

Thrive 365

Dragonfly: Impact Education



Did you know?

Autistic fatigue is an expression coined by autistic adults to describe the exhaustion caused by the pressure of social situations, 'masking' their autistic traits and sensory stimulation. It can lead to autistic burnout, increased anxiety and depression. It is something that is also worsened by changes in routine - something that has become somewhat unavoidable in recent times! [1]

So, what can we do to support children and young people with autism?

[1] <https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/mental-health/autistic-fatigue/professionals>

1 Know the signs

Knowing the signs of autistic fatigue - and helping young people recognise the signs for themselves - is the first step in avoiding associated distress and/or burnout.

Signs can include: regression - where the child or young person is unable to perform tasks or do things that they could previously; shutting down and/or being unable to speak; covering ears or being more bothered than usual by sensory stimuli; or having stomach-aches, headaches or other physical pains.

2 Energy accounting

Energy accounting works on the principle that there are activities, situations and people who will drain our energy and others that will give us energy because we enjoy them or find them comforting.

Working with the young person to make a list of these things in two columns, help them to assign a score /10 to each thing on the lists (these scores might vary day to day!). If the score in the 'draining' column is higher than the score in the 'energising' column, the aim is to plan in more energising activities.

3 Unmask

'Masking' is the term given to a person with autism minimising their autistic traits and adopting the mannerisms and behaviours of their peers to 'fit in'.

This requires a lot of effort and can be exhausting (often resulting in a meltdown when children return home after school). Allowing children and young people a safe space and some time in the day where they can let their mask drop and engage in behaviours like stimming without fear of judgement can alleviate this.

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