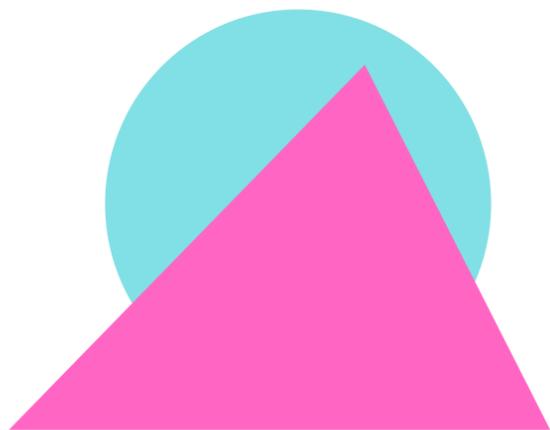


How to Avoid Burnout For Autistic People

Follow these steps!

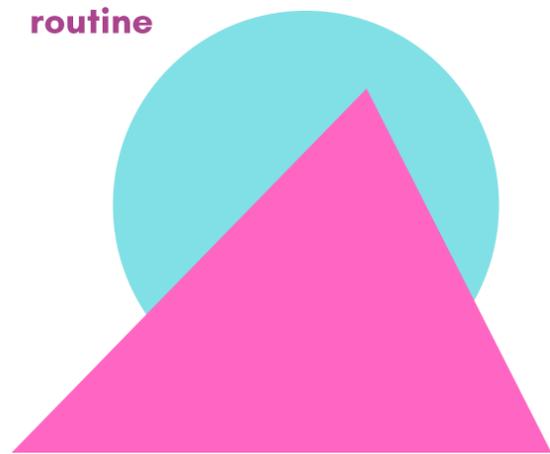


DECREASE ENERGY OUTPUT

Minimise social interactions, stressful environments, exposure to too much sensory input and new things, change or unexpected situations. Avoid the grocery store or crowded places when burnt out

Reduce or delay chores and anything non-critical. Delegate these to someone else with more spoons

Go back to the basics of your routine



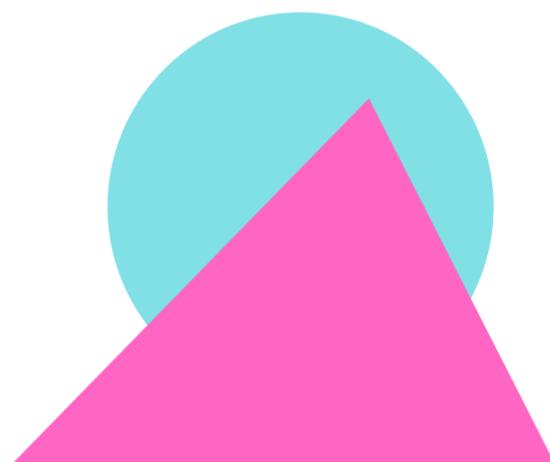
STIMMING!

Stimming helps us to process and self-regulate emotions

Rock, flap, tap, stretch, use stim toys. Soft fabrics or weighted blankets, watch your favourite tv show or listen to favourite song, puzzles, sorting things, lining things up and arranging things, singing, echolalia, reading, gaming etc.

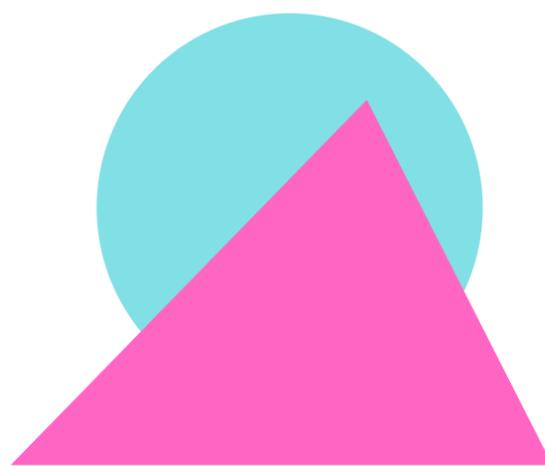
SLEEP OR REST

Sleep and rest as much as you can. We often need more sleep than Neurotypical people especially when in burnout. Rest in a quiet dark room.



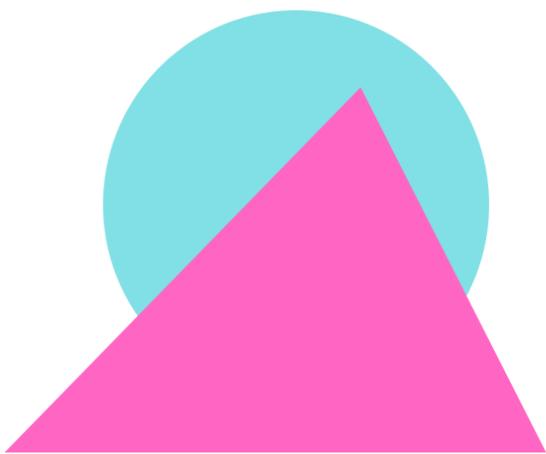
SENSORY STIMULI

Reduce your Sensory Load
Eg: time alone, sunglasses, dark room, earplugs/noise cancelling earphones, comfortable clothes, stick to safe foods, reduce exposure to noise and smells



INTENSE INTERESTS

Spending time focusing on interests can help us self-regulate and recharge



EXECUTIVE FUNCTION

Increase support from others and executive functioning supports.

In burnout executive functioning such as memory, concentration, planning and motivation are decreased.

Take the load off your executive functioning by outsourcing to calendars, reminders on iphone, diaries, whiteboards, automated bills etc. and use other people's executive functioning

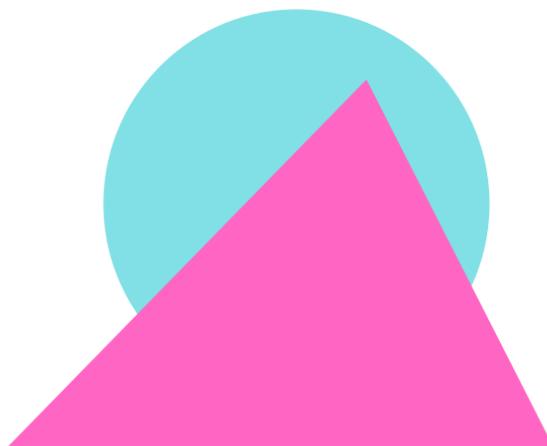
Focus on one thing at a time and use monolithic thinking and hyperfocus. Juggling multiple demands can increase burnout in autistic people

Delay non-critical tasks and Delegate to support people

BASIC NEEDS

Stay hydrated

Try to eat, stick to safe foods, and have easy to prepare or ready to eat foods in the pantry



PREVENTION

An Autistic person needs a lifestyle that does not lead to burnout and adequate supports as prevention are essential.

Consider your social load of a regular week, your school or work load, sensory load, and executive functioning load for burnout prevention.

Decrease Masking where possible and safe

For Supporters + Clinicians

Strategies such as behavioural activation (increasing activity levels) while an Autistic person is in acute burnout can actually be unhelpful and increase burnout due to placing increased load on their nervous system and sensory differences

Behavioural activation can be used gradually AFTER burnout passes. Whereas for neurotypical people it is often useful immediately when depressed.

Autistic people are more prone to burnout due to increased sensitivity of their nervous system to the environment and hyper-connected brain.

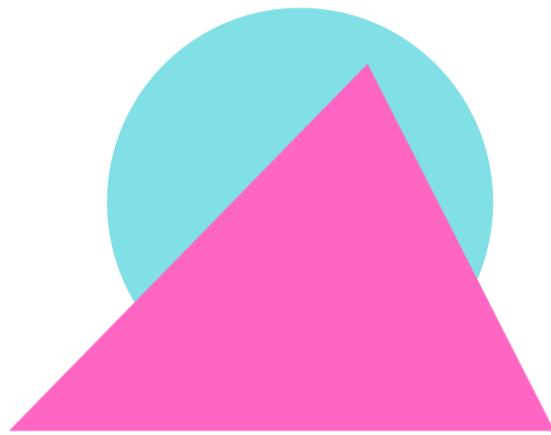
People who are autistic parents often need increased support to prevent burnout due to increased loads of the above.

Monique Mitchelson
Clinical Psychologist

The Neurodivergent Woman Podcast
Spotify and Apple

SIGNS OF AUTISTIC BURNOUT

- Exhaustion not relieved by rest or sleep
- Withdrawal
- Increased Mutism
- Increased time spent on interests or loss of interest in regular interests
- Lack of basic needs being met eg: not drinking water or eating
- Increased Sensitivity to sensory stimulus
- Worsening Executive Function
- Decreased ability to mask
- Increased irritability
- Increased Meltdowns or Shutdowns
- Increased demand avoidance
- Increased thoughts of self-harm
- Increased anxiety and somatic symptoms eg: headaches, stomach aches
- Immune system breakdown and health issues



Research on Autistic Burnout

"Autistic burnout appears to be a phenomenon distinct from occupational burnout or clinical depression. Better understanding autistic burnout could lead to ways to recognize, relieve, or prevent it, including highlighting the potential dangers of teaching autistic people to mask or camouflage their autistic traits, and including burnout education in suicide prevention programs. These findings highlight the need to reduce discrimination and stigma related to autism and disability."

Dora M. Raymaker, Alan R. Teo, Nicole A. Steckler, Brandy Lentz, Mirah Scharer, Austin Delos Santos, Steven K. Kapp, Morrigan Hunter, Andee Joyce, and Christina Nicolaidis. *Autism in Adulthood*. Jun 2020. 132-143. <http://doi.org/10.1089/aut.2019.0079>