

South Carolina Speech-Language-Hearing Association
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Autistic Burnout or Regression

Individuals on the Autism Spectrum

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Disclosures

- I have **relevant financial relationship(s)** with South Carolina Speech and Hearing Association
 - I have received financial compensation for this presentation.

- I have **no relevant non-financial relationship(s)** to disclose.

Why Are We Here Anyway?

This presentation will provide the participant with information regarding various terms used when discussing Autistic Burnout as well as provide a discussion platform for implementation of strategies to increase the recovery period while continuing in a clinical therapy setting.

Learning Objectives

- 1. Identify & Review terms associated with burnout and regression in autism & communication
- 2. Compare and discuss various signs and symptoms to help individuals diagnosed on the Autism Spectrum who struggle with Autistic Burnout.
- 3. Confer vital information regarding the continued ability to provide clinical therapy and collect positive data gains during periods of Autistic Burnout.

What is Burnout?

Definition of NT *BURNOUT*

1: The cessation of operation usually of a jet or rocket engine

2: Exhaustion of physical or emotional strength or motivation usually as a result of prolonged stress or frustration

2b: A person suffering from burnout

Management of BURNOUT

1. Stop working
2. Find a release
3. Take a break from Alcohol & Caffeine
4. Ask for less responsibilities
5. Have a heart-to-heart with someone
6. Make work more fun
7. work away from your desk
8. Use FMLA if necessary
9. Get plenty of sleep, exercise, and eat well
10. QUIT YOUR JOB!

What is Autistic Burnout?

Autistic Burnout is an accumulation of years of trying to appear normal and cope as a Neurotypical (NT). The Strain and drain of it suddenly becomes too much and a person with Autism falls apart.

ALL AUTISTIC SYMPTOMS GET WORSE

What is Regression?

Neurotypical:

Regression is a psychological defense mechanism in which a person abandons age-appropriate coping strategies in favor of earlier, more childlike patterns of behavior. This regression is a form of retreat, bringing back a time when the person feels safe and taken care of.

Autism Spectrum:

There is no universally agreed definition; however, all definitions support that regression involves the loss of a previously attained skill, such as language.

- Language regression refers, to the loss of verbalizations
- Language/social regression, indicates other social behavior involved in addition to the language

Temper Tantrum vs. Autistic Meltdown

Temper Tantrum

- Temper tantrums are unpleasant and disruptive behaviors or emotional outbursts.
- They often occur in response to unmet needs or desires.
- Tantrums are more likely to occur in younger children or others who cannot express their needs or control their emotions when they are frustrated

Autistic Meltdown

- Many autistic people will show signs of distress before having a meltdown, which is sometimes referred to as the “rumble stage”.
- They may start to exhibit signs of anxiety such as pacing, seek reassurance through repetitive questioning or physical signs such as rocking or becoming very still.

Autistic meltdown is a short term event

The Signs and Symptoms

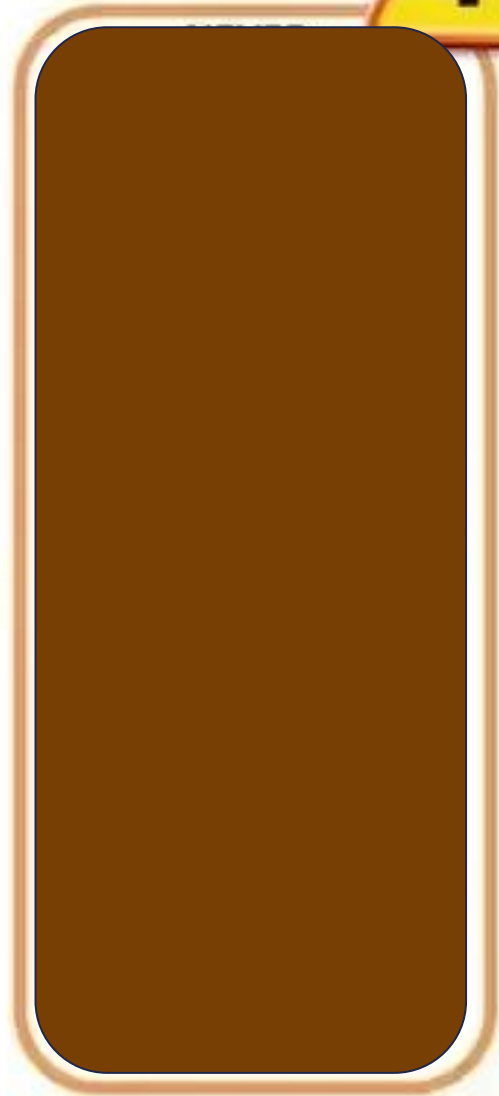
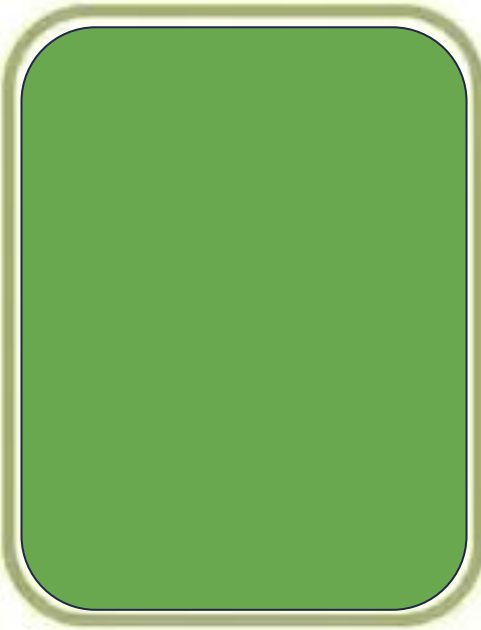
ASK AN AUTISTIC

Fitting in... Autistic Burnout



What is it? .

1. Late onset loss of functionality due to sustained monumental efforts.
2. Happens to MANY young ASD adults and many more all the way up into 50-60 years.
3. Often directly related to failing at "fitting in" with NT social skills despite faking it all the time to make it



What is AUTISTIC BURNOUT?

a guide from Autism Women's Network



signs



- Lack of motivation (hard to care about goals when everyday life is overwhelming)
- Loss of executive functioning abilities (decision-making, organization, etc.)
- Difficulty with self-care
- Easier to reach overload or meltdown
- Loss of speech, selective mutism
- Lethargy, exhaustion
- Illness, digestive issues
- Memory loss
- Inability to maintain masks or use social skills
- Overall seeming "more autistic" or stereotypical
- May have period of high energy before collapse

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causes



- Passing as neurotypical / suppressing autistic traits
- Doing 'too much', too much stress
- Aging: needing more downtime, having less energy
- Changes, good or bad (relationships, jobs, living arrangements, belongings, environment, routines...)
- Sleep deprivation, poor nutrition, dehydration
- Illness
- Sensory or emotional overload

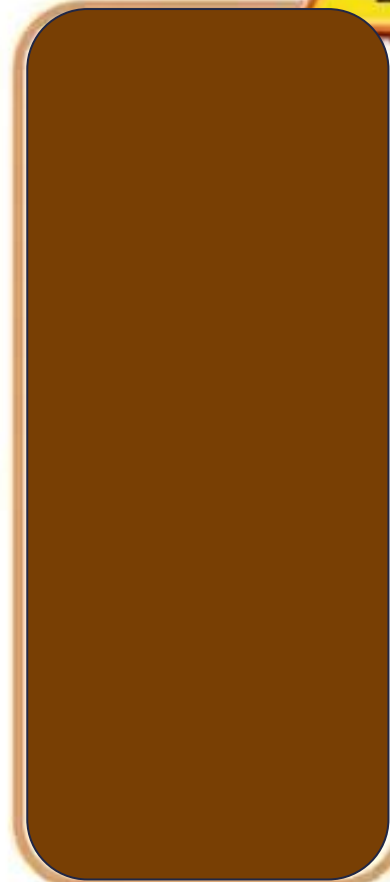
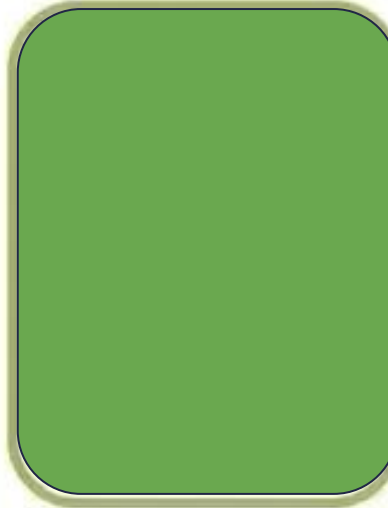
What To Do Now

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No ASD book or NT professional references Autistic Burnout. Only ASD adults talk of it. **Please treat this as a real and serious threat until it can be disproven as a threat.**

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ASD Adult NEEDS:

1. Know basic polite skills
2. Acceptance.
3. Protection.
4. Friends who "get" him..
5. Education on awareness and advocacy. .
6. Mentorship.
7. Vocational training in a strength area.

NEVER:

1. Assume social skills learned in a classroom will work outside of the classroom.
2. Under estimate how hard it is to be someone you are not neurologically meant to be.
3. Assume that NT social skills are the only way to success and/or integration in society.
4. Under estimate the importance of "like" people/friends for social interactions and practicing of ASD social skills .
5. Believe the books have all the answers. Ask about Autistic Burnout on forums where there are autistic adults.



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strategies



- Time
- Scheduling breaks, managing spoons
- Leave of absence
- Stimming, sensory diet
- Exercise
- Massage
- Reminders and supports
- Routines
- Better environment/job/etc.
- Boundaries, saying 'no'
- Dropping the mask/façade
- Solitude
- Absolute quiet
- Creative projects, passions, special interests
- Paying attention to reactions and your body



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