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

- 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 vs Neurodivergent Burnout

**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 $\frac{1}{2}$ 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 you are a person with 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

● Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction class through UPMC

● YMCA - $10 to swim in their pool and use that to reset your body

● https://calmstrip.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/