

What is burnout? Burnout is something that happens when you are suffering from chronic exhaustion. This can usually stem from having periods of meltdowns and shutdowns. Burnout is a long-term effect after experiencing highly stressful situations and environments, and it could go on for days, weeks, months, and even years.

So, burnout is the net result of autistic people just finding everything far too much, usually for far too long. It can result in an autistic person completely withdrawing into themselves, maybe wanting to spend a lot of time in their room, away from other people, and maybe just having very minimal energy to do the things they need to do, such as go to work, college, or school. Even doing fundamental basics such as self-care, cleaning your teeth, brushing your hair, having a wash, eating a meal, or even going to the loo, if you're in burnout, all of those things can feel very, very difficult.

I know myself, I'm not good at saying no to people. They need help. I'll try and do everything I can to be there, and that often means I will go to a beyond, and I won't even think about what I need to do to look after myself. With that, I will completely crash and burn, and I'll have to spend a few days out trying to get myself back on track. Then I just get straight back into the loop because, for me, I don't know how to get out of it.

Sometimes it can be a sensory thing. If I have to be in a very stressful area for a long period of time, sometimes it will just be you're doing something you love, but you don't look after yourself in terms of needing to have a rest, things like that. And you just crash, and you lose a lot of time. That's how I'm affected by burnout. I'll lose days. I won't leave my room because I'll just put way too much effort in, and I won't sleep for days on end. And I've just come to an end.

If you are suffering from autistic burnout, the biggest piece of advice I could give you is to just go very easy on yourself. Recognise why you've got to this point – that you are not defective. You've just been trying to cope for a very long time in a world that's not really set up to meet your needs. Give yourself the opportunity to take a breather. Don't be hard on yourself. Let yourself rest up and sleep when you need to. Engage in the activities that you have got the energy to do, which might be watching your favourite TV shows on repeat.

Make sure, if you can, to eat and sleep well. That might be tricky, so don't worry about making complicated super healthy meals. Just try and eat and drink something, no matter how simple it is. Just take basic care of yourself and take your time.