



Fatigue and The Spoon Theory

Resources:

[BYDLS-TheSpoonTheory.pdf](#)
(totalcomputersusa.com)

[Neurodivergent Spoons & Forks: How to Explain Autism and Fatigue | Neurodiverging](#)

[What's spoon theory? The metaphor helping people with chronic illnesses and disabilities plan their days - The Brain Charity](#)

[Meltdowns - a guide for all audiences \(autism.org.uk\)](#)

[Meltdowns & shutdowns | Embrace Autism \(embrace-autism.com\)](#)
[Autism Support](#)

Fatigue is a very common barrier to learning and is particularly common for children and young people (CYP) with a disability, chronic illness or are neurodivergent.

The spoon theory describes the common fluctuation in energy levels. Each spoon represents a unit of energy. Some people have an unlimited number of spoons whereas others may start the day with a limited number.

Similarly, for some CYP a task may use many more spoons than would be typical for example negotiating a social situation may cost several spoons for an individual with autism. When we run out of spoons it can cause an extreme feeling of overwhelm ('bucket to overflow') and may result in meltdowns or shutdowns. This can be linked to sensory overload.

How can we get more spoons?

- Getting enough sleep
- Naps
- Yoga
- Meditation
- Reading
- Massage
- Singing/listening to music
- Dancing/ exercise
- Eating healthy food
- Having a good laugh
- Hobbies

Meltdown

An intense response to an overwhelming situation resulting in a temporary loss of control (shouting, screaming, crying, kicking, biting).

Shutdown

A muted response to extreme overload or stress. For example, they may freeze, withdraw, hide, lay face down on the floor or stop communicating.