

Parents Page

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Pandemic fatigue is real, and you're not alone

Posted on January 14, 2022
by maxsullivan2

We're all tired. We're all stressed, unsure of what lies ahead. It's been nearly two years since the COVID-19 pandemic upended our lives, and it's getting old. The result? Pandemic fatigue – a mixed bag of emotions and behaviors that leaves us feeling just not ourselves. It takes a notable toll on both our mental and physical health. We talked with psychiatrist and Oregon Health Authority senior health advisor Dr. Margaret "Meg" Cary about pandemic fatigue, its effects and what we can do about it.



OHA: What is pandemic fatigue and what causes it?

MC: "COVID fatigue, fundamentally, is the natural response to prolonged, all-encompassing stress that demands our emotional, cognitive, physical, and spiritual energy. The stress comes from what we are experiencing, as well as from the emotional and cognitive energy required to continually respond to uncertainty and changing circumstances. The pandemic has resulted in losses. Grieving is a whole body, mind, spirit process that exhausts us even though it also eventually helps us heal."

OHA: What can we do for others who may be suffering pandemic fatigue?

MC: "Check in with yourself and others. If you have some emotional reserves, are in a time when you are rejuvenated, check in and just be an ear and a friend to what they are experiencing. Reach out, ask how you can be a support or make your best guess. And if you are concerned about it, ask about suicidal thoughts. Asking will not put the idea in someone's mind and it can be a lifesaving way to take the idea out of their minds. If you are interested in increasing your skills, consider taking Mental Health First Aid Oregon (MHFA Oregon) course or signing up for mental health training."

Dr. Margaret Cary, MD, MPH, is a senior health advisor for Oregon Health Authority.

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- PROTECT YOUR MORNINGS** [or whenever you wake up] less cortisol, more intentionality.
- GO OUTSIDE** [or look outside] perspective, context + something larger than this.
- BE ACTIVE** [avoid stagnation] in body, mind, spirit.
- CULTIVATE RELATIONSHIPS** those that are edifying + healthy.
- NURTURE GRATITUDE** what is one thing, right now, that is going well?
- DETOX** if navigating addictions be wise + safe limit news + social media.
- SPEND TIME WITH ANIMALS** ↓ stress hormones, ↑ comfort.
- METABOLIZE ALL YOU ARE EXPERIENCING** re-regulate your nervous system.
- SIMPLIFY** [less is more] be aware of decision fatigue + cognitive overload.
- ADMIRE ART** the gift of feeling transported.
- LAUGH** pure humor = a sustaining force.
- FOSTER HUMILITY & EXTEND GRACE** self-righteousness + hubris = unhelpful.
- SLEEP** to cleanse + repair brain + body.
- CLARIFY INTENTIONS** how can i refrain from causing harm, how can i contribute meaningfully?
- BE REALISTIC • COMPASSIONATE** [with yourself] be mindful of the quality of your presence. it means so much to others.

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