



Nervous System Navigation

FROM BURNOUT TO
BALANCE THROUGH
NEUROPSYCHOLOGICAL
INSIGHTS

HEALTHY MIND PSYCHOLOGY UK

Welcome

I'm Dr Amber Johnston!

In addition to being the founder and director of Healthy Mind Psychology, I am an accomplished Clinical Psychologist, Neuropsychologist and Pain Psychologist with trauma specialty.



I am passionate about enhancing widely accepted knowledge to better understand components of psychology not often talked about and to break the stigma around individuals who seek guidance to support their mental well-being.

At Healthy Mind Psychology, we support a number of patients who are struggling with chronic stress and burnout. In this guide I'm sharing a quick guide to your nervous system alongside the signs of burnout and ten key ways that you can regulate your system and promote recovery.

Amber

The Nervous System

The nervous system is the body's command centre, made up of our brain, spinal cord, and a complex network of nerves. It sends messages back and forth between the brain and the body, helping to regulate bodily functions and coordinate responses to the world around us.

The nervous system has two main parts:

- The **Central Nervous System (CNS)** which includes the brain and spinal cord
- The **Peripheral Nervous System (PNS)** which includes a network of nerves running from the spinal cord throughout the whole body.

Within the Peripheral Nervous System, there are two parts:

- The **Somatic Nervous System** which controls voluntary movements.
- The **Autonomic Nervous System** which guides involuntary movements.

The Autonomic Nervous System consists of two branches: sympathetic and parasympathetic. These systems are designed to work together to keep your body in balance, with the sympathetic nervous system regulating responses to threats, and the parasympathetic nervous system guiding the body back to a state of rest and calm.

The Autonomic

NERVOUS SYSTEM



PARASYMPATHETIC

- Constrict pupils
- Stimulate saliva
- Slow heart rate
- Constrict airways
- Stimulate digestive system
- Contract bladder

SYMPATHETIC

- Dilate pupils
- Inhibit saliva
- Increase heartbeat
- Relax airways
- Inhibit digestive system
- Relax bladder

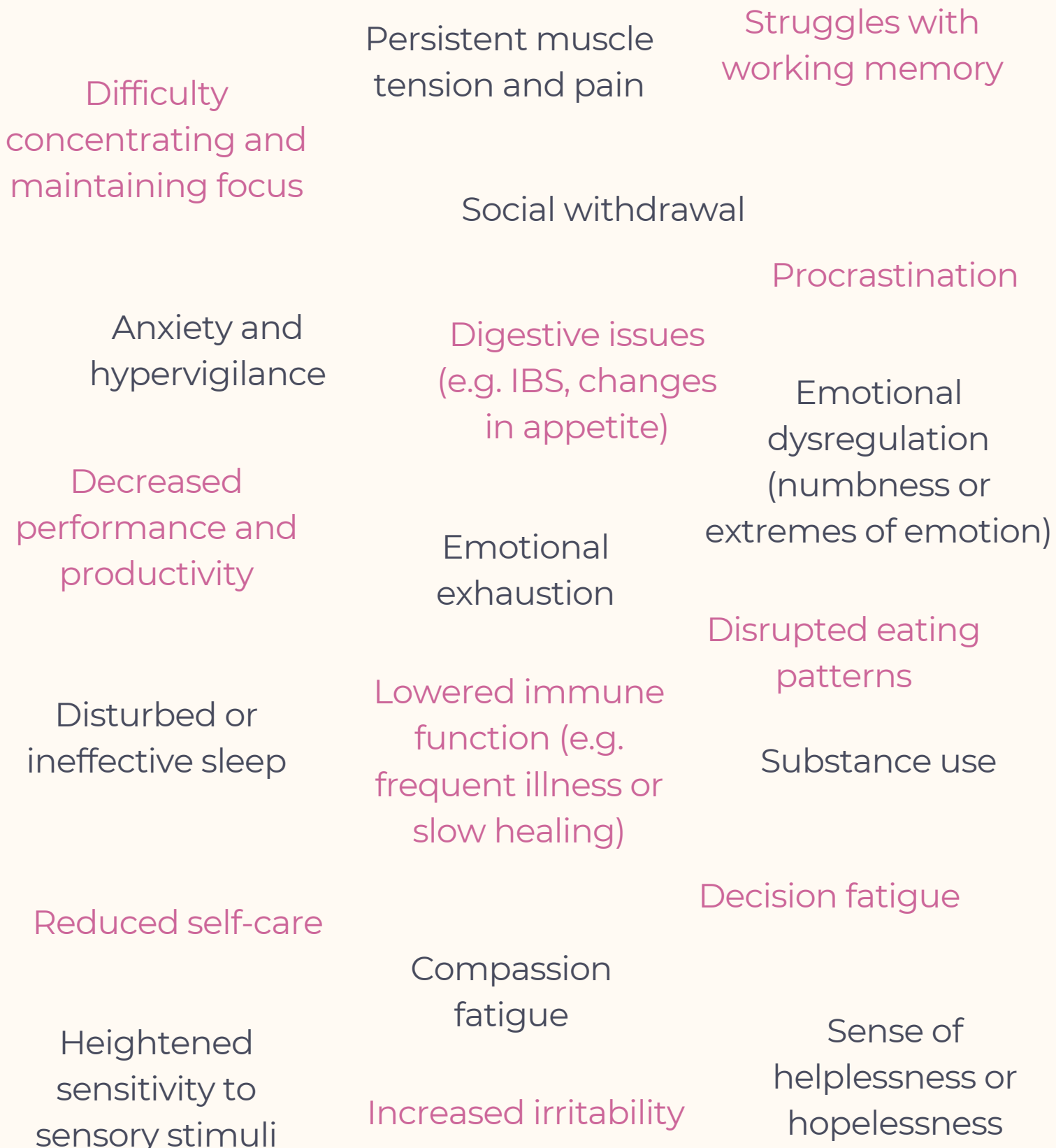


Burnout

Burnout develops when your nervous system gets stuck in prolonged sympathetic activation:

- Your body continuously produces stress hormones (cortisol, adrenaline)
- This constant "high alert" state depletes your resources
- Systems that should repair during rest phases (immune, cognitive, emotional) don't get adequate recovery time

Signs of Burnout





— Burnout Recovery —

Over time, chronic activation of the sympathetic nervous system can create changes in:

- Brain structure and function (particularly affecting memory and decision-making)
- Stress hormone production (eventually leading to adrenal fatigue)
- Immune system effectiveness
- Emotional regulation capacity

Recovery from nervous system burnout involves deliberately activating your parasympathetic system through specific techniques (breathing exercises, social connection, mindfulness) to restore the natural stress-recovery cycle.

Regulation Strategies

Let's explore ten key nervous system regulation strategies to aid recovery from burnout and navigate the nervous system back to a place of safety.



Diaphragmatic Breathing

Slow, deep belly breathing activates the vagus nerve and shifts the body from sympathetic to parasympathetic dominance.



Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Systematically tensing and releasing muscle groups to release physical tension and signal safety to the nervous system.



Nature Exposure

Spending time in natural environments reduces stress hormones and activates parasympathetic functions.



Social Connection

Engaging in positive social interactions triggers oxytocin release and co-regulation, counteracting stress responses.



Sensory Grounding

Using the 5-4-3-2-1 technique (identifying things you can see, touch, hear, smell, taste) to bring the nervous system back to the present moment.



Boundary Setting

Limiting exposure to stressors and energy drains by establishing clear personal and professional boundaries.



Sleep Hygiene

Prioritising consistent, quality sleep to allow for nervous system repair and neurotransmitter replenishment.



Mindful Movement

Gentle physical activities like yoga, tai chi, or walking that combine movement with awareness to release tension and improve vagal tone.



Digital Detox

Regular breaks from screens and notifications to reduce the constant stimulation that keeps the nervous system in alert mode.




Micro-Recovery Practices

Implementing brief moments of rest throughout the day (like the 60-second reset: 20 seconds of closing eyes, 20 seconds of conscious breathing, 20 seconds of body awareness).



— Help and Support —

If you're struggling with chronic stress, anxiety or burnout, [Healthy Mind Psychology](#) can help. Our therapists understand traditional and more modern ideas behind psychology and neuropsychology. We help you fill in the gaps of how your daily life can affect your mental health and use multiple treatment modalities to help you discover how a healthy mind can lead to a healthy body. Visit our website to find out more.



Embrace the
journey to a calmer
nervous system

www.healthymindpsychology.co.uk