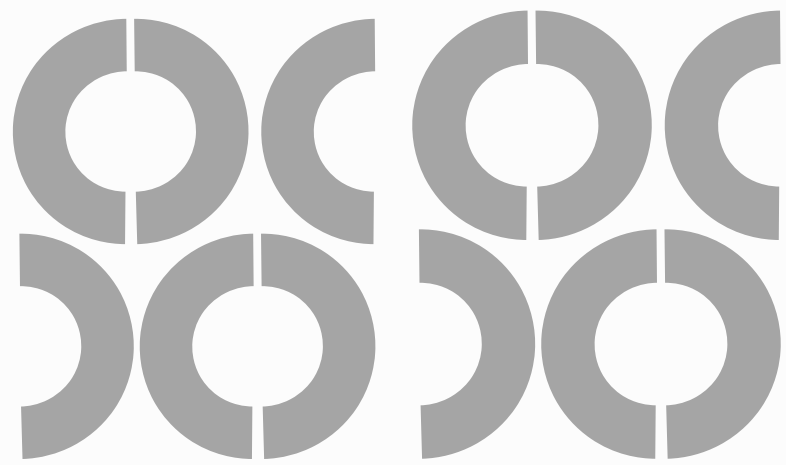




UNDERSTANDING AUTISTIC BURNOUT

A Free Support Workbook
For Parents

www.equallydifferenttherapy.co.uk



Hi

I'm Sarah Wellaway

I am the founder of Equally Different Therapy and have created a range of workbooks to support neurodiverse families and children. I am Neurodiverse myself, have raised my own neurodiverse children and trained as a psychologist, as such, I have a wealth of knowledge that is practical and tried and trusted.

CONTENT

This workbook is designed to help you:

- Recognise signs of autistic burnout in your child
- Understand the underlying causes
- Reflect on environmental factors
- Plan practical support strategies
- Care for your own nervous system too

You do not need to complete this all at once. Use it slowly, reflectively, and return to it as your child's needs evolve.



01

RECOGNISING BURNOUT: YOUR CHILD'S SIGNS



Prompt: Think about the past 2–4 weeks. What changes have you noticed?

Area	What You've Observed
Emotional regulation	(e.g., more meltdowns, irritability, flatness)
Social behaviour	(e.g., withdrawal, clinginess, shutdown)
Language / communication	(e.g., refusal to talk, increased scripting)
Physical energy	(e.g., can't get out of bed, restlessness)
Sensory responses	(e.g., covering ears, chewing sleeves)
Interests & play	(e.g., losing interest in favourite things)



02

WHAT MIGHT BE CONTRIBUTING?

Prompt: Reflect on possible environmental stressors building up.

Possible Factors	☒ Tick if relevant	Notes
School stress or demands		
Masking / hiding stims		
Sensory overload (noise, light)		
Transitions / routine changes		
Social fatigue or confusion		
Lack of downtime		
Sleep disruption		
Family stress		
Illness, growth, puberty changes		

03

STRATEGIES TO TRY RIGHT NOW

Instructions: Choose up to 3 small changes to trial this week.

What We'll Try	Why We Chose This	Notes / Plan
E.g., Cancel one club this week	Reduce overload	
E.g., Use visual cues instead of questions	Lower pressure	
E.g., Allow safe stimming freely at home	Regulate sooner	

Keep it manageable — you're not failing if you only do one thing.





04

SUPPORTING CONNECTION

Even during burnout, your child still needs connection — just on their terms.

Reflection Questions:

- What helps my child feel safe with me right now?
- When is the last time we connected without talking?
- What “non-verbal” ways can I show love and safety?

- ☐ Sitting nearby
- ☐ Gentle touch (if allowed)
- ☐ Shared favourite activity
- ☐ Stimming together
- ☐ Listening to music
- ☐ Just being present

05

CARING FOR YOURSELF



Burnout is exhausting — for your child, and for you.

Reflection Prompts:

- What has felt hardest for me recently?
- What do I need more of? (Sleep, silence, help, kindness?)
- Who is one safe person I can text or call today?
- What can I take off my plate this week?

Mini Reset Menu: (tick as used)

- ☐ 5 minutes outside
- ☐ 3 deep breaths
- ☐ Hot drink alone
- ☐ Writing out a thought
- ☐ 1 song that shifts my mood
- ☐ Saying “no” without guilt



06

WEEKLY CHECK-IN

You can repeat this page every week if helpful.

Area	What's improved?	What still feels hard?	What we'll keep/change
Energy levels			
Emotional state			
Communication			
Sensory overload			
Parent wellbeing			

07

Burnout Log Sheet

Purpose: Track your child's daily experiences to identify patterns and triggers associated with burnout.

Layout:

- **Date:** _____
- **Energy Level:** Low / Medium / High
- **Mood:** Happy / Anxious / Irritable / Withdrawn
- **Activities Today:** List of activities and duration
- **Sensory Experiences:** Notable sensory inputs (e.g., loud noises, bright lights)
- **Notable Behaviors:** E.g., meltdowns, shutdowns, stimming
- **Parent Observations:** Space for notes on what seemed to help or hinder

Usage Tip: Consistent logging can reveal trends, helping to adjust routines and environments proactively.



08

VISUAL REGULATION TRACKER

Blue Zone

Feelings: 😞 Sad | 😴 Tired | 😐 Bored

My body feels slow, heavy, or empty

What I can try:

- Hug a soft toy
- Listen to music
- Do a calm activity (drawing, playdough)
- Sit somewhere warm or cozy

Green Zone

Feelings: 😊 Calm | 😄 Happy | 🎯

Focused

This is my just-right zone!

What I can try:

- Keep doing what I'm doing
- Talk or play with someone
- Enjoy my favourite interest
- Try something new or challenging
- I feel ready to learn or join in!

Yellow Zone

Feelings: 😰 Anxious | 😡 Frustrated
| 😜 Silly

My body feels buzzy or wobbly

What I can try:

- Blow bubbles or pinwheel
- Do a movement break (star jumps, wall push-ups)
- Squeeze a fidget or putty
- Ask for help or use a cue card
- I need space to regulate before things get too big.

Red Zone

Feelings: 😡 Angry | 😱 Out of control
| 🤯 Overwhelmed

My body feels too much

What I can try:

- Use my headphones
- Go to my calm corner
- Sit quietly with my comfort item
- Take a break from people or talking
- I need an adult to help me feel safe.

How to Use This Page:

Point, colour, or move a marker to show how you feel

Choose 1 or 2 strategies from that colour zone

Ask for help if you're not sure what to do



Final Thoughts: You're Doing Better Than You Think

If you've made it to the end of this workbook — pause for a moment.
Take a breath.

Supporting an autistic child through burnout is emotionally, mentally, and physically demanding. It asks so much of you — patience, insight, flexibility, advocacy, and love — all while you're probably carrying your own worries, exhaustion, and doubts.

Please know this:

- Burnout is not a failure — not yours, and not your child's.
- You are not behind. You are adapting.
- Small changes matter. Rest is progress. Connection is progress.
- You don't have to get everything "right" — you just have to stay in connection.

There will be better days. Not because you fixed everything, but because you stayed beside your child and made it safer for them to be.

This workbook is just one step on that journey.

You're doing more than enough.

Need More Support?

Looking for more tools?

Explore our other downloadable resources, including:

- The Sensory Toolkit Pro
- Our ADHD Teen Workbook
- On-demand webinar: Supporting Your Autistic Child Through Anxiety

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