

## The Third Wave.... Do you have Covid Fatigue?

It is a bit of a perfect storm. We are exhausted from a year of life changing, stressful circumstances. Now we are seeing the numbers of Covid infections on an exponential rise affecting younger people and infecting us at more than twice the rate as the original virus. Since the last wave I have seen people's fatigue beginning to show. We allowed ourselves to be a little less vigilant about distancing, masking, and freer to socialize with more people. I think the fact that we got through the last wave may have given us hope that it was the last wave and the vaccines would end the pandemic. This past year one of the most stressful factors has been the uncertainty. Living lives on a roller coaster course of predictions, changing information, and viral variants. We are overwhelmed with uncertainty about employment, finances, health, our families, education, and work dynamics. We have struggled and it has been exhausting. It would be fair to say that we are in the midst of a grief reaction of international proportions.

These days I find myself tiring more easily, generally feeling less rested and tense. Motivation and interest lacking, I have to push myself to do things. I can't seem to get as much done as I did. Often, I find myself at my computer staring at the screen and suddenly wonder what it was that I was suppose to be doing. Remembering a word or a name is a challenge some days. I am grumpier than usual. I feel lonely and yet I am reaching out less to connect with others. Either I don't feel as much like eating or I am eating junk. Although I have not had Covid I seem to be having more mild flu like symptoms. I will sometimes experience a vague sense of dread and not be able to put my finger on the cause. My body feels sluggish. These are symptoms which are common and "normal" for those of us who are experiencing chronic stress. We are calling it "Covid Fatigue". If you are experiencing these symptoms, you are not alone. Your body and mind are reacting to months of stress and attempts to adapt. You might think a psychiatrist would be able to dodge this chronic stress syndrome. After all I am supposed to be an "expert" in coping, adapting, helping, and healing. None of us are completely immune.

The tools for minimizing the effects of chronic stress are relatively straight forward. We should be eating more fruits and vegetables and less processed food. We should be pushing ourselves to exercise 4 to 5 times a week. We should be keeping a daily routine including a regular sleep wake schedule. We should be connecting with each other on a regular basis. We should be making time for rest and relaxation. This sounds easy but again, don't wait to feel like it.... you will probably have to push yourself to keep these measures going.

At a time when we are tired and our motivation is flagging, we need to focus on caring for ourselves and each other. We need to find it in ourselves and our community to buckle down and do what is required to get to the other side of this. We have the guidance of our public health and health care professionals. They are reinforcing their messages to help motivate us. Sadly, although the vaccines are being rolled out, they will not stop this third wave. We need to be extra vigilant about staying home, masking, social distancing, and not traveling. We need to be getting vaccinated when it is available to us. We need to come together as a community, to encourage each other and have faith that we will beat the virus and get our lives back. Most of all we need to recognize how much courage and strength it has taken us to get this far.