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Jayme A Swalby: Good morning, everyone. Thank you for being here today at Autism Conversations. My name is Jayme Swalby, and I am a Senior Program Therapist at the University of New Mexico Center for Development and Disability.

Today we have a great podcast, titled Autism Understanding Masking and Burnout. And as your facilitator, I am feeling really grateful and really lucky today to have such a wonderful panel with us. I'm excited for you all to learn about them and the expertise that they bring here today.

So... Please help me welcome Vashad Frink, Elisheva Levin, and Savannah Oster.

And I just thank all of you for being here today, willing to share your stories, willing to share your wisdom with us. This is... for some folks, I have the opportunity of working with families, and for some folks, this is new for them. They are not really familiar with what this is, and so...I just really appreciate you all taking your time to come here and share. So, as we get started, I would love it if each of you could tell us a little bit about yourselves, who you are, and just so we can get to know you a little bit.

Elisheva, would you mind starting us off?

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Elisheva H Levin: Sure, I can do that. So, my name is Elisheva Levin. I am an autistic, and that's how I think about myself now, but I wasn't diagnosed until my son was diagnosed. And then his doctor at one point or another said to me, you might want to consider, your own autism. In the situation, and so from there, then I... as, I think I was in my late 40s, maybe... Yeah, right there in the late 40s, early 50s, somewhere in there. I had to find somebody who could diagnose, and that happened, outside of New Mexico. It was almost impossible to find someone to diagnose an adult.

In New Mexico at the time. And, it changed some things, but what it really did for me was help me understand who... who I was and why life seemed to be so difficult in some ways, that other people didn't experience. So, I'm grateful to be here.

And, I work at the Center for Development and Disability, because I thought that would be a good, good fit. With the life I had.

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Jayme A Swalby: Excellent, thank you so much for being here. Savannah, can you share?

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Savannah L Oster: My name is Savannah Oster. I am an Education Associate at UNM Center for Development and Disability as well.

I have autism. I got diagnosed here at the CDD when I was two and a half years old. This is full circle for me. I'm very honored to be a part of this podcast.

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Jayme A Swalby: Well, Savannah, we are... we are honored that you are here as well.

And... and Vashad... How about you?

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Vashad Frink: My name is Vashad Frank, and, I too have autism. I was diagnosed since birth. I was born in California, in Hollywood, and I moved to New Mexico in 2000. But, but, but, I, I wear, I wear many hats. But, but, one... but one of the things that Amy knows is a senior social... assistant at the, at the, at the, Mexico Development Disabilities Council. And I... and I'm really happy to be here with all of you, definitely. Thank you for having me.

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Jayme A Swalby: Oh, Vashad, thank you so much. Just hearing you all share a little bit about yourselves, I know you were bringing such great insight to this topic, so thank you all for being here today.

And... why don't we just go ahead and jump right into our conversation?

We're here today, we're talking about masking and burnout.

And the first question that has come up from the community is, what causes you to mask, and how does that lead to autistic burnout?

Elisheva, you have any thoughts about that?

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Elisheva H Levin: Yes, I do. So... I think that what happens is when life starts to pile up for me.

And a lot of things are coming at me at once. And I feel this real obligation to satisfy everybody, and I think that's something that a lot of women do, whether they're... they're on the spectrum or not, but for me, what it causes, then, is this... feeling that I'm not...doing enough, not getting enough. If I make a mistake, I feel like it's a bigger deal, because, you know, people know that I have autism, and, so...when I don't have time, it gets to the point where I don't have time to stop and think, or I'm not taking the time to do the things I need to do to keep myself on an even keel. You know, and a lot of responsibilities that might be being thrown at me at once, or if there's a big change.

Like, right now, we're moving. Our office is moving, and it's a big change, and I have to be really mindful Or I get really upset over little things. And as that starts to happen, then I... I feel like the expectations are increasing. And if I... in those situations, if I have to do or say something that's unexpected, or that I didn't plan for, then I can get to the point where I can't even speak. And... and that's happening more and more. I think it also has to do with some other things that have happened in my life in the last 5 years. But, I... I get to the point where I feel like I have to think like everybody else. And as that piles up. if I don't remember to get to my safe spaces, if I don't remember that I can take a break too, like everybody else does, I can get to the point where I can't even speak at all. And, and to the point where I am really... I'm shaking, I'm out of it. And, That's why it's really important for me to understand where I can go and what I can do. And I will say that I have... those expectations of me are pretty high sometimes, and people forget that I may not think about the world in the same way.

So... and I think some of that's being a female with autism as well, because we mask. And, so, yeah, that will lead to burnout for me.

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Jayme A Swalby: It sounds... thank you for sharing all that. It sounds like a full-body experience for you.

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Elisheva H Levin: Yes, yes, it's, it's not just in my head, it's in the gut. It's, I'll stop eating correctly, and it spirals.

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Jayme A Swalby: Thanks, Elisheva. Vashad, what are your thoughts on this?

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Vashad Frink: Well, I... I would try to, be like the other person. And I thought by doing that, I was gonna fit in. This can lead to... this can lead to an autistic burnout because, I was trying my hardest to fit in. And I was trying my hardest to be like everybody else when I realized that I couldn't. I had to learn how to, be myself, And to know who I was.

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Jayme A Swalby: Yeah. Yeah. That's beautiful. Thank you for sharing that. That's beautiful.

Vashad Frink: Thank you.

Jayme A Swalby: Savannah?

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Savannah L Oster: The cause of masking for me personally is trying to fit in with the world when you want to do whatever everyone else wants to do by getting their items in the store, matching, whatever you want to do with the sweatshirt, for example. If somebody wants to have the same sweater as you, or you want the same sweatshirt as them, you're more likely to put the same clothes on as that person. You're not really your... best authentic self when you're trying to mask, because what we're trying to do is fit in with society. That's what masking is, and just being a person you're really not.

Masking does lead to autistic burnout, because masking is exhausting, and it's just a tricky thing to navigate, and it's... like I just said, it's exhausting, and it... Flares us up, and flares... it becomes... to the point that I feel fatigued personally from doing that. I grew up doing it because I had no idea what fitting in felt like. I really, for the longest time, wanted friends, and I've always... and I'm so thankful I do now have wonderful friends. I wanted friends when I was little, and my mom told me about... I had a sign in my bedroom that said Friends on it, because I've really dreamed of friendships since I was a little girl, and I'm so honored to be able to say now that that has come true.

And so I now have friends. So that's huge for me, because what I've learned over the years is just to be our best authentic self, and just be you. That's even better than masking and pretending to be someone that you're really not.

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Jayme A Swalby: Wow, that... that all was so helpful in that piece about your authentic self. When you're trying to fit in, it sounds like it's really hard to just be that authentic self, but, Nice job doing the work, you guys, for being able to do that.

Our next... the next question that we have that has come up for... for this podcast is.

How does burnout affect a person's ability to work, and to socialize, to communicate? Elisheva, you shared a little bit about this. Perhaps you could share a little bit more about that, and also to handle everyday tasks, so really that impact that it has on you in all areas.

Vashad... What do you think about that month?

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Vashad Frink: Thank you for asking. I... I... burnouts... burnouts can create stress for someone in the agency. And... And, it can also, Create frustration in someone whenever they have conversation with someone. Women have conversations with someone else. Including, this, burnouts can definitely, lead to, lead to, someone being unable to perform tax.

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Jayme A Swalby: Have you experienced this yourself, Vashad?

Vashad Frink: I have, as a matter of fact, I experienced it, many times over, and what, how I, how I overcame it was, was just, taking deep... taking deep breaths and, and just finding... finding some comfort... comfort time to, to regain myself, regain my reality, and come back to doing it once more. So, it's, it's really... it's been a journey, but, but, It's a... it's a struggle overall to, have burnouts, you know, but, but it's never impossible to, to not overcome it, and it can be overcome. You just got to, you know, just... anybody just has... anybody just has to, you know, to, just... recuperate, and come back to... and just start again. And never go too hard on yourself.

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Jayme A Swalby: Thank you for those reminders, and it... Elisheva, you touched on that a little bit, too, about finding the space that you need to recoup, because it... it stops you in your tracks, is what I heard you say.

Savannah, can you, share a little bit on this one?

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Savannah L Oster: Yes, of course I can.

A person is usually very exhausted, very fatigued, to the point our health gets affected, and that's why we get sick easily sometimes, because it affects, our ability to work, socialize, and communicate so much, because it really... affects us with everyday tasks, that's when we start to... some people experience body aches, some people experience tummy aches, some people really experience high stress so bad, we have to go home and rest for the day, so it just really, really depends.

And it just affects... it's so painful to deal with it physically. It gets... first it's mentally, comes all the way down to...

Then it gets physical, it can be very serious, that's why it's super important we take care of ourselves when we're burnt out by resting. Whatever works best for the person, whatever works best for that individual, do, because I highly encourage everyone to take care of themselves to... In their best ways, in the ways that work for them, because it will help us refresh, we need a refresh. We really just need to really... and once a week, we usually need to reset ourselves, because we can't be on the go-go-go all the time, because that can affect health big time. And there was an article that I've read before. That it actually reduces... It reduces, stress, and it also reduces... it helps with our heart in the long run, and that's why it's so, so important to take care of ourselves.

It's why it's super important we take care of ourselves, and that's why it affects us. The burnout affects us. Our ability to even function, socialize, work, communicate, and even handle everyday tasks. And a sign of burnout, too, is when we're very quiet, and we're not ourselves, and that's usually one of the first factors we're... Usually, you'll know for yourself, and I got an advice once, we gotta listen to our body.

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Jayme A Swalby: Savannah, you're such a great advocate for listening to your body and taking care of yourself, and I... I appreciate you always sharing that with other people. I myself, forget to do that, and it sounds like if you're experiencing autistic burnout, you need to do it more.

Savannah L Oster: It's so true, you have to do it more often, Jayme, because you gotta just listen. That way, we feel better. In the long run, it's gonna help our health.

So it's really important to also talk to a doctor about it if it gets very serious. I've had experience with that. I talked to my PCP about it, and she gave me good tips based on what works best for me, and so it's really important to have a doctor involved.

Jayme A Swalby: Nice, great reminder. Elisheva?

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Elisheva H Levin: Yeah, I think, you know, burnout kind of, starts with not, For me, with not paying attention to my limits. You know, every person has limits, and women particularly, I think, whether they're on the spectrum or not, often are asked to, in our society, do way more than, than people, would expect. And, so what I, what I think happens to me is it gets to the point where I can't... make a decision. I can't think. I can't... and lately, since the COVID and the medications that I was forced to use to keep my job. I... I now have trouble with language when that happens. I didn't used to, but I do now. And so I have to really, recognize, and I don't always do that, like, right now, with everything that's been going on in the last few weeks, and the move and everything, I... I have to stop and remind myself, you... you have to, take care of your spiritual self. You have to take care of your physical self, and everything doesn't have to devolve on you, or for myself, on me. And so what I... I have to do, and I'm not very good at it, I say, is, I have to recognize that limit. And if I don't, I'm going to end up sitting in a corner, rocking.

Rocking is my way of, you know, dealing with stress, and I like it since I was a little child, you know, the rocking. And this disturbs a lot of people. But it's like, I don't understand quite why, because everybody has a limit like that. It's just that with autism, what happens is I, at least for me, I shut down. And... and I can't function. And then I'm no good to anybody. And I have to remind myself, I need to do things. I need to take care of my spiritual self, I need to take care of my physical self, I need to, balance those things out, and I need to be aware that maybe other people can function differently, than I do.

And, like I said, I've said earlier, and I'll say it again, you know.

People need to figure out... we each need to figure out what it is we need to do. To give ourself that space, to allow ourselves to say, you know, I... I'm just sometimes at work. When there's too much chaos going on, I'll go home. I'll go back to my... I actually home, I have two homes. I will go home to my apartment if I'm up in Albuquerque, and I'll go home, and I'll take my computer with me, but I may not be able to use that computer for a while. You know, I may need to take care of the immediate stress and problems, because what burnout feels like is that everything I'm doing is not working. And... and then... I don't know about others, but I start to think it's all me. And, you know, there's a whole world out there that doesn't care if I take, you know, a couple of hours and go home. you know, I have to remind myself that when I am doing my work, and I am working with all cylinders, as we said when we had cars with cylinders, that, that the world goes on just fine, and it goes on just fine if I'm not. And so... and I...

Also, I, I think... that it's really important to have medical people who understand. And so, I recently had to go on, Medicare. and they wanted to give me somebody in Albuquerque that I didn't even know, but I'm paying more so that, you know, I can have a PPO, so that I can have, people, I can have the doctor that I really trust, and that I learned to trust, and he... He's not an autism doctor. But he's good with dealing with autism, if you know what I mean. And I have a

good relationship, and he's the one who will say to me. Why don't you just take a walk? Or why don't you... you know, sit in the quiet, because... there's so much noise and confusion in the world, and and I don't need to be adding to it, because, you know, I try to push beyond what I can do. I'm one person, and that's what I have to say to myself. I'm one person, I, you know, everybody's here in the world for a reason, or they wouldn't be here, but I have my limits.

Jayme A Swalby: Yeah, that... it's such important information, and some of the takeaways from what you guys said that resonate with me are that balance between the proactive strategies, what can you do ahead of time to give yourself some of the energy, but also then you're gonna have to have, sometimes, those reactive strategies, because you didn't know that that was gonna happen to you, and so you have to recoup... Elisheva, you have to go home for 2 hours, and... just because it happened, and you weren't expecting it. But, such beautiful messages.

Jayme A Swalby: And so, as we're talking about this, what do you wish others knew about what it's like to experience burnout?

Savannah?

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Savannah L Oster: what it feels like to experience burnout is what I wish other people knew was it's a real... burnout is very real, it's not fake. I wish people understood it was real. It's a real thing people... individuals go through. Our bodies... I mentioned this earlier today, our bodies tell us when we are not ourselves, and I wish people realized that pick up on the signs, and... because it's really important to make awareness of what autistic burnout is, because, for example, I wish people knew when things become a little more overwhelming, it's... really real. It's when we can't do the small things. That's how we know something's wrong. That's when I know... that's when I wish people knew it's okay. They're probably going through something we're not aware of. It's giving grace and compassion so important, so I wish people would give us a lot more grace and compassion. Towards our feelings every day, because we all never know what we're all going through.

Jayme A Swalby: Very well put, Savannah. Elisheva?

Elisheva H Levin: So, what does it feel like to be in burnout? You... For me, I just... freeze. And, and to solve the burnout, to deal with the burnout, I have to accept the reality that maybe my... the way that my brain and body works. And, it's brain and body, by the way, because you've got a little brain in your gut, too. And your gut tells you that, and then if you ignore it, you're... that's when I get myself into a lot of trouble. So, I... I think... what... that's what it feels like. It just feels like I can't... you know, there's a frustration that comes with it, because I want to be

like other people. And, and... So I get frustrated, and I know when I'm getting frustrated because I'll start to pick at little things. you know, oh, I didn't get sat down to have my coffee right at that time, and so that's a problem. And it just balloons out. And so that is... is how I know that, you know, I'm in that situation, and I'm burning out. And it's... really important then, like Savannah said, to make sure that you have people who can say, hey. Because sometimes I don't even know how to get out of it. And that is where I think we need help, and we also need compassion from other people that we work with, particularly. Because there's so much competition, and so much, in the world that I think sometimes we don't really see the person.

Jayme A Swalby: Right?

Elisheva H Levin: So, you know, I just... sometimes I just have to go home and rock.

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Jayme A Swalby: And I love that you know that about yourself, I love that you know that that's been calming for you since a child... since childhood, and that you allow yourself to do that. It's wonderful. It's a great message to share.

Vashad, what are your thoughts? What do you wish others knew? What it's like to experience burnout?

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Vashad Frink: What I wish others knew about the experiences of burnout is that, It reduces your ability to cope. for... it reduces your ability to cope. For example, when someone has a burnout. They can not only get overwhelmed, but it can lead them to having triggers, whether in the public eye, or inside your eternal self. And... And, triggers, you know, people don't really understand triggers. And, sometimes they don't... sometimes they do, sometimes they don't, but a lot of times, a lot of times they don't understand because, you know, because, to put a sense of burnout, you know, does not really mean that they are... they are having triggers. That one triggers, you know, but they're not, they're not, they're not, they're not attending it. And so, when someone has a trigger, it's because they have burnouts, and they have, you know, like, no, they get overwhelmed, something happens... something happens on that day where someone gave them a hard time, or they have a rough environment, or in a bad environment, that they get triggered. And so, triggers and burnouts, you know, kind of relate to each other because... because, they both are stress-related, concepts, and... And, people... I wish that also... I also wish that people could understand that, when someone has triggers, you know, do not necessarily have the idea that they're gonna cause violence, or they're gonna cause troubles, because Is... or... or... or for the most part, believe that they are a bad person,

because... because, you know, cause, cuz, I know for me, when I used to have triggers, I was assumed that I had... that I was a bad person because I had triggers.

I remember... I remember, back in... back in my school, there was, a teacher, a professor that called security on me because I was getting triggered, but I didn't mean to, but it just... it was something that happened, and... I don't know how to express it, or I thought I was expressing it completely and clearly, but they assumed that I was being triggered. And so, so... the mole... to my, to my, to my point of view of why a person wants to experience what is that, don't judge somebody for the triggers. Always want to help them, and always, don't assume so quickly that they are, antagonists, or, or, or, or a violent person, because, that's never true, and that can lead them to low confidence, in themselves, knowing that... and that can lead to... that can lead to... and that can lead to more burnouts. Basically, for them.

Jayme A Swalby: Thank you, thank you for that. I, I... that message of... how it makes you feel like you're a bad person sometimes. I mean, I don't think people realize that. I don't think... people realize that you also have feelings about, perhaps, maybe how you reacted, because you got overwhelmed, or you... you were in burnout, and it just all of a sudden happened at once. So that's such a great reminder. Thank you, Vashad.

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Jayme A Swalby: So, thinking about work, what would a truly autism-friendly workplace look and feel like?

I think... I think this question comes up because I think if we could implement some of these things in the workplace, maybe it would decrease some of that burnout and need to mask.

Elisheva?

Elisheva H Levin: So... and I'm gonna be brutally honest here.

Even at the...

Jayme A Swalby: Thank you

... even at the CDD, I have experienced situations in which my need to step back, or my need to stop and think, or my need... it, it's treated as if there's something wrong with me. When really, it's the whole environment. And I don't think... I think one thing that would help a lot in a workplace is for there to be some serious training. By the people who are not on the spectrum, about what to expect. And I say this even though I know there are a lot of people at work who should know this. And yet, I see situations in which, And maybe we have to be kind of kind also, because in which people who, are not on the spectrum, they think they know. They think they know... Who you are and what to expect. But they don't know. And to recognize that. And I would... I think in the workplace, there needs to be people on the spectrum who are part of

some of those conversations, like we're doing now. I'm really pleased that we're doing things like this, because, you know... it's always that game of trying to, trying to be like other people.

That's the masking. And... and we're not like other people. And our... our brains, and our bodies, and our little brain and our gut, all of that works differently, if you're on the spectrum. And from one person to another, it works differently. I mean, I've seen happy Autists, I'm not one of them. So, so, you know, that's what I would say about the workplace. And I think there needs to be a lot more training, even in places where people think they're helping people with autism. There needs to be a lot of training where autists can say, without feeling like they're gonna hurt somebody's feelings, or that people aren't going to hear them. They need to be able to say, this isn't working. And I've seen that a lot, even at the CDD, where, you know, they put a band-aid on it. So that's my brutally honest part, but I also believe there are a lot of good people who want to help, But they really... I don't know if there's some way you could put them through... a program in which they're in a situation where they don't get what's going on, almost like we used to do with, when we were teaching... when I was teaching, at UNM about people with other disabilities. You know,

Jayme A Swalby: Hmm.

Elisheva H Levin: you know, something... we had something called Fat City, you know, where you... you talk about the fact that you're being, you know, the... the person not getting part of what's going on. And so that kind of training, I think would be very good. And, you know, none of us can walk in other people's shoes as much as we would like, but we need to do more of it. Maybe on both sides.

Jayme A Swalby: That is... that is a fantastic idea, and maybe some of the... these little nuggets will be planted when people hear this podcast, I hope.

Vashad.

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Vashad Frink: So, to me, a good autism-friendly workplace. It's a place that where it looks and feels like a sanctuary, and... And what I mean by this is that, it's a place where some... where no one bullies pain or autism. Or, or for the background, And... It also, including that also tells me, too, that, It's also too, like, you know, to... to treat everyone with autism equally, and as a team. regardless of the origins. Cause, and, I kind of, I kind of, I kind of agree with Elisheva, that, that, it can be kind of challenging... it can be challenging sometimes in the book push, you know, of people, just not understanding you, like, all the way through. And, Yeah, because... and... Autism in the workplace, you know, can also... it can also mean that, you know, that... of understanding someone that has autism, you know, and giving them time to, to just... do their

job, and, have their own pace, you know, and, and just, you know, and, and... And just... just... Not going so hard on them, but also at the same time, you know, Going hard on them, not because, you know, that they... not because that, that, that, that they, that they're... that they're bad, but... Going hard on them because no one... believing that they can do it, and that they can accomplish that goal in a workplace, and accomplish on being a... being a high... Power position, or... or get the job done in that very exact moment. So, so there are different ways to go hard on someone, but you treat that one equally, and you treat them... if you do go hard on someone, autism, you know. Don't go hard on them, that, that, that, oh, you can't do it, no, because you can't... because, no, you have autism, you know, no, you don't do that, you just say, you know, you go hard on them because, you know, because you believe that they can do it, and you show them that you can't... that they can do it. Because that type of going hard is emotional intelligence, and... and that kind of going hard, it's, it's definitely perfection, though, and it's definitely, a great leader would... would do someone that's looking at the agency, regardless of the background, autism, any, any kind, any kind of background. So, so, so... Yeah, I mean, so, so just knowing that, that, that, that I'm just, just, just going hard on someone in that, in the, in the workplace, you know, that they can do it, and showing you a good leadership at It can definitely boost their confidence, it can... it can boost their ability to perform really well, and it can give them, you know, and it... And they can do it, you know, so they... no one should never assume that they can't do, the job in the workplace, because, you know, because people often can do the workplace, you know, and they'll care about more than more than anybody else knows. So, so as a leader, go easy or go hard, but don't go hard to the point that they can't do it. Go easy or go hard on someone that they can do it, and they will do it, because Because never assume too quickly that they can't do it. And just because that someone often cannot maybe cannot speak at the time, or maybe cannot... before at the time, you know. They know everything. We know everything, you know. We observe, we see, so if you hurt our feelings, we're gonna know. And so... and so... so... so nobody is never naive, because We all are the same species, and so great teamwork and great leadership. It's a wonderful place for someone with autism, and that goes across the board, aka emotional intelligence for anyone for autism of the background, too.

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Jayme A Swalby: Oh, thank you for that, and it... that... the message of presuming competence... for people. Presume that they... everybody can do something, and give them a chance, and help them learn in the way that they learn best. Yes, beautiful.

Savannah?

00:42:24.000 --> 00:42:31.440

Savannah L Oster: What a truly autism-friendly workplace would really look like is including all voices in trainings. people on the spectrum giving trainings to the providers and self-advocates and families, just facilitating discussions, and even doing basic tasks, I feel it needs to be more... more inclusive on that piece. Everything we do, that will also decrease burnout, because encouraging even people off the spectrum to do people... doing stuff that normal people on the spectrum do, I feel that, for sure. For example, like, the basic things for... the workplace anywhere, really. It's just in every workplace, that's what I'm gonna say, I'll leave it at that. And as well as just doing basic things, and I'm... very happy to do anything, and I feel we need to encourage it more together, that's what I believe. And as well as just train each other, in LEND, they do a lived experience with panelists. I think we need to do more of that everywhere in New Mexico and all around the world, too, because it's just so important to be fair, it's important just to be... just to be inclusive in everything, whether or without a disability, it doesn't matter what disability we have, so I... that's a truly autism-friendly workplace, as well as being kind, being compassionate to everybody, and just really just... just showing, like I said earlier, showing more grace and compassion, because Because people on the spectrum do experience a lot of pressure already, it's already so much going on in the world. Just really, just the kindness is beautiful, it's just... it's definitely a wonderful feeling to have as kindness. It's just beautiful, as well as... as well as Grace, because... A truly autism... A truly autism-friendly workplace means we don't have to over-explain everything, what we're going through, because we feel like us on the spectrum do have to over-explain in order for understanding to be done, and that needs to change.

Elisheva H Levin: Yeah.

Jayme A Swalby: Wow, I, That was beautiful, that was... and I... I'm excited for people to really hear what... what that would be like, and... and there's such a thread winding through all of it with... with that, you know, compassion and... and... Just accepting of everyone. And, and... you know, lack of judgment, all of the things. You guys, thank you so much for sharing that, and... and we're getting ready to wrap up here. We have one last question, and I'd love to hear your advice.

00:45:17.530 --> 00:45:32.859

Jayme A Swalby: What advice do you have for the community navigating burnout and masking with autism? So those people that are navigating it, and they just would like to hear your advice.

Vashad, could you start us off with that one?

Vashad Frink: Of course. So, for the burnout,

Never, never, ever, ever, ever go hard on yourself, and never, ever, ever try to,

Try to believe that, that perfection is perfection, because perfection isn't necessarily getting things done all correctly. It's the fact that you are trying the perfection.

And, and whenever someone has burnouts, like I mentioned before, stop what you're doing.

Get grounded, and... And, and just... And, and, and just, and just, come back and start again.

And lastly, lastly, for, for the masking, Be authentic. Be authentic, you know. We all... everyone is unique. And if someone does not like a personality, then they are not meant to be in your circle or in your space. And the ones that love you. Regardless, are the ones that would stick around. So, so, always know that And...

Never, never, never, hate yourself, or think you're a mess, or curse, because, you know, because you are a blessing to this life. We all are. Always embrace all of who you are.

00:47:18.910 --> 00:47:24.490

Jayme A Swalby: Oh, thank you for that. That gave me some chills, Vashad.

Savannah?

00:47:25.930 --> 00:47:41.630

Savannah L Oster: The advice that I have for the community navigating burnout and autism is that an individual with autism, when they share their personal life with you, it just means they feel really safe with you, it just means that They feel safe enough, so please be a good listener, and just be kind as they're telling you a story, because that just means you're a trusted person, you feel safe, and it's hard for someone on the spectrum.

Two, share their life and share their stories.

And if they have... and if they feel feelings, and we feel like we have to hide feelings all the time, and really... Really, because the masking is a feeling of protection for us to help us cope in the world, and we're in survival mode all the time.

So, it's a feeling of protection, and it's the... we're afraid something bad's gonna happen to us. When somebody opens up with you, just be... Be on... be listening, just be kind, just recipitate it well, because it's just...

That's what... it's huge for somebody on the spectrum to show their personal life. And I'm a person that loves to share my life to encourage the world, and I just want to be able to... encourage everybody, and I'm gonna keep sharing my story, and... and... that way the people encouraged, and that way people get reassured, and my advice, too, is autism is not scary, it is a beautiful superpower. So we gotta utilize our superpower, and I agree with Vashad on when he said that perfectionists is... bad, because perfectionist... perfectionist really just makes it worse, I feel like. Thank you for bringing that up, Vashad, because perfectionist is something I'm working on all the time. Sometimes things are meant to be not perfect, we've just got to learn to embrace Embrace what the day brings, because that will help flow even better with flexibility. We just... we... we just gotta learn that with each other, and be kind through it all. That is my advice to the community.

Jayme A Swalby: Oh, thank you, Savannah.

Elisheva?

Elisheva H Levin: Can you please I would state the question again.

Jayme A Swalby: Absolutely. What advice do you have for the community navigating burnout and masking with autism?

Elisheva H Levin: Okay, so advice for the community.

Jayme A Swalby: Yeah.

Elisheva H Levin: I would start with, saying... that you need a practice. You need something that you know. That you can do. And you need to know who to go to. Because it doesn't help at all if you go to someone who doesn't understand, refuses to understand, sees the world only in their little space. So it's really important, to find those people wherever you are. And... I think the other part is to have some kind of a practice. You may not be good at it.

But whether it's, you know, you like to sit down and say, some people like that, you know, or if you... if you need to just do something physical, because so often we live in a world, Especially, you know, it feels like at work and places like that, where we don't think about those things.

And yet, there are people out there who, especially in the health community, which we're all in, who, you know, who are there just exactly to help you with that. Well, what is it that you can do to kind of, you know. Allow that stress to leave your body now and then.

And then, finally, what the community outside of the people with autism can do is remember that Every person is a unique person, and if they are here in the world with you, they are there for a reason, and you are there for a reason, and there's something that you can learn from each other.

Jayme A Swalby: Nice.

Elisheva H Levin: But that doesn't happen when there's a lot of judgment. So it's really important Especially when you're dealing with people, and people on the spectrum, we're different. And that's okay, but, you know, to expect us to be like everybody else is, is, is a losing... cause to... to begin with. So I think that those are some things that the community can look at, and just remember that each person is, if they are here, there is a reason they are here. And... and to keep that in mind. And then for us, I think, the important thing is seeking out and finding other people we can talk to. Like, I... love Savannah, and I love Vashad, because they are people I can talk to.

And there are other people like that that I know. And I would say this, the DDC has a Tuesday... what is it, the third Tuesday? I think it's the third Tuesday, I'm gonna miss it tomorrow, but next month, I intend to be there. So, you know, get together with other people. On the spectrum, because what you'll learn is that there's a whole variety of people. We're just as diverse As, you know, the neurotypical community. But we understand each other in a particular way, and I think that having that support from other people who understand, is a very useful thing, For those of us, so that then we can go into the world feeling like we have that Floor underneath us. And... and then we can help other people understand that everybody is a little different. We're all a little weird.

00:54:09.930 --> 00:54:19.430

Jayme A Swalby: We all bring something beautiful to this world, don't we? And that's the message that I hear weaving throughout what you all said, and... You're right, we have to... we have to take time to learn everybody's beauty, so thank you all so much.

On behalf of the Autism Conversations team, we want to thank you all, this wonderful panel, for joining us and sharing your wisdom with us today.

We also want to thank you, the listener, for tuning in to this important conversation.

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And until next time, keep the conversation going!