



Spoon Theory

Spoon theory is a metaphor that is used to describe the amount of mental or physical energy a person has available for daily activities and tasks. The theory was developed by Christine Miserandino as a way to express how it felt to have lupus. She used spoons to provide a visual representation of units of energy that a person might have and how chronic illness forces her to plan out her days and actions in advance so as not to run out of energy, or spoons, before the end of the day. See the full article at: <https://butyoudontlooksick.com/articles/written-by-christine/the-spoon-theory/>

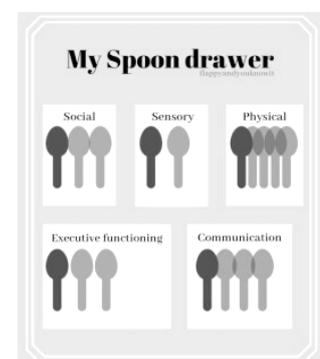
Many participants relate to this spoon theory. Participants with no outward symptoms or symbols of their condition are often perceived as lazy, inconsistent, or having poor time management skills and Spoon Theory really illustrates how they may be coping on a day-to-day basis.



See page 65 Spoon Theory
A Manual to Provide Support and Care
for Adults on the Autism Spectrum

Not all spoon reserves are created equally. Depending on how life is going at the moment for the participant each of their spoon drawers are stocked differently i.e. more spoons in one drawer and less in others. For example, the participant may not have the energy to go out to see a movie but can quite happily stay at home and play a game on their computer.

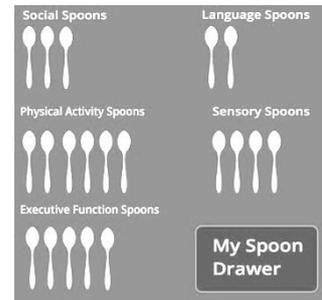
Going out uses more spoons than staying home as each set of instructions, each set of work demands, each time they have to organise themselves, follow a complex set of instructions or cope with change, and each social interaction may cost the participant a spoon. If there are sensory sensations that are overwhelming, then another spoon is used up in regulating and keeping calm. If they are working in a group environment more than one spoon may be needed. Break times are not relaxing. Another spoon or two is used up in coping with



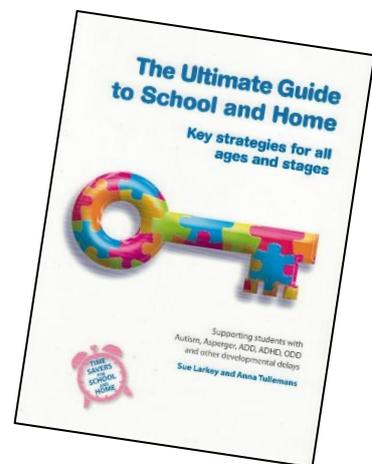
Spoon Theory Cont'd

all the social interaction, noise, and lack of structure. Some manage to save a spoon by shutting off, taking the time to be alone so that they can cope.

Remember that some days there are very few spoons in the drawer to start with.



Understanding the spoon structure for each day for the participant will help you to see what strategies will work best and when. For example, if the participant uses up lots of energy in being social in the morning, then structure non-social or solitary activities for the afternoon.



Anna Tullemans is a consultant and author in Autism Spectrum based in Brisbane and runs regular workshops. Visit annatullemans.com.au

© 2021



annatullemans@gmail.com
www.annatullemans.com.au
0419 168 742