

THE EXHAUSTION CYCLE™

A FREE INSIGHT MINI GUIDE



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Insight Therapy and Consulting

An Insight
Framework

Insight Mini Guide Series

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THE INSIGHT

You know the tiredness I mean. The kind that doesn't fully go away after a good night's sleep, assuming you can get one of those anymore. The kind that's there when you wake up, already waiting for you before your feet hit the floor. The kind that makes you wonder if this is just what being an adult woman feels like and you missed the memo everyone else seemed to get.

I call this the Exhaustion Cycle, and it's one of the patterns I see often in my work with women. The Cycle is one way of mapping a pattern: over-responsibility can bring guilt or pressure, which can lead to overdoing. Overdoing may contribute to resentment, strain, and exhaustion, especially when there is too little recovery. People do not necessarily move through these stages in this order. You may skip a stage, move back and forth, or find that a different pathway explains your exhaustion better.

Many women encounter gendered expectations around caregiving, emotional labour, planning, and keeping things running. The amount and impact of that labour vary widely by relationship, culture, work, resources, and stage of life. Some expectations are still actively reinforced. Others may persist even when the current environment has changed. Repeated patterns can become automatic enough that we stop questioning them.

The Exhaustion Cycle™ is my original clinical and psychoeducational map. Research supports many of the pieces around it, including role overload, unpaid and cognitive labour, work-family conflict, overcommitment, and inadequate recovery, but the exact five-stage cycle has not been independently validated. Persistent, severe, new, or unexplained fatigue can also have medical, sleep-related,

medication-related, mental-health, occupational, and other causes. This framework can help you explore one possible part of the picture. It should not replace appropriate medical or mental-health assessment.



THE ACTION

One Thing You Can Try Today

The cycle can convince you that everything is urgent and everything is yours to carry. A useful experiment is to do one low-risk thing a little less. Choose one nonessential task where reducing effort will not affect safety, care, health, or a serious responsibility.

Let one small, safe thing drop and observe what actually happens. The goal is not to abandon your responsibilities. The goal is to notice which tasks truly require your effort and which ones you have taken on automatically. Let one small, safe "plastic plate" bounce and see what you learn.

THE REFLECTION

Want to Go More In-Depth?

This mini guide is an introduction. The full **Exhaustion Cycle Workbook** walks you through each stage of the cycle, helps you map your own pattern, traces where it may have been set in motion, shows you what it may be costing you, and gives you a practical plan for interrupting it. It includes reflection exercises and optional deep-dives for when you're ready to go further. You can find the workbook at insighttherapyandconsulting.ca or take the **free Pattern Quiz** to discover which pattern may be most active in your life right now.

I offer virtual therapy across Ontario for women who are ready to understand their patterns and build lives that feel authentic and sustainable. If that's you, I'd love to hear from you. Book a session with me or ask a question here: **Insight Therapy and Consulting**.

Let's talk about it.

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