



# **NEURODEVELOPMENTAL DIVERSITY**

## **MANAGING CAREGIVER STRESS**

Psychology in Schools Team, Norfolk and Suffolk NHS  
Foundation Trust

Co-produced with Suffolk Parent Carer Forum (SPCF)

**How would you rate your confidence in supporting yourself with caregiver stress?**





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## **MANAGING CAREGIVER STRESS**

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# Important Messages

Use of language

- Neurodivergence first

Sources of caregiver stress

Busy schedules

Being neurodivergent yourself





## Looking after yourself

- Emotional topics being covered today
- Do what you need to look after yourself
- Recording and resources will be shared with everyone who signed up for the workshop

# Overview

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Defining Caregiver Stress

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Caregiver Stress and  
Neurodivergence

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Impact of Caregiver Stress

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Coping with Caregiver Stress



## Activity: How does caregiver stress affect you?



# Defining Caregiver Stress

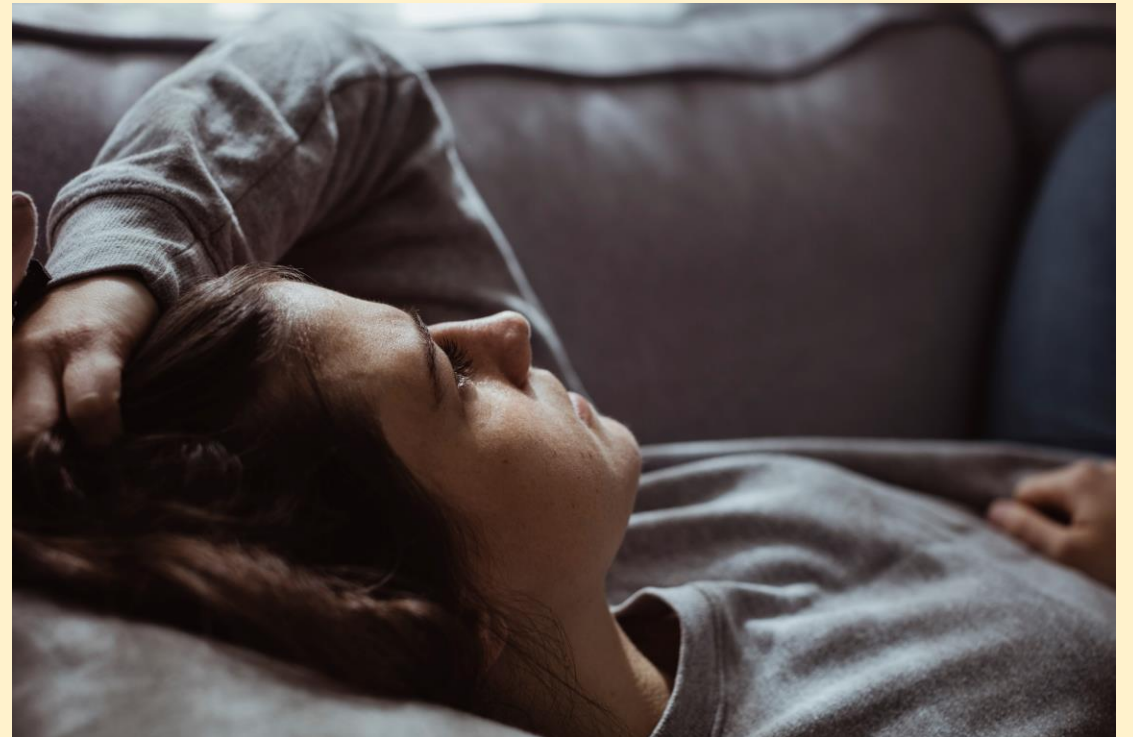
A distinct type of stress felt by carers when it seems the demands of caring for others outweigh individuals' resources for dealing with the demands



Parents/carers	Both	School staff
Getting child ready for school/education	Managing over excitement	Managing needs of multiple children
Managing multiple needs in the family (siblings)	Being asked constant questions about what's happening next	Time pressures
Having to provide close supervision at night	Having to think ahead	Academic demands
Advocating for the right educational support	Being on the receiving end of emotional distress	Limited resources and staff
Attending additional appointments	Multiple contacts with professionals	Limited training
Advocating in a neurotypical world	Having to provide close supervision	Managing home and work life
Navigating referral and assessment processes and waitlists	Alert - not knowing what will happen next	Working overtime
Financial strain	Managing sensory needs	School rules/policies
Caring for others	Keeping children safe	Out of date information in EHCPs
Stigma	Behaviours of distress	Targets/Expectations
Uncertainty	Supporting emotional regulation	Scared of getting things wrong
Co-parenting		Masking
Managing school avoidance		Differences in Staff Approach

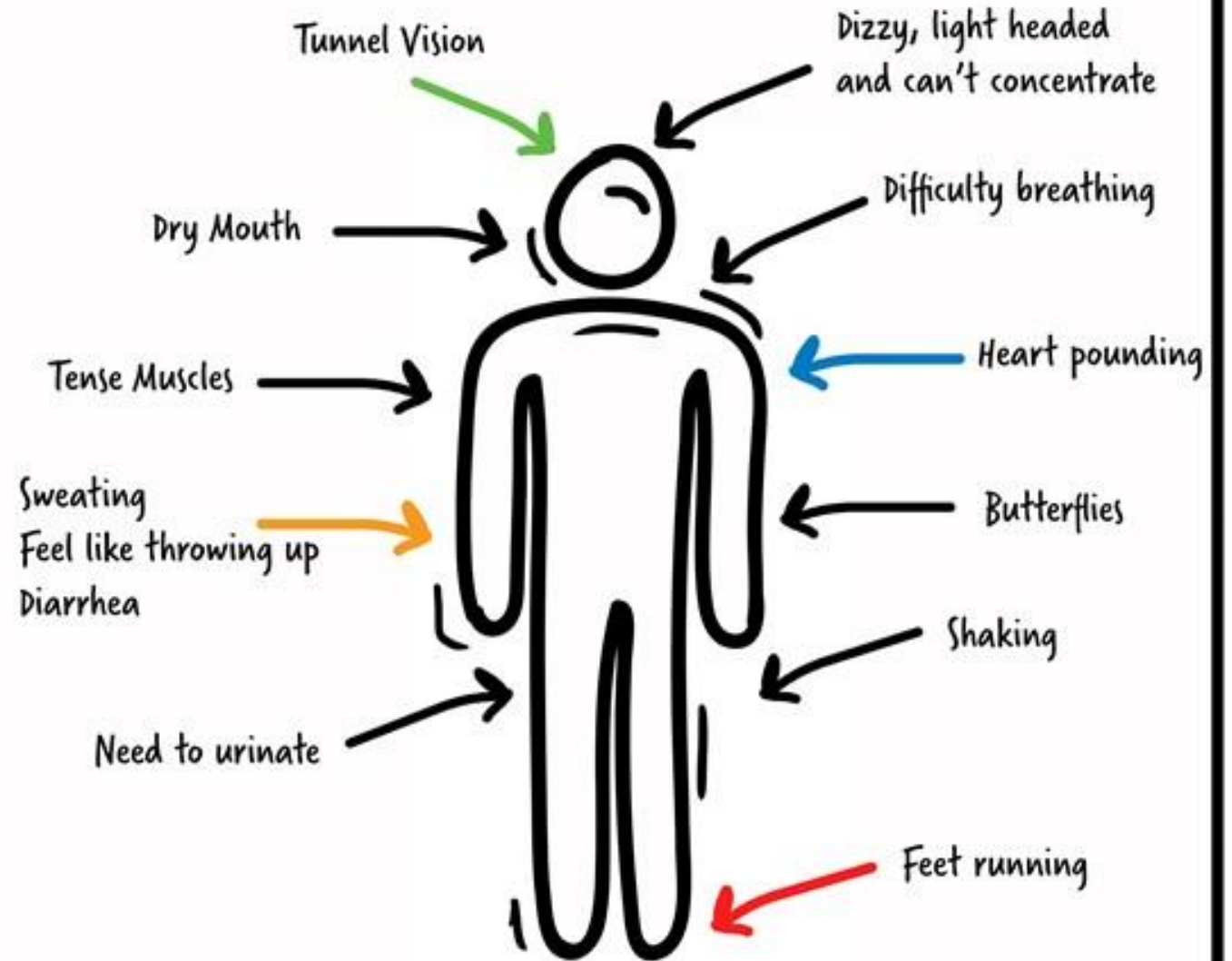
# Different Types of Stress

- Acute Stress- Short term stress from immediate stressors
- Chronic Stress- When the stressor persists over an extended period
- Burnout- Chronic stress can lead to burnout



# Fight/Flight/Freeze Response

What happens during freeze, fight or flight?



# Impact of Stress

Emotional Impact

Physical Impact

Behavioural Impact

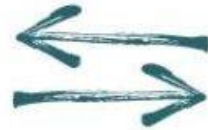
Cognitive Impact

Workplace impact

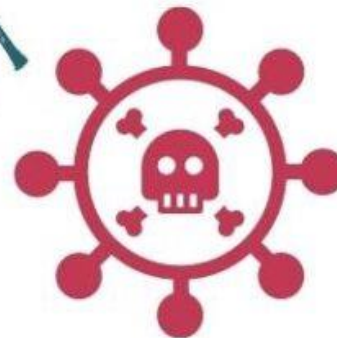
# The Three Emotion Regulation Systems



**DRIVE**  
Wanting, pursuing, achieving and  
consuming



**SOOTHING**  
Caring, safety, kindness



**THREAT**  
Protection and safety-seeking



# Experiences of Trauma



Trauma and early life stress

Link between  
neurodivergence and trauma

Ripple effect

Can feel relentless

# Coping with Caregiver Stress

Activating the  
Soothe  
System

Self-  
Compassion

Making  
Sense

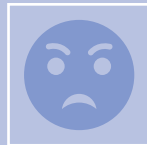
Battery  
Analogy

Support  
Systems

# Helping Make Sense



Bringing awareness to the context of your distress



Avoiding self-blame



Our feelings signpost us to what really matters

# Activating the Soothe System

- Activating the soothe system can help us to feel safe, content and calm
- The soothe system can be activated in lots of different ways
- Examples include:
  - Connection to the present
  - Meaningful social connections
  - Physical touch or movement



# Soothing Breathing



# Self-Compassion

- Self-compassion can help when we find ourselves being self-critical
- Two ways to practice self-compassion
  - Compassionate voice
  - Compassionate letter writing



# Building our Compassionate Voice

- 1) Identify the self-critical voice
- 2) What would you say to a good friend?
- 3) What would be a kinder or more helpful way to speak to yourself and view the situation?
- 4) What is something you are proud of achieving today?
- 5) Engage in a self-soothing activity

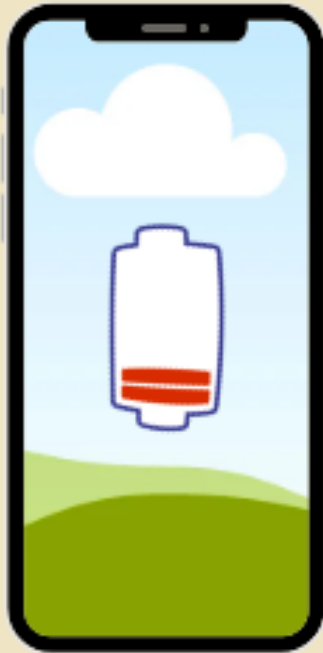


# Writing a Compassionate Letter

- 1) Identify what you are finding difficult
- 2) Imagine you are writing this to a good friend
- 3) Validate your experiences
- 4) Provide another perspective to the situation
- 5) Remind yourself of your self soothing activities
- 6) Remember you can read this at any time



# Battery Analogy



**What drains  
your battery?**



**What helps to  
recharge your  
battery?**

The battery analogy is a helpful way to think about how much energy you have and what your energy is used on throughout the day

Caring for a neurodivergent child may mean certain activities use more bars of energy in your battery

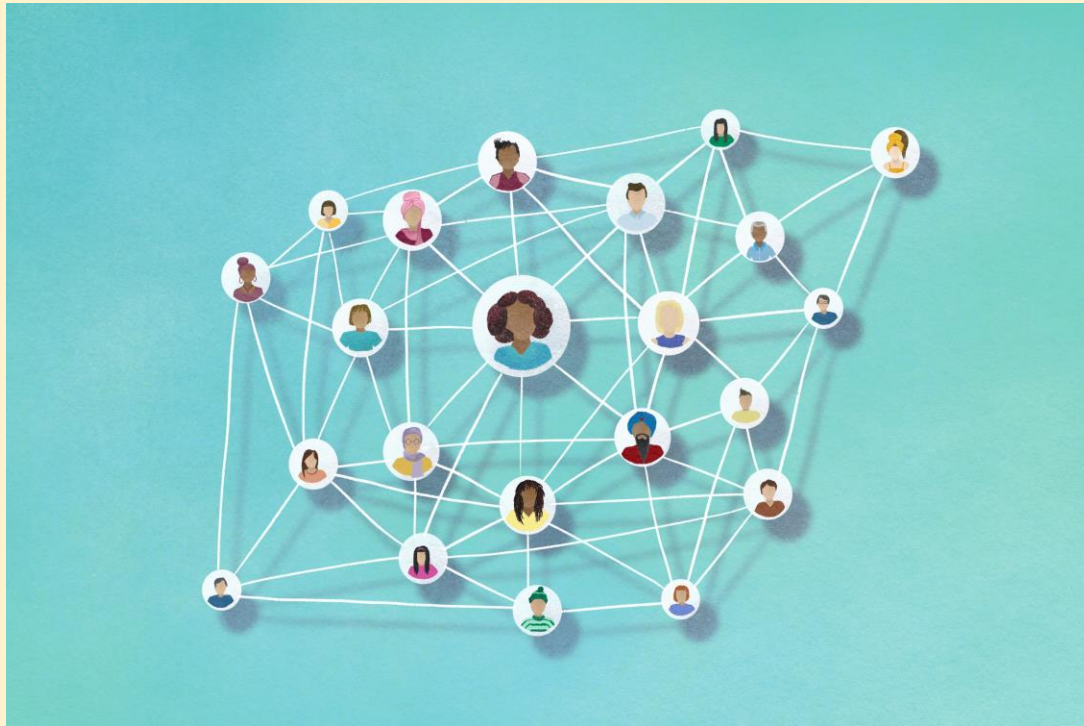
Thinking about what recharges your energy battery can help to manage caregiver stress

‘You would not let your phone run out of battery, so do not do it to yourself’

## Large group discussion: What recharges your battery?



# Support Systems



- Building, connecting and utilising support systems
  - Family
  - Friends
  - Support groups
  - Professionals
  - Hobbies
- Importance of speaking to others about shame
- Embracing neuro-affirming spaces

## SUPPORT AND ADVICE IN SUFFOLK

- **Suffolk Local Offer**

<https://www.suffolklocaloffer.org.uk/>

- **Parenting courses and more:**

[The Parent Hub - Suffolk County Council](#)

- **Suffolk SENDIASS:**

<https://suffolksendiass.co.uk/>

- **Parent/carer networks:**

[PACT | Parents And Carers Together | Suffolk](#)

[Suffolk Parent Carer Forum \(suffolkpcf.co.uk\)](#)

- **The Source Engagement Hub:**

<https://thesource.me.uk/engagement-hub/>

- **Families Together Suffolk:**

[Families Together Suffolk | Local Family Charity | Formerly Homestart Mid And West Suffolk](#)

# Holding Hope

We are not alone with  
bringing up  
neurodivergent  
children

You know your child  
better than anyone  
and your voice  
matters

Ask for support, don't  
try to do things alone

Celebrate every small  
gain towards the goal

It's ok to crash, give  
yourself a break



# Take Home Messages

- Caregiver stress is normal and valid
- You are not alone
- Support your soothe system
- Consider your own battery level
- Find your support networks



Small group discussion: What two things will you try do to in the next week to support your own wellbeing?



# Key sources of support and resources in Suffolk for parents/carers

- **Suffolk Local Offer**

<https://www.suffolklocaloffer.org.uk/>

- **Parenting courses and more:**

[The Parent Hub - Suffolk County Council](#)

**Action for children:** [Support when you feel like you can't cope as a parent](#)

- **Parent/carer networks:**

[PACT | Parents And Carers Together | Suffolk Suffolk Parent Carer Forum \(suffolkpcf.co.uk\)](#)

- **The Source Engagement Hub:**

<https://thesource.me.uk/engagement-hub/>

- **Behaviour safe at home – Suffolk SEND Local Offer:**

[Behaviour safe at Home - Suffolk SEND Local Offer](#)

Two-day course, £10 per person. Look at the link for dates

# RECOMMENDED BY Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust

## PARENTS FOR PARENTS ON THE ADHD/ASD PATHWAY

### THE CURLY HAIR PROJECT



Uses animated films, stories and comic strips to support young people on the ASD spectrum.

[The Girl With The Curly Hair - Autism Training, Animations, Books](#)

### PARENT WORKSHOPS

Workshop programme designed by the Psychology in Schools Team to support parents

Sign up here -



### ACTIVITIES UNLIMITED

Short breaks open to young people with SEND needs in Suffolk

<https://www.suffolklocaloffer.org.uk/short-breaks-and-leisure-activities/activities-unlimited>



### SENDIASS

A free support service which offers information and resources for supporting special educational needs and disability.

<https://suffolksendiass.co.uk/>

### NEURODIVERGENT ABILITIES GROUP (IPSWICH)

<https://www.neurodivergentabilities.org/>

Bespoke support tailored to help young people thrive in a neurotypical world.

Offers 1-1 face to face support in Ipswich. Also offers remote sessions and independent living support.



### SCHOOL SUPPORT

Find key staff members to understand and support your child. Roles who may be most helpful include SENCO, pastoral lead, teaching assistant, form tutor, head of year, mentor, thrive leader, school nurse, nurture group leader. They can consider reasonable adjustments.

ELSA:

Your school may offer ELSA intervention. A 6 session intervention supporting young people to develop their emotional literacy skills

<https://www.elsa-support.co.uk/>



### FAMILY ACTION (SUFFOLK)

<https://www.family-action.org.uk/>

Offer self help resources, local services and a free helpline called 'FamilyLine' which can be used to help through



### BEANS

Offers support for families journey with neurodiversity. Support for parents/carers, young people (11-25), siblings. Support includes drop ins, groups and activities.

<https://accessct.org/beans/>

## Support in Suffolk continued

### SENDIASS

Parent workshops on SEND including:

- What is a special educational need (SEN)?
- SEN support in schools
- EHC Needs Assessment
- Preparing for school transitions

Recorded previous workshops on YouTube

Parent & carer information sessions - Suffolk SENDIASS

Suffolk Sendiass – YouTubeFS

## What help is out there for young people?

- **School:** tutor, pastoral support, head of year, SENCO
- **Suffolk School Nursing** - School Nursing Service - Suffolk County Council
- **Emotional Wellbeing Hub:** Information, advice, and support for anyone concerned about the emotional wellbeing and mental health of a child or young person.  
<http://www.emotionalwellbeinggateway.org.uk/>
- **NSFT Wellbeing services:** you can self-refer to Wellbeing 16 years + [www.wellbeingnands.co.uk](http://www.wellbeingnands.co.uk)
- [Recovery College | Norfolk and Suffolk NHS](#)
- **GP**

# Other Resources

## Apps:

*Silver cloud:* course to manage anxiety and depression at your own pace

*Catch it:* manage negative thoughts and look at problems differently

*Blue ice / Calm harm:* manage emotions and reduce urge to self harm

*Headspace:* mindful meditation

## Websites:

*Youngminds.org.uk* Good resources. support for YP & Parentline. Guidance. 24 hr crisis support

*Living life to the full*  
[littf.com](http://littf.com)  
Free online courses on low mood, stress and resiliency

*rcpsych.ac.uk/mental-health* : Information about mental health and treatment. Has a section on young peoples mental health

*Moodgym*  
[moodgym.com.au](http://moodgym.com.au)  
interactive self-help to learn skills to manage symptoms of depression and anxiety

[Soothing Breathing Rhythm 1 Script - CFT - Balanced Minds](#)

# Psychology In Schools: Free Live Workshops And Video Recordings

Upcoming LIVE Parent/Carer workshops on mental health

[www.nsft.uk/workshops](http://www.nsft.uk/workshops)



Recorded previous mental health workshops on a range of topics:

- School Avoidance, Tics and Tourette's, Self-harm, Managing Behaviour, Social Media, OCD and more!

[www.nsft.nhs.uk/parent-workshops](http://www.nsft.nhs.uk/parent-workshops)

Childhood Neurodiversity Workshops:



[Neurodiversity online parent/carers workshops - Suffolk SEND Local Offer](#)

Access recorded workshops from previous series here:

[Parent workshops | Norfolk and Suffolk NHS](#)

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## FEEDBACK FORM

PINS Feedback Survey (Suffolk)



[click here](#)