The York University Staff Association Health & Wellness News & Views

If you are constantly tired or feeling trapped in a state of perpetual jetlag during the pandemic, you are not alone. "COVID fatigue" is hitting hard and fighting it is equally as difficult. It's real and it's strong. The COVID-19 pandemic has introduced a high degree of uncertainty into our homes, businesses, and minds on a global scale. Lack of consistency in our daily schedules and unanswered questions have stimulated anxiety, which is intensified by the recent staggering statistics being presented to us. The days all blur together, time has no meaning, and it'd be great if we could just hug our friends again. It's a long-haul fight and, just like someone running a marathon with no training, it's easy to lose steam well before the finish line. Our worlds have shifted, and it takes emotional energy to cope with that. Health-care workers are spending long shifts in hospitals and care homes trying to keep patients alive. Other essential workers are pulling overtime in grocery stores, warehouses, fields, production plants and delivery trucks to ensure the country has enough food, toilet paper and face masks. At-home workers are doing their jobs and, in many cases, also caring for and educating children. We're tired of being cooped up, tired of being careful, and tired of being scared. Our collective fatigue is making some people careless – possibly one reason COVID-19 cases are rising sharply again. In order to effectively combat this lack of focus and energy, aka – burnout, promote overall health, and increase focus, during these tough times it would be helpful to focus on actives, practices, and mindsets that encourage thriving, and strategies for sustaining energy during this exceptionally difficult time.

We do not need the threat of a virus to cause us to lose that fire we have inside, that drive or energy that is synonymous with feelings of effectiveness and success. When we are in our zone, the feeling inside us is almost a supernatural force capable of driving us forward to great heights. However, when we are missing that feeling, there is a flatness to our state of mind that creeps in. Put simply: We have lost our mojo. So how can you get your mojo back? You've heard all these tips before, but they bear repeating: get enough sleep, follow a balanced diet, exercise regularly, don't drink too much, stay socially connected while staying socially distanced and find ways to relieve stress…

Stress-induced emotions consume huge amounts of energy. We know there are two kinds of stress that have long term effects on our mental well-being and overall physical health. These are intense stress and prolonged stress. Currently we have both, and add to that the uncertainly about, well, almost everything managing stress can be extremely difficult. Try adding activities to your daily routine that are well-known for being effective stress relievers, such as yoga, meditation, reading, or listening to music. These outlets can mentally transport you to another time and place, letting you take a small vacation from anxieties around COVID-19 and return rejuvenated.

One of the main reasons for lack of energy and fatigue is overwork. Overwork can include professional, family, and social obligations. Try to streamline your list of "must-do" activities. Set your priorities in terms of the most important tasks. Pare down those that are less important. Consider asking for extra help, if necessary. People are hardwired to want to do things on their own and be independent-minded. Asking for help often makes us feel uneasy because it requires surrendering control to someone else. Beyond the emotions and logistics of living during the Covid-19 pandemic, people really need to rely on each other more than ever before both in their personal lives and at work. The adage "united we stand, divided we fall" is easy to recite when things are going well. However, it is now, in the face of this pandemic, that it takes on an even deeper meaning. By relying on each other we can sustainably energize ourselves and those around us.

The COVID-19 pandemic has managed to alter our realties so much that it feels like we are living in a science fiction novel. The phrase "once things get back to normal" is being thrown around a lot these days and the truth is we can't wish away what's happened over the past several months. We will just be exhausting ourselves further. Why not use this time to really evaluate our lives. This is a powerful opportunity for us to look at how we want to live differently and better. You can't go back to yesterday or last summer. All you can do is take the wisdom and insight from what's happened and move forward. Focus on how you want to live today and how you want to take that into tomorrow. And remember, we are all in this together. "COVID fatigue" is normal, and you're not the only person feeling it.

Stay well & think healthy.

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