UNDERSTAND

It's not just tired. *Neurodivergent burnout.*

Running on empty, and the smallest ways back.

Burnout is what happens when the scale stays tipped toward demands for months and the supports that would balance it are missing. A weekend off takes a little weight off; Monday puts it all back. **Recovery needs the weight to change, not just a pause.**

THREE SIGNS IT'S BURNOUT, NOT TIREDNESS

CHRONIC EXHAUSTION

A tired that sleep and quiet weekends don't touch. Months, not days.

LOSS OF SKILLS

Emails, dinner, the right word mid-sentence. It isn't laziness. It's one of the defining signs.

LOWER SENSORY TOLERANCE

Lights, noise, textures and crowds become too much, faster.

THE HIDDEN LOAD, AND THE REST EACH ONE ASKS FOR

SENSORY

Quiet, dim light, low input, familiar places.

SOCIAL

Time alone, or with people who need nothing from you.

EXECUTIVE

Fewer decisions, routines, someone else planning.

EMOTIONAL

Being heard without being fixed.

MASKING

Time fully unmasked: stimming, skipping the scripts.

PHYSICAL

Sleep, lying down, gentle movement.

THE CHEAPEST THING THAT HELPS A LITTLE

- **Zero spoons:** somewhere dim, earplugs, a heavy blanket, the show you've seen twenty times
- **One spoon:** stim on purpose, cool water on your hands, two minutes outside
- **Two spoons:** a short slow walk, a warm shower, a text to one safe person

THREE SMALL THINGS THIS WEEK

- **Count it.** Name the work under the work.
- **Set one thing down.** Shrink, share or drop one demand.
- **Add one thing back.** One zero- or one-spoon thing, on purpose.

Your body isn't failing you. It's protecting you with what it has left.

- "I used to be able to do this." Try: my capacity changed; my worth didn't.
- "I didn't do anything today." Try: holding it together all day was the thing I did.
- "I'm overreacting." Try: this is a protective response, not a choice.
- Rest is repair, not a reward. You're allowed it.

Leah Hunter, MAMFT · Educational, not a substitute for care from a mental health professional. In crisis? US: call or text 988.