

# How we deal with Autistic Burnout

**A living document created by Autistic adults,  
for Autistic adults.**

The authors of this document are Autistic adults. Between us, we represent a range of different experiences, perspectives and intersectionalities. However, there are also many perspectives that are not represented in this document as it stands right now. We acknowledge this. We recognise that none of us can speak on behalf of other Autistic people, especially those who are marginalised in ways that we are not.

We speak as individuals, each describing our own experiences. But we do have something in common. Each of us has experienced particularly difficult times in our lives, that we have come to identify as “Autistic Burnout”. Many of us have found it helpful to describe our experiences in this way. Using the term “Autistic Burnout” has helped us to understand what’s happening without blaming ourselves for it, and it continues to help us find one another, connect with people who might be able to understand what we’re going through, and access information and support that might be relevant and helpful to us.

We want to make use of our experience and pass on to others what we have learned about dealing with Autistic Burnout. We hope it might help other Autistic folks, to know that they are not alone, and to get some ideas about different things that have been significant for some of us. We also hope it might help allistic (non-autistic) folks to understand a bit more about what it’s like from our perspective when Autistic Burnout is around, and some of the ways we try to recover our lives from the effects of Autistic Burnout.

We offer the document you are reading right now as just a beginning, not a final version. In fact, we hope there will never be a “final version”. This is a living document. That means that we intend for it to be continually added to and revised, and to keep growing and changing over time. We hope that it will become a better representation of the wide range of Autistic adults’ experiences and perspectives on Autistic burnout, as more stories are gathered.

We hope you will find it beneficial to read the stories we’ve gathered so far. And, if you are an Autistic person who also has some experience in dealing with Autistic Burnout, we invite you to contribute your stories to this document too.

Many of us did not know that we were Autistic until well into our adult lives; we knew we were “different” but didn’t know why. We often felt as though nobody really understood us. We were subject to expectations from other people (and from ourselves), about the kinds of things we “should” be able to do, and the kinds of coping strategies that we “should” be able to use to manage our distress and “get over it”.

Sometimes, we were drawn into blaming ourselves for not being able to function “like everyone else”. We did not yet have the language to explain, even to ourselves, why it was so hard for us to meet those expectations, why we were so exhausted by our efforts to do so, or why the “standard” ways that were often recommended for managing distress often seemed to be not-so-helpful for us.

Some of us have begun to use words like “neuronormative” and “ableist” to describe the expectations we have been subject to. We have begun to wonder what our lives might be like if we could unsubscribe from those expectations (or, at least some of them). There are many ways we can describe this process, but maybe the most widely understood term is “unmasking”.

We each have different relationships to unmasking. For some of us, it has been a process of conscious choice and liberatory exploration. Some of us have felt like our mask got broken, or was ripped away without our consent. And for many of us, it has been a combination; sometimes we felt we could exercise some degree of choice about when and how and in what areas of our lives we wanted to unmask... and other times we felt that those choices were much less available to us.

For many of us, the journey to identifying as Autistic has been quite a long and winding road. But we are here now. And from where we are now, we can look back and consider the possibility that those hard times, either recent or earlier in our lives, could make sense when viewed as episodes of Autistic Burnout; a consequence of the chronic stress of being subject to neuronormative expectations, without adequate relief, accommodations, or supports.

During those times, many of us could not continue working or doing other things that were important to us. Some of us became so unwell that we were in danger of losing our lives. Some of us were hospitalised and given various diagnoses, like depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, or borderline personality disorder.

Now that we understand ourselves through the lens of Autism, we can acknowledge the crushing weight of the pressures we are often under to “act normal” and try to “fit in” with neuronormative expectations.

So now, we can see that if we have sometimes buckled under the weight of those pressures, it never meant that we were “weak”. It meant that the pressures had become unbearable. This helps us to appreciate the skills we have developed, and the efforts we have been making (and continue to make) to live our lives.

## **Skills of knowing, naming, and describing our experience**

### ***Acknowledging the ways that survival masks are created and maintained***

I have always been my biggest critic. I think that's the main purpose of the behaviour modification techniques used against us in our early childhood onwards. In attempts to alter our behaviour and our minds, traumatising verbal, emotional, social and physical abuse are used against us. Mental health and other consequences result from these techniques. The consequences can last a lifetime without sufficient and significant supports. These traumas both create the survival masks and maintain them for years or decades. Even when we don't know we are Autistic, these trained self-hatred and negative self-talk daily experiences (internalised self-abuse caused by outside abuse) make sure that we know that the mask is expected 24/7 and in every environment that we inhabit or move into.

### ***Acknowledging the impact of losing my masking ability***

Losing my masking ability has been devastating, as it was not by choice. I simply don't have the energy or functional capacity to provide a Neurotypical mask to anyone anymore. This has had an immensely painful impact on me and my loved ones, including my wife, my family and my closest friendships. If it had been a choice and had occurred more slowly over time, this loss of my Neurotypical mask/masks may not have been as devastating or may have actually been healthy and beneficial.

### ***The disability lens was essential information***

I had previous Autistic Burnouts that were scattered throughout my life prior to this Autism diagnosis. These difficulties were viewed by others (and by myself as a direct result of other peoples' attitudes and opinions) as all kinds of challenges and crises of my own choosing and/or caused by my personal failures and or character flaws (laziness, unwillingness to meet deadlines/expectations of others, stupidity, bad decision making, immaturity, choosing bad friends, etc.). Negative consequences that I lived with, both in effect and blame, were viewed through a deficit lens, but without the disability lens that was essential information that was lacking.

### ***Finding what other people had written about their burnout***

It's the social isolation of burnout which is the worst, probably one of the hardest things, that and the loss of functions across the board. If you don't know what's happening to you, because I was so newly diagnosed, I didn't realize that all of these things were related to my autism until I started finding that other people had written these symptoms or these increased autistic traits, difficulties and things that were related to their burnout, they thought they were related to their burnout, and then I eventually started finding research articles that confirmed that.

### ***Finding the language I needed***

When I started experiencing my current Burnout, I had no idea of what I was experiencing, just that I was deteriorating in a lot of functional capacities all at once and it was happening fast.... Once I discovered how much self-reporting of Autistic Burnout literature, videos and research there was online from people living with Autism, I realised that 'Autistic Burnout' was the most suitable language I needed to use to describe my current situation, for both accuracy and historical discourse/pathologisation reasons.

## **Skills of identifying and asking for what we need**

### ***Seeking and describing the types of supports I need***

I found that an Autistic person's own accounts of their Autistic Burnout deterioration and their description in an article they wrote online was similar to my previous experiences of Burnout and then I found the term 'Autistic Burnout' useful in finding more personal accounts online in a number of journals, websites, apps, professional literature and online Neurodivergent communities.... I have found YouTubers and Instagram resources to be most helpful in my search for not only language to describe my current Autistic Burnout but also previous Burnouts and to start seeking and describing the types of supports I need to start my recovery journey.

### ***Asking myself how I'm feeling***

I need to pay attention quite deliberately, and ask myself how I'm feeling, notice my energy levels, go through a mental checklist of needs, like; Have I eaten today? When did I last have anything to drink? Do I need to take a break, get some fresh air, go for a walk? These are all things that I know make a big difference to how I feel and what I can manage on a day-to-day basis, but remembering to do them has never become automatic or easy for me. My mind is so full of other things, that I just don't notice sensations like hunger, thirst, or discomfort, until they have become really intense and urgent.... and by that stage, it can be difficult for me to work out what I need to do to get those needs met. So now I try to stop and notice, a few times a day, so I can become aware of those things earlier. One website that was helpful for me; <https://youfeellikeshit.com/> it's like an interactive flowchart that I could go through to work out what I needed. Now I just do it in my head most of the time, but that was a really useful tool when I didn't know where to start. I still don't remember to do it all the time, but at least I have a framework for the kinds of things that might help when I really do feel like shit.

### ***Talking with somebody who wants to understand your individual experience***

You could try lots of things that other people claim have helped them, but until you've tried those things, you don't know if it's going to help you, because everybody experiences autism so differently.... The different spectrums of our challenges and strengths are so different, and I think it would be a matter of trial and error and talking with somebody, having a psychologist or recovery specialist, an OT or somebody who understands autism at a deep level, who wants to understand your individual experience of autism, and understand what strengths they can draw on to boost some of the things you're struggling with, or use the special things that your brain does that could be considered weaknesses if they're not utilized, or if they're left to just exist without any structure.

### ***Requesting accommodations***

Learning how to ask for the accommodations I need at work has been quite a challenge. There aren't very many examples of truly inclusive and neurodiversity-affirming workplaces to follow. So, trying to imagine which accommodations would be most helpful can be tricky. And then asking for those accommodations is another thing. For instance, wearing noise-cancelling headphones in an open office environment where others are talking and making distracting noises is a basic accommodation that could make a big difference for me. Unfortunately, there are still a lot of places where they are not very accepting of that. One thing I have found helpful sometimes if I have to meet with Human Resources or a supervisor or line manager to discuss accommodations, is that I search online for recommendations from credible sources that make a business case for why these accommodations are good from an organisational perspective, not only helpful for me personally. I try to present a logical argument for how these accommodations will enable me to contribute my best work, which will benefit them as much as it benefits me, and I give them copies of the documents to read too (though I'm not sure if they actually read them or not) so they can see I'm not just making things up. Here is one of the websites I've found particularly useful: <https://www.neurodiversitymedia.com/resource-library>

## **Skills of boundary-setting**

### ***Recognising red flags***

I have had many situations in my life where someone has creeped me out or they've said something that I absolutely cannot ethically agree with, or they've done something that I instantly go, "I don't feel safe around you"... or they've mistreated somebody, or they've boasted about mistreating somebody, and all of those things are a red flag now. I've had enough experiences over the decades that now those things are serious red flags.

### ***Saying "thanks, but no thanks"***

Sometimes I get asked to do things or attend events and I think I should go because it's a great opportunity, or because I'm flattered that they invited me, or because I'm worried that I'll be missing out on something if I don't go... but at the same time I know that it would just be too much. I used to say yes anyway... but I've realised now, that even though I find it hard to say no, it's a whole lot better for me in the end. So I've learnt to say "thanks, but no thanks". I let them know that I appreciate the offer, and maybe I would be able to do something like that at some other time in the future, but at the moment I need to decline.

### ***Trusting our instincts***

Sometimes it's just a gut feeling. A lot of people say that autistic people don't have gut feelings, but we do. We just notice patterns that other people miss, so we have gut feelings about things that we can't necessarily always put into words, but years later, in retrospect, you can. You can say, "Well, when I first met that person, I had a bad feeling but I didn't know what it was... until this happened." I think trusting our instincts is something that we were taught not to do from such a young age, so now that we're adults and we're trying to relearn to trust our instincts, it's very hard to do, and it's even harder to put into words what that instinct feeling - that gut feeling - even is.

### ***Decreasing external commitments***

I think I have become better at knowing when I am being overstretched so I have less incidents of burnout. I have also decreased my external commitments as I have had to take on other things and I am being more accepting of changing my work so I am not simply adding things all the time.

### ***Speaking up in the face of ableism***

I'm a fairly gentle and soft-spoken person by nature. But it really upsets me to hear ableist slurs and ignorant comments, stereotyping, and unjustified assumptions about what disabled or neurodivergent people can or can't do, or should or shouldn't do. I'm so sick of it. Literally, it makes me feel sick to my stomach. And the only thing I've found that can ease that sick feeling is to speak up and say something, even though I might feel really anxious about doing that in some contexts. But I can't just let it slide.

## **Skills of sensory modulation: soothing and stimming**

### ***Creating a sensory kit***

I got a really lovely little velvet pouch and I put a few things in it that are comforting or stimulating for me, and I keep it in my backpack so it just goes everywhere with me. It's my sensory kit. There's a fidget toy that I made myself with glass beads and a satin ribbon, and an electroplated metal one that I bought online, some thinking putty, and some eucalyptus and menthol lozenges, and some spearmint chewing-gum. I used to be embarrassed to stim in public, but now that I've started doing it more, I realise most people don't care or don't even notice. And even if they do, their reactions don't worry me anymore. It's worth it for the comfort it gives me.

### ***Being immersed in water***

Swimming and being immersed in water... It's not necessarily a special interest, but it's more a protective factor. It decreases my sensory overstimulation, especially if it's in a space that's not loud, and especially if it's warm, like a hydrotherapy pool, so yeah... I go to hydrotherapy as often as I can. Three to four times a week is ideal for me.

### ***Bare feet and feeling a breeze***

The ocean is hugely important to me – I loved it as a kid but didn't realise how much of a role it played in keeping me balanced and ok. I would walk for hours most days, even longer when I was upset and I loved it during storms and winter weather especially because no one else was there. I love most aspects of nature and like to have bare feet, and feeling a breeze and moving air is hugely important.

### ***We watch something that calms us down***

We do try to watch at least one episode or half a movie, something that we enjoy watching together at the end of each day which is sort of our attempt at trying to get some normalcy back into our lives... But we do try to get our minds off of the real world into an escapism world. We watch sci-fi, we watch something that calms us down.

### ***Enjoying zoning out, and being in the zone, with music, puzzles, art and craft***

The completion of a jigsaw puzzle is a really amazing feeling. It feels great. You've got physically something in front of you you've achieved and it's also pretty. I was listening to music and enjoying just zoning out and being in the zone when I was doing the puzzles as well, and there was always a strategy, a new strategy I was trying as well. So yeah, that was a really good realization that some of my childhood interests like music and puzzles and art and craft were really useful.

## **Skills of connecting**

### ***Connecting with my neurokin***

For me, the most helpful thing has been to grow into my Autistic identity, through connecting with other Autistic folks. I needed to have safe spaces to find out who I was under the neurotypical mask. I needed to connect with the people who really could empathise with me. I remember when I first came across the word “neurokin” as a way of describing our connection with one another. I loved it. I think that was the beginning of my being able to feel a real sense of belonging in my life, which I’d never experienced before.

### ***Connecting with lived experience experts***

Reading blogs, watching YouTube and connecting with other Autistic people through social media has been my lifeline. There are many Autistic people out there who are so generous with sharing their insights. The people with lived experience are the real experts, and they’re the ones I want to connect with more. I sometimes find it hard to physically leave the house, for lots of reasons, so those online connections are really important. And the great thing is that it has opened up my world, and my options... it isn’t so bad if I don’t know many other Autistic people in my area, because now I have Autistic friends all over the world. And I can take time out when I need to, without having to justify it... they totally understand if I’m not always interacting or commenting. And then when I re-surface, they’re just happy to see me back online.

### ***Deep connections with each other keep us safe***

It’s our connections and our deep connections with each other that keep us safe the most. It’s the people that we have the deepest connections with, we really need to see them face to face and have hugs and contact with the people that are an essential part of our mental health and essential part of our sense of who we are and our sense of safety and our sense of continuity and stabilization force.

### ***Connecting with the people we love***

My wife is amazing. The first conversation I had with her 12.5 years ago was the most important conversation and meeting of my life. We discussed our values and beliefs and established boundaries that we still have today. We also continue to negotiate those boundaries that require work, and we communicate the important stuff. Even though my wife has her own disabilities and minority challenges, we are a team. I love her more and more every day. Her strength and her ability to generate hope for herself inspires me just as much today as it did on that first day we met. Our combined knowledge of values and beliefs around social justice, social inclusion and human rights are an integral part of our lives, our lives together, our connections with others and our commitments to each other and other people, groups and communities, including to people and communities of people who we will never meet.

### ***Finding common communication ground***

We have these little frustrating miscommunication moments that probably appear like disagreements, but we’re just, one of us is just too tired. We’re both too tired and exhausted and fatigued, and both in pain and both overstimulated, and we just can’t do this conversation.... I think the foundations that we built were strong enough to have us withstand a lot of hardship together, separately and together, separately emotionally supporting each other without knowing what it was that was causing the problem until we had our autism and my wife had her ADHD and autism diagnosis. The fact that we communicate in very similar ways probably helps. Even when we’re miscommunicating, we can often find a common communication ground that helps.

### ***Developing close friendships***

Most of my closest friendships that I developed in the last 30 years (I prefer a small number of close friends, over a large number of acquaintances) are also discovering that they are Autistic/Neurodivergent and have started to get assessed in the last 5 years. Additionally, almost all my most recent closest friends identify as LGBTIQ+. We love sci-fi and the creative arts, and many of us are either artists or have unique special interests that have sustained our friendships as well as our well-being over the years. My connections with my wife and my closest friends are everything to me. We discuss anything and everything, from politics, religion and the economy, to all our special interests, like our art and craft ideas or creations, to our most recent pop culture and fringe culture interests. It means the world to me that we can do this for each other. As most of us live with disabilities or are also members of minorities, we are also often fighting the same fight, both within ourselves and with the outside world.

### ***Unwavering values and deep empathy***

My deeply held values are unwavering and my deep empathy (which I cannot turn off or even dial down) has always been the foundation of my life.... I think I was born with a fascination and desire to ask questions about systems of power and inconsistencies, cultural norms that are unfairly applied or unethical, economic and social injustices that don't make any sense, and numerous other questions that require a solution or answer. I also had two parents who were interested in politics and were politically active throughout their whole lives. Not in a protesting in the street kind of way, but in an educating themselves as best they could way, and educating others what they knew way. They taught my sister and me to be curious about the way the world is designed, how it's designed that way and who benefits most from its design... I suppose my values are deep and strong for both reasons, because my brain loves consistently applied rules that must be fairly applied to all people, and my parents encouraged that natural instinct.

### ***Connecting with emotions***

The best way to explain this is to suggest to everyone I know and anyone who knows someone with ASD diagnosis or suspects they are Neurodivergent, read the amazingly articulate and moving article by Terra Vance titled 'Very Grand Emotions: How Autistics and Neurotypicals Experience Emotions Differently' on the NeuroClastic website: <https://neuroclastic.com/very-grand-emotions>

### ***Enjoying interests and values in common with other people***

The stuff that I find in common with people that I enjoy talking about is probably music, and sci-fi. Sci-fi is a huge one. Like Star Trek, I love Star Trek, but there's the philosophy behind Star Trek, it's the values behind Star Trek that I love. So once again, it's about values, you know? I've gotten into magical realism recently, and I've discovered that a lot of the shows and movies and TV shows and books and stuff that I've enjoyed, stories that I've enjoyed throughout my life fit into the category of magical realism... I've gotten into more and more of it and realized more and more of my interests and my friends' interests in those topics or those kinds of stories is also strong, which also gives me the impression that they're also... It's another sign that a lot of my friends are autistic or neurodivergent because they have kind of a similar special interest for a similar reason, like the escapism factor, but also the factor that a lot of sci-fi delves into social, political, or values and beliefs, or philosophical theory in a safe way. And music is the same. A lot of music that I love is revolutionary music. So even the most recent music, if I listen to it, it's only the music that is revolutionary in tone and in message that resonates with me.



### ***Building trust and safety through being with animals***

My brain wants to be where the animals are. It doesn't matter what kind of animal either. It doesn't have to be fluffy. It could literally be anything. It could be a green tree frog or an axolotl, something like a fish even, and I'm still fascinated by it. I wish I could cuddle an axolotl. They're so cute. But yeah, that's probably something that is related to a whole bunch of autistic traits. You could relate it back to not only sensory needs, that being around an animal that's calm can calm us down, and the building of trust and dependability and reliability and all those kinds of things, but also safety and feelings of not feeling safe in most social situations historically throughout your life, and a whole bunch of other things that are either related to your experience of autism itself and how you experience autism, but also related to how you were raised or the behaviour modification techniques used against you, and how that affected your mental health and the way that you existed in survival mode and the effects of the masking. Because with an animal, you don't have to mask.

### ***Engaging with the interests and activities that light me up from inside***

I have to create space in my life to do the things that I love, and it's not up to anyone else to decide how much time is "appropriate" for me to spend doing those things. I don't consider my interests "restrictive" at all, that's deficit-based language from the DSM-5. My interests are deep, and they sustain me and fulfil me in ways that most people don't understand. They help me rest and recover when my energy is drained, and they help protect me from burnout by giving me little glimmers of joy. When I'm engaging with the interests and activities that light me up from inside, I can be in flow and it just restores me to myself like nothing else... and at the same time, I'm accumulating the extra spoons I'll need so that I can do other things that are also important but are less inherently rewarding.

### ***Having an emotional assistance animal***

We really benefited from having a dog. It helped us in so many ways, and now that we know that we're autistic, we know why. We know that it reminded us to drink and stay hydrated and reminded us to leave the house every now and then. It reminded us to get out of bed, or it gave us motivation to get out of bed and gave us hope for the day. Dogs are incredibly hopeful animals, and they love you no matter what, and also there's a safety level. Because of the minority stress and fears and anxieties and past traumas, that dog in the house allows you to sleep more soundly and lowers your stress levels in terms of that safety level, but also physical contact with an animal that's soft and fluffy that's sleeping next to you or on you instantly calms many of us down. An emotional assistance animal is really important.

### ***Finding hope in each other***

Hope is essential in Autistic Burnout and, it seems, we can only find it in each other or in resources and online information that we have made for each other.

## **Skills of resisting neuronormative expectations**

### ***I need to allow myself to rest***

My mind is constantly on overdrive, processing All The Things, at lightning speed, and often I can't stop or even slow down. Things like social interactions, which are probably the mental equivalent of a leisurely walk in the park for most neurotypical people, feel more like a full-on session of HIIT (High-Intensity Interval Training) for me. I can't keep up that pace for long. I get really, really tired. Physically, mentally, and emotionally exhausted. So, I need more breaks, and longer breaks, compared to most non-autistic people. And I know now, that if I don't take those breaks when I need them, if I keep pushing myself, then eventually burnout will catch up with me again, and force me to take a much bigger break, even though I don't want to. I've had to repeat the cycle more times than I'd like to admit, but I've learnt this now - when I'm tired I really do need to allow myself to rest.

### ***Just believe me***

It really makes a difference if other people around me can just believe me when I tell them what I'm going through and not dismiss or minimise it. I know that's hard for them to do sometimes, if they've never experienced it themselves. But I'm not exaggerating. When I say that I'm unable to do things that I might have been able to do previously, even basic things like cooking a meal, sending an email, making and attending an appointment with the GP... I need people around me who will accept that I truly can't do these things without support right now, even though I could do them independently before. Maybe I will be able to do them independently again at some time in the future... but pushing me to do them while I'm trying to recover from burnout, doesn't help, and trying to convince me that I can or "should" be able to do these things only makes me feel worse. Just believe me. That would really help.

### ***Challenging stereotypes***

It's important to me that the old stereotypes and pathologisation of Autism be challenged (e.g. that we are unemotional, that we are selfish, that we don't value friendships, that we all have intellectual disabilities, that we are lazy, that we have no empathy, that we lack motivation, that we can be judged by our behaviours from an outsider perspective without taking our inner experiences/ thoughts/ feeling/ sensations into account, etc.).

### ***Doing what feels right for me***

The thing that's made the biggest difference for me has been really getting to know myself. Connecting with the Autistic community has helped me understand the reasons behind my reactions and my struggles with certain things. When I see that many other Autistic people struggle with the same sorts of things that I do, it's such a relief. It's not just me! This has really helped me work out how to deal with Autistic Burnout and what can (hopefully) help me avoid further burnouts in the future. I'm learning to accept myself and do what feels right for me, even if neurotypical people don't understand or approve of it.

### ***Taking time alone to reset***

Over time I have had more confidence to do what works for me rather than what society expects. In the past, I pushed myself to do what I thought I was meant to be able to do, rather than pay attention to what I needed - now that has changed a lot. Now I know what has been going on I am more ok with it and able to identify issues earlier and make sure I get some alone time to reset.

### ***Helpful skepticism***

I'm gradually weeding out the shoulds and shouldn'ts. I've always been quite skeptical, and I'm finding it really helpful to question these ideas. It's become a habit now, when I hear myself (or anyone else) say "I *should* be able to..." or "I *shouldn't* need..." or anything like that, my next thought is to ask, "Why? Who said so?"

### ***It takes courage***

I'm trying, more and more, to give myself permission to do things in my own way, and not apologise for that. Like, neurotypical people often have certain expectations about time-frames for responding to emails, or being available by phone because that's their preferred method of contacting someone. I often feel like I couldn't meet those expectations even if I wanted to. But also, I've realised that the fact is, most of the time I really don't want to do things their way... and that's ok. Their way isn't "the right way", and my way isn't "the wrong way". I prefer to correspond via email rather than talking on the phone, that works better for me for lots of reasons. I prefer to take the time I need to process information and arrive at a response I'm comfortable with, rather than dashing off a quick reply that I'm not sure is really what I want to say. It takes courage to push back against those expectations. Sometimes I cave, and just do it their way, because I don't have the energy to push back. But every time I do things my own way and feel good about it, my courage grows.

### **Our hopes...**

#### ***More professional understanding***

I think it'd be great to have more professional understanding of how autistic burnout might present differently in different people, how to look out for it, the warning signs or the possible vulnerabilities. In an ideal world, a person would not only know they're autistic as a child and that that's an okay thing, that there are plenty of people out there who are autistic, and they have friends who are autistic or neurodivergent, but also that there were people in their life that were looking out for warning signs or vulnerabilities that they could be protected against. That would be the ideal scenario.... I think everyone who works on their little special interest section of autism and its challenges contributes to that.

#### ***Increasing voices of a diversity of Autistic people***

I hope that more research conducted by Autistic/Neurodivergent people with Autistic/Neurodivergent populations will increase the knowledge of positive aspects and strengths of being Autistic, as well as the true challenges we face and not just the ones others perceive as outsiders. And I hope we can develop ways to confront and change the many wrong assumptions and attitudes about Autism and Neurodiversity in general. I also hope that the increased voices of a diversity of Autistic people can contribute to the destruction of the mass of medical establishment and Neurotypical biased views and misinformation that have been allowed to crush our spirits for too long. We want to come out of the fog, but we want to be able to access this safely and without preconceived ideas about our abilities, potentials and behaviours.

#### ***A more inclusive future***

I hope that this document might be helpful to other Autistic people who read it, whether they have experienced Autistic Burnout or not. We also hope it will spark more ideas about how to create a more sustainably human, inclusive, and neurodiversity-affirming future, not only for Autistic people but for everyone. Sharing our stories about how we deal with Autistic Burnout is one of many ways we can contribute to that.

## **Now that you've read our stories...**

How have they resonated with you?

What are your hopes, for how sharing these skills and knowledges as a living document might make a difference... for you? For others?

Are there stories and skills that you would like to share, from your own experience of dealing with Autistic Burnout?

A note from KJ...

I'd like to express my deepest gratitude and thanks to all the authors of this document... your contribution of time, energy, thoughts, ideas and expertise as co-researchers for this project is greatly appreciated. It has been my privilege to receive your contributions and curate them.

As this is a living document, there is an open invitation to other Autistic adults who have experience in dealing with Autistic Burnout. If you have stories and skills you would like to be included here, please contact me, care of the Dulwich Centre. I would be very happy to hear from you.