

What are shutdowns?

So shutdowns are similar to meltdowns.

Meltdowns are where an autistic person loses control because of overwhelm and they will do things like shout or move their body more than usual. Is it kind of an external expression of losing control of everything, whereas a shutdown is internal. The autistic person goes within themselves and they stop speaking. They stop moving, they stop giving you any kind of eye contact, and they find it too difficult to communicate, unable to communicate, don't want to and can't communicate. And that's a shutdown.

So if a meltdown is the fight response, then the shutdown can be described as the freeze or the flight response. They can often result from situations of high demand, such as social interaction. Being at work or at school in an environment that you're not used to or unfamiliar to you. Very emotional situations or situations that can be very active or demanding. Some of them they can't talk at all for some people, but you just kind of freeze, you just sit in a space as quiet as possible.

And that's the difficulty when it comes to shutdowns is I know people who have had shutdowns instead of meltdowns growing up, and it's actually meant that diagnosis, it can take a lot longer to have them because in normal life they're just seen as just that quiet kids in school and even family events. They could be completely overloaded, but the people are far less likely to notice it because they go quiet. And almost reclusive in a way, even when they're still there, and it makes it very difficult to notice.