



PDA Burnout

Compiled by PDA North America from resources by No Pressure PDA & Trauma Geek

No Pressure PDA - <https://nopressurepda.com>

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About PDA Burnout

“Burnout” is a long term, stress-induced drain that results in sustained behavioral changes such as: extreme mood swings, irritability, exhaustion, addictions, retreating from socializing, and more.

Because of their sensitive nervous system, PDA children are more prone to burning out from “typical” stresses that most people can manage. In fact many parents discover their children are PDA because of how burnout accentuates PDA triggers.

It is common in these spaces that the burnout is triggered by too much activity, but it is also possible that understimulated children experience burnout as well.

Triggers for Burnout

Developmental milestones, co-occurring health needs, external life stresses, sensory sensitivities, are all unavoidable demands that can trigger periods of burnout.

School, “typical” expectations to keep to schedules, inflexible parenting styles, are examples societal-imposed triggers.

We hope as a group we can help you troubleshoot what is truly essential and what can be dropped (long- or short-term) in order to help your child, and your family, function best.

Ways to Heal

Parents can expect that periods (months if not years) of radically reduced demands will allow for healing should include:

- shifting to low-demand parenting
- dropping limits on regulating activities such as “screen time”
- providing as many preferred options and activities as is feasible
- proper education supports
- supporting increased sensory sensitivities like sound, light, safe foods
- troubleshooting safe, stimulating activities when inactivity is making burnout more pronounced
- increased caregiver support so that family members don't also burnout in the process

What to Remember

Burnout accentuates the worst in all of us. We can't escape every stress in life, but there are many expectations in our society that don't fit with PDA needs.

How UNDER-stimulation Can Lead to PDA Burnout By Trauma Geek

Under-stimulation contributes to burnout.

Burnout is not just about over-stimulation. It's about missing the right kind of stimulation, the kind that brings us to coherence and flow.

Burnout is about not having access to pleasure, joy, safe connection, and rest.

Burnout comes from not having co-regulation, not having a safe home space, not having a network of people we can call on for help, not being able to fully express ourselves, not having time in nature, not having time for hobbies or art or play. Burnout comes from not having any of the numerous things that mammals need as social beings - clean air, reliable food sources, soundscapes without mechanical noise, natural water, singing, dancing, community, etc.

Not having what we need is just as stressful to the body as being over-stimulated. Not having what we need causes our nervous system to send the same danger signals and activate the same stress responses as when we encounter a significant threat in our environment. Not having what we need is perceived as a significant threat to the body.

Burnout recovery is not ONLY about avoiding too much stimulation and resting/sleeping as much as possible. It's also about finding healthy and helpful stimulation to replace aversive stimulation.

The kinds of stimulation that tell us we are safe at an Autonomic level can be incredibly difficult to access in the modern world. Burnout is 100% not your fault. It's a collective problem that requires a collective solution.

Burnout is often caused by the wrong kind of stimulation. Healing is often about finding the right kinds of stimulation for our nervous system to perceive deep safety. I want to work towards creating a world where the right kind of stimulation is more easily accessible by all.