



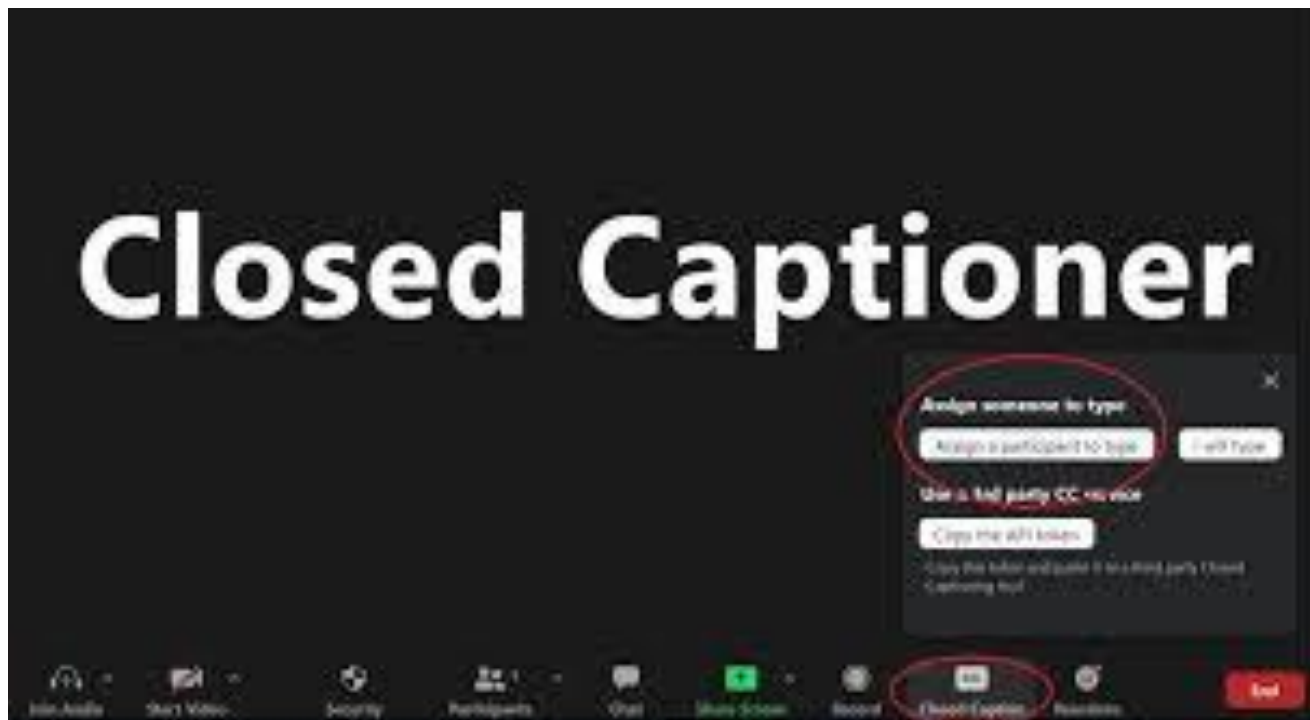
WASHINGTON
— AUTISM ALLIANCE —

Autistic Burnout vs Clinical Depression

Presented by:
Mash Makhlyagina - Neuro Support Services
Arzu Forough - Washington Autism Alliance



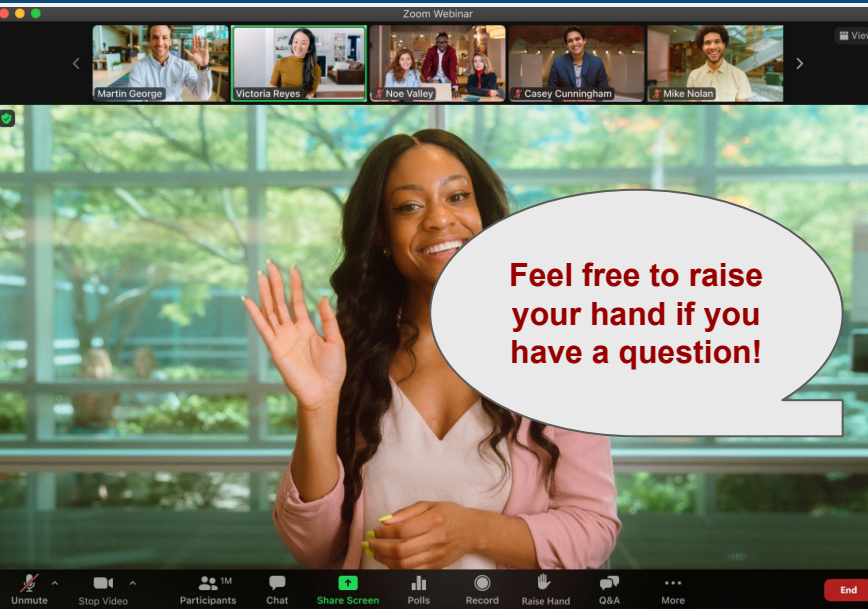
Accessibility



Welcome!



Parents Navigating A New Autism Diagnosis

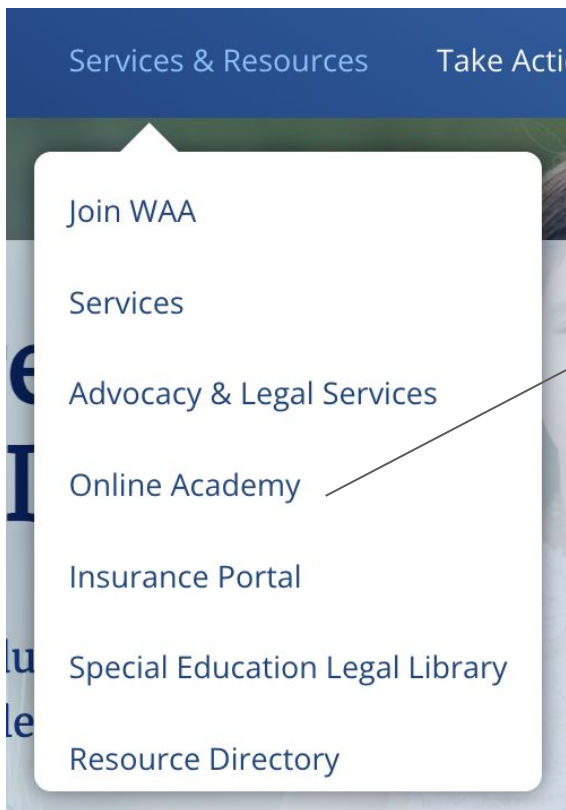


Before we get started

- Please change your name in Zoom to include your first name and preferred pronouns
- Please use the “raise hand” function under “reactions” and unmute yourself to ask a question

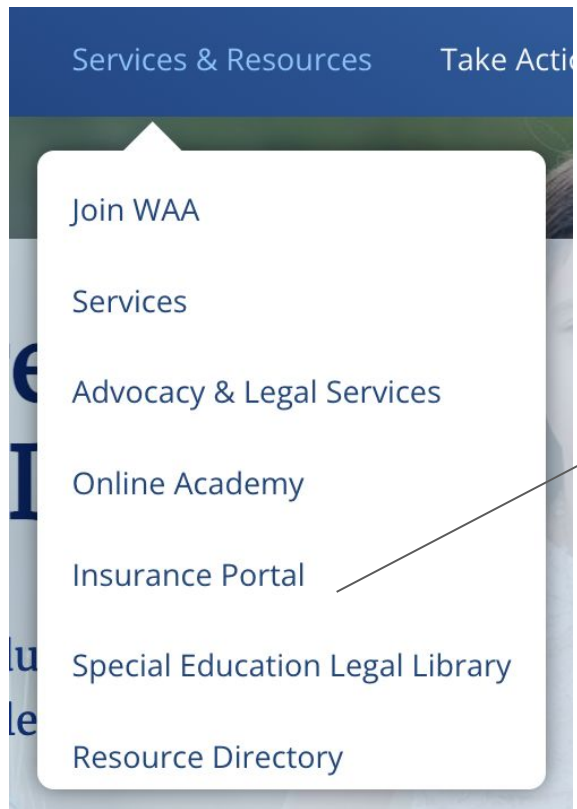
⇐ ZOOM Toolbar (or taskbar)

Self-Help Tools



12 JUN	12:00 pm - 1:00 pm UNDER THE DOUBLE RAINBOW – THE INTERSECTION OF AUTISM AND LGBTQIA+ Thursday, Zoom
17 JUL	12:00 pm - 1:00 pm DDA ELIGIBILITY & DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS ● Thursday, Zoom https://zoom.us (please download the app and check your internet connectivity)
14 AUG	12:00 pm - 1:00 pm HOW TO INCLUDE STUDENTS WITH COMPLEX SUPPORT NEEDS WITH A 1:1 PARAPROFESSIONALS ● Thursday, Zoom https://zoom.us (please download the app and check your internet connectivity)
13 SEP	9:00 am - 2:30 pm BLUEPRINTS TO SPECIAL EDUCATION (HOW TO BUILD EFFECTIVE SCHOOL SERVICES) ● Saturday, Zoom https://zoom.us (please download the app and check your internet connectivity)

Self-Help Tools



Private Insurance

You can find information on diagnoses and treatment, choosing providers, encouraging your employer to add Autism benefits, information on navigating your benefits and more.



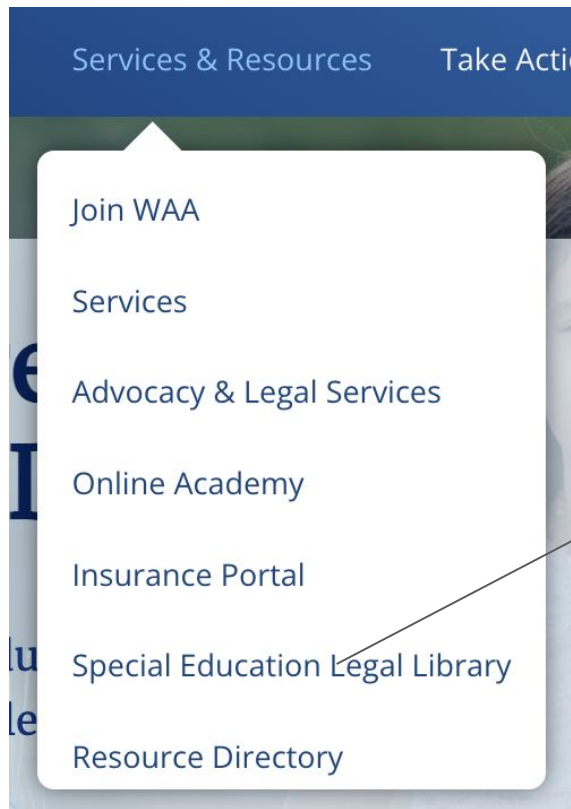
Medicaid

You can find information on navigating Medicaid diagnosis and treatment, medical necessity, working with insurance case managers, the Premium Payment Program and more.



Explore the articles on the sidebar for more information

Self-Help Tools



Special Education Law Library Articles

- ➔ Transition 18 – 21
- ➔ Hygiene
- ➔ Transportation
- ➔ Restraint / Isolation
- ➔ Related Services – OT, PT, Nursing
- ➔ Eligibility
- ➔ Procedural Safeguards - The Parental Rights and Responsibilities
- ➔ Parent Participation
- ➔ Language Access / ELL
- ➔ IEP Compliance
- ➔ Homeschooling
- ➔ General Information and/or Referrals
- ➔ Evaluation / Re – Evaluation
- ➔ Emotional / Behavioral Support
- ➔ District / School Transfers
- ➔ Dispute Resolution
- ➔ Discrimination / Civil Rights / Bullying
- ➔ Discipline / Removals
- ➔ Academic Failure / Regression
- ➔ ABA in Schools

Special Education Law Library Blueprints

- 📁 Blueprints to Special Education March 2024 Handouts
- 📁 Blueprints to Special Education Presentation March 2024



Self-Help Tools



Hover over each category to find subcategories

Directory Category Behavior Health / Mental Health

Search Listings Find Listing

[Directory](#) [View All Listings](#) [Add Listing](#)

ABA Board Certified
ABA (Applied Behavior Analysis) Board Certified (163)

Family Systems' Counseling
Family Systems' Counseling (27)

Inpatient Treatment Centers
Inpatient Treatment Centers (4)

Psychiatrists
Psychiatrists (22)

Psychotherapy/Counseling
Psychotherapy/Counseling (656)

Search Providers by Category

Adult Programs
Adult Programs - Age 22 - lifespan (289)

Advocacy, Financial, & Legal
Advocacy, Financial & Legal (72)

Autism Diagnosis
Autism Diagnosis (105)

Behavior Health & Mental Health
Behavior Health / Mental Health (839)

Educational Programs
Educational Programs (171)

Health Services
Health Services (200)

Local Autism Organizations
Local Autism Organizations (11)

Military Family Resources
Military Family Resources (11)

Neurodevelopmental Therapies
Neurodevelopmental Therapies (184)

Other Local Organizations
Other Local Organizations (67)

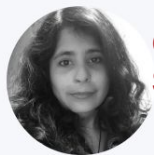
Recreation
Recreation (191)

Religious Resources
Religious Resources (5)

Services - Other
Services - Other (104)

Support Groups
Support Groups in your Community (92)

Need additional Help?



Crisis Stabilization

Miriam Reyes, MSc
Crisis Stabilization Navigator

▼ Read Bio

Ms. Reyes brings over 10 years of experience in conducting needs assessments and direct intervention for individuals with developmental delays such as Autism, SPD, Intellectual Disability and Speech Delays.

As a proud parent of a 2e son, Miriam first joined WAA as a client in 2017 and on staff in 2020 as our intake specialist. We welcome Ms. Reyes back to WAA as our Crisis Stabilization Navigator, specializing in supporting those at imminent risk of restrictive placement due to unmet complex support needs.



Special Education Coaching

Lisa Cushman MS Ed
Special Education Advocate

▼ Read Bio

Lisa has experience on both sides of the special education table. Her favorite role is being a mom to a young woman who lives on the autism spectrum. She has also worked as a general and special education teacher. Lisa is passionate about helping individuals and their loved ones advocate for their right to a Free Appropriate Public Education. Lisa holds a Masters degree in Curriculum Development and Instruction and a Bachelor degree in Education with emphasis on Special Education. She was formerly a teacher with a Washington public school district.



Multi-System Navigation

Keishawn "Bev" Crusing
Family Navigator

▼ Read Bio

Bev is the first point of contact for individuals and families in need of multi-system navigation to improve access to evidenced based healthcare services, effective services in schools, and supportive community based resources.



Resource navigation

Misha Trivedi, MS
Intake Screener

▼ Read Bio

Misha is the intake screener for WAA. She is the first point of contact and face of WAA for families and individuals seeking help to navigate through myriads of needs. Misha has over 10 years of experience at nonprofit and for-profit organizations. Misha first started with WAA in 2018 as a volunteer and on staff in 2023. She has worked in a few roles on various projects. She feels passionate about the mission of WAA and the help she is able to provide by being a part of a goal driven, compassionate team. She has an MS in Computer Engineering and a Masters in social communications and outreach science. She loves traveling, volunteering at her children's schools, playing board games with her kids and cooking for her family.

What to Expect From This Lunch and Learn

- Introductions
- Definition of autistic burnout
- Comparing autistic burnout vs. clinical depression
- Reviewing research on autistic burnout, depression, and risks
- Recognizing early warning signs
- Personal Stories
- What to do
- Getting help
- Q+A

Who Are We?

Arzu Forough

CEO and Founder of WAA

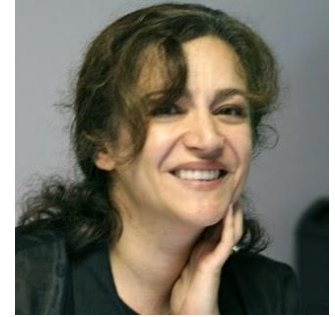
In 2007 she founded Washington Autism Alliance and developed the “Autism IEP supplement: Best Practice Guidelines for educating students with autism”. Her IEP supplement as well as guidelines for training teachers was legally adopted by the Washington State legislature in 2008 and became the requirement for all teachers working with learners with Autism Spectrum Disorders statewide.

Arzu introduced Shayan’s Law, Autism Insurance Parity to the Washington State legislature, petitioned the state Health technology Assessment of evidence based treatment of autism and ignited multiple legal actions that have clarified state and federal laws mandating insurance benefits for those with autism and other developmental disabilities.

Mash Makhlyagina

CEO of Neuro Support Services

Since 2011, Mash had been a special education teacher, admin, 504 coordinator, dean, and many other school-based roles in NY and WA working with autistic students ages 4-19. They have worked with over 1,000 families across the United States and DODEA. They now work as a Special Education Specialist and Advocate supporting teachers, teams, and families of autistic students.



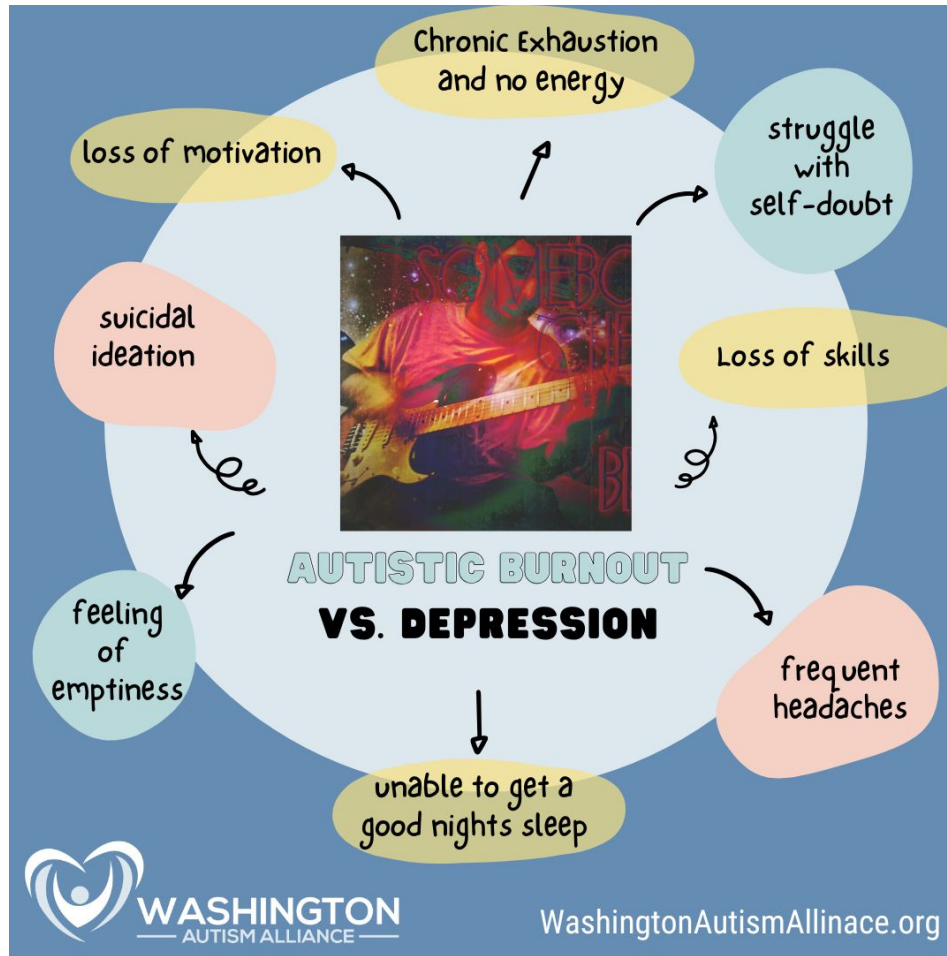
What is autistic burnout?

Raymaker et al., 2020, “Autistic burnout is a syndrome resulting from chronic life stress and a mismatch of expectations and abilities without adequate supports”

Core features:

- Chronic exhaustion (mental and/or physical)
- Loss of skills/functioning (can include regression)
- Increased sensory sensitivities
- Reduced tolerance for social interaction
- Emotional dysregulation

This is not just clinical depression or workplace burnout.



Put in chat: What comes to mind when you hear “autistic burnout?”

The Cycle of Autistic Burnout

Autistic person appears to be coping so demands are increased.

Prolonged exposure to stressors without adequate support is unsustainable.



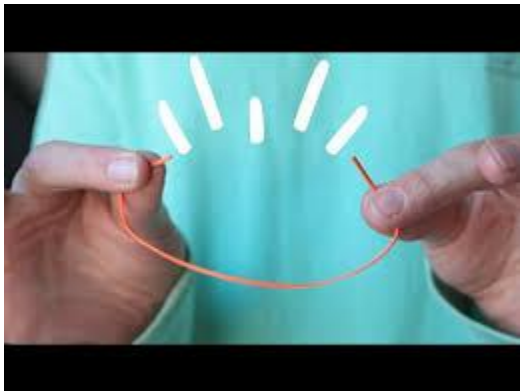
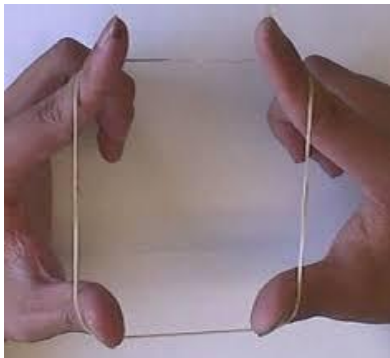
Energy and functioning slowly improve.

Demands are removed or reduced. Increase in soothing and regulating activities.

Courtesy of Dr. Alice Nicholls

Severe fatigue, loss of functioning.

Autistic Burnout is a “Stress-Induced Brain Injury”



When was autistic burnout first recognized?

2020 is the first time we have community-based participatory research with autistic adults

“Having All Your Internal Resources Exhausted Beyond Measure and Being Left with No Clean-Up Crew” Raymaker, D.M., et al. (2020). Autism, 24(4), 915-927.

Higgins et al. (2021)- Found increased masking and emotional labor predict burnout

Kronenberg et al. (2021)- pediatric and adolescent experiences include shutdowns, increased school refusal, regression of skills and developmental markers

Clinical Depression versus Autistic Burnout

In Raymarker's research, participants with comorbid depression were able to clearly describe the difference

"This isn't sadness. I just can't function anymore"

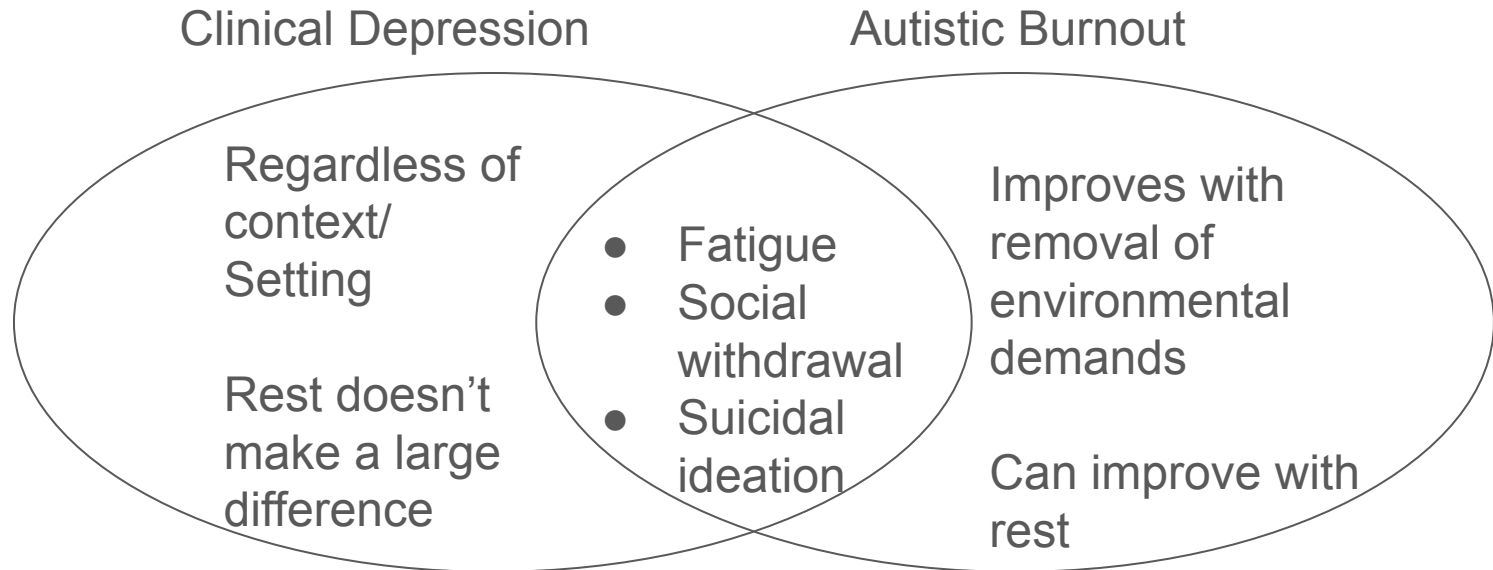
In children and adults: regression can include incontinence, baby talk

Courtesy of Literally
Ausome



Clinical Depression versus Autistic Burnout

Higgins et al. (2021)- Comparing burnout to depression and general distress



Autistic Burnout Specifically...

Mantzala et al.(2022) looked at the overlap between autistic burnout, depression, and anxiety in young adults

Found: differentiation in burnout-related loss of skills and increased autistic traits/behaviors

Autistic burnout often involved a perceived loss of identity, not just mood symptoms and was environment-sp



Suicidal Ideation is Different in Autistic Burnout

- In Raymaker et al. (2020), participants described SI as a desire to escape overwhelming demands. We see this echoed in Higgins et al. (2021).
- SI with autistic burnout can be very sudden onset versus how some depression trajectories can build toward it
- If someone has co-occurring OCD, limited research is suggesting that high-masking environments and folks who are high-masking could be at higher risk of autistic burnout due to cognitive load and emotional exhaustion from masking both
- Under-recognized in autistic populations such as people with intellectual disabilities, Down Syndrome, and autistic people who are nonspeaking

A Personal Story

Mash shares their experience with autistic burnout from 2023

Key features:

- Loss of verbal communication abilities
- Unable to make decisions, even small ones
- Unable to feed self
- Sudden SI and severe intrusive thoughts
- Uptick in OCD severity
- Multiple meltdowns a day
- Loss of ability to walk more than a few feet
- Loss of ability to drive
- Could not tolerate sensory input at same level
- Constantly on verge of tears
- Sleeping for 12+ hours a day



Some Gentle Reminders

- The length of a workday/week or school day/week is not based on researching what works best for allistic people—and definitely not for autistic people!
- It is not a failure to not be able to keep going with the same level of output as before
- It is normal to dislike having to embrace our limitations. We have so many passions, so much to give, want to do so much.



The Progression of Autistic Burnout (by Little Black Duck)

1. General Fatigue

Consistent mental and physical fatigue, general forgetfulness, everyday tasks become harder or more overwhelming.

2. Social Fatigue

Socialising is more tiring. It becomes harder to adapt to social environments and/or mask.

3. Cognitive Fatigue

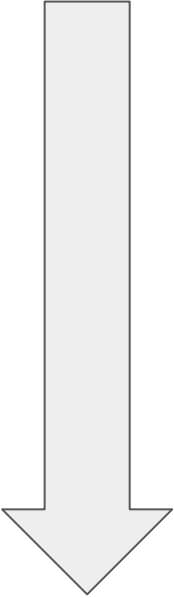
Increased difficulty with emotional regulation, task management and time management. There is increased brain fog.

4. Occupational Burnout

Occupational burnout is when states of fatigue persist for several months. This impacts on the person's ability to successfully complete daily tasks.

5. Continuation

Due to difficulties in body mapping, social expectations, recognising internal states, rejection sensitivity, masking, the autistic person persists.



The Progression of Autistic Burnout (by Little Black Duck)

6. Autonomic Distress

The body goes into a flight/fight reaction. There is an increase in anxiety, feeling overwhelmed, cognitive confusion, meltdowns, shutdowns, avoidance, and anger.

7. Autistic Burnout

A state of allostatic overload. Often the autistic person continues to push through this state until they struggle to do even simple tasks and activities.

8. Degradation

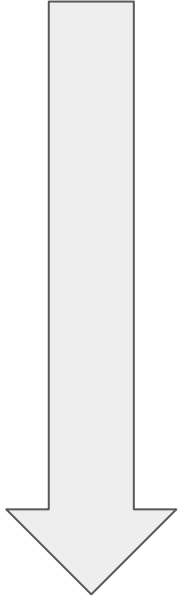
Persistent states of autonomic distress are unsustainable. Additional physical and/or psychological symptoms begin to manifest as well as increased difficulties in managing sensory input.

9. Cognitive Shutdown

Access to upper brain functions, like language, executive network, body schema and mapping, and motor functions begins to deteriorate.

10. Autistic Catatonia

When left unaddressed the signals from the upper brain become slower or interrupted. The ability to use speech, transition and manage motor functions slows, stops, and/or becomes inconsistent. This leads to mild forms of autistic catatonia.



What helps with autistic burnout?

Accommodations such as being able to work from home, take breaks, finding time to destimulate your nervous system	Being able to be validated for unmasked behavior (as long as safe)	Getting sufficient sleep
Getting proper sensory stimulation	Decreasing demands and decisions	Schedule recovery time
Visual forms of communication (text to speech, AAC apps, communication cards)	Time in nature or with pets/animals can help those who find that soothing	Exploring medication with medical providers

Learning Your Warning Signs

Signs To Look For:

- Fatigue, irritability, shutdowns, sensory overload
- Increased meltdowns, social withdrawal
- Loss of language or motor skills
- Decreased executive functioning or independence



The goal shouldn't be to return to the same quantity or intensity of activity. That is what exhausted the nervous system in the first place:

The goal is to find out what is your optimal window of functioning and to support yourself in that window.

Catatonia

“Catatonia in varying degrees can occur in autistic children and adults. Studies suggest that between 12-18% of autistic people may present with varying levels of catatonia”

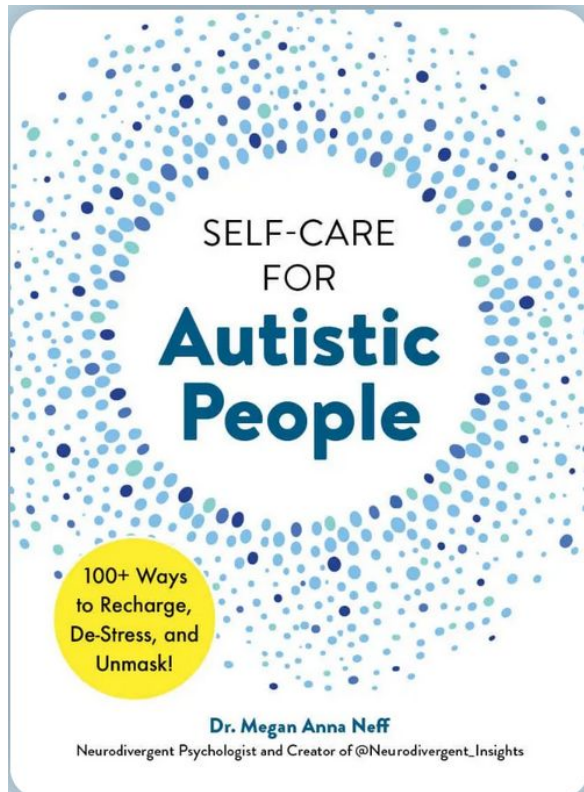
We need to be aware of [catatonia](#) and malignant catatonia

Shah, Dr. Amitta, 2019, [Catatonia, shutdown and breakdown in autism](#),
Jessica Kingsley Publishers

Risk Factors

- High masking environments
- Invalidating social connections
- Poor accommodations
- Cumulative trauma or invalidation
- Intersectional stress (Race, gender, LGBTQ identity, poverty, co-occurring mental and physical health disabilities)
- Being high-masking/wanting to be perceived as normal
- Being socially isolated outside of the workplace
- Co-occurring disabilities (OCD, ADHD, PTSD, etc.)





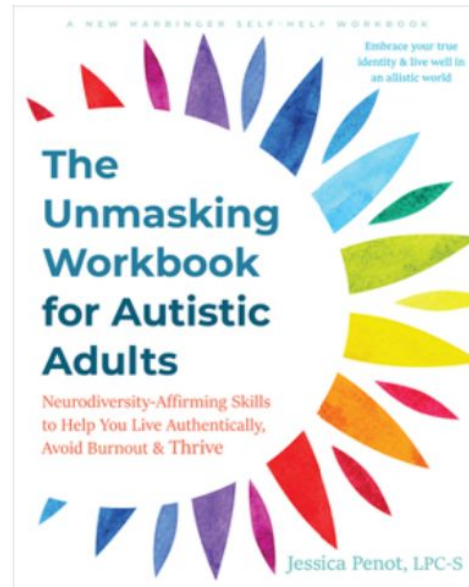
YOUR GUIDE TO
YOUR PERSONAL RECOVERY PLAN

THE
**AUTISTIC
BURNOUT**
WORKBOOK



WITH GUIDANCE ON
Sensory Self-Care, Masking, Spoon Theory,
Nervous System Regulation, and More

DR. MEGAN ANNA NEFF
Neurodivergent Psychologist and Creator of @Neurodivergent_Insights



Do Not Suffer in Silence- Get help!

Reach out to WAA for support to be connected with potential providers and find support

You getting help can be totally private— therapists and psychiatrists will not report your autism to family, employers, partners, etc.

Getting help early can be **life saving**. We want and need you here.

Citations

- Bradley, L., Shaw, R., Baron-Cohen, S., & Cassidy, S. (2021). *Autistic adults' experiences of camouflaging and its association with mental health. Autism in Adulthood*, 3(2), 147–156. <https://doi.org/10.1089/aut.2020.0071>
- Cassidy, S., Bradley, L., Robinson, J., Allison, C., McHugh, M., & Baron-Cohen, S. (2014). *Suicidal ideation and suicide plans or attempts in adults with Asperger's syndrome attending a specialist diagnostic clinic: A clinical cohort study. The Lancet Psychiatry*, 1(2), 142–147. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366\(14\)70248-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366(14)70248-2)
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- Kapp, S. K., Gillespie-Lynch, K., Sherman, L. E., & Hutman, T. (2019). *Deficit, difference, or both? Autism and neurodiversity. Autism*, 23(3), 643–647. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362361318823294>
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- Raymaker, D. M., Teo, A. R., Steckler, N. A., Lentz, B., Scharer, M., Delos Santos, A., Arnold, S. R., & Nicolaidis, C. (2020). *“Having all of your internal resources exhausted beyond measure and being left with no clean-up crew”: Defining autistic burnout. Autism*, 24(4), 915–927. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362361320914853>

Q+A

Three Minute Survey



Our Lunch & Learns are designed to provide information, services and support to our community around autism and other developmental disabilities.

Please take 3 minutes and fill out this **brief survey** to help us improve our future presentations. Thank you for your feedback!