Perspectives

REDUCING PANDEMIC FATIGUE

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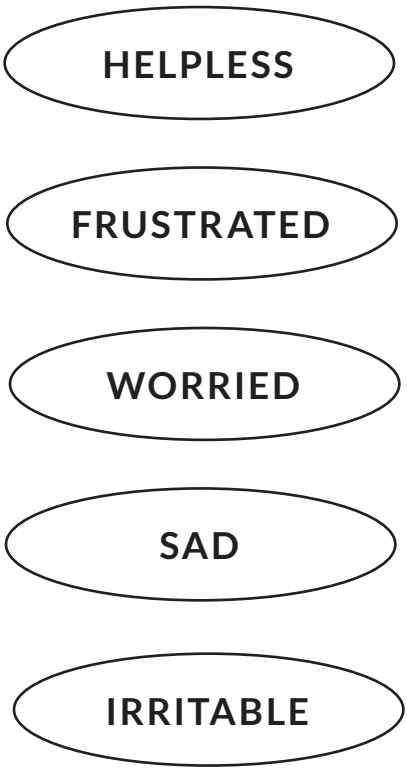
After many months of dealing with the fallout from COVID-19, many people have pandemic fatigue. It's a very real feeling of exhaustion stemming from the effects of the novel coronavirus in your life – from stay-at-home orders to the fear of getting ill to job loss.

It's perfectly normal to feel burned out right now. It's also important to stay the course and slow the spread of coronavirus.

Wrestling with intense emotions day after day drains your energy, causing pandemic fatigue. Fatigue can stem from a number of emotions you've experienced during the pandemic, including:

- Fear
- Anxiety
- Loneliness
- Hopelessness

SIGNS OF PANDEMIC FATIGUE



You may notice that you:

- Eat or sleep more or less than usual
- Have trouble focusing (brain fog)
- Feel edgy or nervous
- Snap at or argue with others
- Lack motivation
- Are unable to stop racing thoughts
- Withdraw from others

HEALTHY **WAYS TO COPE**

Adapting to the increased uncertainty of the pandemic is challenging. To reduce the toll it takes, it's essential to pay attention to your emotional and physical needs. Take these steps to renew your energy and feel more in control:

Take Care of Your Body

Make sure you're getting enough sleep (at least seven hours a night) and maintaining a nutritious diet. Though it may be difficult to drum up the motivation, exercising every day is important too. Doing these things will boost your energy, lift your mood and strengthen your immune system.

Limit your news intake

It's good to stay up to date on the latest coronavirus information. But too much news can overload you with negative emotions and zap your energy. Take a break from the news for a day or two and see if you feel better.

Lower your stress

Focusing on activities that are calming or bring you joy can lower your stress level — whether that's cooking a fancy meal or bird watching or practicing meditation for 15 minutes a day. Anything that offers you stress relief can be helpful.

Activities you can do include:

- Breathing exercises
- Yoga
- Nature walks
- Reading
- Watching a comedy

Connect with others

Humans are social creatures by nature. Being alone and feeling isolated can be stressful. So it's crucial to connect with others during the pandemic. Although you should limit your physical contact with people outside your household, try other ways to connect socially.

You can:

- Make phone calls
- Arrange video meetings
- Chat on social media
- Write letters
- Take a live class online

Accept your feelings
Challenging situations stir up a mix of emotions. Stuffing feelings down and ignoring them doesn't make them go away. Instead, acknowledge and name your feelings. Allow yourself to have them.

Then refocus your mind and energy on things you can do to feel better. If your feelings are overwhelming or all-consuming — and getting in the way of your daily activities — reach out to a health care provider. Protecting your emotional health is just as important as caring for yourself physically.

Try Positive Self-Talk
Sometimes fear and anxiety can make our minds leap to the worst scenario, even if it's most unlikely. You might become plagued with "what if" thoughts. Try catching those negative thoughts and replacing them with more realistic statements. For example, replace thoughts about acquiring COVID-19 with what you're doing to stay safe.

Create New Traditions
Usher more joy into your days by creating new traditions. You'll have something fun to look forward to and you might even decide to keep it up once the pandemic has passed.

For instance, you might set aside Sunday nights for self-care. Do anything that makes you feel good physically, mentally, or emotionally. You might focus on a hobby such as playing guitar or scrapbooking or do something for your body such as giving yourself a facial or going for a long run.

To socialize, you might make Friday your family movie night or picnic in the backyard every Saturday. You can also organize a video call with friends as a mid-week check-in. Be creative and come up with ideas that work best for you.

Going Home Checklist

- [ ] Take a moment to think about your day.
- [ ] Consider three things that went well.
- [ ] Acknowledge things that were difficult during your work day.
- [ ] Express gratitude to your colleagues and check in with them before leaving.
- [ ] Focus on making a deliberate transition from “work mode” to “home mode”
- [ ] If any of these tasks were difficult or overwhelming, consider calling the EAP to talk to a counselor for support.