

Understanding & Preventing Burnout

- Understand the challenge
- Develop practical strategies for managing your energy.



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Specialist **ADHD** support services

Great minds think alike, brilliant minds think differently



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- **Chartered Coaching Psychologist, mentor and trainer**
- **Over 20 yrs secondary school teaching and pastoral care**
- **Parent of children with ADHD**
- **Late diagnosed with Dyslexia & ADHD**

“This is not just ‘burnout’... it is ND burnout”

Neurodivergent burnout is a state of chronic physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion.

‘Bonus features’ of ND Burnout:

- **Skill loss / regression** of capabilities
- **Longer recovery time** - months / years
- It is tied to the sustained effort of **navigating neurotypical environments / expectations**



Key Symptoms of ND burnout



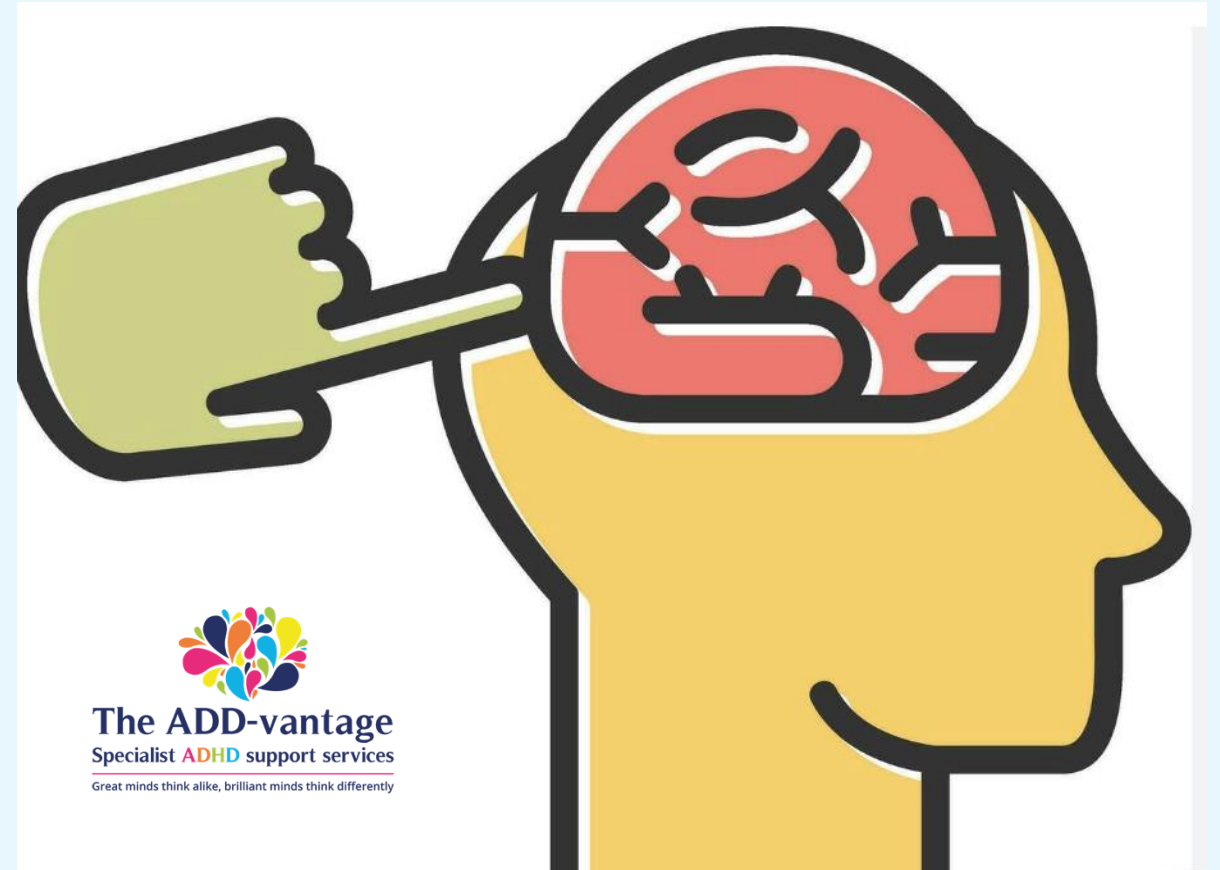
- **Extreme, persistent exhaustion** that rest doesn't relieve
- **Loss of skills or regression in abilities** that were previously manageable
- **Increased sensory sensitivity**
- **Emotional dysregulation** — heightened anxiety, irritability, or emotional numbness
- **Social withdrawal and isolation**
- **Increased memory and concentration difficulties**

Triggers of ND burnout

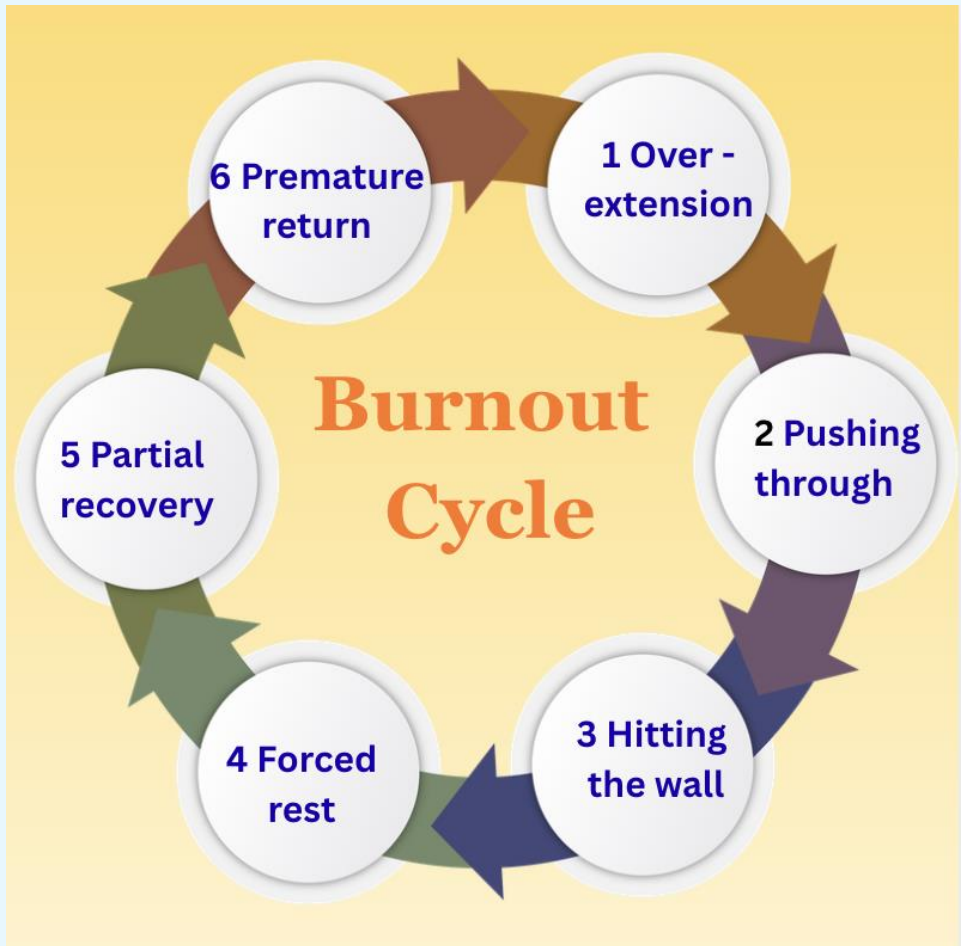
Often **‘masking fatigue’** is a **central driver**; the effort of suppressing natural neurodivergent traits and constantly performing neurotypical behaviour is a huge drain on energy.

Additional triggers

- Sensory overload over time
- Life transitions
- Persistent lack of support
- Trauma
- Sustained exposure to unsupportive environments



It's a cycle...if YOU do not break it, it WILL come around again!



1. Overextension – ‘honeymoon’ period. The cycle begins with taking on too much — driven by external pressure, internal drive, fear of failure, people-pleasing etc

2. Pushing through - warning signs appear; **fatigue, irritability, lack of focus— but are ignored or suppressed.** We rely on adrenaline, caffeine, willpower, masking intensifies.

3. Hitting the wall. The body and mind can no longer sustain the effort. Productivity collapses, emotional regulation deteriorates, and basic functioning becomes difficult (**the burnout state**)

4. Forced rest. The person stops because they simply cannot continue. There may be a period of withdrawal, sleep, or reduced activity.

5. Partial recovery. Energy and functioning return to a degree. We begin to feel better and more capable. Crucially, this is rarely full recovery — the underlying causes have not been addressed.

6. Premature return Feeling somewhat better and often facing a guilt / shame of neglected responsibilities, the person re-engages too quickly and too fully. (**The cycle restarts**)

What makes people with ADHD vulnerable?



Our desire to 'fit' regardless of the cost. The **energy expenditure of constant compensation strategies and masking**. This is **exhausting and unsustainable**.

- **Interest based Nervous system (IBNS)** – prone to over commitment; saying yes to everything interesting, novel etc.
- **Emotional hyperarousal** – feel emotions intensely / less capacity to modulate. Frustrations hit harder / takes more energy to process and recover
- **Sleep deprivation** - trouble winding down, irregular sleep patterns, and non-restorative sleep = chronic sleep deficit,
- **Managing executive function deficits** – for us these require conscious, effortful work = exhaustion
- **Chronic stress and anxiety**— from missed deadlines, disorganisation, and the fear of being perceived as lazy or unreliable.
- **Poor interoception** — difficulty reading one's own bodily and emotional signals



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**Prevention
is better
than cure!**

Proactive approach



- **building in recovery time** between high-demand periods
- creating non-negotiable **boundaries around capacity**
- developing a **personalised, sustainable accommodation plan** rather than constantly ‘white-knuckling’ through
- **energy management over time management approach** (working with your ADHD rhythm rather than against it)
- regular **self evaluation of workload vs. energy**
(Go to www.theadd-vantage.co.uk to download a free template or create your own)

Building sustainable work practices



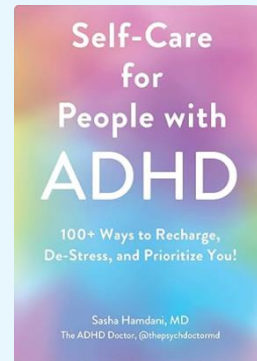
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Identifying optimal environment to support sustainable, healthy working practice

- What adjustments / accommodations do you need to level up the 'playing field'?
- Leveraging technology and support staff for delegating / outsourcing of draining tasks
- Curating work environments that supports effective motivation & minimises sensory overwhelm
- Structuring your practice area or caseload to align with your strengths and interests where possible



Build in self-care for the ADHD brain



Explore ADHD-friendly self-care that actually works:

- short, frequent breaks rather than long vacations?
- physical movement throughout the day
- creative activities that provide dopamine without depleting energy;
- maintaining treatment (medication, therapy, coaching) even when busy;
- connecting with ‘your people’ – loved ones, other ADHDers, support groups)
- getting out into fresh air, sunlight, nature
- Develop & maintain effective sleep hygiene routines that deliver adequate rest



If you have already 'hit the wall'...



STOP.

ACCEPT you need to step back.

- Communicate the situation
- Take leave
- Reduce demands
- Unmask in safe environments

REST.



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Returning after burnout



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Do not rush.

Ensure you have **FULLY** recovered, confirm with a qualified professional.

Reflect and review the context of your burnout, take **PROACTIVE** action to avoid repeat:

- **Rebuild systems from scratch** rather than trying to return to what wasn't working
- Considering whether **structural changes** are necessary.
- **Optimise your working environment** for healthy outcomes.
- **Secure robust support** from colleagues and other relevant professionals



Considerations for a personal burnout prevention plan



Identifying your personal early warning signs:

Regular mindful practice; journalling to notice changes

Self assessment across domains (physical, social, emotional, mental)

Establishing your boundaries to protect energy:

Taking a daily lunch break? Taking your holiday entitlement?

Turning off work email notifications on phone?

Hard stop to end of day / fixed wind down and bedtime?

Building your support network

Who are your people at work? outside of work?

What do they need to know/ you need from them?

Creating regular check-ins to assess your energy / capacity vs. demands:

Are you the best / only person to do the thing?

Does the thing need to wait for you to complete something else ?



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'Hive Mind' activity



In groups

- **Nominate a scribe**
- **'Vomit' ALL ideas for ONE of the categories, recording them on the paper provided**
- **Agree your which are your top three for your context**
- **Record them on the larger display sheets**

1 Demand vs Energy Management
3 Rest and Recovery
5 Mental & Emotional Health
7 Meaning & Purpose
9 Early Warning Systems

2 Work-Life Boundaries
4 Physical Wellbeing
6 Social Connection
8 Organisational Culture
10 Resources & Support



Invitation to create your own personal burnout prevention plan



Include

- **individual** strategies (things people can do themselves)
- **organisational** factors (what the workplace does to reduce risk)

Aim to identify a minimum of 3 strategies that *will best support you to avoid burnout across these categories:*

1 Demand vs Energy Management

2 Work-Life Boundaries

3 Rest and Recovery

4 Physical Wellbeing

5 Mental & Emotional Health

6 Social Connection

7 Meaning & Purpose

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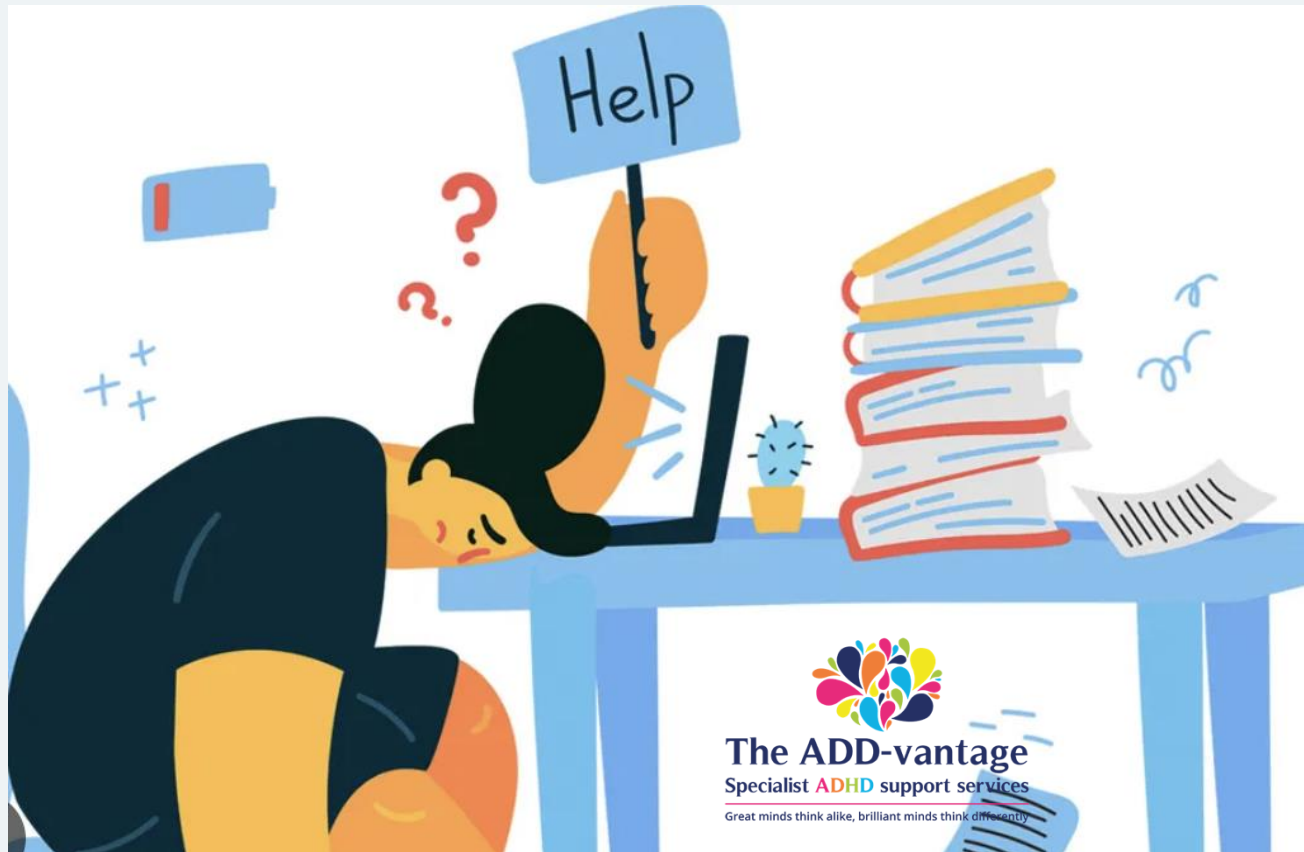
Finally, remember...



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- You are a human being
not a human doing
- You work to live, not live to work
- Invest in rest (rest is a VERB!)





Hopefully, now you...

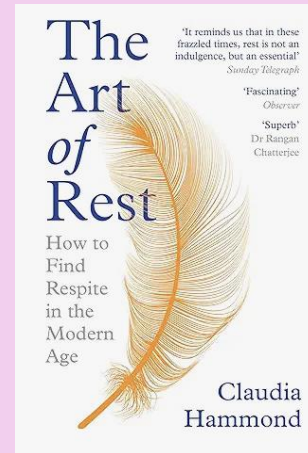
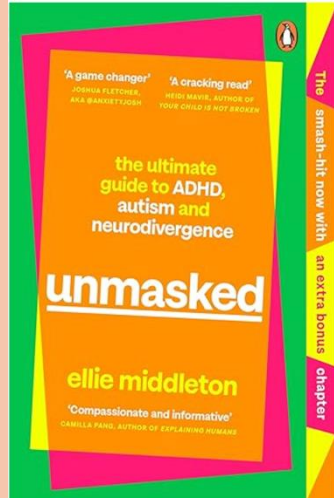
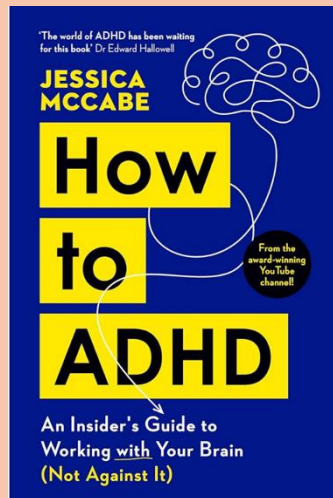
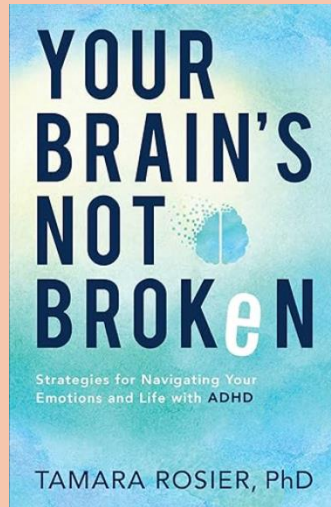
**understand of the nature
and challenge of burnout**

***& are better equipped
with...***

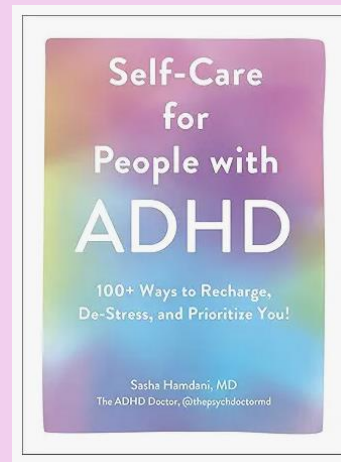
**practical strategies for
managing your energy,
breaking the cycle**

Additional resources to support ADHD awareness & burnout prevention

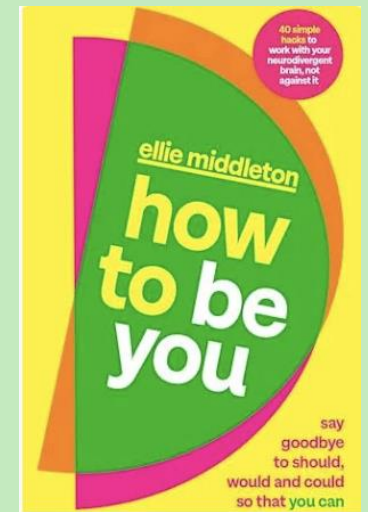
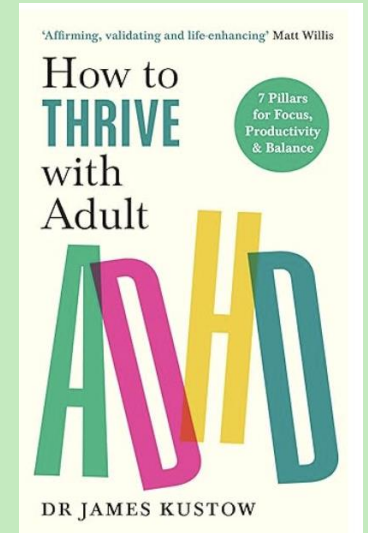
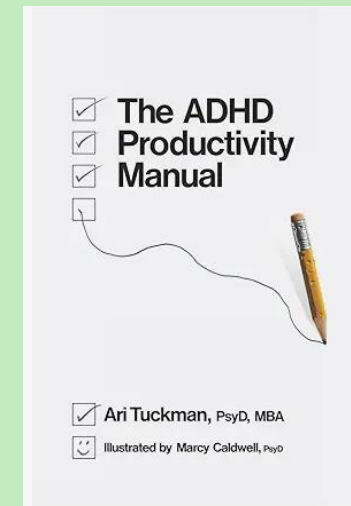
Increasing awareness and living well with ADHD



Rest and self care



Practical tools to help you lean into your ADHD brain





**MAY THE
FORCE BE
WITH YOU...**



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Thank you for the
gift of your
attention

Any Questions?



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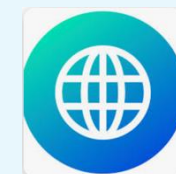
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