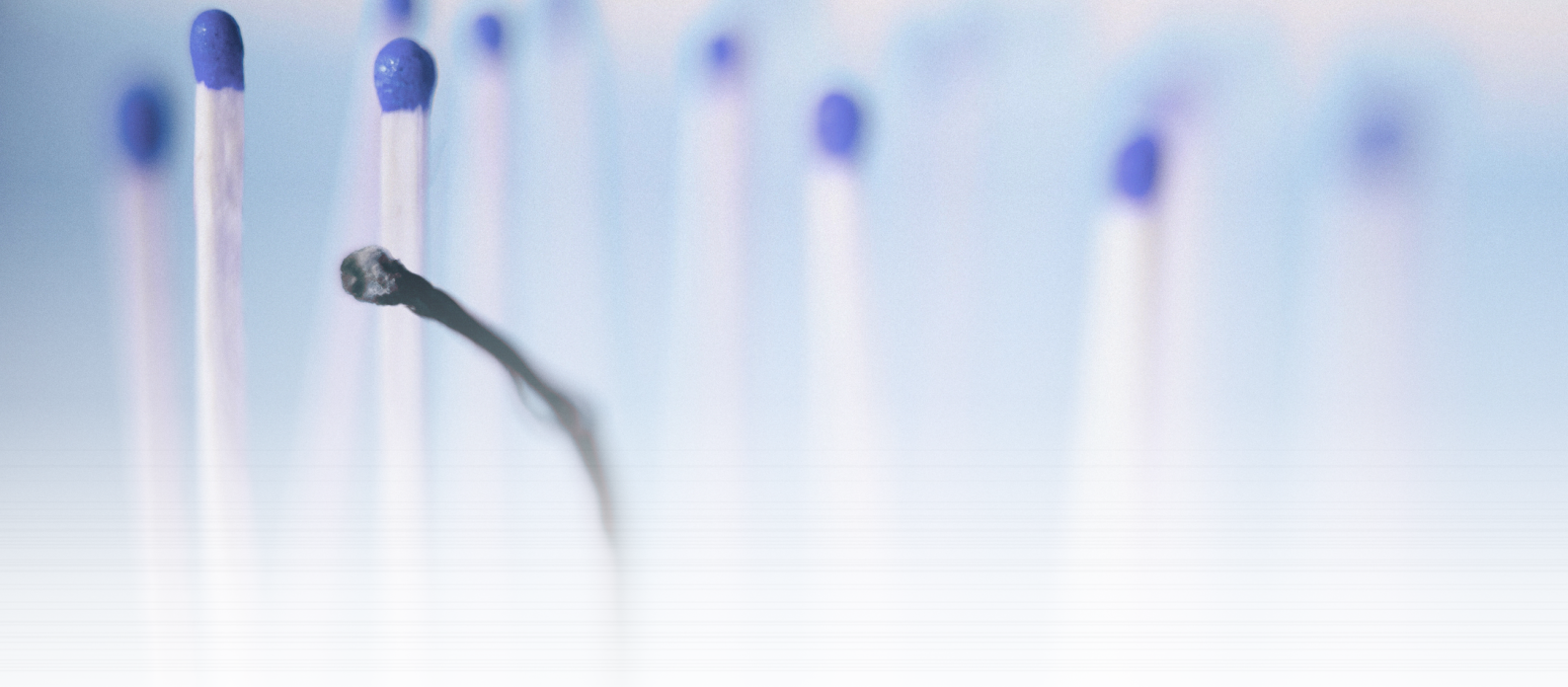




BURNOUT RECOVERY

W O R K B O O K

A THERAPIST-CREATED WORKBOOK
TO HELP YOU RESET, REFLECT, AND RECONNECT WITH
YOUR NERVOUS SYSTEM

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UKCP Registered Psychotherapist & Clinical Supervisor

EDITION 1

PREFACE

This workbook is your invitation to rest – not as a reward, but as a right. You'll find space here to reflect, reconnect, and remember what makes you feel most like yourself

This workbook is for the part of you that's tired – not just physically, but deep down.

The part that's still holding everything together, even though something inside feels off. The part that wonders if you're doing enough, being enough, or allowed to stop.

This is a space for rest, reflection, and reconnection.

There's no perfect way to use it.

No deadline.

No pressure to finish.



MEET THE AUTHOR

Claire Daplyn is a UKCP registered psychotherapist and clinical supervisor with over a decade of experience supporting people through stress, burnout, and emotional overwhelm. She is the founder of Inner Space Counselling Ltd., a therapy practice based in Tunbridge Wells, UK.



Claire's approach draws on Transactional Analysis, neuroscience, and a practical understanding of what helps people move forward. Her work focuses on helping people reconnect with themselves and find sustainable ways to restore energy, boundaries, and clarity.

This workbook was created from real moments in the therapy room; the stuck points, the lightbulb moments, and the steady process of reclaiming what matters. It's designed to offer tools you can return to at your own pace, in a way that feels useful and honest.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

This workbook is here to support you gently. There's no right way to use it and no need to complete it all in one go. Many people dealing with burnout are already feeling pressure. So let this be a space where you explore, pause, reflect, and return as needed. Go at your own pace. Be kind to yourself. This is about recovery, not performance

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WHAT IS BURNOUT?



Burnout isn't just tiredness



It's emotional, mental, and physical depletion caused by long-term stress, especially when stopping feels impossible, and rest doesn't feel restorative. Your body and mind are not failing you. They're responding to overload.

How Burnout Shows Up (Body + Mind)

Burnout affects everything; your nervous system, hormones, sleep, digestion, and mood.

Common signs include:

- Constant tiredness (even after rest)
- Trouble focusing or making small decisions
- Irritability, emotional numbness, or guilt
- Feeling detached from things you usually care about
- Overworking without actually feeling productive

Pause + Reflect

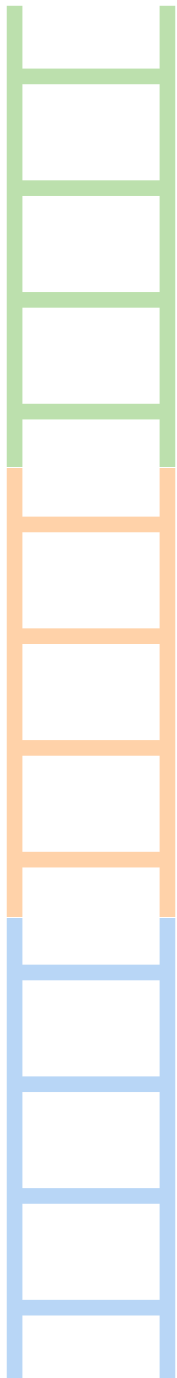
Which signs have shown up for you lately?

You might be doing everything “right” and still feel exhausted, anxious, or shut down. That doesn't mean you're weak. It means your system is asking for something different.

This workbook will help you listen again and start reclaiming your energy, clarity, and boundaries.

YOUR NERVOUS SYSTEM ON BURNOUT

Think of your nervous system like a ladder. Where you are on the ladder shapes how you feel, think, connect and how much energy you have.



● **Top rung – SAFETY (Safe + Social)**

- You feel present, connected, open, creative
- Your body feels grounded, your breath easy
- You can set boundaries, ask for help, laugh

● **Middle rung – OVERDRIVE (Mobilised)**

- You feel anxious, wired, irritable
- You're go-go-go, but with little joy
- You might get snappy, perfectionistic, or frantic

● **Bottom rung – SHUTDOWN**

- You feel flat, heavy, foggy, disconnected
- Rest doesn't feel restorative, it feels numb
- You might isolate, freeze, or feel invisible

💡 Here's the thing:

Burnout often means we're cycling between 🟠 overdrive and 🔵 shutdown – never quite able to reach 🟢 safety.

Sometimes your body senses threat even when your mind doesn't. That's called **neuroception** and it's not something you can think your way out of.

You don't have to climb all at once. Small, kind steps up the ladder are enough.



Pause + Reflect:

- Where do you spend most of your time on the ladder lately?

- What does that feel like in your body?

- What helps you take one step up – not a leap, just a step?

CO-REGULATION: YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO IT ALONE

Your nervous system is built for connection. It calms down not just through rest, but through *relationship*.

We regulate with others not just on our own.

In Polyvagal Theory, this is called co-regulation – the way our body and brain feel safer when we're near someone who is grounded, kind, and steady. When someone's presence says: “You're okay. I've got you.”

Co-regulation might look like:

- A friend who listens without trying to fix you
- A therapist who holds space without rushing you
- A partner's hug, a pet curled up beside you, a warm voice on the phone
- A moment of shared quiet with someone who doesn't need you to perform
- Even a memory of someone who once made you feel deeply safe



You don't have to heal in isolation. Co-regulation isn't a weakness. It's your biology asking for safety and offering safety to others, too.

Even one safe moment with another person can begin to shift your nervous system back toward balance.

Pause + Reflect:

- Who helps your system feel softer, slower, safer – even just a little?
- What kind of presence settles you: stillness, lightness, humour, quiet?
- Where in your life could you seek (or allow) co-regulation more often?



THE INTERNAL PRESSURE THAT KEEPS YOU STUCK

Why You Might Keep Going When You're Exhausted

Burnout doesn't just come from external pressure.

It often begins with internal rules, unconscious beliefs picked up in childhood that tell us we must keep going.

In Transactional Analysis (TA), these rules are called Drivers - messages like:



These helped us survive, fit in, or feel safe.

But in adulthood, they often push us past our limits - even when no one else is asking us to.



Polyvagal Theory helps us understand what happens in the body when we live by these rules for too long:

- We enter ● **Sympathetic overdrive** (tense, anxious, on edge)
- Or we collapse into ● **Dorsal shutdown** (numb, heavy, checked out)

We burn out trying to earn safety we never feel we're allowed to have.

 This isn't a flaw. It's a survival response that became a habit.

Pause + Reflect:

- Which of these internal messages feel familiar to you?

- What parts of your nervous system do they activate?

- What might a more compassionate voice sound like?

UNSPOKEN BURNOUT RULES

Which of these messages have shaped how you move through the world?

Tick all that resonate with you - no judgement, just awareness.

- ☐ I feel like I always have to be useful
- ☐ I can't rest unless everything is done
- ☐ I worry others will be disappointed in me
- ☐ I keep going even when my body says stop
- ☐ I feel like slowing down is lazy
- ☐ I don't know how to stop without feeling guilty
- ☐ I worry that if I don't do it, no one will
- ☐ I feel like asking for help makes me a burden

Pause + Reflect:

- Where do you think these messages came from?

- Are they still true - or just familiar?

- What new messages might support you better now?

EARLY WARNING SIGNS

“

Burnout rarely shows up all at once.

”

It builds – slowly, subtly until you barely remember what “rested” feels like. Noticing the early signs means you can respond with care, not collapse.

Early signs might include:

- Struggling to fall asleep or waking through the night
- Avoiding simple tasks or decisions
- Feeling disconnected from your body
- Constant mental chatter or zoning out
- A short fuse or low tolerance for noise, people, or pressure
- Tearfulness, resentment, or emotional numbness
- Losing interest in things that normally bring comfort
- Feeling behind even when you’re doing your best

Pause + Reflect:

- What are your early signs that something’s off?

- Can you name three signals your body or mind gives you?

Write them down. They’re not warning signs of failure, they’re invitations to slow down sooner

YOUR BURNOUT MAP

Trigger

Signs

Response

Recovery

Everyone's burnout looks a little different.

Some people feel like they're drowning.

Some feel like they're vanishing.

Some can't stop moving.

Some can't get off the couch.

Use this space to begin noticing your pattern without judgement, without pressure. Just curiosity.

Your Burnout Map - Explore the Pattern

- What tends to trigger burnout for me?

- What physical signs do I notice first?

- What emotions or thoughts show up next?

- What do I usually do in response (push through, isolate, etc.)?

- What helps me begin to feel like myself again - even slightly?

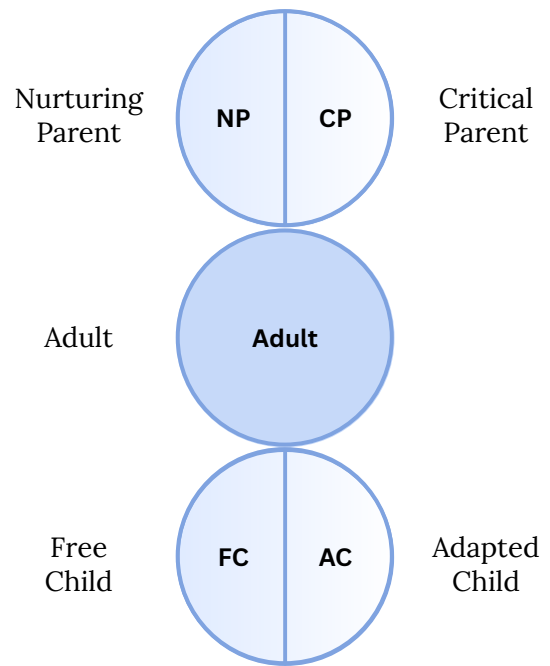
This isn't about diagnosis. It's about awareness.

And awareness gives you **choice**.

HOW BURNOUT DISRUPTS YOUR INNER WORLD

In Transactional Analysis (TA), we talk about **functional ego states** – the different parts of us that think, feel, and respond.

These parts show up in all of us. Burnout tends to pull us away from the ones that *feel most like us*.



Functional Ego States in Burnout:



Critical Parent – The harsh inner voice: “Keep going.” “Not good enough.” “You should be coping better.”



Nurturing Parent – The soothing part: offers warmth, permission to rest, emotional safety



Adult – Calm, balanced, present: assesses clearly, makes choices from the here and now



Free Child – Creative, playful, curious: feels joy, follows impulses, connects easily



Adapted Child – People-pleasing, fearful, frozen: tries to stay safe by conforming or shutting down

When we're burnt out, the **Critical Parent** and **Adapted Child** parts often take over -while the nurturing, playful, and grounded parts go quiet.

Pause + Reflect:

- Which ego state do you notice yourself spending the most time in lately? (e.g. *Critical Parent, Adapted Child, Adult...*)

- Which parts of you feel hard to access right now? Why might that be?

- What helps your Free Child feel safe enough to show up – even briefly? (Think: *playfulness, curiosity, joy*)

- What would help your Nurturing Parent step in more often? (What kind of support or internal permission do you need?)

“

**The goal isn't to "get it right."
It's to bring more balance back to your inner world.**

”

BURNOUT AND THE OLD STORIES WE CARRY

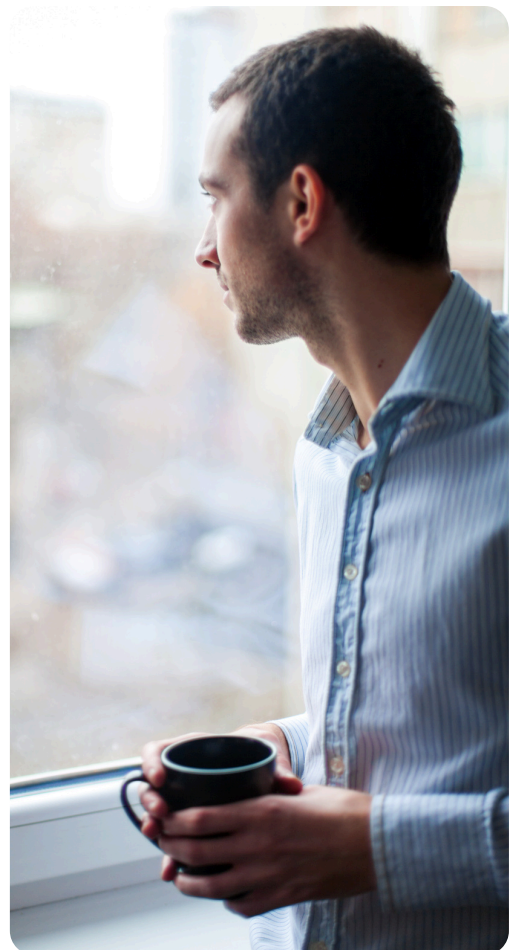
Burnout doesn't just come from what's happening now. It's shaped by old stories - quiet beliefs we absorbed long ago about who we have to be in order to belong, be safe, or be loved.

These stories often run beneath the surface. But they shape everything: how we work, rest, ask, give, and collapse.

Common Inner Scripts:

- “I must prove myself.”
- “I can't let anyone down.”
- “Rest is selfish.”
- “I'm not allowed to ask for help.”
- “If I stop, everything will fall apart.”
- “My worth comes from being needed.”

These aren't your fault. They were once survival strategies - ways to stay safe in the systems or families you grew up in. But now? You have the right to rewrite them.



“

You are allowed to rest without needing to earn it.

”

Pause + Reflect:

- What story might be driving your burnout right now?

- Whose voice does it sound like?

- What story would you rather live by?



RECLAIMING REST

“

Rest is not a break from progress. It's part of it.

”

Rest isn't a reward. It's a biological need - and a birthright.

You don't need to earn it.

You don't need to explain it.

You don't need to finish everything first.

Your body begins to recover when it feels safe - not when the list is done, inbox is cleared, or house is spotless.

“

Rest isn't lazy. It's how your nervous system resets.

”

It can be stillness.

It can be quiet.

It can be pleasure.

It can be doing less - and noticing how much that softens things.

Pause + Reflect:

- When was the last time rest actually felt restorative for you - not rushed, not guilty, not earned?

- What kind of rest does your body respond to best?

CREATING YOUR REST MENU



Not all rest is the same.



What restores one person might drain another.

This is your chance to build a personalised Rest Menu – one you can return to when you're tired, overloaded, or unsure what you need.

You don't have to guess. You just have to listen.

Your Rest Menu



Physical Rest:

Stretching, lying down, warm bath, slow walk

➡ What helps your body soften?



Mental Rest: Podcasts, zoning out, daydreaming, intentional screens-off time

➡ What clears your mind without numbing it?



Emotional Rest: Journaling, crying, safe conversations, watching something comforting

➡ What gives your feelings space to exist?



Sensory Rest:

Low lights, white noise, soft blankets, silence

➡ What helps your nervous system settle?



Social Rest: Time with people who don't need you to perform or no people at all

➡ Where can you be real, not "on"?

Use the space below to add your own ideas.

This is your menu. Keep it somewhere visible. Let it change as you do.

7-DAY REST TRACKER

This is not a test.

It's a way to gently notice the kinds of rest you're making space for - and which types might be missing.

Each day, check off the types of rest you allowed yourself. One is enough. A few is a bonus. None? That's useful information too.

Your Weekly Rest Check-In

	PHYSICAL	MENTAL	EMOTIONAL	SENSORY	SOCIAL
MON					
TUE					
WED					
THU					
FRI					

Notice the patterns.

- Are there rest types you rarely access?

- Are weekends different from weekdays?

- What helped you say yes to rest?



BOUNDARIES AND PERMISSION



**Burnout often happens in the space where we say “yes”
when we mean “no.”**



Boundaries aren't walls, they're edges.

Edges that say:

“This is what I can give.”

“This is what I need.”

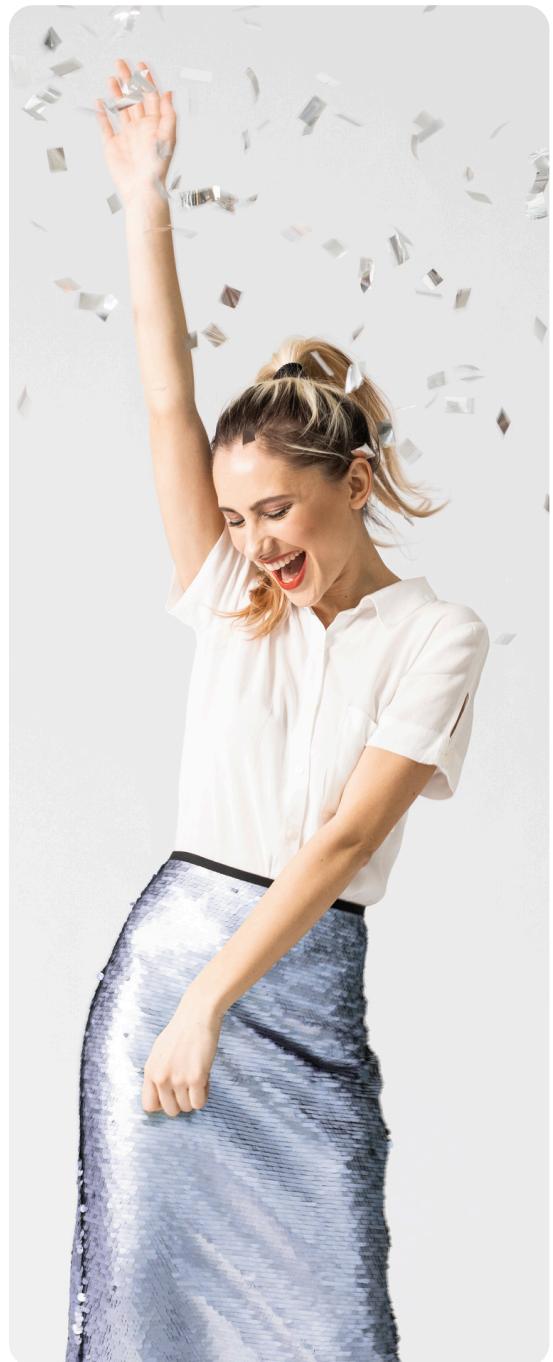
“This is where I stop.”

You don't need to explain them. You
don't need to apologise for them.

You just need to practice them
imperfectly, bravely, again and again.

Give Yourself Permission To:

- Say no without a story
- Cancel plans without guilt
- Pause before responding
- Ask for more time
- Leave a conversation when your
body says “enough”
- Rest without finishing the list



Pause + Reflect:

- Where do you notice your boundaries getting thin?

- What would “permission” sound like in your own voice?



YOUR PERMISSION SLIP

Sometimes the hardest part of rest or recovery is not the work itself - it's giving yourself permission to begin. This page is here to help you practice that.

Write what you need to hear. Make it real. Stick it somewhere visible. Reuse it as often as you like.

Permission Slip

I give myself permission to:

This permission is valid even if...

- Others don't understand
- I haven't finished everything
- I feel uncomfortable at first

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Try this:

Fill out a new one each week - or each time you notice burnout creeping in again. You don't need to earn permission.

A LETTER TO MYSELF

This page is for the part of you that's tired, trying, and still showing up.
Use it to write to yourself - not from the critical voice, but from the wise,
kind, grounded part of you.

- What do you need to hear right now?
- What would your compassionate self say if she had space to speak?

You don't need to get it right. You just need to be honest, and gentle if you can.

You might start with:

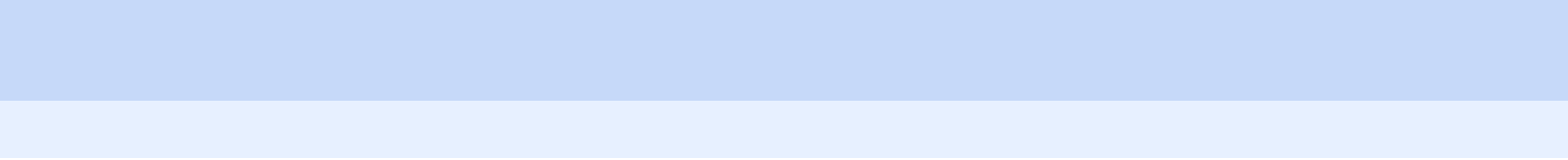
Dear me,

I know this has been a lot. But I want you to remember...

Want more structure? Try including:

- Something you're proud of
- Something you forgive yourself for
- Something you hope for
- Something you no longer need to carry





Handwriting practice area with 20 horizontal blue lines.

LOOKING BACK, MOVING FORWARD



Reflection is where healing deepens.



You've spent time noticing, naming, and reconnecting with parts of yourself that may have been long ignored.

You don't need to have all the answers. But you can choose what comes with you - and what you're ready to leave behind.

Take a moment to check in.

Looking Back:

- One thing I've realised about myself is...

- A message I'm ready to soften is...

- A boundary I want to honour is...

Moving Forward:

- A practice I'll return to when I feel disconnected is...

- A new permission I want to offer myself is...

- One small next step I feel ready to take is...



PRINTABLE QUOTE CARDS

“

Words matter - especially when your inner voice is tired.

”

These quotes are here to interrupt self-criticism, bring you back to yourself, and remind you what's true.

Cut them out. Screenshot them. Pin them on your fridge, desk, or phone wallpaper.

Let them land. Let them help.

Quote Cards (*Colour*)

“You're not broken.
You're burnt out.
There's a
difference.”

“Exhaustion isn't a
flaw. It's a signal.”

“Rest isn't lazy. It's
how your nervous
system resets.”

“Guilt is not a sign
you've done
something wrong.
It's a sign you're
healing old
patterns.”

“You can stop
proving yourself.
You were already
enough.”

“Doing less isn't
giving up. It's
choosing what
matters.”

GLOSSARY

These definitions are here to support you

You don't need to memorise or master them, just come back here anytime something feels unclear or unfamiliar.

Burnout: A state of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion caused by prolonged stress - especially when rest doesn't feel possible or allowed.

Dorsal Vagal: The "shutdown" state - where you feel numb, disconnected, heavy, or checked out.

Drivers: Internal rules learned early in life (like "Be Perfect" or "Please Others") that can push us into burnout when left unchecked.

Ego States: The internal voices or modes we operate from: the nurturing or critical Parent, the present Adult, and the playful or compliant Child

Neuroception: The body's subconscious ability to detect safety or threat even before the mind is aware of it. It's how your nervous system responds automatically to tone of voice, facial expression, body language, or environment, without needing conscious thought

Polyvagal Theory: A way of understanding how your nervous system responds to safety or threat, shaping how you feel, react, and connect with others.

Rest Menu: A personalised list of rest practices - physical, mental, emotional, sensory, and social.

Script: An unconscious life story or pattern developed in childhood - often influencing how we relate, work, and care for others.

Sympathetic State: The “activated” state - often felt as fight, flight, anxiety, or restlessness.

Transactional Analysis (TA): A model of personality and communication based on three ego states: Parent, Adult, and Child.

Ventral Vagal: The “safe” state of the nervous system - when you feel grounded, socially connected, and emotionally regulated.



REFERENCES & WHERE TO LEARN MORE

If you want to go deeper...

These are some of the books, websites, and ideas that have shaped this workbook -and may support you further in your own journey

On Transactional Analysis (TA):

- *Games People Play* by Dr. Eric Berne (The original TA classic)
- *TA Today* by Ian Stewart & Vann Joines (A clear and accessible guide to TA theory and practice)
- UKATA – www.uktransactionalanalysis.co.uk (The UK Association for Transactional Analysis – find articles, training, and therapists)

On Polyvagal Theory:

- *The Polyvagal Theory* by Dr. Stephen Porges
- *Anchored* by Deb Dana (A compassionate, practical introduction to Polyvagal ideas)
- www.rhythmofregulation.com (Deb Dana's resource hub for Polyvagal based practices)

On Burnout and Recovery:

- *Burnout: The Secret to Unlocking the Stress Cycle* by Emily & Amelia Nagoski
- *The Body Keeps the Score* by Dr. Bessel van der Kolk
- *When the Body Says No* by Dr. Gabor Maté

Thank You

Thank you for showing up for yourself in this work.

This workbook isn't about fixing yourself, it's about remembering that you were never broken.

Keep listening to your body. Keep returning to rest. Keep questioning the stories that no longer serve you.

You're not alone, and you're allowed to go at your own pace.



CLOSING REFLECTIONS

Take a moment to pause and honour the space you've created for yourself.

This work isn't about doing more - it's about **being with yourself differently**.

You might want to finish by answering one or two of the questions below. Or simply sit with them:

- When I feel tired, I will...
- I want to remember that...
- When I start to push again, I will remind myself...
- I feel most like myself when...



Let this be your gentle commitment to your future self.

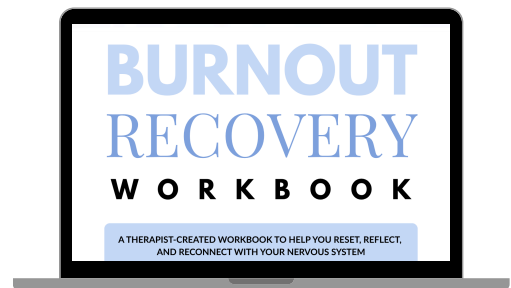
USING THIS WORKBOOK

(DIGITAL OR PRINT)

This workbook can be used digitally or printed out - whatever supports you best:

◆ USE IT DIGITALLY:

- Open with your favourite PDF editor or annotation app (e.g. **GoodNotes, Notability, Adobe**)
- Type directly into the text boxes or use a stylus to handwrite responses



◆ USE IT PRINTED:

- Print the whole workbook or just selected pages (**like the rest tracker or quote cards**)
- Keep it in a binder or notebook for quiet reflection time



TIP

The quote cards at the end can be screenshotted, printed, or used as reminders on your phone or desk.

Come back as often as you need.

ABOUT THE CREATOR

This workbook was created by Claire Daplyn, MSc.,

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**Want more tools and
updates?**

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