PETERBOROUGH

Wednesday 27th March

# COSY UP

A half termly newsletter for by the Autism Advisory Teacher Service for Peterborough's Autism community

# FATIGUE & BURNOUT

#### Rob Emery (Autism Advisory Teacher)

'Autistic Fatigue' or 'Autistic Burnout' are relatively new terms that have been used by adults with autism to describe the intense physical, mental or emotional exhaustion they can experience as a result of coping with the demands placed on them by the neurotypical world. The increasing demands of the academic curriculum as well as the daily social demands of school life, can make our children with autism particularly susceptible to fatigue/burnout. Here, we re-visit the causes, signs and ways to help.

## THE CAUSES

Autistic adults have described several reasons that they experience Autistic Burnout:

•Sensory Overload

•The increased demands that social situations place on them

•Masking autistic traits for prolonged periods

•Suppressing stimming

•A sense of not meeting other people's or society's expectations

Burnout could happen at any time throughout a child's development, but we may need to monitor our children and young people more dosely at times of increased stress such as during transitions or in the period leading up to exams. The early signs of burnout or fatigue can present itself in different ways. Changes in behaviour such as becoming withdrawn and avoiding social situations or activities that they used to enjoy. Also, more volatile behaviours resulting in periods of distress. Changes in diet or sleep pattems could all be warning signs of burnout.





# HOW TO HELP

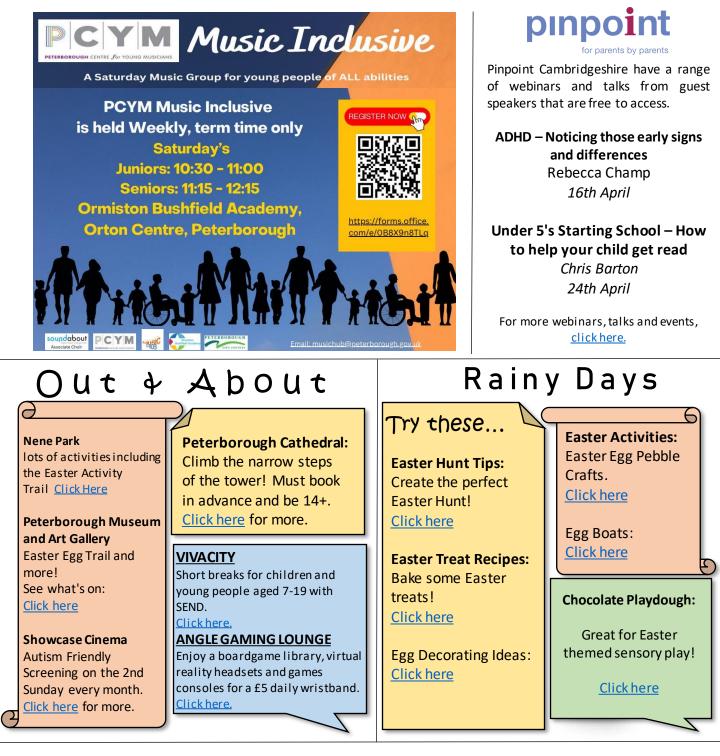
If we think a child or young person may be showing signs of Autistic Burnout, we may need to dial down the demands we are placing on them. Allow extra leisure/relaxing time or find a time/space for them to not have to mask their autism. Communication between parents and schools is key.

Energy accounting is a system for considering the emotional energy that the individual has available on a given day and the amount of energy that will need to be expended on the day's tasks. These are assigned numerical values to help the individual plan how they will spend and replenish their energy levels throughout the day. This can be a useful strategy for older children and young people but for our younger children we need to support them to know themselves and their emotional tolerance levels.

Emotion coaching is a good way to begin to help younger children to explore the language related to emotions and identify their own feelings. We calmly label the emotion that is being demonstrated: 'I can see that you feel upset'. We validate the emotion: 'Sometimes I get upset too, especially when I can't have something that I want'. Then we offer a strategy to support them: 'When I'm upset, I like to go for a short walk on my own, it helps me to feel better'.

By supporting our children and young people to be aware of their emotional energy levels and supporting them to fins strategies to replenish their levels when they are running low, we can help our children and young people to avoid burnout.





# NOTICE BOARD

#### To do:

- Consider exam preparations <u>Click</u> <u>here.</u>
- Have your say in the Pinpoint annual survey Click here.

#### Upcoming events:

PinPoint SEND Annual Conference 20th June

... And more! <u>Click here</u>

### PARENT AND CARER PHONE CONSULTATIONS

Advice and support at home.

To book a phone call with one of our Autism Specialist Teachers please email <u>SEN.Inclusion@peterborough.gov.uk</u>

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