

ADHD Burnout: What's Really Behind It

Self-Help Worksheets for Women with ADHD

PART 1: Understanding ADHD Burnout – FACT SHEET

Burnout in ADHD isn't laziness or failure — it's a natural result of chronic stress, sensory overload, and constant internal and external pressure. Below are common contributors:

- 1 Performance Pressure:** Trying to appear "put together" drains mental energy.
- 2 Overworking:** Extra effort to "keep up" often leads to exhaustion.
- 3 Guilt About Rest:** Rest can feel undeserved after years of stigma
- 4 Time and Energy Blindness:** Misjudging limits causes overwhelm.
- 5 People-Pleasing:** Saying yes too often to avoid disappointing others.
- 6 Masking:** Hiding symptoms to appear neurotypical increases stress.
- 7 Environmental Stress:** Noise, light, chaos — it all adds up.
- 8 Sensory Fatigue:** Chronic sensory input can be mentally draining.

 Burnout is the result of chronic nervous system stress, and discrimination not lack of motivation.

ADHD Burnout Recovery Checklist:

Small Changes, Big Impact

Reduce the Load

Do a “commitment audit” — list everything on your plate (work, home, emotional labor)

Ask: *What can I drop, delay, or delegate right now?*

Say **no** to new things — even exciting ones. Your energy is limited.

Build in Micro-Recovery Moments

Take short breaks (5-minute walk, sit in your car, deep breaths)

Lower your standards takeout is fine, mess is okay, simple is enough

Say No to Draining Social Time

Skip social events that feel heavy

Alone time is valid. Burnout ≠ depression

Externalize Everything

Write things down don't rely on memory

Set alarms, timers, or sticky notes for tasks

Ask people to repeat things

Use visual or audio cues to switch tasks

Protect Your Sleep

Say no to late-night commitments

Put your phone in another room early

Try a 10-minute wind-down (lights off, music, quiet time)

Soothe Your Nervous System

- Use cold (ice pack, washcloth) on neck or wrists
- Hold a calming object — fidget, stone, plush
- Wrap up in a soft blanket or hoodie
- Listen to gentle music, white noise, or nature sounds

Keep Nourishment Easy

- Eat something small and simple — toast, fruit, snack plate
- Use a timer to remind you to eat and hydrate
- Keep snacks + water visible and within reach
- Let “good enough” meals be enough

Simplify Your Environment

- Clear one small surface
- Use soft lighting instead of bright overhead lights
- Put away just 3 things — and stop there
- Shut the door to overwhelming spaces

Ask for Low-Energy Help

- Text a friend: “I’m low — can I vent for a sec?”
- Ask someone to take one small task off your list
- Let someone know you’re in burnout
- Use voice notes or emojis if texting feels too hard

Reset Your Inputs

- Mute or unfollow accounts that add pressure
- Turn off non-urgent notifications
- Swap doomscrolling for something soothing
- Move your phone away if it’s draining your focus

Talk Back to the “I Can’t Slow Down” Voice

- Write down one fear-based thought (e.g., “If I rest, I’ll fall behind”)
- Reframe it: *“If I don’t rest, I’ll crash harder later.”*
- Read this aloud when you feel the urge to override your limits

One Change This Week

Pick one thing from the list to try to implement

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