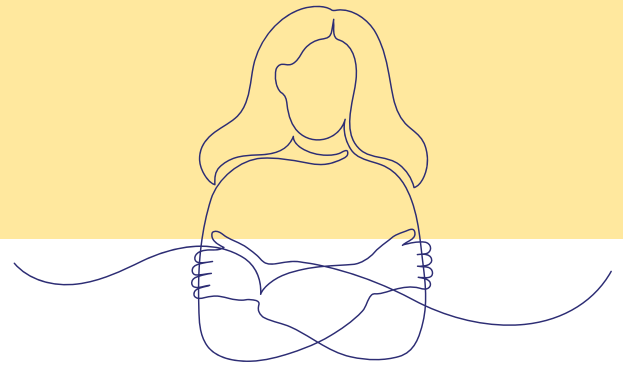


Parent self-care



Parents and caregivers of neurodivergent children, such as those with autism spectrum disorder, dyslexia or attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, often juggle multiple roles, including advocate, care coordinator, emotional support and daily caregiver. Without adequate support and opportunities for rest, these ongoing demands can lead to caregiver burnout over time.

Below are common warning signs that a parent or caregiver may be experiencing burnout.

Emotional warning signs

These changes often show up first in how a caregiver feels.

- Feeling constantly overwhelmed or emotionally drained
- Increased irritability or frustration
- Feeling hopeless, discouraged or stuck
- Frequent guilt or self-blame about parenting decisions
- Feeling disconnected from your child or family
- Loss of enjoyment in activities that used to feel meaningful

Physical warning signs

Burnout can also affect the body.

- Chronic fatigue or feeling exhausted even after rest
- Sleep problems (difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep)
- Frequent headaches, muscle tension or stomach problems
- Getting sick more often due to stress
- Changes in appetite or energy levels

Cognitive (thinking) warning signs

Stress can affect concentration and decision-making.

- Difficulty focusing or remembering things
- Feeling mentally foggy
- Trouble making decisions
- Feeling like your mind is always racing with worries

Behavioral warning signs

Burnout may show up in everyday habits and behaviors.

- Withdrawing from friends, family, or support systems
- Avoiding appointments, meetings, or responsibilities because it feels overwhelming
- Increased conflict with partners or family members
- Feeling like you're running on autopilot most days
- Spending very little time on personal self-care

Family and parenting warning signs

Some signs appear within the parenting relationship itself.

- Feeling less patient with your child
- Feeling like you have nothing left to give emotionally
- Becoming overly controlling or, on the other hand, feeling disengaged
- Feeling like you must handle everything alone
- Increased stress around school meetings, therapy appointments or advocacy tasks



When to pay extra attention

Burnout is more likely when parents are:

- Managing multiple therapies or appointments
- Navigating school advocacy or special education systems
- Experiencing limited social or family support
- Balancing caregiving with work and other children's needs
- Facing financial or insurance stress related to services

Caregiver self-care planning worksheet

For parents and caregivers of neurodivergent children



Caring for a child with a neurodevelopmental difference often requires added advocacy, planning, and emotional support. As a result, caregivers may place their own needs last. Recognizing early signs of burnout can help caregivers seek support, share responsibilities and protect their well-being. This worksheet is designed to help you identify what helps you recharge and create a realistic self-care plan.

Part 1: Checking in with yourself

Over the past few weeks, how often have you experienced the following?

Experience	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
I feel emotionally drained			
I feel like I have very little time for myself			
I feel overwhelmed by responsibilities			
I feel physically exhausted			
I feel supported by others			

One word that describes how I've been feeling lately:

Part 2: What helps me recharge?

Self-care looks different for everyone. Consider activities that help you rest, feel supported or reconnect with yourself.

Activities that help me relax:

- Taking a walk Talking with a friend Quiet time alone Reading or listening to music
 Exercise or movement Creative hobbies Spiritual or mindfulness practices

Other activities that recharge me:

Part 3: My support network

Caregiving should not happen alone. Identify people who can offer different types of support.

Person **Type of support** (*emotional, practical, listening, childcare, etc.*)

One person I could reach out to this week:

Part 4: Small self-care goals

Choose one or two small, realistic goals for the next week.

Example:

- Take a 10-minute break each day
- Ask for help with one task
- Schedule time for a hobby

My goal:

When I will do it:

What might get in the way:

How I can work around that challenge:

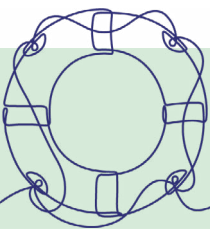
Part 5: My caregiver reminder

Complete this sentence:

Taking care of myself matters because...

Reflection

What is one thing you could do this week that would make caregiving feel a little more sustainable?



Reminder for caregivers:

Self-care does not have to be large or time-consuming. Small, consistent moments of rest, connection and support can help prevent burnout and make it easier to continue caring for your child.