

Is The Fatigue and Anxiety Epidemic Undermining Your Well-being?

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Acute and chronic are often used to describe fatigue and anxiety. Most people however describe them as being overworked, overly tired and worried – worried about everything from the economy and losing their job to higher taxes and how they are going to meet their family's needs. Many are expected to do more work with less pay while taking on additional jobs just to make ends meet.

For people in professions like nursing and healthcare, utilities and production facilities where workers report in on a 24/7 cycle or do lots of repetitive work, the fatigue and anxiety factor is widespread and on the rise. Realtors, people in sales and at-home spouses and family caregivers face the same fatigue and anxiety crisis.

Acute, Chronic or Long-term Emotional

Fatigue and anxiety have been chronicled for years and while not easily measured or quantified the end result is very measurable. According to an earlier study reported in the *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, 40 percent of U.S. workers experience fatigue resulting in billions of dollars in costs through loss of productivity.

Other studies show that tools such as the Occupational Fatigue Exhaustion/Recovery Scale have been developed to learn how to deal with these issues. Individuals can even go online to use a Fatigue Questionnaire based on the Fatigue Severity Scale to see how bad their fatigue levels are. The Canadian government has publications on how to deal with psychosocial fatigue. And chronic fatigue has been determined by the US Social Security System to be a disability.

But what about the long-term emotional fatigue and anxiety epidemic that no one is talking about? What about the millions of people who have been and are suffering daily from the same stress, anxiety and worry that should have lasted for a week, a month or several months but has now dragged on for a year, year and a half or two.

It's about the long-term emotional fatigue and anxiety caused by the new economy, the uncertainty of keeping a job, having to work two or three jobs or to work twelve or fourteen hour shifts four days in a row with too little downtime or for at-home caregivers no downtime? Some of the results of long-term fatigue and anxiety include:

- Decreased communication skills, concentration and decision making
- Reduced productivity and performance rather than absenteeism
- Increased errors in judgment and forgetfulness
- Increased sick-time, absenteeism, rate of turnover, medical costs and accidents
- Increased food cravings, insomnia and headaches

Five Anti-Fatigue Habits

It isn't just about work and productivity, it's about your life and well-being. Everyone is suffering today from emotional fatigue with nerves constantly on edge and at high alert. **Don't just sit there – do something!** The only solution is to control what is in your control and to develop personal habits to help you stay balanced while everything else is spinning out of balance. The following habits are based on using Feng Shui principles that lead to a balanced life and prosperity.

One - Simplify! Control and eliminate stress at home by simplifying your life, your personal environment and the commitments on your calendar. Unclutter and eliminate everything in your personal surroundings that is not necessary, functional or esthetically attractive so it can provide you positive supportive and uplifting energy. Excess "stuff" and clutter provides you stagnant draining energy – think of it as constipation for your surroundings and your emotional well-being. Treat your calendar the same way – you will be amazed at how much anxiety you will eliminate by under-scheduling your calendar.

Two – Get Ample Rest! One of the biggest contributors to the fatigue and anxiety epidemic is lack of sleep. First, make sure your bedroom is clutter and computer-free so you do not think about all of the negative things in the outside world or all of your undone work while you are trying to go to sleep. Clutter-free means nothing under your bed as well as in the corners and closet. Make sure your bedroom is painted a very soft peaceful pastel color to encourage calm and rest – pastel blues, greens and earth tones like peach work great. Also keep the bedroom a bit cooler than other rooms because studies show that people sleep better in slightly cooler rooms. Then commit to going to bed an hour earlier than usual so you can overcome the fatigue instead of succumbing to it. If you are working more than one job and getting ample rest is a timing problem, take shorter naps in-between jobs or do relaxing things that will provide you downtime. Ample sleep is key to creating balance and dealing with fatigue and anxiety.

Three – Stop Watching Late-night News! The last thing your mind focuses on before going to sleep is the one thing it will focus on while you are trying to sleep. Stop watching the news, stock reports or on-the-edge-of-your-seat thrillers before bedtime. Just because you are ready to sleep, your subconscious mind isn't and will continue to be engaged with that thriller or the negative news. Instead watch a sitcom or something lighthearted. Better yet, put on some relaxing music in your bedroom or take a warm shower to relax before retiring. With so much fatigue and anxiety creating stress in the world outside of your home, your home and especially your bedroom needs to be your private sanctuary to ensure regenerating sleep.

Four – Eat Nutritious Food Regularly! Most people know that they should eat regularly and nutritiously because that is the way to maintain good health, not gain weight and remain in-control of your well-being. However long work hours, inadequate downtime and a nervous system on high-alert often results in skipping meals, over-eating, snacking and food-cravings. Caffeinated beverages and high sugar foods only serve to escalate the problem. Stick to a routine of eating a solid breakfast, a normal

lunch and light dinner every day along with healthy snacks and fruit so your nervous system is nourished properly to support you emotionally and help you stay in balance. And, remember to limit your use of caffeinated beverages and high sugar foods that contribute to sleeplessness and irritability.

Five – Eliminate Negative Self-Talk! Stop the constant loop of negative self-talk in your head. Remove thoughts and words from your vocabulary like, I can't, I don't deserve it, good things never happen to me, I never win anything, I always lose, I won't get the job, etc. Replace them with I can, I do and I will words, or; I already have. Hold onto only positive thoughts and keep them looping through your mind. When the negatives try to creep into your life again, thank them for offering to help but send them away and tell them you no longer need them. This will reduce your emotional fatigue level, put you in control and provide you the balance you need.

Dealing with fatigue and anxiety is not an option once it has grown into an epidemic. It is contagious and passed on from one person to the next, to the family, neighbors, the community and workplace. Once it becomes part of the 24/7 news cycle it is constantly re-enforced and expands much like any disease epidemic. Long-term emotional fatigue will not be common or costly to your well-being once you have taken control and re-instated balance in your life.

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