

Graphic RHM - Reflexive Response Cartooning (Column 2, 2025)

Image descriptions for this column:

Cyclical Risk

Image: a single panel cartoon inside a thick square frame. Top title just above the frame: "SPECTRUM" (in large block lettering with stripes throughout); "by A Girl Named Earl" (written sideways to the right)

Inside the frame: Earl, a spiky headed character, is shown riding a unicycle and juggling, very near the edge of a cliff. They seem to be concentrating so much on those tasks at hand, did they do not notice how close they are to the edge. Clouds and other cliffs in the background indicate great height. Three written "labels" are shown in the scene: the word "Me" is written next to the person on the unicycle; the words "day-to-day life" are written next to the balls being juggled; and the words "Autistic Burnout" are written in the area off the edge of the cliff, pointing downward toward the drop below.

Cartoon subtitle (written just follow the frame): Cyclical Risk

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Breaking the Cycle

Image: a 4-panel cartoon arranged in a grid inside a thick square frame. Top title just above the frame: "SPECTRUM" (in large block lettering with stripes throughout); "by A Girl Named Earl" (written sideways to the right)

Top left panel: Earl, a spiky headed character, is shown riding a unicycle and juggling multicolored balls. (Background is white for all panels.)

Top right panel: Earl is shown here still on the unicycle, but it is tilted to one side now and the balls are flying in all directions. In the right side of the panel, there is a large hand holding a brush pen, as if held by the cartoonist. The tip of the pen is going into the spokes of the unicycle, causing it to no longer spin, and throwing Earl off balance.

Bottom left panel: The unicycle and all of the balls are now lying on the ground. Earl is also on the ground, sitting near the other items with a sad expression.

Bottom right panel: the unicycle and all the balls are still lying on the ground, but now Earl is shown exiting the area, walking out of the frame.

Cartoon subtitle (written just below the frame): Breaking the Cycle

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Emotional Overwhelm

Image: A two-panel cartoon, arranged vertically.

Top title (written just above the frame): "SPECTRUM" in large, striped letters, "by A Girl Named Earl" written sideways

In the top panel, we see the main character's face, and their hand which is holding a small, red, marble-sized object up to look at it. An arrow points to the red object with words reading, "How big a thing IS:"

The bottom panel closes in on the small object, but now it is not a red marble, but rather the main character's head, gone tiny, while their hand has gone all red with jagged teeth and an angry eye so that it resembles some kind of hostile rooster monster. Another arrow points, this time to the main character's head, with words reading, "How big a thing FEELS:"

Cartoon subtitle: "Emotional Overwhelm"

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Flipping the Script

Image: a page showing two nearly identical 2-panel cartoons, each arranged vertically. The two-panel strips are presented diagonally against a large white background on which there are words and arrows, offering further interpretation.

Top title: "SPECTRUM" in large, striped letters, "by A Girl Named Earl" written sideways

Upper left side of page: a two-panel cartoon, arranged vertically. In the top half, we see the main character's face, and their hand which is holding a small, red, marble-sized object up to look at it. An arrow points to the red object with words reading, "How big a thing IS:". The bottom half closes in on the red object, but now it is not a red marble, but rather the main character's head, gone tiny, while their hand has gone all red with jagged teeth and an angry eye so that it resembles some kind of hostile rooster monster. Another arrow points, this time to the main character's head, with words reading, "How big a thing FEELS:". Beneath this frame is a wavy line and a bottom subtitle: "Emotional Overwhelm"

To the right of this first cartoon are the words: "Sometimes, when the world feels TOO BIG..."

Lower right side of the page: The same two-panel cartoon as above in the upper left is repeated here, but the order of the panels is reversed. (The top panel from the "Emotional Overwhelm" is now at the bottom, and the bottom panel from that cartoon is now at the top of this one.)

Beneath this frame is another wavy line and subtitle: "Reverse Perspective"

To the left of this 2nd cartoon are the words: "...it can help to FLIP THE SCRIPT for a new perspective."

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Breakdown Bingo

Image: a one-panel cartoon, black and white.

Top title: "SPECTRUM" in large, striped letters, "by A Girl Named Earl" written sideways

Panel: A Bingo card. Instead of saying BINGO at the top, the columns are labeled with big white letters: "BREAK". The contents of the 25 squares are presented in columns, read from top to bottom as follows:

B1: 40 (+) hour work week

B2: Buzzing lights

B3: Sudden loud noises

B4: Crowded space

B5: Being "on" all day

R1: No alone time
R2: Socks too tight
R3: Strong odors
R4: Extra long meetings
R5: Pranks or mean jokes
E1: Change in routine
E2: Weird looks from others
E3: (lack of) FREE SPACE
E4: Unspoken social rules
E5: Center of attention
A1: Multiple social plans
A2: Unclear directions or rules
A3: ticking ticking ticking ticking
A4: The greeting dance
A5: Whispers and laughs
K1: Having to sit still
K2: Constant gear changes
K3: Nonstop chit-chat
K4: Official phone calls
K5: Big surprises
Bottom caption: BREAKDOWN BINGO

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Breakdown Prevention Bingo

Image: a one-panel cartoon, black and white (plus red).

Top title: "SPECTRUM" in large, striped letters, "by A Girl Named Earl" written sideways

Panel: A Bingo card. Instead of saying BINGO at the top, the columns are labeled with big red letters: "AVERT". The contents of the 25 squares are presented in columns, read from top to bottom as follows:

A1: Make time for rest
A2: Headphones when needed
A3: Allow time & space to recover from triggers
A4: Move to another area as needed
A5: Take breaks
V1: Build in alone time
V2: Wear sensory-friendly socks
V3: Move away from sensory intrusions
V4: Doodles, fidgets, sensory anchors
V5: Avoid toxic people
E1: Keep an "anchor" to help w/ transition
E2: Limit direct interaction
E3: (plenty of) FREE SPACE!
E4: Social "rules" are not mandatory

E5: Deflect unwanted attention

R1: Limit social obligations

R2: Ask for CLEAR DIRECTIONS

R3: Find a sensory anchor

R4: Find new greeting routines

R5: Listen to your gut regarding others

T1: Move around when you need to

T2: Allow time for transitions

T3: Step away as needed

T4: Prepare "scripts" ahead of time

T5: Request a PLAN or AGENDA

Bottom caption: (in black) BREAKDOWN (in red) ^ PREVENTION (in black) BINGO