

WELLNESS WEDNESDAY TIPS

ARE YOU FEELING STRESSED? BURNED OUT?

As the end of spring semester arrives, students are often feeling stressed and exhausted. The added stress of coping with Covid-19, in addition to ending the semester, has added another layer of constant adjustments and uncertainty over the past several weeks. There have been many decisions to make about managing school, meaningful contact with others while social distancing, and how to manage daily life. Some students have felt additional pressure to use this time “well” and not “waste it”, so as not to be at a disadvantage during residency interviews. These changes and decisions are being made in an atmosphere of constantly changing guidelines, expectations, and advice. This is emotionally draining and can lead to a type of burnout described as decision fatigue.

Some signs of burnout include feelings of physical and emotional exhaustion, fatigue, decreased concentration, decreased motivation, feeling cynical and detached, feeling apathetic, decreased productivity, irritability, insomnia.

During Covid-19, many usual resources for coping with stress have not been available, either because they have been closed (gyms and restaurants) or due to limitations of social distancing.

But there are some things you can do to address stress and burnout:

- Try to limit the amount of time engaged in activities that may reinforce a pessimistic, discouraged outlook, such as decreasing time listening to the news.
- Move your body. With social distancing, physical inactivity may increase as people spend more time at home.
- Do something enjoyable that takes your mind off your studies, residency applications, and pandemic worry. It's OK to engage in light reading or binge watch Netflix.
- Do something for someone else. It doesn't have to be official volunteer work – bake for a neighbor, send a friend a playlist, call a friend you haven't talked with for some time.
- Don't be judgmental about how you spend your down time. Every minute doesn't have to be productive. You don't have to learn a new skill. You aren't a failure if you don't do something new. Doing nothing (i.e. staying home for social distancing) is doing something

- Do something that makes you happy.
- Focus on the present

As Saleh states “... there is no magic pill. Pulling out of burnout is an ongoing process of recharging and de-stressing.” There is no one right strategy. Find what works for you and give yourself permission to focus on self-care. If you are feeling overwhelmed or would like assistance in identifying how you might cope with feeling stressed and burned out, MSCC counselors are available to work with you or assist you in identifying available resources.

Worklife_ BBC. “How to Avoid Burnout Amid a Pandemic.” Bryan Lufkin. March 30, 2020

<https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20200330-covid-19-how-to-learn-a-new-skill-in-coronavirus-quarantine>

Lean Forward. Harvard Medical School. “A Double Whammy: The Covid-19 Pandemic and Burnout in Medical Professionals.” Marwa Saleh. April 9, 2020

<https://leanforward.hms.harvard.edu/2020/04/09/a-double-whammy-the-covid-19-pandemic-and-burnout-in-medical-professionals/>

High Octane Women. “The Tell Tale Signs of Burnout ... Do you Have them?” Sherrie Bourg Carter. November 26, 2013.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/high-octane-women/201311/the-tell-tale-signs-burnout-do-you-have-them>

Feel free to contact the MSCC for questions, concerns or to schedule an appointment.

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