

Status Effects and Specializations



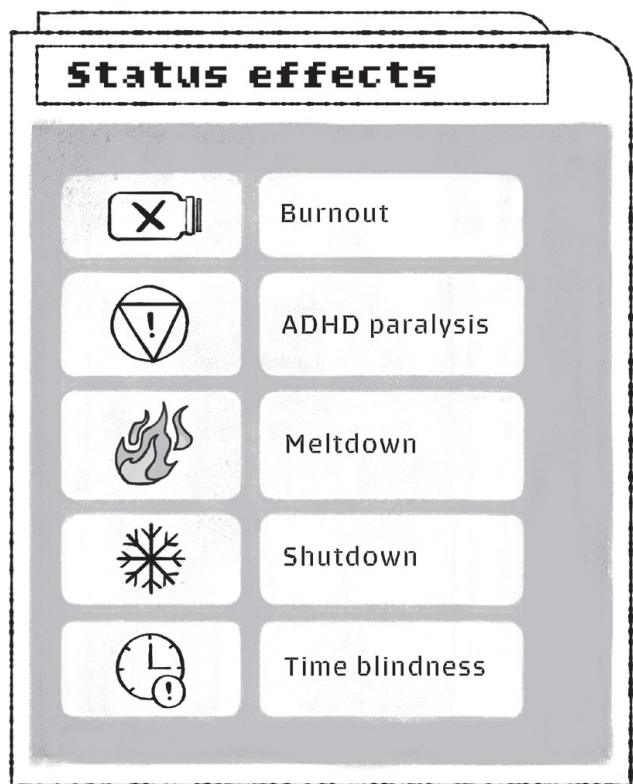
Status effects in Life.exe are the result of an accumulation of experiences, negative or positive, which build up over time, slowly or quickly, eventually becoming overwhelming and affecting the player's stats negatively. Generally, only time, rest, and sometimes solitude, can counteract a status effect. The longer it took the player's experiences to accumulate and cause the effect, the longer it will usually take to recover and regain their normal stats.

Burnout



I have already mentioned the Burnout status effect several times now, specifically in regard to masking, which is most common among ASD builds. It is actually a status effect that can impact anyone, NT or ND, but is much more easily triggered in ASD or other ND builds than it is in NT builds.

Burnout is the result of an accumulation of stress, overwhelm, and exhaustion from everyday activities, which causes a Bandwidth-depleting penalty over a period of time. Once the Bandwidth stat drops all



the way down to zero, Burnout is initiated, and all the player's stats are negatively impacted. The player becomes unable to function at the level to which those around them have been accustomed, sometimes even to the point of being unable to leave their home.

Burnout often occurs because the player had been masking, or trying to socialize an

amount that was unsustainable for them based on their Sociability stat. It isn't always caused by masking or socializing, however. Burnout can even be [unwittingly] self-inflicted, by trying to work on more career or personal projects, or volunteer more, or have more quests simultaneously active than the player's mental Bandwidth allows for.

Because ND players experience Life.exe on a higher level of difficulty than NT players, the stress, overwhelm, and exhaustion accumulate much more quickly, and take more time to recuperate from than they do for NT players. The reason it is especially the case for ASD builds is that they tend to have lower Bandwidth scores to begin with than NTs and most other ND builds.

Burnout can be reversed, but it takes time, and a lot of rest and self-care. Even after recuperating fully, players should be careful not to overextend themselves, because after being burnt out once, they are more susceptible to it happening again. Luckily, to counterbalance that, once a player has experienced Burnout, they can hopefully remember how they felt leading up to their first Burnout, and can take steps to reverse their Bandwidth depletion before another Burnout occurs.

To avoid initiating the Burnout status effect, a player should try to figure out what triggers the Bandwidth-depletion penalty for them, and attempt to do the triggering activities less often, or to rest long enough that their Bandwidth has time to regenerate before doing a triggering activity once again. For example, if you find socializing exhausting, don't feel guilty if you have to

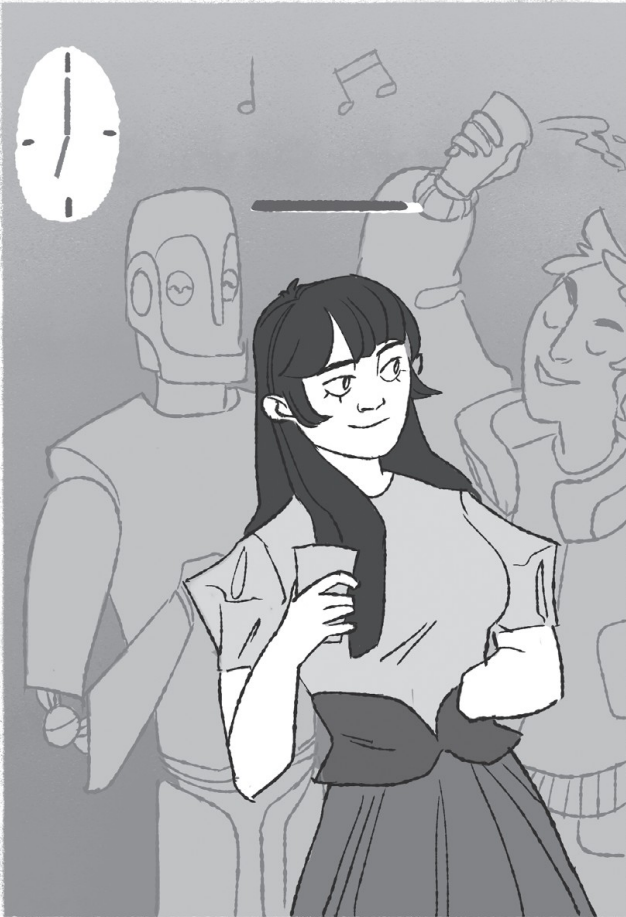
HELPFUL HINT

If you decline an invite due to being mentally, emotionally, or socially exhausted, you may feel the need to explain why. If that is the case, try explaining it to the player who invited you using a concept with which they're familiar. Players of Life.exe, regardless of neurotype, tend to better understand concepts they can relate to.

Perhaps remind them of the lockdowns of 2020, and how they, and most other NT players, were happy to be off from school or work for a bit—but the longer the lockdowns wore on, the more they needed to get out and socialize again. The lack of socialization was literally affecting many NT players' mental health. Explain that for you it is the opposite. You are sometimes happy to socialize, but after a while, you really need to spend time at home to recharge.

bow out of a social situation early, or even politely decline some invitations because your Bandwidth is already somewhat depleted, and you need to rest. Don't let anybody guilt you into socializing if you can't handle it mentally, or even if you just don't want to. Remember that "No" is a complete sentence.

Some players [especially of the NT variety] may badger you as to why you're leaving a function early, or have declined to attend entirely, and you can tell them why if you want to, but you certainly don't have to. They may feel entitled to that information, but they are not. ND players should



prioritize doing what is best for themselves and their build type, and not feel guilty for simply taking care of themselves.

Meltdown and Shutdown



Meltdowns and Shutdowns are two sides of the same coin, which is why they're listed together here. They are both responses to stress, overwhelm, and exhaustion, similar to Burnout. However, unlike Burnout, they are not the result of a slow accumulation of smaller triggers over a long time. They are more of an immediate response to being overwhelmed by internal or external stressors, which can build up over the course of a day, or even in minutes, depending on the player's Bandwidth stats.

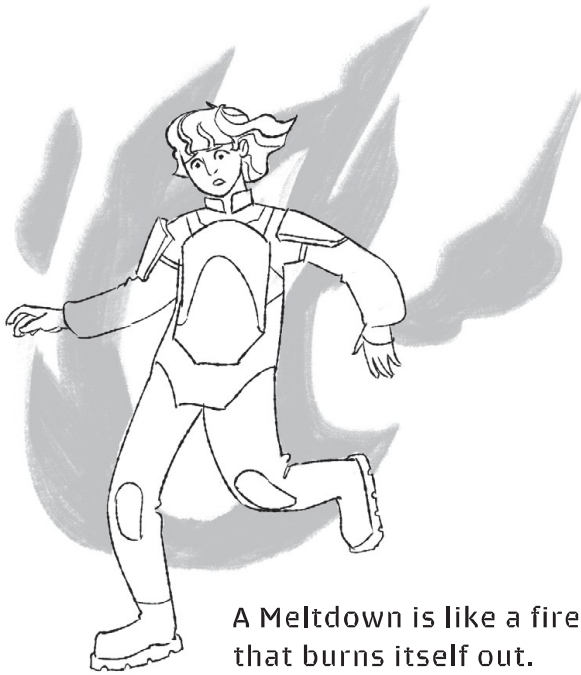
Burnout is the result of depleted Bandwidth, and because of this players with an active Burnout status effect are more susceptible to Meltdown or Shutdown, as they do stack with Burnout. These status effects can happen to any ND player who struggles with emotional dysregulation, but they most commonly affect ASD builds, once again, due to their lower base Bandwidth scores.

The Meltdown status effect is caused when acute overwhelm becomes too much for the player's Perception stat to handle. The Meltdown is one of the most well-known aspects of autism, unfortunately, and NT players tend to wrongly equate them to temper tantrums. If the player having the Meltdown is a noob, their parents are looked down upon for not properly disciplining

their spawn, and if the player having the Meltdown is mid- to high level, NTs tend to think they are being melodramatic, or that they're using their autism as an excuse to behave poorly.

The thing is, while they may appear similar from the outside, Meltdowns and temper tantrums are not the same thing. Temper tantrums are usually sparked by a player not getting their way. They are done for attention, and are used to manipulate others into giving them what they want. Some Meltdowns can begin that way as well, if "not getting their way" (e.g. having their routine disrupted) is the straw that breaks the autistic camel's back, so to speak. But it is never just the one instigating stressor that triggers this status effect—there is always more behind a Meltdown. Tension from something like sensory issues or social communication problems will have been building up within the ND player—sometimes for an entire day—and the disappointment or anxiety caused by something not going how they'd anticipated is what finally causes an emotional overload.

Another big difference between the Meltdown status effect and a tantrum, is that tantrums are done consciously, with intention, while Meltdowns are an instinctual response to stress, and not something the player has control over. They can involve things such as the player crying, screaming, rolling on the floor, kicking, collapsing to the ground, pulling at their hair, and even doing self-injurious behaviors (SIBs) like banging their head against hard surfaces or biting themselves.



A Meltdown is like a fire that burns itself out.

They rarely try and hurt others in this state, but may do so unintentionally if a well-meaning, but uninformed player tries to interfere with this status effect as it plays out. As long as the player dealing with the Meltdown status effect is not unsafe (e.g. in a road or parking lot), hurting other players, or in danger of seriously hurting themselves with their SIBs, they should be left alone. Because of their intensity, Meltdowns are exhausting, and tend to wind down on their own once the player has had a chance to physically work out all the stress and tension they've been holding in.

The Shutdown status effect is triggered by the same things that can cause a Meltdown. If you are familiar with the concept of “fight, flight, or freeze,” a Meltdown is an exaggerated fight or flight response, while a Shutdown is the ND version of freezing. The difference between the two status effects is that instead of lashing out when pushed past their breaking point, players experiencing the Shutdown status effect shrink inward. They have a hard time

putting together thoughts or sentences (sometimes temporarily becoming completely non-vocal), and may even dissociate, which means their mind may feel disconnected from their body, or they may feel like they're dreaming.

Some lucky players (sarcasm) will experience both. I happen to be one of those lucky players. I find that the main difference (which may not be the same for everyone) is that the causes of the Meltdowns I've had aren't usually intentional acts by anyone—just bad sensory feels, or bad luck, coupled with mental and emotional exhaustion or overwhelm. On the other hand, pretty much any time I have experienced the Shutdown status effect, it was due to the words or actions of other players that were directed at me. This can be the result of a misunderstanding. However, there are some griefers in Life.exe who get a kick out of bullying or abusing ND players.



A Shutdown is like something that's been frozen solid having to fully defrost.