the Chains of Shame

The world has told you, time and time again, that you are 'too sensitive', 'too rigid', 'too much'. You have been made to believe that the problem is 'you'. That if you just tried harder, just fit in better, just 'managed', then you would be fine.

But the truth is this: you have done enough. You have 'always' done enough. The world was not built for you, and yet you have survived within it. That is no small feat.

It is time to let go of shame. You do not have to match any neuronormative standard. You do not have to 'prove' anything. You are allowed to meet your own needs. You are allowed to exist as you are.

You Are Not Alone

Burnout is not failure. Burnout is not a personal flaw. It is the price extracted from autistic individuals who have spent a lifetime adapting to a world that refuses to adapt to them. But you do not have to remain here. Step by step, you can find your way back. You can build a life that does not deplete you. You can reclaim yourself.

And most importantly, you do not have to do it alone.

