

Module 29

Burnout

Flourish



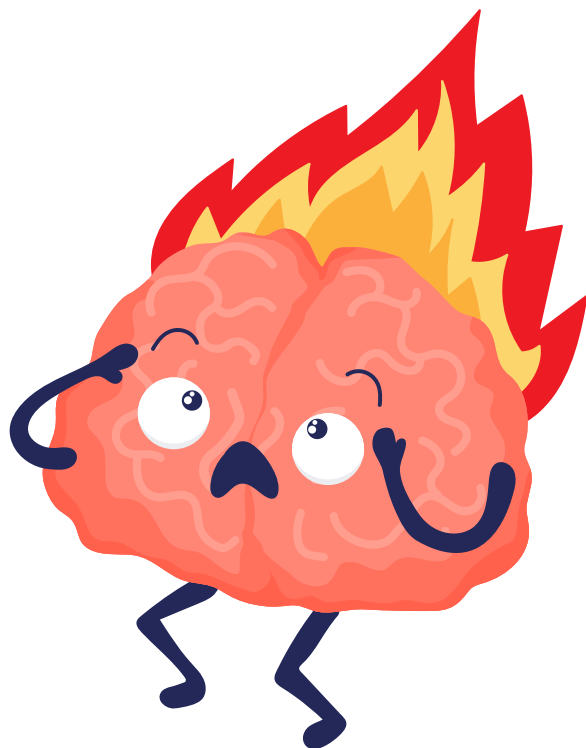
ADHD and Burnout

🔥 Burnout is a state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion. It manifests differently in neurodivergent people.

Burnout is a consequence of trying to function in an environment or situation designed for neurotypical individuals without accommodations.

It is a consequence of chronic stress, causing disturbance to physical (autonomic nervous system) and mental facilities.

Dora M. Raymaker, expert and researcher on autistic burnout, defines autistic burnout as "... a state of physical and mental fatigue, heightened stress, and diminished capacity to manage life skills, sensory input, and/or social interactions, which comes from years of being severely overtaxed by the strain of trying to live up to demands that are out of sync with our needs".



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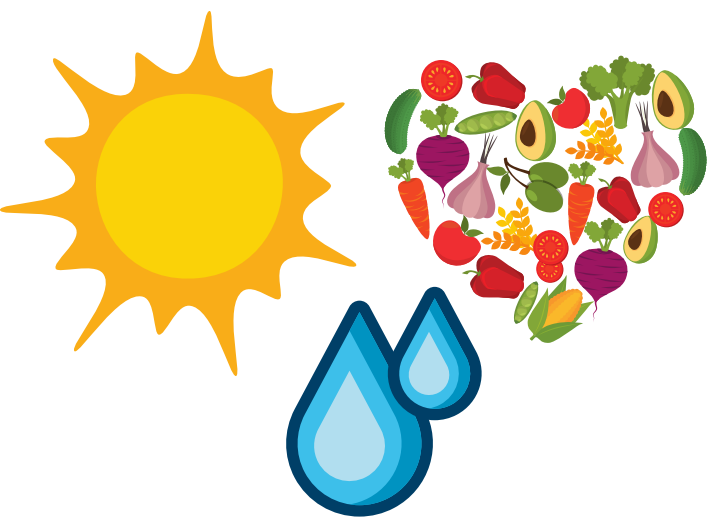
To truly understand burnout, we need to go back to the beginning and look at how we treat adhd children.

From an early on, girls with ADHD are frequently instructed to conceal their emotions, dissociate from their physical selves, and adhere to the norms of a neurotypical society. As a result, they tend to create coping mechanisms, such as masking their true selves, and behaviors, such as perfectionism, to avoid experiencing shame and self-criticism. Of course, these are the beginnings of the makings of burnout.

It is crucial to monitor stress in children with ADHD at an early stage to prevent it from turning into an unmanageable situation. Instead, we should provide the appropriate accommodations and avoid imposing typical behavioral expectations or pushing them beyond their comfort level.

Just like each plant needs special instructions and care, so do our neurodivergent children.

Optimally, as parents, teachers, and others in charge of their well-being, we would watch for signs of distress and protect them rather than encourage masking.



Nourished with: Emotional Attunement

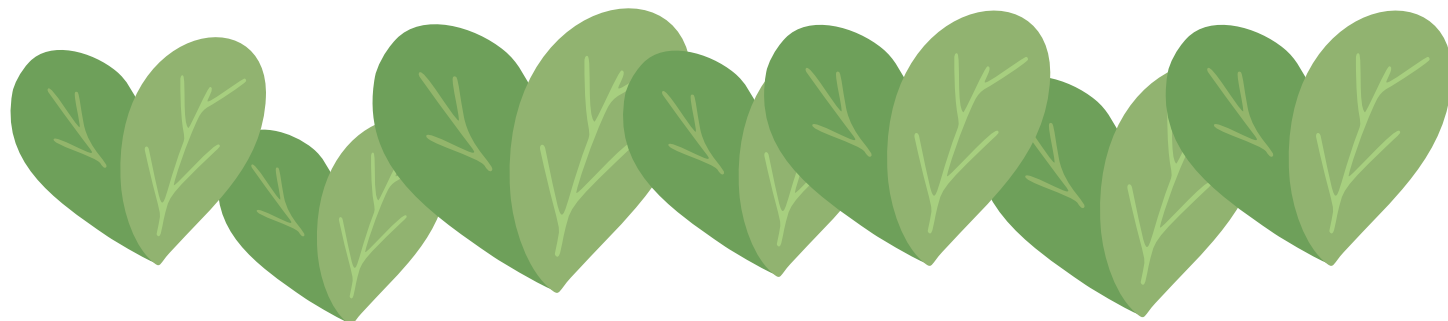
**- Masking can lead to
burnout**

**,Acceptance can lead to
self-determination,
empowerment, and
innovation.**



**The right level of stress
Understanding of their differences
Accommodations for their needs
Friends that fit them
The skills to understand their feelings
and express them**

What ADHD GIRLS NEED



ADHD and Burnout

Understanding and Managing Burnout in Neurodiverse Children

Signs of Burnout in Children:

1. Meltdowns: Frequent emotional outbursts due to an overflow of emotions or sensory input.
2. Increased Reactivity: Intense reactions to stimuli or changes they once handled easily.
3. Regression: A step back in behaviors or skills, like struggling with tasks they once mastered.
4. Physiological Responses: Manifestations like shutdown, numbing, disconnection, or dissociation.
5. Sympathetic State Activation: Fight or flight responses indicating feelings of threat or overwhelm.

Recognizing these signs allows caregivers to adjust the child's environment, reduce expectations, and provide the necessary support.

Strategies to Manage and Reduce Burnout:

1. Rest and Recovery:

- Sensory Rest: Provide quiet or alternative spaces or noise-canceling headphones.
- Emotional Rest: Allow expression of feelings without judgment.
- Physical Rest: Ensure adequate sleep and relaxation.

Why it helps: Rest helps the child reset and recover, reducing the risk of burnout.

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2. Decreased Expectations:

- Reduce academic pressures.
- Offer flexibility in routines.
- Understand their current participation limits.

Why it helps: Reducing demands prevents overwhelm and allows the child to operate within their comfort zone.

3. Environmental Accommodations:

- Create sensory-friendly spaces.
- Use visual schedules for predictability.
- Minimize exposure to triggers.

Why it helps: A tailored environment minimizes stressors, making coping easier for the child.

4. Communication: Keep open lines with teachers, therapists, family, and peers.

Why it helps: Understanding and collaboration from all parties ensure consistent support.

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5. Therapeutic Interventions: Engage in therapies to process feelings and develop coping strategies.

Why it helps: Professional guidance can equip the child with tools to manage their emotions.

6. Routine and Structure: Maintain a balance of flexibility and predictability.

Why it helps: Predictable routines reduce anxiety and provide a sense of security.

7. Co-regulation: Be calming, helping the child navigate their emotions.

Why it helps: Emotional support and understanding can prevent emotional escalation.

8. Educate and Advocate: Promote understanding of neurodiversity and advocate for the child's needs.

Why it helps: Awareness ensures the child receives the necessary accommodations and support.

9. Value and Affirmation: Celebrate the child's strengths and provide continuous affirmation.

Why it helps: Positive reinforcement boosts the child's self-esteem and resilience.

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Co-regulation Defined: Co-regulation refers to the process where one person helps another person regulate their emotional state. It's a dynamic interaction between the caregiver (or another supportive individual) and the child, where the caregiver provides external support to help the child return to a calm and regulated state. This is especially important in early childhood when children are still developing their internal self-regulation skills, but it remains relevant throughout life, especially for individuals who might struggle with self-regulation due to neurodiversity or other factors.

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Significance of Co-regulation in Managing Burnout:

- **Emotional Safety:** Co-regulation provides a sense of emotional safety. When a child is overwhelmed, the presence of a trusted adult who can remain calm and offer support can be grounding.
- **Skill Development:** Consistent co-regulation can help children develop self-regulation skills over time. Through modeling and experience, they learn how to manage their emotions and responses.
- **Reduction of Stress:** Immediate co-regulation can help reduce the physiological stress response. Helping the child calm down faster reduces the potential negative impacts of prolonged stress on the body and mind.
- **Strengthening Relationships:** Co-regulation fosters a deeper bond between the child and the caregiver. It builds trust, as the child knows they can rely on the caregiver for support during challenging times.
- **Understanding Triggers:** Through the process of co-regulation, caregivers can often identify specific triggers that lead to dysregulation. This knowledge can be used to make proactive environmental or routine changes to prevent future overwhelm.
- **Promotes Recovery:** For children experiencing burnout, co-regulation can be a vital part of their recovery process. It ensures they don't remain in a heightened state of stress, allowing them to rest and recover more effectively.

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Significance of Co-regulation in Managing Burnout:

- For neurodiverse children, who might experience the world more intensely or differently, having supportive figures who can co-regulate with them is invaluable.
- Understanding your own emotions is crucial in supporting your child's emotional regulation.
- Utilizing resources such as the emotions wheel, timer check-ins, and body scans can be incredibly beneficial. Identifying and labeling your emotions and becoming familiar with your stress levels can contribute to your ability to recognize and manage your emotions.

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Acceptance

Why is acceptance crucial for neurodiverse children to decrease masking?

- **Reduction of Masking:** At its core, acceptance reduces the need for neurodiverse individuals to "mask" or hide their neurodivergent traits. Masking can be mentally and emotionally exhausting. When individuals feel accepted, they are more likely to be their authentic selves, decreasing the stress and fatigue associated with constant masking.
- **Emotional Relief:** Acceptance provides emotional relief. Knowing that they are understood and accepted for who they are can alleviate feelings of being "different" or "out of place." This emotional validation can be deeply comforting.
- **Empowerment and Self-Esteem:** Acceptance empowers neurodiverse children. It boosts their self-esteem, allowing them to embrace their neurodiversity as a part of their identity rather than seeing it as a deficit.

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Symptoms of Burnout in Adults

There isn't much research on burnout in ADHD, and only a little more on autism, so we will extrapolate from what is known about autism. Anecdotal evidence suggests that ADHD burnout is similar.

Symptoms include:

- Exhaustion
- Heightened autistic or ADHD traits
- Withdrawal
- Diminished functioning

While neurodivergent burnout shares similarities with occupational burnout, they are distinct phenomena.

Women with ADHD who are experiencing burnout might:

- Be more sensitive to environmental sensory cues
- Prefer solitude over socializing
- Find that their Rejection Sensitive Dysphoria (RSD) worsens (burnout seems to amplify sensitivities)
- Struggle more with focus and attention, especially in bustling work environments
- Forget commitments more frequently, leading to more apologies

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Burnout versus Depression

Depression is a mood disorder characterized by persistent sadness, hopelessness, sleep disruption, and other symptoms. If depressed, socializing might be recommended.

On the other hand, ADHD burnout often results from environmental stressors exceeding one's capacity. It's marked by profound physical and mental exhaustion due to an overloaded nervous system.

Exhaustion is an intense feeling of tiredness, possibly accompanied by physical symptoms like muscle weakness.

Advice given if you are misdiagnosed by a professional as depressed may not be helpful. For example, if you're experiencing burnout, being encouraged to socialize might not be beneficial.

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Causes of Burnout

Risk Factors for Autistic/ADHD Burnout include:

- "Masking" neurodivergent traits
- Undergoing stressful life events
- Alexithymia
- Facing stigma and discrimination due to being neurodivergent

Sensory overloads and challenging social interactions can be constant for neurodivergent women. Some describe both chronic and acute episodes of burnout, with shorter ones leading eventually building up from sensory overloads and social interactions. Many report the need to distance themselves from others and avoid environments that aren't friendly to them.

To combat burnout:

- Build your ability to recognize stress
- Practice unmasking
- Advocate for oneself

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Preventing Burnout

Strategies include:

Self-care: Engage in activities promoting physical and emotional well-being, like exercise, meditation, and therapy.

Energy Management: Understand and manage physical, emotional, and cognitive energy throughout the day. This includes:

- Recognizing energy drains and peaks
- Prioritizing tasks
- Taking scheduled breaks
- Managing sensory input
- Setting boundaries
- Practicing self-awareness and self-advocacy
- Engaging in regular physical activity
- Prioritizing sleep hygiene
- Maintaining a balanced diet
- Practicing mindfulness and relaxation techniques
- Incorporating hormonal cycle awareness



energy management

ADHD and Burnout

Timer Check-ins and Self-accommodation are also essential. These involve:

- Regular reflection and task adjustments
- Taking breaks when needed
- Practicing body scans for mindfulness
- Adjusting one's environment for comfort
- Using tools like fidget toys or weighted blankets
- Setting boundaries for energy management

Remember to:

- Understand personal triggers
- Recognize activities or situations that are particularly draining or energizing.
- Be aware of hormonal cycles and their impact on energy and mood

Engaging in special interests can be a crucial recovery tool from burnout and can function as an energy management strategy.

Accommodations include:

- Self-accommodation and workplace accommodations
- Making environmental or situational changes to better suit individual needs

Advocacy involves:

- Speaking up for oneself and others to promote understanding and acceptance of neurodivergent individuals

Building Support Networks and maintaining a Work-life Balance are also crucial for preventing burnout.

ADHD and Burnout

Healing from Neurodivergent Burnout

Burnout is more than just feeling tired; it's a deep-rooted condition that affects the nervous system, often stemming from chronic stress. It's serious. Unmasking is a key to healing.

1. Prioritize Stimming:

- Stimming is essential for neurodivergent individuals. It helps regulate the nervous system and provides relief.
- Suppressing this natural behavior can be harmful. Embrace stimming as a way to heal and protect against burnout.

2. Rest is Essential:

- Healing from burnout requires deep and extensive rest.
- If work is demanding, it's crucial to reduce those demands. Focus only on essential tasks and give your brain the break it needs.

3. Connect with Like-minded Individuals:

- If you seek company during your healing process, connect with fellow neurodivergent individuals.
- Their understanding and shared experiences can provide comfort during challenging times.



ADHD and Burnout

Healing from Neurodivergent Burnout

1. Reflect on the Causes:

- Understand what led to your burnout. Recognize the triggers and patterns.
- This reflection is essential to prevent future episodes and to build resilience.

2. Build a Support Network:

- Having a support system is invaluable during the healing process.
- Connect with those who offer genuine understanding, especially fellow neurodivergent individuals.

3. Tread Lightly Back into the World:

- As you venture back into daily routines, do so with caution. A gradual return can help prevent a relapse into burnout.

4. Engage in Joyful Activities:

- If you're able to, engage in activities that are special interests or bring you joy. These can be therapeutic and rejuvenating during the healing process.

