

WELLNESS TIPS

QUARANTINE FATIGUE

Have you been feeling irritable, stressed, anxious, unmotivated/less productive, or on edge recently? Or engaging more in former activities or habits that are challenging current social distancing recommendations? Are you beginning to tune out new directives for precautions and updated Covid -19 information? These may be signs that you are experiencing quarantine fatigue.

The past several months have been difficult and as the pandemic drags on, many people are beginning to feel exhausted and worn out physically and emotionally. Quarantine fatigue is a natural response to the constant underlying stress.

The first steps in coping effectively are to identify and acknowledge your feelings without being judgmental. Accept that this is occurring so that you can take care of yourself and begin to make plans for moving forward in the current reality.

MANAGING QUARANTINE FATIGUE

- Remind yourself that this will pass. It's hard to remember when you are exhausted. You may want to put a post-it where you will see it as a reminder and help you stay hopeful.
- Focus on the present. It doesn't help to think about how things were before. And while there are future school, clerkship, residency application and other deadlines, focus on current goals and activities that move you toward the long-term deadlines. Include personal goals such as exercise and leisure.
- Establish a routine (Can you count the number of times I have put this in previous Tips?) This isn't just for school or work – it includes everything.
- Keep a journal. Reviewing entries can help you see patterns, get perspective, and see progress.
- Consider rearranging your environment. Decluttering, reorganizing, or rearranging furniture can freshen your space and make it more inviting and even more conducive to studying.

- Maintain social contact. You can even expand your social circle by texting, e-mailing, writing people you haven't normally stayed in touch with – perhaps someone from a tutor group or with whom you have volunteered, or who has left IC to begin residency, or friends from high school or college.
Are there activities you can pursue while maintaining social distancing? Perhaps meeting in a local park?
Start a tradition of singing, playing a musical instrument, dancing from balconies or driveways, such as have been mentioned in the news?
- Were there things that you weren't satisfied with in your life before Covid-19 that you would like to work on changing?
- Some days will be more difficult, and the focus might be on just getting through the day. Now is not the time to be harsh with yourself and expect perfection. You might choose to relax expectations for some parts of your life.
- Get outside if you can. Exercise or at least physically move about. Research shows benefits of being in nature.
Check on bike rentals at local bike shops or if the bike library has cheap used bikes in stock.
Take a walk at Ashton Cross Country Course or nearby trail west of the soccer fields on UI West Campus. Hike at Ryersons Woods, just outside of Iowa City.
Bring nature inside – get some fish – or plants.
- Take time for mentally stimulating activities that distract you from concerns or study/work. Is there a language you would like to learn? Plan a trip you would like to take in the future and read about the location.
Did you know there are on-line improv classes? Want to learn line dancing? Get friends to participate with you on Zoom.
Enter the CCOM poetry contest promoted in a recent e-mail from Cate Dicharry.
- Practice mindfulness or other relaxation techniques (see previous Tips, plus many on-line sites)
 - Breathing techniques are easy and effective and results increase with practice. They involve diaphragmatic breathing by relaxing your stomach, allowing it to expand when you inhale and contract when you exhale. Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. (See previous Tips on relaxation).
 - One technique is to count backward from 10 to 0, moving down one number each time you exhale. See how you feel when you reach 0 and try it again if anxiety hasn't decreased.

- If you worry excessively,
 - Try to think about the future in a more positive way. What can you do today to begin to impact the future?
 - Avoid thinking about the worst-case scenario. “what if . . .” will increase your anxiety. And you are focusing on something you don’t know is going to happen (and may be unlikely).
 - Work on letting go if you can’t do anything about it. Focus on what you can do.

These are not easy challenges, but you will have lots of chances to practice as worried thoughts return. Practicing thought challenges becomes easier and more effective over time.

If you are feeling overwhelmed or feelings of anxiety and depression are persistent, MSCC counselors are available to talk with you.

Cleveland Clinic. Health Essentials. “Are You Experiencing Coronavirus Quarantine Fatigue?” May 14, 2020.

<https://health.clevelandclinic.org/are-you-experiencing-coronavirus-quarantine-fatigue/>

Verywell mind. “How to Cope with Quarantine Fatigue.” Sara Lindberg. May 15, 2020.

<https://www.verywellmind.com/how-to-cope-with-quarantine-fatigue-4844181>

Massachusetts General Hospital. “Overcoming Quarantine Fatigue.” Laura Marques and Robert Waldinger. June 2, 2020.

<https://www.massgeneral.org/news/coronavirus/quarantine-fatigue>

Shape. “Why You Might be Experiencing Quarantine Fatigue – and How to Deal with It.”

<https://www.shape.com/lifestyle/mind-and-body/quarantine-fatigue>

Health. “Quarantine Fatigue is Real – Here’s How to Keep UP Social Distancing Anyway.” Lea Groth. May 4, 2020.

<https://www.health.com/condition/infectious-diseases/coronavirus/quarantine-fatigue>

And, as always, contact the MSCC with questions or concerns

If you would like to review previous Wellness Wednesday Tips, go to the CCOM Medical Student Counseling Center Website:

<https://medicine.uiowa.edu/md/student-support/student-counseling/mscc-wellness-programs-and-resources>

Stay safe and stay healthy!

Liz Schacht elizabeth-shacht@uiowa.edu

Medical Student Counseling Center osac-mscc@uiowa.edu 319-335-8056 1240 MERF