



## Battery Theory and Lack of Energy for an Autistic Person

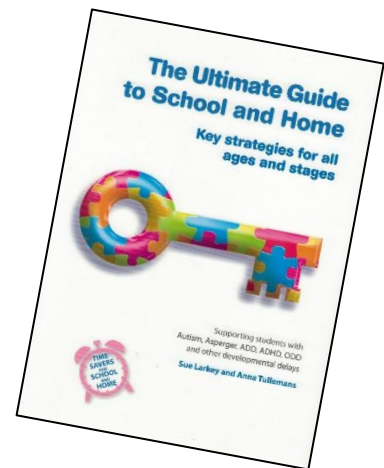
- Corrina Becker

Following is an excerpt from Corinna's blog regarding her ability to interact and use calming strategies when she is tired. To read the full excerpt, please go to her blog at

[www.nostereotypeshere.blogspot.com.au](http://www.nostereotypeshere.blogspot.com.au)

I wanted to discuss my *battery theory* in regard to autism, since I have found this to be useful as a metaphor to explain energy and ability to do things on a day to day basis.

**My Battery Theory** works kind of like Spoon Theory, (See Christine Miserandino [www.butyoudontlookstuck.com](http://www.butyoudontlookstuck.com)) except that it has to do with energy in general and being able to do things. A lot of the time I specifically use it to show how much social interaction I can handle. For me, even a little social contact, like someone walking by, drains my battery. Sometimes one person drains the battery more than three people. On a good day, the drain is slow and paced, on a bad day, the drain is fast and uneven.

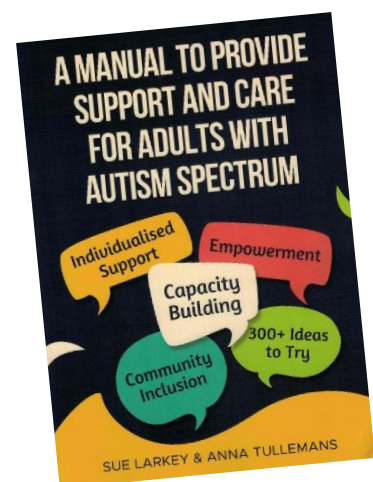


I describe the energy levels in my battery with colour levels. In each colour level, there is an "early" and "late" stage, meaning, how long I've been in each colour. The longer or "later" I'm in a colour, the harder it is to recharge. I have four colours, Green, Yellow, Orange and Red.

**Green:** I'm good, I'm refreshed and at my peak. At this level, I can do pretty much anything. In this stage, I'm good to test my boundaries and sensory input, and can put up with a lot.

**Yellow:** I'm a bit tired, but I'm holding in there. At this level, it's fairly easy to take short breaks and get back into Green. This is a pretty safe tired level. However, it has taken me a long time to recognize myself at this level and being able to differentiate it from the other tired levels.

**Orange:** I'm pretty tired. Still hanging in, but I'm starting to be more likely to make mistakes, lose skills, and be very intolerant of sensory issues. I can handle things, just not as good as I usually can, might get whiny, more intolerant. Withdrawal, time out, or as I call it "lone time", is highly recommended at this point. It takes about an hour or so to get back to Green or an early Yellow and I try not to get any more drained than a late Orange on a regular basis.



**Red:** This is the danger level. If I'm in public, and I say or write that I'm at red, it means that I'm running on low or emergency energy, and once I get to a safe, private location, I'm going to crash. At this stage, withdrawal isn't just highly recommended at this level; it's essential. This is the level where there is a high risk of burn out, meltdowns and overload. Actually, it's not even a risk, it's a guarantee.

In an early Red, I can actually mimic "functioning" or green. However, at both early and late, it can take an entire day to get myself back to Green. And that's if it's uninterrupted. When I've reached Red, it's harder for me to recharge, and so any interruptions, whether it'll be talking, notes for me to read, just tends to drain. Actually, I think in a Red, the only form of communication I can handle is online, and sometimes not even that.

On a good day, it takes me six hours for me to reach Red, after which there's really no way for me to socialise. Sometimes upon reaching Red, I'll just shut down, either really quickly or slowly, but there are times where I pull in emergency stores and actually appear to be functioning or in a higher level. But its survival and emergency stores and is basically me "borrowing" battery energy from future days, and results in my needing to recharge more frequently in the following days to recover.

I offer this as a way to explain a part of what it is like for me to be autistic, just as Christine used her Spoon Theory to explain living with Lupus. If it seems to fit by way of an explanation, both to other autistic and parents/caregivers/teachers of autistic people, then it is a good way to explain.

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