

BURNOUT & WOMEN WITH ADHD

by Saskia Elswijk
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We do hope that you save our e-book about Burnout so that you can refer to it when you need to. Please feel free to share this e-book with your friends, family and colleagues.

You are your best advocate for having ADHD and getting the right treatment and care! You CAN reach out to us via the support groups mentioned in this e-book.

Our e-book was created especially for ADHD Awareness month under the ADHD Europe ADHD Women Subcommittee Group. We are all hoping to help more women with their symptoms and raise awareness about Burnout in ADHD women.

Chantel Fouche

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InTrODuctioN

Each month, **Saskia Elswijk** (host) and **Moon van der Togt** (co-host) an online support group for women with ADHD in the Netherlands. Many women in this group suffer from burnout and burnout symptoms. We held three meetings in September 2021 with the theme of ADHD & Burnout and we would like to share the information which we hope will be useful for you.

If you think you might need professional help after reading this e-book, start with your primary care physician. Discuss with your physician whether and what professional help can best support you alternatively, come join a support group meeting just for women!

The Knowing Me! Knowing You! peer to peer support groups are joined by women globally who go through similar situations as you might find yourself in. Saskia runs the online AD(H)D Women's Café which is hosted every first Friday of the month between 20:00 and 22:00 chatting about anything that concerns you, ADHD-related or not, everything is allowed, like a fun evening in the pub.

Saskia Elswijk & Moon van der Togt
Volunteers Vereniging Impuls & Woortblind



Website <http://www.impulsenwoortblind.nl>

WHAT IS BURNOUT?



Burnout is a psychological term for feeling burnt out and when we no longer have the energy and/or motivation to carry out our daily activities.

Burnout can be recognised by:

- A feeling of strong fatigue
- The feeling of wanting to want to take distance from (the work and/or) people
- The feeling of performing less well, insecurity about one's own capacities
- Depressed and/or emotional moods.

Source: www.burnoutpoli.com



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ADHD IN WOMEN & BURNOUT



The diagnosis of ADHD is sometimes missed, especially in women. A misdiagnosis can cause problems such as **depression, anxiety disorders burnout and others.**

It is difficult to find concrete figures on how common burnout is among ADHD women. This is because women often go into burnout without knowing they have ADHD. If woman knows more about burnout which could be caused by ADHD symptoms then burnout can be treated first instead of the ADHD.



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STUDY REVEALS

In a small-scale study in Sweden revealed the relationship between ADHD and burnout. It was investigated whether ADHD is a possible underlying cause of burnout.

Of all participants who had been ill for a long time showed that

- **24%** were found to have ADHD
- **56%** who experienced burnout, suspected they had ADHD (Brattberg, 2006)
- percentage with "**possible ADHD**" was even higher

Source

www.varkstaden.se/pdf_filer/PTSD_ADHD_artikel.pdf



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ADHD & ADAPTING

Generally, women with ADHD are fantastic at adapting. This adaptive behavior comes with a price.

If you must deal with too many stimuli from yourself and others all day, your brain is already busy processing your daily life. If you are very sensitive and smart, then you often manage to disguise and avoid it.

It then seems like you can handle that job or your studies just fine. In the meantime, you waste so much energy dealing with the stimuli and processing them that you only function at half strength. It's in there, but it just doesn't come out, which makes you feel frustrated. Most ADHD women then start working even harder because they feel like they know they can do it and because they feel as if they should be pushing themselves more.



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ADHD & ADAPTING

While you feel like you can't get it all under control and that you're failing, other people don't see that because you can hide it so fantastically.

People might say to you that you have a nice enough job, what do you mean and you're not succeeding? The battle that you are having with yourself inside because of this also takes a lot of energy and suddenly the lights go out. This all seems sudden, but of course a whole process preceded it.

Burnout is the effect of having done too much for a long time that goes against your own nature. It may feel like you didn't have that much stress at all, but if you're used to living this way and feeling this way, it doesn't feel like stress anymore.

It is the stress that is the reason you may go into burnout.



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Prof. Sandra Kooij: "Women keep a lot of plates spinning anyway and take care of everyone around them, but if you have AD(H)D it's even harder. If a man has it, he just turns on his tunnel vision and delegates, to his wife or his secretary. A woman is less good at that, we naturally pull a lot of caring tasks towards us.

But it's incredibly difficult when with AD(H)D you have to organize not only yourself but also the whole family, birthdays, presents, you name it. And if you have children, you never have a quiet moment at all, which can cause mega chaos in your head. Fortunately, we can treat it well."

Prof. Sandra Kooij is a team member of the [ADHD Women Project](#) and Professional Advisory Member of [ADHD Europe \(Biography\)](#)



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The Effect of Hormones

Hormones have a major impact on ADHD symptoms & also on burnout symptoms.

We would like to refer to the expert in this field about hormones, Prof. Sandra Kooij who talks about it during the ADHD Europe webinar which was held on October 2020 during ADHD Awareness Month.

[Link to webinar \(ADHD & Hormones\)](#)

Prof. Kooij has been and continues researching the relationship between hormones and ADHD. From what she calls “danger week” (the week before your period) to post-partum and (peri)menopause. More about research later on in this e-book.

As a psychiatrist, Prof. Kooij has been **treating women with ADHD for more than 25 years**, and for the past 20 years she’s been studying adult ADHD as the head of the Adult ADHD Program of [PsyQ](#) in the Netherlands.



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Patricia 38, and Burnout!

"When I was diagnosed with burnout three years ago, I **didn't understand it at all**. I was having a great time at my job as a manager in a drugstore, so I didn't think it had anything to do with that. My doctor, however, thought I was **very active for someone with a burnout** and asked if I might have AD(H)D. Because of his own children with ADHD he seemed to know quite a bit about it and during our conversation a lot made sense. He referred me to and there I was extensively examined. **Alot became clear**. He referred me to a diagnostic center and there I was extensively examined. The diagnosis made me a little insecure at first, because my whole self-image was suddenly turned upside down. It also took some time to find the right medication, but now I'm so relieved and I know for sure that it has helped me to get out of the burnout faster."



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Recovering from Burnout

Involves three distinct phases:

Phase 1:

Acceptance and Relaxation

Phase 2:

Causes and Solutions

Phase 3:

Lifestyle Changes



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Phase 1

Acceptance & Relaxation



The first step to the recovery phase in burnout is about acceptance and relaxation.

Accept that you have reached your own limits and don't fret about this all day.

Journaling can help you write your thoughts down.

Make sure you have a structured daily schedule with enough moments of relaxation and rest.

Get enough sleep and limit yourself working to do only as much as you can handle.



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Phase 2

Causes & Solutions



The second phase in recovering from burnout is about identifying causes and solutions.

Questions you could ask yourself are...

- What factors in your lifestyle are causing stress and tension?
- Can you avoid these things in the future or deal with them better?
- What concrete changes do you need to make in your life to prevent a relapse in the future?



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Phase 3

Lifestyle Changes



The third recovery phase in burnout is about implementing the solutions into your life.

Avoid unnecessary things that cause you excessive stress (also take it easy on alcohol).

Do more of the activities that help your brain recover. Both physically and psychologically.

It is important during this phase to continue to invest in yourself and your own health.

(source: BrainBalance)



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5 Tips to Help Recover from Burnout

1 – Get Bored



Doing nothing is one of the best things you can do to recover from burnout. It may feel uncomfortable at first, but over time you will learn to enjoy it.

2 – Eat Smart



Your brain gets burned out faster if you don't give it the building blocks it needs. Take a look at your diet and eat more foods that Eat Brain Food daily to support your burnout recovery.

source: BrainBalance)



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5 tips to help recover from Burnout

3 – Exercise



Moderate exercise activates your parasympathetic nervous system. This triggers all kinds of happiness substances in the brain. The most relaxing effect is a gentle walk in green nature.

4 – Meditate



Like exercise, meditation activates your parasympathetic nervous system.

With this, you can train yourself to go to a quiet place in your mind during times of stress.



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5 tips to help recover from Burnout

5 - Sleep

The less you sleep, the more susceptible you are to stress. Therefore, go to bed on time every night and don't look at your phone in the hours before you go to sleep..

Sleeping well is a challenge if you have ADHD But why? More importantly, what can you do about it?



Prof. Sandra Kooij explains on [Youtube](#) the late sleep phase in ADHD. Is ADHD actually a problem of the biological clock? Melatonin and other medications – do or don't? What is light therapy and is it useful? This Youtube [link](#) will help explain.



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LISTEN TO YOUR BODY !!

TELLTALE SIGNS

The telltale signs were there before you burned out!! Tiredness, irritation, distraction? So how do you prevent burning out again?

1.

Know different causes of Burnout.

There is never just one cause. It is always about the combination of external and internal factors.

2.

Balance! Stay sharp on the balances between:

- Stress vs. Relaxation
- Energy Providers vs. Energy Takers
- Musts vs. Wants
- Need To vs. Have To

3.

Continue to **allow yourself sufficient time** for recovery and moments to recharge



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LISTEN TO YOUR BODY !!

TELLTALE SIGNS

4.

Keep recognizing the signs.

Make sure you continue learning & recognizing the signs that you might be burnout out again

- Signs your body gives
- Pitfalls in your behaviour
- Working on autopilot again

5.

Practice new skills.

Make sure you don't move too fast and take time to practice what you learned during your recovery.

New behaviors really need time and practice to sink in.



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LISTEN TO YOUR BODY !!

TELLTALE SIGNS

6.

Learn to set, recognize and communicate boundaries! Saying no is difficult for many people. Partly because they do not know what they want and because they do not recognize their limits. The other side of saying no is often even more difficult to indicate more about you need/prefer.

7.

Support & Help!

Who can help you when you feel you're getting off track again? Someone who warns you when they recognize the signs. Support from the people surrounding you is extremely important if you suffer from stress-related symptoms. So make sure you keep talking to them about stress and burnout.



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LISTEN TO YOUR BODY !!

TELLTALE SIGNS

8.

Coaching can help preventing a new burnout.

If you notice that after burnout recovery you still suffer from (increasing) stress-related complaints, then it's wise to talk to a specialised stress and burnout coach.

There is a very good chance that during the recovery from the first burnout you skipped some important steps or gave them insufficient attention. A specialized stress and burn-out coach will help you effectively turn the tide, and prevent a second burn-out.

[Download the Practical Guide](#) for finding a coach (Authored by ADHD Europe coaching subgroup, aiming to give you practical tips when looking for a coach to overcome the difficulties associated with your ADHD)



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LISTEN TO YOUR BODY !!

TELLTALE SIGNS

9.

Join a Support Group

There are various peer groups that you can join to find fellow women that are currently experiencing or have had Burnout at these support groups. Women share their struggles, challenges with ADHD and help each other by talking about how they manage their symptoms and strategies to cope!

Knowing Me! Knowing You is a free service. All women are welcome to attend. Please register for each support meeting to receive the zoom link. [Register here](#)

European Support Groups

Find Your ADHD Women Tribe on [our webpage](#).



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LISTEN TO YOUR BODY !!

TELLTALE SIGNS

10.

Be Kind to YOURSELF.

Try not beat yourself up for things in the past, that you can't change. You can change the future!

FORGIVE yourself.

There will be moments of sadness, while you understand that it is OK to have made a mistake, or dropped the ball. This is a grieving process.

Be POSITIVE.

As soon as you ready, you will see life more brighter, it takes time to see this. It will come!

Express GRATITUDE.

Notice your blessings around you. A bed to sleep in, food to eat, your favourite shoes or anything you have that someone else may not have.



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Shining a light on Women's Health

Did you miss this webinar? Prof. Sandra Kooij and Dr. Dora Wynchank shared information about research insights on health of women with ADHD, incl. hormones and cardiac health.

[Watch it here on Youtube](#)





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for adult women
with ADHD.**

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Saskia Elswijk

***for making our Burnout
e-book possible!***



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