
PARENT BURNOUT

Parent Burnout 24-Hour Reset

A one-pager for the day after the worst day.

Tonight

You need sleep and lowered activation. Your nervous system is flooded.

Aim for six hours minimum. Put your phone across the room. Set an alarm so you're not anxious about oversleeping. You don't need to "process" today or plan tomorrow yet.

If you can't sleep:

- Don't fight it. Read something boring on paper. Stay in dim light.
- Do not scroll, do not problem-solve in your head.
- Lie still. Your body rests even when your mind won't.

Lower the house chaos before bed. Dishes in the sink, laundry in a pile, toys everywhere — these create background stress even when you're asleep. Spend 10 minutes putting things into containers so they're out of sight. You're not cleaning; you're hiding the visible wreckage.

Skip bedtime routine with your child if it will cost you 30 minutes of sleep. Say:

"Tonight we're doing quick cuddles instead because I need rest. Tomorrow things are back to normal."

Don't justify. Don't apologise. That's the full script.

Tomorrow

You've rested. Now: structure, small wins, and telling someone.

Have one simple meal plan. Breakfast, lunch, dinner — pick the easiest option for each. Cereal. Toast. Pasta. Something you can make without deciding. Write it down or put it on your phone so you don't have to think at 6pm.

Tell one person it was a hard day. A partner, a parent, a friend. One sentence:

"Yesterday was a burnout day. I'm recovering today, so we're doing low-key stuff."

This does two things: it normalises what happened (you're not broken, you're recovering) and it may get you 30 minutes of help or at least some grace from others' expectations.

Identify one thing you won't do. You cannot parent, work, and clean at full capacity right now. Pick one to drop:

- No deep cleaning. No laundry folding. No meal prep.
- Or: no work emails. No admin tasks. No returns.
- Or: no social plans. No group chats. No decisions.

Pick one. Write it down. Refer to it when someone asks.

Do one ordinary thing with your child. Not special, not compensatory. A walk. A film. Colouring. Something that requires your presence but not your performance.

This week: What to stop

- **Stop negotiating every transition.** ("You can watch one more episode if you brush your teeth first.") Use statements instead: "Tablets go away at 6pm. Then dinner."
- **Stop explaining your limits.** You don't have to justify bedtime, screentime rules, or "no" to activities. Repeat the boundary once. Then stop talking.
- **Stop fixing things that aren't broken yet.** Don't pre-solve problems. Don't anticipate meltdowns. Let them happen, then respond.
- **Stop being the only person who knows where things are.** Where are the clean uniforms? Where's the permission slip? Other people can learn. Say "I don't know, go look" without guilt.

If you're having thoughts of harming yourself or your child, contact your GP or call 111 (or emergency services if immediate).

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