

# AUTISTIC BURNOUT

Autistic burnout is caused by "sustained demands of masking, interpersonal interactions, changes and other stressors combined with unaccommodating environments (Reframing Autism, 2023). The child experiencing burnout may have a reduced capacity to engage in tasks/activities due to the reduction in functioning and focus on trying to stay regulated & meet sensory needs. Masking is also tricky to sustain during this period, which may also be dysregulating for the autistic child.

## Causes

- Autistic masking
- Unaccommodating environments (e.g., schools, places where sensory needs are not met)
- Big changes in routine or environment
- Unrealistic expectations from family school, society etc.

## Consequences

- Increase in meltdowns and shutdowns
- Increased mental and physical exhaustion
- Cognitive overload
- Hypersensitivity to sensory stimuli, or increased need to stim
- Increased discomfort during social situations
- Withdrawing from loved ones or favourite activities

## Reducing or Preventing Autistic Burnout

Each autistic child will require different supports when approaching or experiencing autistic burnout. Some of the following supports may benefit an autistic child:

- Expressing autistic needs (e.g., stimming, engaging with special interests, unmasking)
- Sensory supports (e.g., adjusting the environment to support)
- Setting boundaries
- Having recovery time (e.g., taking time off, having more breaks, reducing social activity)
- Support from family, friends and school supports
- Learning how to recognise one's own signs of burnout