

# Neurodiverse Burnout

Happens more often to individuals who mask their neurodivergence and do not have adequate support, accommodations, or breaks to manage their stress and sensory inputs.

NIH article quote



# Neurotypical vs Neurodivergent Burnout

Burnout is - a state “resulting from chronic environmental stress that has not been successfully managed. Characterized by a deterioration in energy, sleep, performance, memory and concentration, and even health — in the *11th Revision of the International Classification of Diseases* (ICD-11).

## Burnout is not stress

Burnout is on it's way to being considered a psychological condition -

- stress causes burnout in a very real way and
- both are considered detrimental to your overall physical and mental health
- stress is usually considered a short term issue, one that can be addressed with acute treatment
- burnout requires more intensive and systemic changes to address

## Neurotypical

- Often Caused by
  - Having a heavy workload and working long hours.
  - Struggling with work -life balance.
  - Working in a “helping profession” (IE nursing, teaching, or other direct care)
  - Feeling of having little or no control over work.
- Often Solved by
  - changes in workload
  - changes or shifts job roles
  - focusing on maintaining healthy balance between life and work stressors
  - stress management strategies to address acute stress and ensure it doesn't linger

## Neurodivergent

- Often caused by the same stressors as neurotypical individuals in addition to
  - sensory overload
  - social demands
  - changes in routine
- because of those additional stressors neurodivergent folks often have a different baseline of stress that they deal with on a daily basis
- burnout has been shown to take longer to “hit” or begin but also is more difficult to treat
- Burnout can often lead to
  - diminished ability to communicate effectively
  - increases in dysregulated emotions
  - inability to participate in social situations
  - inability to regulate sensory processing
  - difficulty maintaining executive functioning skills
- Prolonged and difficult to solve
  - needs to be addressed with supports
  - can not be managed with “rest and relaxation”



## Community Discussion: What helps your burnout? Working with your Team

- use your PTO - take ½ days or whole days sporadically in order to make sure you are getting rest
- change work schedule/place if possible (work from home, alternate schedules)
- Take time to disconnect completely from work
- Use the people that are on your team
  - “You are worthy of help and people want to help you”

SELF-CARE CHECK: Meds? ☞ Hydrated?

Eaten? 🍏 Bio break? Binder break?

Showered?

# Community Discussion

## Maintaining Relationships

- being honest and open about what you need from others
  - “Shame grows best in the dark and sharing burn out to people who you trust helps, especially for support.”
- Designate an Emotional Support Person - someone who can recognize symptoms and help to pull you out of those funks
- Body doubling - set up time to do unwanted tasks with someone else to make them easier
- Set up specific times or groups for check - ins
  - “I have a group chat on discord where we ask each other ‘did you take your meds? Have you eaten? Have you had water? Have you had a shower?’ and generally check in on each other and support each other”

# Community Discussion

## Caring for yourself

- sharing with other people - talking to folks
- go outside and touch grass
- do yoga or take another exercise class
- go outside for a mental health walk
- try to maintain some daily routines when we're off.
  - "I make myself get out of bed and eat and do a lot of things on that check -in list you mentioned, every day, even if I am having a scheduled lazy day. That helps me transition back to work more smoothly"
- Remember that your a person with a needs - if you wouldn't judge someone else for taking care of a basic need, don't judge yourself
  - "I give myself "grace period" for getting out of routine but make sure I reset after x days and if I don't then I contact my support network (whether a friend, family member, or therapist) for support to identify if I am ignoring a bigger issue (is there something I am suppressing and not facing or am I physically ill or do I just need assistance)"
  - "I can be even harder on myself when I'm burnt out so reminding myself to be nice to me even when I don't feel proud of me is so important. "
- take time to "brain dump" and get yourself in order everyday as part of a routine
- Journaling
  - "helps me dump all my emotions out where they don't seem so big and overwhelming."
- Journaling with ChatGPT or Bing
  - (CMU Faculty and Staff are not recorded due to a contract with CMU)
- Treat yourself
  - "Doing small nice things like facemasks or drinking tea etc, is important to remind myself that I'm worth it."

# Community Discussion

## Products and Services

- Local trauma informed yoga courses: <https://www.peaceoftime.org/events> -and-forms
- [Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction](#) class through UPMC
- YMCA- \$10 to swim in their pool and use that to reset your body
- <https://calmstrips.com> - physical strips with reminders to breathe or help regulate through sensory input
- [Parts Therapy](#)
- The Artist's Way book a few years ago and that got me writing morning pages every day. <https://www.amazon.com/Artists-Way-Spiritual-Higher-Creativity/dp/1585421472>
- [CMU Employee Assistance Program](#)
- Vibrant Pittsburgh - CMU has a contract with them and we can attend their lunch and Learns <https://vibrantpittsburgh.org/>
- Evolve Coaching Pittsburgh - <https://www.evolve-coaching.org/>