

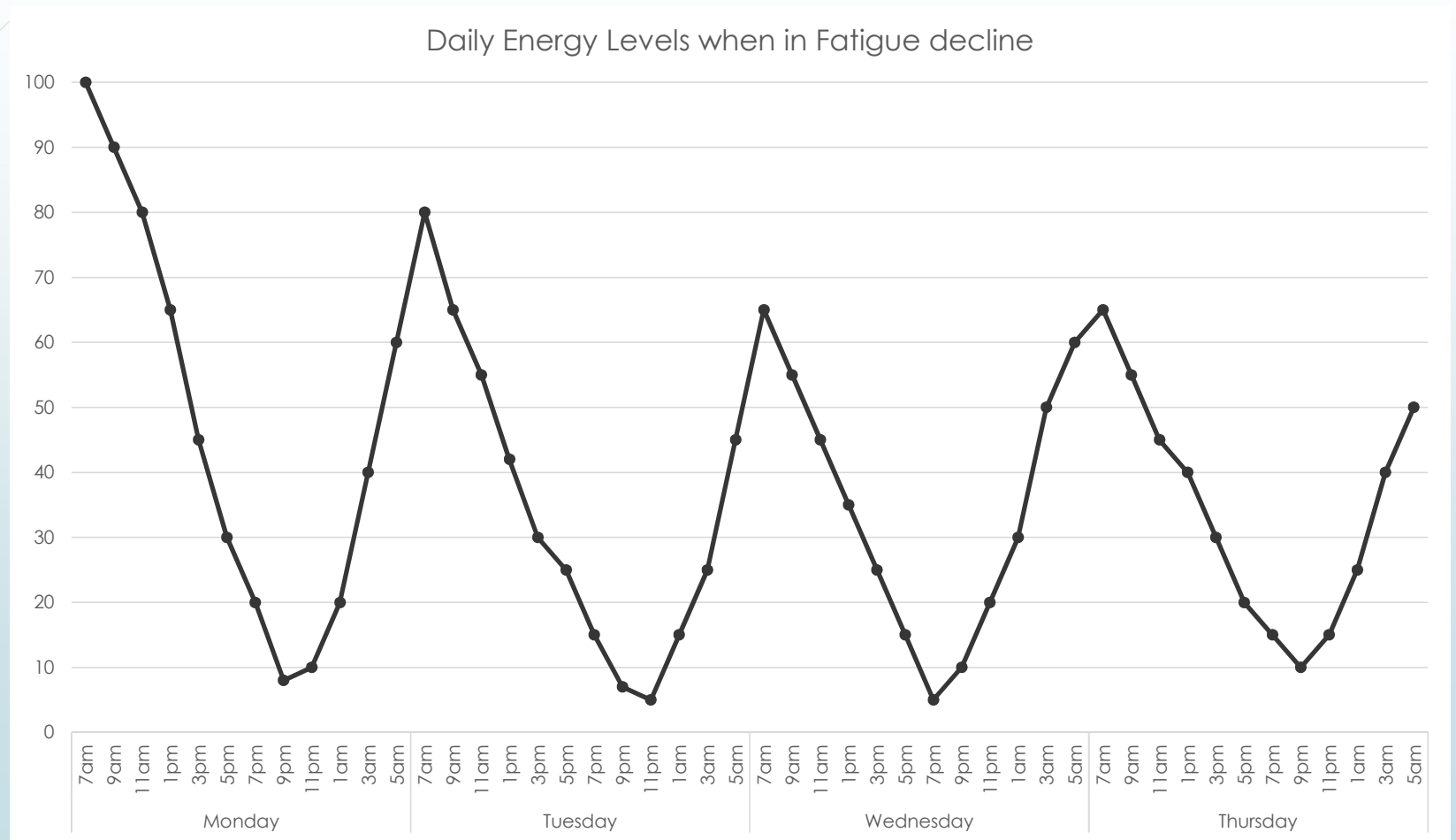


Autism Fatigue and Burnout

Helen Ellis



What is Autism Fatigue and Burnout





Burnout

“a state of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion caused by excessive and prolonged stress”

Herbert Freudenberger, 1970

Signs and symptoms of burnout



Physical signs and symptoms of burnout

- Feeling tired and drained most of the time
- Lowered immunity, frequent illnesses
- Frequent headaches or muscle pain
- Change in appetite or sleep habits

Emotional signs and symptoms of burnout

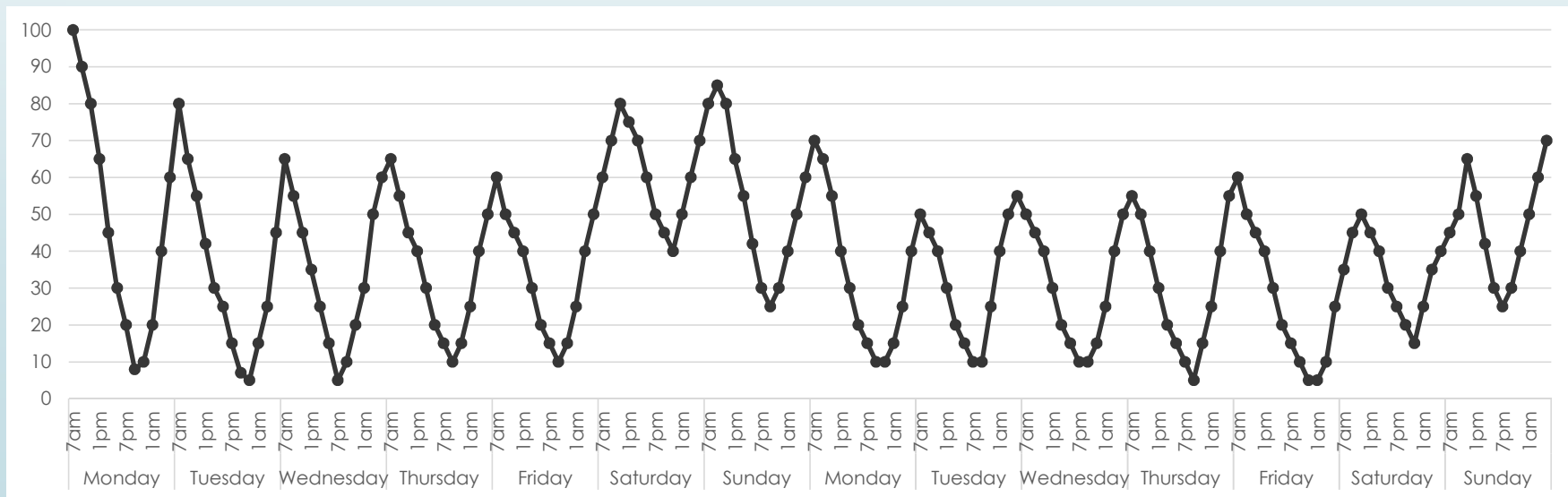
- Sense of failure and self-doubt
- Feeling helpless, trapped, and defeated
- Detachment, feeling alone in the world
- Loss of motivation
- Increasingly cynical and negative outlook
- Decreased satisfaction and sense of accomplishment

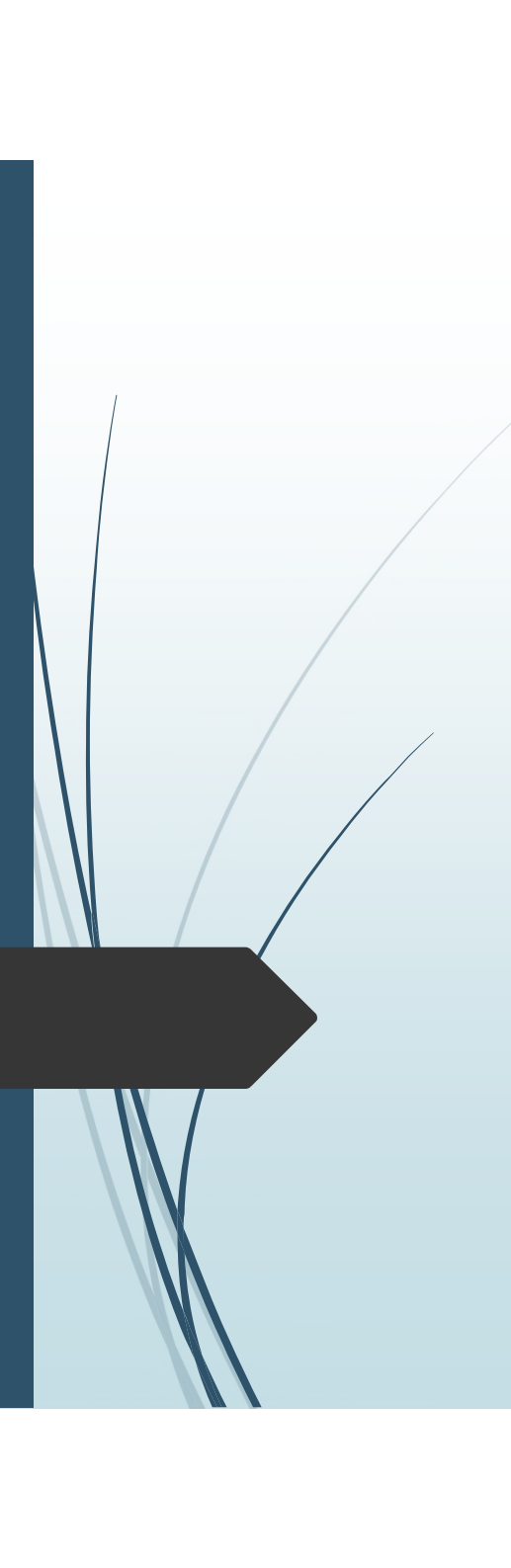
Behavioural signs and symptoms of burnout

- Withdrawing from responsibilities
- Isolating yourself from others
- Procrastinating, taking longer to get things done
- Using food, drugs, or alcohol to cope
- Taking out your frustrations on others
- Skipping work or coming in late and leaving early

Autistic Burnout

“a state of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion caused by excessive and prolonged stress”





Predicting, Avoiding and Coping with Fatigue and Burnout

Predicting

- Look at your calendar – put everything in (including personal appointments, reminders to do household chores and marked out time for tasks such as cooking and travelling)
- Keep a sleep diary – how much are you getting every night and how much is good quality restful sleep? Are your dreams about work or not having enough time?
- How often in the day are you genuinely happy and how many times are you “faking it”?
- Are your sensory sensitivities getting stronger? Do meltdowns feel more imminent more regularly?
- What in your life is giving you purpose? What do you have to look forward to and keep you energised?

| Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| 1 BUSY! | 2 BUSY! | 3 BUSY! | 4 BUSY! | 5 BUSY! |
| 8 BUSY! | 9 BUSY! | 10 BUSY! | 11 BUSY! | 12 BUSY! |
| 15 BUSY! | 16 BUSY! | 17 BUSY! | 18 BUSY! | 19 BUSY! |
| 22 BUSY! | 23 BUSY! | 24 BUSY! | 25 BUSY! | 26 BUSY! |
| 29 BUSY! | 30 BUSY! | 31 BUSY! | | |

Help!



Avoiding

- Ensure time is blocked out to take regular breaks from work/tasks that must be done – do not forget meal times and the time needed to prepare them!
- Use annual leave or ask for respite breaks to get away and recharge
- Talk to managers, partners, friends – this can be checking in with them on what they expect of you but also letting them know when you need to say no to things
- Don't be scared to say no! Looking after yourself is more important than trying to please everyone
- Know your own levels – what can you cope with, what are your early warning signs and what are the things that give you positive energy?



| THURSDAY | |
|----------|------------------|
| | 11 |
| 08 | |
| 09 | |
| 10 | 1:1 with manager |
| 11 | |
| 12 | Lunch break |
| 13 | |
| 14 | |
| 15 | |
| 16 | |
| 17 | Leave on time! |
| 18 | |

Coping

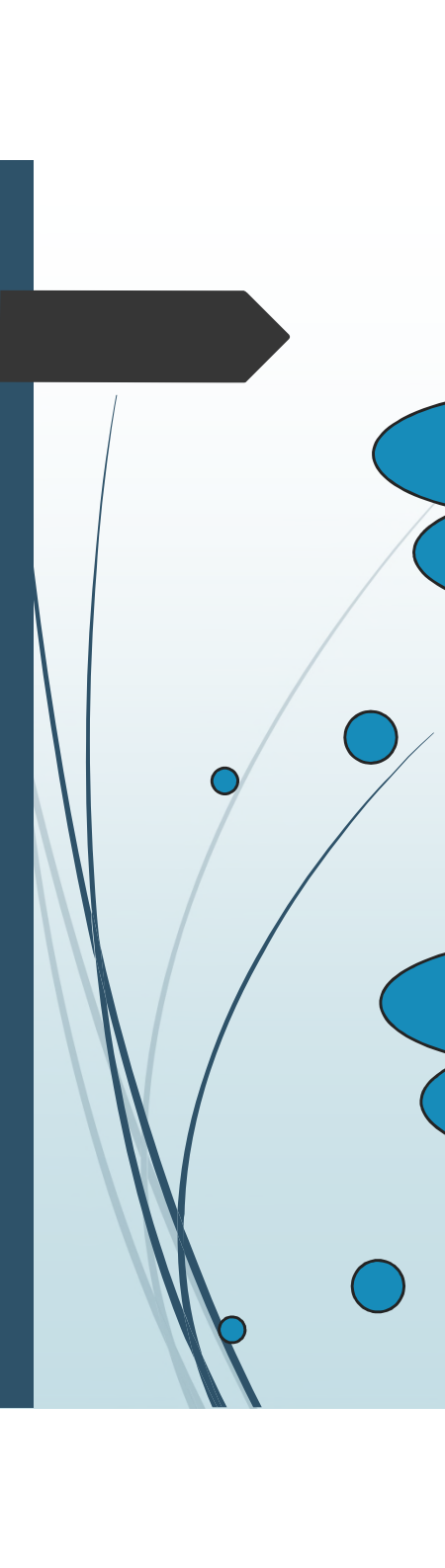
- Exhaustion – more sleep, better quality rest, time away from stress sources
- Physical symptoms – cut out high caffeine/sugar/poor quality food, try to find a physical activity to do, listen to your body!
- Alienation/emotional distance – reconnect with family and friends, spend time with animals, talk to colleagues about non-work things – let them know about your passions



Coping

- Lack creativity – express yourself! Poetry, finger painting, knitting, gardening, music: try new things
- Negativity – stop comparing yourself to others and your past self! Do the best you can do for the current circumstances
- Don't rush – things will take time to start to feel better again, and don't try to hurry back to where you were before
- Learn from the past – ask for help if you feel yourself starting to burnout again and don't slip back into bad habits!



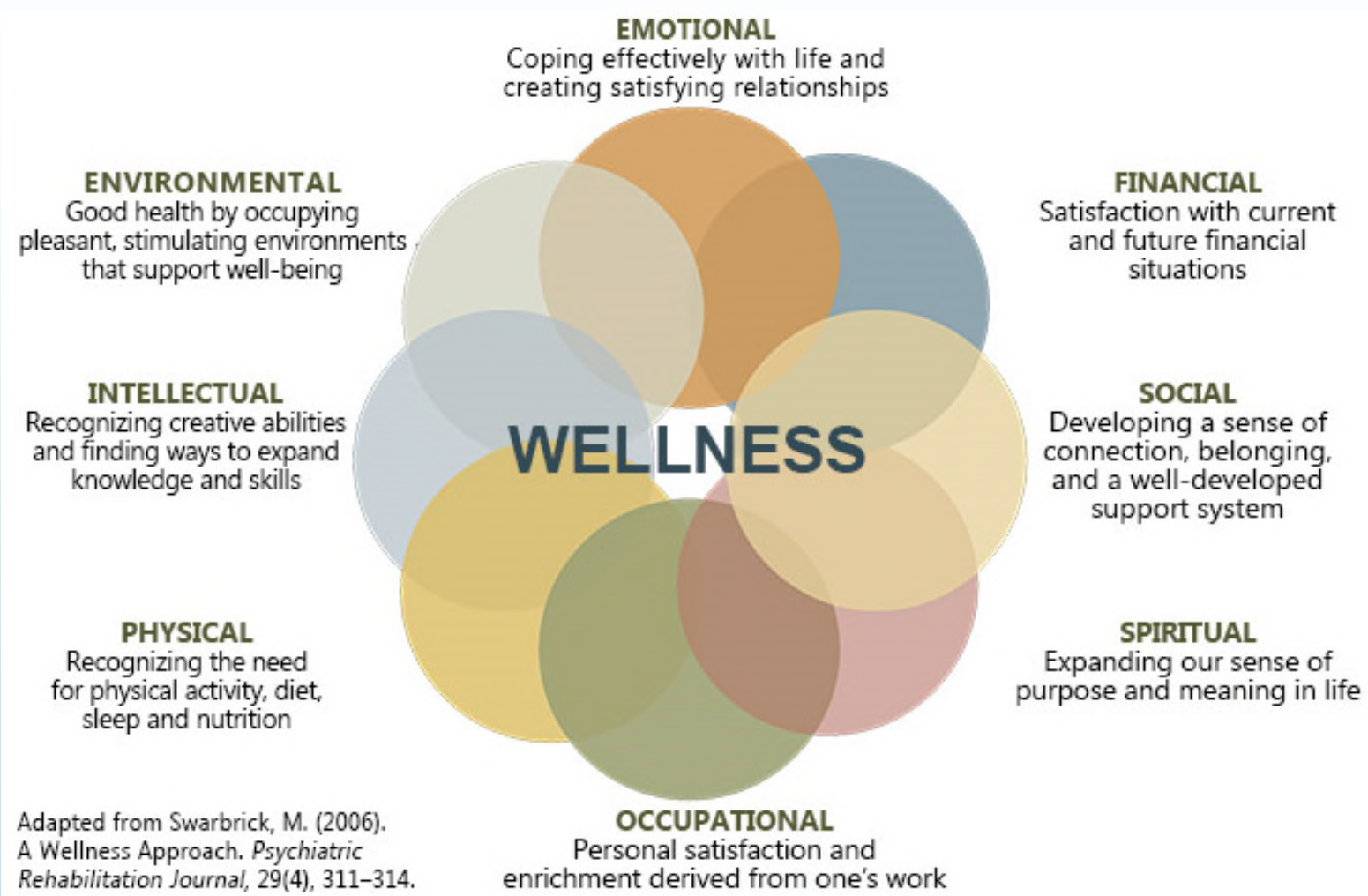
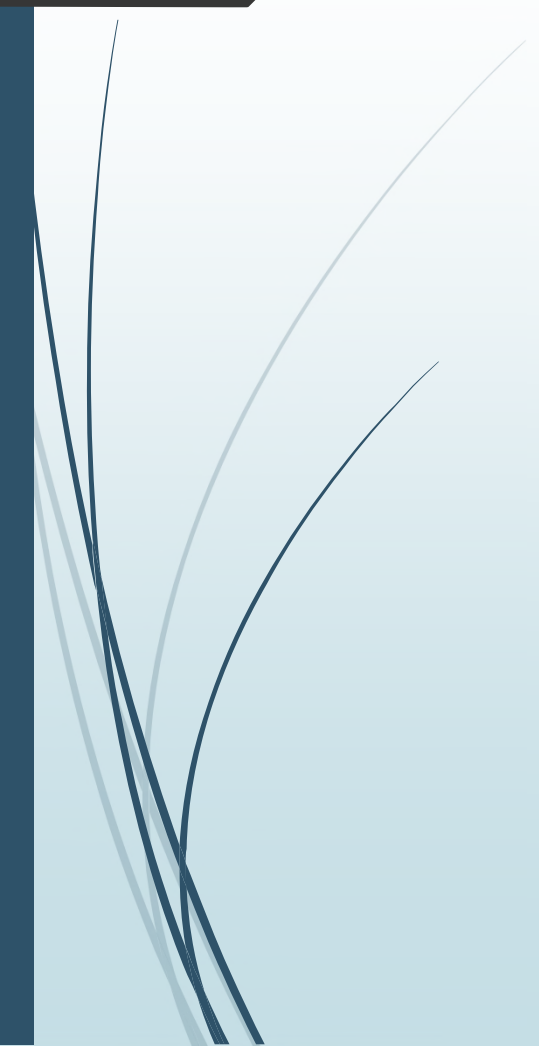


"When the doctor told me I'd burned myself out from too much stress, I found it difficult to believe. To me, stress meant being unhappy, whereas I was really enjoying my life. But it was true: there was no work-life balance and I was living a high-stress life"

"The biggest turning point was when I began to pace myself. Up until then, I'd compare myself to how I was before. If I was feeling a bit better, I would try to do lots of things and then feel ill with exhaustion again. I began to realise I was setting myself unrealistic goals, so I decided to take things gradually"



Autistic Wellbeing and Happiness



HAPPINESS



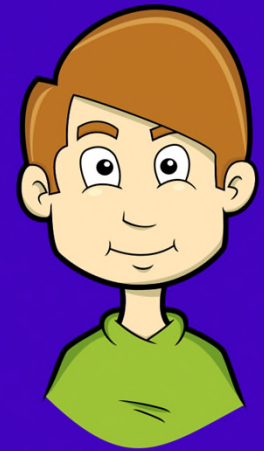
PLEASANT LIFE



Positive feelings
Joy – Pleasure
Absence of pain
Safety
Activities you like



MEANINGFUL LIFE



Contentment
Purpose in life
Personal growth
Serving others
Life satisfaction

Credit - P. Vermeulen

