

Overwhelming Situations



Burnout

A state of emotional, physical, and/or mental exhaustion caused by excessive and/or prolonged stress which can prevent a person from accomplishing desired goals and/or necessary tasks. It occurs when a person feels overwhelmed, emotionally drained, and unable to meet constant demands. The causes of burnout will vary due to many factors like one's sensory needs, lifestyle, and support system. It's most important to take time to rest and recharge after doing something demanding in order to feel your best and avoid burnout.



Meltdown

An intense response to overwhelming circumstances—a complete loss of behavioral control. Some people have difficulty verbally expressing when they are feeling overly anxious or overwhelmed, which sometimes leads to an involuntary coping mechanism—a meltdown. Too much sensory input or other stressors often leads to a meltdown. If you want to be an ally to someone in distress, give the person privacy, a safe place, and never film him/her. Let it pass and don't have them explain the situation as it is happening. Talking is always an option after there's been enough time to rest and recover if the person is willing and able. It is not the same thing as a tantrum and these terms should never be used interchangeably.



Tantrum

In contrast to a meltdown, is a conscious, voluntary behavior done for the purpose of manipulating another to get a specific reward. Knowing the difference between a tantrum and meltdown is crucial to appropriately help people with their unique needs.



Regulation

Managing sensory input in a way that helps a person live a happy and healthy life and prevent burnout/meltdowns. Everyone has a unique way to regulate/realign/ ground themselves. There are a variety of ways to regulate one's body, including stimming, but see page 38 for more examples: