AKII:  Welcome to the avenues of support tips and tricks to avoid burn out webinar.  This is the third webinar in the series.  The aim is to acknowledge the challenges faced by women with disabilities to help find out avenues of support for ourselves, each other and our communities.  Living with disability is challenging and getting the supports you need can sometimes seem impossible.  Today's speakers will share their varied experience and discuss how to prioritise wellbeing and how to keep our cup full when it is empty.

I'm very delighted to be your host for today's webinar.  If you know about me already from previous webinars, I'm a passionate advocate with over ten years of experience working throughout Australia and overseas in public health, capacity building.  I'm a first generation Australian from a refugee background.  I am disabled, queer and non-binary person.  I live with chronic pain from spinal injuries.  I'm a board director and company secretary.  I serve on many committees and panels within the health, disability agenda, LGB and happy to be here.

You can enlarge and minimise the screen.  For closed captions we have a separate screen on the bottom left-hand corner.  You can click this so you can make the closed captions your main viewing window.  If you wanted to access them, click the icon that is located on the top right-hand side and you will pop the window out.  You can move between the screens.  If you click the star, it will move you to all screens.

At the bottom of the screen on the right-hand side there is also an icon with a speech bubble in it.  If you select this, it will allow you to submit questions.  You do not need to wait until the end of the webinar to submit questions.  You can submit questions as you go.  If at any stage you are experiencing any technical difficulties and cannot continue to watch on, this webinar will be recorded and will be available to access later.

Speaking of technical difficulties, right next to the speech bubble there is an icon with a letter I in it.  Inside of that has a link called webcast support and live chat.  Use this option if you are having any difficulties.  Before we get started, I would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians on the land on which we are meeting today.  I'm honoured to welcome and hand over to Auntie Yvonne Weldon to do our welcome to country today.  Welcome.

AUNTY YVONNE WELDON:  Thank you.  Hello, everyone.  As was said, I'm Yvonne Weldon.  I'm in New South Wales.  I'm from the waters of the Clare and later Lachlan.  I'm the elected chairperson of the metropolitan Aboriginal land council who are the authority under the Act for the land that I am on.

I would like to pay my respects to all Elders past and present, to all First Nations and to you and the many nations of lands that you're on today.  I am on the lands of the nation.  Our boundaries are not defined by the hand of others but by the natural landscapes of the earth.  We cover from the north to the west and the Georges River in the south.  My people have practised our traditions for thousands of years and endless generations.

A welcome to country is more than words, but spiritual process.  To continue the practice of the many generations before us to the many generations to come.

My people have been a part of this land for more than 60,000 years.  We are the oldest continuously living culture of the world and on behalf of the metropolitan local Aboriginal land council, I welcome everyone to the land.  I acknowledge the people and the many ancestors that you are representing virtually here today whose spirits and ancestors will always remain with this land, our Mother Earth.  The first nations are the most resilient, unique and sustainable people on the planet.  To survive as long as we have, it is through respect, collaboration, understanding and a willingness to come together.  There are many Aboriginal warriors that have crossed this land before all of us, creating pathways before there were any, and to give respect and honour, can you pause for a moment to remember the many sacrifices that have been made along the way, the ones that we will continue to make and those that we shouldn't have to.  As you connect, learn and share, today, tomorrow and beyond, no matter what pathways we have all travelled, we all need to support each other, bringing out hidden heartaches to share and bringing us all a strength together.  The road travel alone is the longest and hardest road.  I will join you and you can join me.  The greatest gift you can give someone is your time.  Don't let this social distancing at this time make us socially absent.  We have to maintain physical distancing but we need to be connected more so now than ever.  We cannot continue to create barriers to our social connections, so whether it is through your work, your family or your networks, please reach out and help others that may not have anyone, creating an inclusion and acceptance and resilience.  All of us together can bring positive changes to multiple generations.  We are in this together.  Recently we had the N hachlt IDOC Week, which was last week, that was - it wasn't deferred but didn't happen in the physical sense, but the theme was Heal Country.  So whether you think about the land and impacts, resilience of my people, it means so much more about than the land.  It is about the land, culture, healing of spirit, living with what was lost because of what was taken.  Heal Mother Earth because we are the children of it.  We should always commence with the voice of Aboriginal people first because we are the first people of this country.

With that said, let us all draw upon my people's spirits as we continue on our journey.  May my people spirits walk with you and guide you as we move forward for us all.  Again, on behalf of the land council, welcome to Gaddigal land.  This always was and always will be Aboriginal land.  Thank you and have a wonderful day.

AKII:  Thank you for that heart felt and very important welcome to country.  It is always a pleasure listening to you speak.  For those who don't know about Women With Disabilities Australia, it is a national disabled person's organisation that represents more than two million women, girls and non-binary people with disability across Australia over almost 20 years.  We're the national voice and force for women, girls and non-binary.

A little bit about the project [indistinct] the project is an exciting information linkages and capacity building project using step-by-step meaningful intersectional community representation to develop sustainable and accessing outcomes and leadership, networking engagement, empowerment and opportunities to build the capacity for individuals and of the community with women and girls with disability.  We thrilled to deliver activities to build on the capacity and leadership skills of our community over the next two years, including a wide range of leadership, peer networking and mentoring.  We would like to thank the Department of Social Services for funding the project through the ILC program.  Today's webinar is part of a series of webinars that we have been delivering and will be delivering throughout the year.  You will all be provided with a link to access the previous webinars as well as this one when it becomes available later in the day.  At the end of this webinar I will highlight some of the key activities and opportunities and how you can get involved.

Today we have an excellent line-up of speakers.  We have Mali Hermans, Monique Crowden, Pauline Vetuna and Bobby Green.

Firstly, I would love to introduce Mali.  Mali is a Wiradjuri writer, organiser and community worker living on Ngunnawal and Ngambriland, but today she is on Yuggera country also known as Brisbane.  As a disabled woman she is deeply invested in disability justice work, committed to challenging ableism and its intersections with Colonialism, white supremacy, patriarchy and class.  Mali is part of the WWDA team and a number of the Disability Justice Network.

MALI HERMANS:  Thank you.  I pay my respects to the ancestors and elders of the country that I'm on today.  I'm in beautiful Meanjin on Yuggera country.  I pay my respects to the ancestors and the Elders of this country.  I feel very proud to be where I am today.

Before I start speaking I thought I would give a visual description of what I look like and the environment I'm in for any blind or vision-impaired folks.  I'm wearing a black and white stripy turtle neck.  I have shoulder length dark brown hair.  I have a fringe.  I am wearing glasses with wire frames.  I'm wearing silver hoops and I have pale skin.  In the background you can see a green couch as well as a white wall with some pictures hanging down just at the top of the screen that have been cut off as well as a grey cat scratch post to the left of me.

As Akii has introduced me, I'm Mali.  I am a proud Wiradjuri woman as well as coming from a white settlor background and I normally am living on Ngunnawal and Ngambriland country.  I am very invested in disability justice politics and I'm a part of the Disability Justice Network alongside working at Women With Disabilities Australia as a project and policy officer.

I am a proud disabled woman, so I live with several different chronic auto and inflammatory diseases, which affect my skin, my joints my mobility as well as my digestive system and it leaf my fatigued a lot of the time and dealing with chronic pain-- leaves me fatigued.

What I wanted to talk about today is what it means to exist as a disabled woman within Australia particularly as a disabled First Nations woman as a disabled person coming from a background of poverty and how burnout is enabled by the systems we live under as disabled people, whether it be because we don't have access to the resources and funds we need because of very bureaucratic NDIS systems, because of very violent mechanisms that prevent a lot of people from receiving welfare support through the disability support pension or whether it be through the medical system and the different ways that it invalidates our pain particularly as women, girls, non-binary and people with disabilities.  So that has been something that I have experienced throughout my life, not having access to resources as a disabled person, and never really being able to keep my head or my health above water or have any sense of stability because of those different systems that I've had to navigate, and, in particular, I think too, experiences with the medical system have very much defined the way that I conceive of myself as a disabled person.  It has been a constant source of stress of pressure, of trauma for me and because of that I have felt fatigued and burnt out most of the time.  I have tried to engage in self-care on a very individualistic level in the past, particularly as a young person, kind of learning what it means to value yourself, look after yourself and have never really felt satisfied with any of those attempts at self care, whether it be getting a massage or burning a candle.  It's never really fulfilled me as a disabled person and so in the last two to three years I very much have come to an advocate of disability justice, and, in particular, a lot of the writing of an amazing black theorist that a lot of us would know, Audrey Lorde, but we don't recognise as a disabled woman, a lot of her work focuses on the way self-care and caring for herself is not an act of self-indulgence but self-preservation and that in itself is an act of political warfare and I love her teachings on that, and the way that she has reorientated self care from being something we engage in by ourselves to something we engage in as a community.  So I think that's what I wanted to talk about because when I think of support, when I think of burnout, I think of being held by my community and I think of the way that I rely on different women with disabilities, in particular, and, in particular, multiply marginalised people with disabilities, and the way in which I have been housed by these people, fed by these people, I have had people act as my advocate in hospital, coming to different hospital appointments with me, assisting me as a caregiver because not only as a disabled person do I navigate the medical system, but I do too for my own family who are also disabled.  So I think without that support I don't think I ever would have thrived as much as I am now as a disabled woman.  I think it is really important when we think of self care and when we think of the way that we support each other, that we don't individualise ourselves from the communities that we're a part of and I think that that is a particular strength of being disabled women, disabled non-binary people, is the way in which we have really - I don't want to say unique knowledge, but we do in the way that we understand how we can meet each other's needs and adapt to each other's needs and care for each other.  So, yeah, that's kind of been my experience with support and care, very much rooted in politics of community and I think too that has facilitated healing in a way and resistance to burnout in a way other avenues of support I followed never really have.  I am a huge advocate of support, obviously, within the medical system.  I do rely on doctors, I rely on specialists, I rely on therapists and counsellors to be able to fell well and manage my chronic illnesses, but I think they are within a specific framework that doesn't always value people, especially disabled people, as their whole self-s, and often we can be treated as disposable or a whole array of different things.  So to be a part of spaces with other disabled people where we can facilitate healing for each other, I feel like that is the best resistance to burn out for me because whether it be having a coffee or a cuppa with someone, when I'm on a really low energy day, just to feel love and connection to other disabled people is really life affirming.

That is my take on support and care as a disabled person and I'm really excited to hear about the journeys of other speakers today because I feel like very similarly a lot of us have been held by other disabled women and non-binary folks and I think that that is a big part of what the lead project is, is not only looking at our individual capacities to live and to self advocate for ourselves, but to look at the way that manifests in community building and learning from other people around us.  Thank you for having me and I will pass back over to Akii.

AKII:  Thank you so much, Mali.  Your experiences are very similar to my own.  Thank you for sharing them.  It is very heart felt and I could feel myself nodding with every word that you're saying because I connected with so much of what you said.   Thank you for sharing your experiences and talking about connecting with one another to lift each other up.  I feel that as well.

I will now introduce our next speaker, Monique who is a passionate self-advocate and leader for people with intellectual disability in Tasmania.  Along with her other commitments, she has been involved in the Speak Out Association of Tasmania and Women With Disabilities Australia for several years.  She has sat on a number of groups including those which have led to the Our Side website and the Sunny app and is now representing her community on the Women With Disabilities Australia lead project steering committee.  She volunteers with her local girl guides group and is a mentor for young girls with disability and is passionate about inclusion and a truly inclusive society.  Monique could not be here live today, but has prerecorded her presentation.

MONIQUE CROWDEN:

My name is Monique Crowden. I live in Ulverstone, on the North West Coast, Tasmania. I'm into country music at the moment. My favourite singer probably is Luke Combs, and I love country because they write their songs like they're coming from the heart. I'm part of the WWDA LEAD project. It's helping people to become leaders and to understand what leadership is all about. There's different sorts of leadership roles.

I mentor a grade 11 student at the local high school. And it's just going there and supporting her and just having, like, for her having someone to talk to and encourage her. I find it really rewarding to be helping a young person. I feel like if they're struggling in life and they have no one to talk to at home, like, they don't have the support at home, they've got their mentor to talk to.

Yeah, it's important for adults to have mentors as well. I never had a mentor when I was younger. And that's why I like to mentor, be a mentor to everyone. It's really hard to do things by yourself. But having a group that supports you, that can encourage you and support you.

Speak Out, they've been a big part of my life to get me where I am now with helping me to speak up for myself, and to know my rights and to stand up for myself. I've gone to the 'Having A Say' conference in Geelong in Victoria. I've also been a part of the 'Adorable' project that they did a while ago and also, yeah, I've led some focus groups, and yeah, I love being a part of the Speak out. I love helping other people, they've taught me a lot of things.

Speak out

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So, like I'm not as shy as I used to be. If it's something that I'm really interested in and that I'm really passionate about, I say yes. And if it's something that I'm not sure about or confident about, I ask about it first before I make a decision, you might not want to do it or you just might not be interested in doing it. And of my speaking, I've come a long way, and helping other people, like helping young people to speak up for themselves and to know their rights. Don't be afraid in trying new things and there is support and help out there.

AKII:  Thank you for your video, Monique.  I would like to say we have received from feedback about my audio.  I've tried to improve it as best oak.  I do really hope that you can hear me now.  I've changed a few settings, but I can provide a transcript of what I've said today to anyone who has not been able to hear me, so I do apologise for that.  IT issues, we can do all we can but they can still happen, so I do apologise for that.  I do hope you can hear me now.  So thank you again to Monique for your video.  If you have any questions for her, you can submit them and we will try and get them answered for you.

Next up is Pauline Vetuna, who is a disabled person, writer and artist, community radio broaderer, and car giver born in Papua New Guinea and living in Boon Wurrung and Woiwurrung (Wurundjeri) people's of Kulin Nation.  They are one of the members of the Disability Justice Network and writers, artists collective disabled QBIPOC Collective.

PAULINE VETUNA:  Hello.  I want to pay my respect to the custodians of the land.

I would like to give a brief description of myself.  I have dark brown skin and I'm wearing a chunky sweater and in front of a virtual background that shows a field of flowers.  Before I talk about tips and tricks for self-care, I want to talk about collective care.  Not surprisingly there will be some overlap between Mali and I.

If we could have the first slide up from the person who is controlling the slides.  Marianne is an actor in the US.  She has this passage in her book, we do this until we free us.  She talks about her issue with the concept of self-care and the need to think always in terms of collective care.  She says self-care is really tricky because she doesn't believe in the self that the way people determine it here in this capitalist society that we live in.  She doesn't believe in self care but collective care, collectivising care and thinking about how to help each other.

She makes a distinction between self-care and community care and that is really to do with the fact as humans we need to be in community.  It is our need.  Our wellbeing is connected to the wellbeing of others and other people.  This is also a point made over and over again in the book care work, dreaming disability justice, which is a must read book.

When it comes to burnout, so many of us suffer from the never ending urgency of so many issues that affect our communities and we do this until we free us.  There is this advice for young organisers on the second slide.  She writes this for young organisers, your timeline is not the timeline on which movements occur.  Your timeline is incidental, your timeline is only for yourself to mark your growth and your living, but that's a fraction of the living that is going to be done by the universe and has already been done by the universe.  So when you under that you really are insignificant in the grand scheme of things you are, and it is a freedom to do the work necessary and to contribute in the ways that you see fit.  I saw it as a way to focus on the work and not get overwhelmed by the urgency of things going on and the need to do things all the time because there is an endless need for us to act and take actions.  The decades that I have been dealing with traumatic experiences and struggled with long-term complex trauma while adjusting to my disabled body's ever changing needs, disabled people have a full time job managing their disabilities and the medical industrial complex and the world so regular expectations about work, energy and life can go right out the window.

Rejecting ableist ideas about productivity has been really essential to my self-care.  Coming to understand my trauma has been a really long and really arduous journey, but it has been essential in order to find ways to care for and accept myself.

My most frequent trauma response is hyperarousal and association.  So going to the next slide, we're sharing a diagram on the screen now and I will supply a full image description for anyone who requires that after the talk, but the diagram shows two broad ways that systems respond to stress and trauma and keep us out of what clinicians call the window of tolerance.  That's the place of being where a person has the capacity to deal with challenges and not be overwhelmed.  The ways that we respond involuntarily is hyperarousal.  This is the strong fight or flight response.  Another way is hypo arousal, which is the body shutting down or disconnecting from your body.  For most of my life I have lived in states of hypo arousal and extended periods of dissociation.  This is a way my body and mind respond when I'm triggered.  The impacts on me before this was really bad.  I had shame that I wasn't able to cope with things I had been told I should be able to cope with.  I didn't have the capacity of others, including that of disabled people.  Once I did start understanding my trauma for what it was, I still had to deal with the reality of isolation that years of this kind of traumatic response will leave you with.  Trauma, able ifl and inaccessibility have blocked my access to education and employment and it is the basis for communities I am and should be a part of.  In the absence of community care and collective care, my only option at times for survival was self-care.  Self-care is how I struggle through recovery and isolation from the impacts of an abusive, intimate relationship and other times of unsafety.  My experiences with unsafety in the presence of unwell people and love and still care for have led me to directly abolutionist thinking.  I'm still recovering.

The practices of self-care help me build my window of tolerance, as it's called, and basically my lifestyle since the middle of last year, after months of pandemic health decline, is built around the practices and activities that I know help me stay in the zone while we're dealing with this situation.  These practices include all of the things we commonly hear about when we think of self care.  There are times spent outdoors or in the sun when it's out, medication, breathing exercises have been helpful, journalising exercises, grief acceptance and processing.  I have my own cultural spiritual practices that guide me daily and ground me and they are how I deal with disconnection from my indigenous lands and hold my centre in a society that can be so damaging to our wellbeing.

I'm also working on self-care when it comes to social media use and the way I take in information.  I think it is really important as we're all stuck inside to log off as much as possible and tune out to the collective mind when we need those breaks, and being present in my body is the most important thing for me.  It doesn't come naturally for me.  I've learned through practice though that a body care focus routine including accessible physical exercises help me and reduce my chronic pain levels.  It is especially important for me as dissociation is my most frequent stress response and it is worsened by the fact that I can't feel, because of my disabilities, I can't feel parts of my body and I have extensive spinal cord damage.  So connecting to my body is something I have to consciously do and work on daily and multiple times a day.  Speaking of the body, I want to say that I would really like to see modalities accessible for people living with the trauma of multiple kinds of oppression.  I would like to see disabled organisers imagine how we can create opportunities for disabled people to access such healing regularly as a form of community care.  We have to look to create opportunities.  We have seen in the pandemic the state has failed in basic housing, health and safety needs for so many of our people.  I'm anything, in particular, of my disabled sisters and siblings who are suffering, dealing with their own poverty and state violence while advocating and caring constantly for members of their communities.  I know many disabled people have been having conversations about how we can support each other which brings me to my final point.  The Disability Justice Network is committed to building in line with the support of disability justice to guide.  We are talking specific about a framework that has emerged from community organising in the US and by black, brown, queer and trans people.

This shows principles 5 to 10 of disability justice.  These principles are important to self-care and community care as they provide a starting point for organising that community care is built into the way we come into community with each other.

There's so much more to say but I will have to leave it there.  Thank you.

AKII:  Thank you for sharing those experiences, some of which I feel as well, some of which I have personally experienced and particularly about your trauma.  I appreciate you sharing that and being able to speak about that because we can acknowledge that's not always easy, so thank you for so much for sharing that and all your tips and tricks as well as collective justice and the importance of disability justice.  Thank you for everyone's questions and comments.

For the last speaker, I introduce Bobby Green.  She is a 35-year-old autistic woman who owns and runs a film nift clothing business and works part-time as a digital marketing strategist for a small Melbourne agency.  She is passionate about creating safe and affirming ways for women and non-binary people to share their lived experiences, and creating an inclusive community and celebrates and empowers all of its members.

Welcome.

BOBBY GREEN:  Thank you so much.  It's lovely to be here.  Thanks for the opportunity to be here as well Women With Disabilities Australia.  I take a moment to acknowledge the traditional owners on the land of which I am residing today and also to deliver a small visual description of myself as the last two speakers have done.

I am a white woman with auburn shoulder length hair, in front of a white wall in front of a bookshelf.  I am wearing a navy T-shirt.

I have left my full time job to spur sue my small business.  I'm approaching today from the perspective of somebody whose ship was beginning to get low in the water and looking at ways to identify the holes and plug them up.

Here are things that helped me come back from the red zone recently.  The first one was getting acquainted with my personal values.  I've only started exploring my relationship with self from diagnosis three years ago.  It has felt alien to me.  I've had some realisations around personal values and taking some time to identify those values and process what they mean in terms of how I want to live has really affected how I prioritise different things in my life.  Frustration, dissatisfaction, over whelm and burn out are things that I have experienced quite recently and the more I explore that relationship with myself, the more I'm finding the feelings are almost always due to a values misalignment somewhere in my life.  When I was talking through values with my therapist, one that came up for me was resilience.  My therapist said it was okay to be thankful that you have those reserves to draw on.  I don't want to see you celebrating your or inviting other people inviting you for your ability to take a hit.  I want you to build a life where you're not needing to draw on resilience every day to survive.  We looked at the things that are within my control in terms of how we approach addressing that and we settled on core values and examined my life and relationships using those values as a lens and one that struck he was my relationship with work and how much mentally and emotional I was struggling with the structure and the nature and the relentlessness of the work that I was doing and how there was a real misalignment with how my brain functions best and I realised that I was continuously prioritising stability and security and everyone else around me when my personal value is freedom.  So I quit.  From a disability perspective, making that jump was really terrifying in theory because I've been told over and over again I'm not suited to freelance work, I have executive dysfunction, issues with impulse control, I struggle to read a room sometimes.  I had doubts.  In lots of ways that comes back to scaffolding.  I found it so much easier to begin caring for myself and putting the feelers out in that sense of community care and collective care because I have more of an idea of what's most important to me and what I can contribute and also what my core needs are as well.  When it comes to core needs, society, under capitalism tries to dictate them to us.  We're saturated by self-care messaging with a marketing spin and it's not to say that they're not valid and that they certainly they will have their benefits, but as an autistic person prone to sensory over whelm my core need is simple, a period of silence every day.  Knowing that about myself allows myself to prioritise those moments of silence and build in other supports and boundaries and protections for myself.  Also to prioritise the really unglamorous bits of caring for myself, like cleaning the stove and organising my student loan repayments.  But for that a little bit comes down to scaffolding for me as well.  The way that my disability manifests in my life is significantly impacted executive functioning skills.  Pre-diagnosis I tried everything to be conventionally organised and found myself constantly frustrated.  Nothing worked.  The knock-on effects of that executive dysfunction are huge.  Racking up over due bills.  Paying to replace every book I've got out from a library, copping April fine every time I've forgotten to register my vehicle.  I used to have two hours a week looking for my keys.

What has worked for me in terms of being able to scaffold that a little bit is understanding that a scaffold and a support looks really different for everybody and for me it looks like having five complete sets of car keys.  I have some systems set up for my home because I'm good at adhering to other people's systems but not building them for myself.  I acknowledge my privilege in having access to resources like this and being able to seek them out, including therapy.  The investment in terms of the time and money and anxiety it has saved me.  The tiny stressors accumulate, boring unsexy games we can make can accumulate in the same way.  That's what I'm striving for now that I've left my job is an incremental improvement of systems and I'm hoping for compound interest on that.  My last little point that I would like to make is if you are in a position where you were in salaried employment, take your sick days, this is a lesson to myself.  I finished up - I worked last year like everybody else, home schooling my three children and the personal hits that I took in order to turn up to work every day, I look back now and I feel shame about that.  I did a poor job of caring for myself in that moment.  My take away for that would be if sick days are available to you, then take them.  That, I think is pretty close to my time.  Thank you.

AKII:  Thank you for sharing.  I spent months and months in hospital and I worked through all of them and didn't take a single sick day.  That is my ableism internalised.  Thank you for sharing that.

Now we have time for questions.  We have a few questions.  You can still send questions through.  These are some questions for any of the speakers to answer today and it would be great to share your opinions and experiences on these questions, so the first question is, for people who don't feel like they have community, how can they find it?

PAULINE VETUNA:  I can respond.  The internet was the only way to find other people.  My background is PNG and I'm from a tiny indigenous group on an island in that country.  So I didn't grow up with members of my cultural community necessarily.  Beyond that we just immigrated to Australia.  We were surrounded by white people in the suburbs.  Those sources of support were a part of my upbringing.  It wasn't until my late 20s when I found other people of colour and black people that I connected with and could start to unpack all of the racial trauma that I had experienced that other people have experienced the same.  It has been another journey to discover disabled people of colour.  That's only been in the last three or four years and the internet has been the way.  If you have access to the internet, which you probably do if you're watching this, I'd start there.  Get on Twitter.  It can be scary if you're not on there.  It is hostile sometimes but I found a lot of people on Twitter.  We could provide some hashtags.  The other members of the disabled community, I met all but one on Twitter.  It is a really effective way to find a community I think.

AKII:  Fantastic.  Would anybody else like to contribute?

MALI HERMANS:  Yes, I second that.  That's how I met Pauline.  I think I don't understand the internet, finding community for me has not so much been a process of physically finding people but cultivating community, if it makes sense.  I've had people around me, I've had disabled people around me, but we have never had those discussions about disability before or we've never been genuine and vulnerable with each other to be, like, this is my need right now in this situation.  So I think becoming confident in the last two years to rely on people and ask for support and very clearly kind of set them out as my community as been something that has changed my life.  I guess one piece of advice I would have for people trying to seek community is maybe look not only beyond your current networks of support, but maybe look at the family and friends in your life and see if there are opportunities to have discussion with them about how you can strengthen your relationships with them as well so this that they can be more of a community for you.

BOBBY GREEN:  I agree with both of those.  I found the community to be generous.  I am in a learning phase and trying to understand things a little bit better and I grow Twitter has been a particularly profoundly helpful resource in terms of just shared experience, really.

AKII:  Thank you.  I agree too.  You can find it through Women With Disabilities Australia, the opportunities, even my identity as a disabled person, that has come from being able to work and know about groups like Women With Disabilities Australia.  The next question is also addressed to all of the speakers.  Burn out, how do you recognise it?

MALI HERMANS:  In my experience I recognise it too late.  It is when I don't have joy left any more and for me, in particular, burnout kind of manifests itself as a really kind of off relationship with time.  Like I'm going at a hundred miles an hour, I feel like I can't sit down and take a break and tune out for a bit.  For me burnout and recognising burn out is a constant checking in process.  In particular, one activity that I really rely upon is physically writing and journalling.  That's something that I wouldn't be able to kind of unpack disability or trauma or just my emotional life, and so that process of constantly checking in with myself via journalling has been my biggest safety net in being able to realise things are not going too well or this is a really clear sign of burnout.  I would really encourage people, even if journalling isn't your thing, just finding a way to kind of track how you're feeling.  Like, for some people it can be even just regularly checking in with other people and having others help recognise burn out symptoms because I know for a lot of us, if we struggle, there are other close people around us who can help us recognise and kind of make protective plans around burnout.

BOBBY GREEN:  Agreed.  For me having feelings is feelings have always been an abstract concept for me that live out here, but they do tend to take root in my body.  I agree in the checking in, even in the physical sense, journalling, if you're feeling like a pit of dread in your stomach, that is a good sign you're on the brink.  For me it's a physical check in as well as a mental check in.

AKII:  Thank you.  The next question flows on from that and is directed to you.  There is a person who would like to know more about scaffolding and how you have incorporated that and what that means.

BOBBY GREEN:  I don't have any particular skills around scaffolding at all, but I have a very good therapist who will help me identify a problem or deficit on or something that I'm struggling with, and we kind of tend to look at typical solutions for that problem or use my keys as an example of scaffolding something in my life that was causing me grief.  I would spend probably a couple of hours a week looking for lost car keys.  When you say it out loud it's ridiculous.  We look at the suggestions to solve this.  Why don't you have a console when you work in, a bowl near the door.  Thank you.  We looked at the ways in which people make recommendations and we stop and think what is going to work for me.  For me that solution was having enough sets of keys that I'm bound to be able to find one.  If works probably 80% of the time.  Other things like with my freelance portfolio, I have worked with somebody to set you see kwenss of tasks to remind me when I need to check in with particular things for particular clients.  I put them on a rigid basis.  The reminders pop up.  If I'm delivering a strategy, there are certain steps needing to take place.  A very privileged position to outsource some the set-up and the scaffolding and building in those supports a little bit more and if that is available to you, I would certainly recommend it if it's not a strength that you have for yourself.

AKII:  The next is about an invisible disability.  Most people with illness, it is not always visible.  Do you find it harder to prove to people how unwell you are.

MALI HERMANS:  All the time.  I feel, yes, absolutely.  I think another layer for me is that I'm visibly a fat person, so a lot of the time a lot of my friend illnesses are related to fatness or viewed through a lens of fat phobia rather than disability.  For me it has been a constant process of unlearning or relying on other people's validation of my disability and learning to validate my own pain, my own slowness within my body, and it's something that I'm still learning to do today.  Sometimes I think I'm not as sick or fatigued as I am, but I would absolutely recommend connecting up with other people with invisible illnesses.  I think for me what has provided the most validation is joining Facebook groups for my specific chronic illnesses and just I felt so isolated for most of my life, not only because I haven't been validated by medical professionals but I haven't been considered a disabled person by people around me because of how I look and so to see people constantly post things that I relate to every single day has very much affirmed that I am disabled and that I share these common experiences with illness with other people as well.  So, yeah, I would definitely recommend trying to find other people with auto immune diseases or chronic illnesses, yeah.

AKII:  Thank you.  I completely agree.  I also have invisible disability and it is hard to feel like you're not faking, particularly if the medical profession is constantly making you feel that way or gas lighting you into feeling those feelings, even when they're not valid, so it can be really challenging, you start questioning yourself and that's where those feelings of stress and internalised ableism, those whispers in your ear and you think, what is going on and you start feeling stressed and wonder and so definitely connecting with community and I felt the same with Facebook groups and social media groups and you're on Instagram or hashtags to find people with your condition and you can find a whole new world of people that you can connect with, even disability pride hashtags, learning to have pride in disability.  It is currently disability pride month, so it is good to see those posts to see you can have pride in yourself as who you are and be proud of that as a disabled person.

The next question is about victim blaming versus self-care.  I love the discussion about collective care.  What do you think of the concept of self-care as victim blaming or blaming individuals when it is often structures that make us burn out?  How can we tackle this tendency of people to place responsibilities of individuals when it is not always possible to care for the self if social structures prevent this from happening?

Mali and I touched on that with our own internalised, am I imagining my conditions and my disability?  You start to then wonder am I blaming myself for not being able to do X, Y and Z because of my disability or being able to recognise that actually this is my disability, there's nothing inherently wrong with me.  It just prevents me, it may just change or modify the way that I am able to do things and so being able to recognise that is a way to be able to take care of yourself because you're not blaming yourself and you're not saying this is my fault, I've done something wrong, because at the end of the day we can do everything right, we can sleep well, eat well, drink well, exercise, do whatever we're told to do particularly through the medical profession and we can still have flairs, we can still be in pain and deal with all the challenges with our disability, so that's one way that I have interpreted that question.  Would anybody like to contribute to that?

BOBBY GREEN:  I think the onus is placed on the individual to care for themselves where the structure has let them down and where there has been a failure of the system to provide the nets collective care or community care.  It is placing the onus of recycling onto individual consumers when there are 71 companies contributing the vast majority of carbon emissions.  I understand it from that perspective.  I think it is a little bit victim blaming to be honest, in terms of what you said earlier about - for me masking and trying to fit in and questioning the validity of my disability and whether I fit in anywhere because I mask effectively.  Thinking about the reasonable adjustments that I've requested through work and then gas lighting into myself to think perhaps they're not reasonable adjustments I'm requesting.  I think we have a long way to go in terms of not macing the onus of care onto the individual.

AKII:  What do you do when that internalised shame and ableism is overwhelming?

MALI HERMANS:  I think I'm unpacking it every day and I will for the rest of my life because that is the nature of how deeply ingrained it is in us from the society we live in.  I think the main way that I have been able to start navigating that is actually having spaces with other disabled people to be vulnerable and to voice the things that I normally wouldn't get the opportunity to voice, so I think having spaces of vulnerability with other disabled people is like absolutely the biggest thing we can do to breakdown that shame.  To me a lot of my experiences of shame are marked by guilt or the idea that I am experiencing something very, very differently, no-one else has experienced this, I'm doing something in the wrong way and so to be able to talk to other people and be validated by them and to learn that we actually have common experiences and that if anything, coming back to that question, that we ourselves as disabled people shouldn't be ashamed.  I think that our broader community has a lot to be ashamed about in the way that it treats marginalised people, in particular, marginalised disabled folks.  So I think that's how I tackle shame, is again collectively.  That's what we keep coming back to in this webinar is the power and importance of doing things collectively rather than in isolation.

AKII:  Absolutely.  Coming from a refugee background, it is huge.  I was told growing up that I had nothing to worry about because I live in such an amazing country and my parents came on a boat and risked their lives to come here and so I feel this shame that I'm not well enough to experience this and all of that.  Connecting with people with similar experiences and connecting with the Women With Disabilities Australia group and community, and even listening to this webinar is validating, self-affirming, telling us we have nothing to be ashamed of.  Anyone listening will be able to gain some of that insight and that experience as well.  The next question is for Pauline, actually.  Could you regarding hypo arousal and hyperarousal, can you define these more for us and tell us techniques to notice when they're happening and how to stop and/or manage them.

PAULINE VETUNA:  I will direct you to the internet because I have Googled this so many times.  You can read articles that go into more detail and explain it much better than I could in the brief window of time that we have.  Going back to an early question about the difference about individual responsibility and structures that actually cause us harm, I have not engaged formal therapy for many years because I have so many traumatic experiences with therapists who did not understand racial trauma, who did not understand my extensive medical trauma.  I have a PTSD response every time I go near a hospital.  There's so many ways that we don't understand the way that the systems around us are actually causing us harm anding and creating disabilities within us, and so a lot of information that I found about my own trauma, I found from Facebook groups, from searching on the internet, about trauma, about complex trauma about the various types of trauma that intersect in my body, and so I definitely recommend doing' deep dive and start investigating for yourself some of these topics.  If you Google hyperarousal, hypo arousal, dissociation, all of these terms you will find the information that you need.

AKII:  Thank you for your comments on therapists not understanding, but there are some out there who understand.  It is so important to be able to recognise that there is a level that can exist for people with colour nor marginalises and disability.

Another question is about NDIS supports.  How do you think systems like the NDIS and Centrelink could be improved to better the needs of women with disability?  A pretty loaded question.

MALI HERMANS:  It is a big one.  I think one of the biggest problems with the NDIS and the way that Centrelink and welfare operates in this country is that they are deliberately punitive, deliberately exclusionary and not trauma informed.  I know that trauma informed has become a big buzz word, but as disabled women and non-binary people, I think it is fair to assume that we're coming to these systems with a level of trauma, whether that be medical trauma, racial trauma because we're people of colour, whether it be coming with just the every day trauma in our bodies from up packing and experiencing ableism, and in particular as women with disabilities, one of the biggest things from making sure these systems adequately fund support for us, which I don't think they do, they are very restrictive and often times deliberately keeping us in poverty, but I think one of the other biggest changes that needs to happen is the way that these systems interact with us because right now I feel like a lot of the time we're considered as a number or a client rather than as a whole person that's come into this system for help and support with a whole array of experiences and traumas.  So I feel like changing the ways that their systems interact with us is vital and, again, coming back to the idea of putting the heat on the systems, that systemic change and that trauma informed change is not something that is up to us.  It is up to the systems to change the way that they're interacting with us.

AKII:  Thank you so much for that response.

BOBBY GREEN:  Likewise.  The onus for advocacy is placed on the individual.  I absolutely agree.

AKII:  That's all the time we have today for questions.  If your question wasn't answered today, the team will do their best to respond to you and provide answers to any of your questions or comments.  Thank you for today's webinar.  Thank you to everyone who has attended today.  A huge thank you to our guest speakers for sharing your experiences.  Sometimes quite complex and quite traumatic.  So it is so deeply appreciated.  Thank you for your tips and tricks today of how you overcome burnout and talk about those experiences and even recognise that burn out.  You're more than welcome to continue to submit questions if you need and the team will get back to you.  We would like to th the Department of Social Services again for funding the Women With Disabilities Australia LEAD project.  We value everyone's time today and appreciate your feedback.  If you could participate in a survey by clicking the information or the icon on the bottom of the screen it would be greatly appreciated.  We will also send out an email with a link to the survey and provide you access of today's recording when it is available.  Share with your friends, family and community especially if they couldn't be here today and missed out.

We would love for you to connect to Women With Disabilities Australia and all of the work that Women With Disabilities Australia is doing through the LEAD project.  You can do this by meeting a member or joining the closed private Facebook group.  One of the things suggested through all the guest speakers.  There is a Facebook group which is the first point of finding community, something I would recommend, plus follow all social media platforms.

Opportunities include the art prize which is still accepting submissions until 23 July.  It is your last chance to enter your art.  We have peer networking events which is a great way to interact with our Women With Disabilities Australia members and you can stay tuned - the next event, peer network event, will be announced on socials.  Our mentoring program has opened today.  This is an eight-month program designed to build the confident, skills and compat of our members.  If you are a woman, girl, non-binary person with disability looking to build your leadership skill, connections, or help someone else build theirs, then this program is for you.  Find out more and go to our website.

If there's anything else that I poke about today that you require, just visit us at the website and get in touch.  The next webinar is for September.  Keep an eye out for details to be announced.  Thank you again to all the speakers again, thank you to everyone who has come and watched today and for those who submitted questions.  We look forward to seeing you next time.  Thank you.  Bye.

End of webinar