



Exhausted? We Are Too!

Heading in to work the other day after a long weekend seemed more exhausting than ever. It wasn't the simple physical fatigue that you feel when you stayed up too late or couldn't sleep the night before and then had to drag yourself out of bed and head straight for the coffee. This feeling of tiredness was more like when your brain is tired, an emotional or mental exhaustion.

Thinking back, it didn't seem to always feel like this. Prior to COVID and full-time telework, when we were all going into our offices more frequently, there was a cadence, a rhythm that lulled us into acceptable patterns and expectations. And when COVID hit, we all thought that working from home would give us a time to re-charge and take care of ourselves. To some degree, this happened, but we were faced with a new and unexpected reality – consecutive meetings staring at a screen that left us in a state of stress, uncertainty, instability, and worry.

As the risks of COVID dissipated, we eagerly sought a balance of remote versus in-person work. And just when we were finding the right approach, many organizations joined the “we have to get back to work” chorus – a drive create an in-building presence with no real strategy or plan to do so effectively, and no intent to balance the documented benefits of a blended approach to most jobs. The “we care about you” refrains of 2020 were replaced with the chants of “get back in the building or else.” No wonder distrust abounds.

To add to this exhaustion, it's an election year. Yay?

Hours and hours of salacious coverage of everything except the issues that our citizens care the most about. One media outlet after another spending hours on trials, appeals, salacious accusations, legal slight-of-hand, and on and on and on. We can't escape. It's everywhere, every day, all around us.

No wonder we are exhausted. We feel helpless. A workplace environment trying to find its way, our lack of control, prominent political figures bickering like immature children, divisiveness everywhere we look, and overseas conflicts create the perfect storm for life fatigue. Making simple, routine decisions and choices becomes harder. Showing patience, kindness, and grace takes more energy. By the time we get home we are spent, depleted and disengaged.

What can we do to cope? Here are five things you can do to increase your stamina and recharge your batteries:

1. **Keep track:** Take a look at how much time you spend listening to or watching the news. This includes reading your news feeds on your phone. Set aside time to purposefully look for good news stories and search out positive news. You might want to subscribe to a news feed that is geared for this purpose alone.
2. **Music:** Add music to your day. Start small and schedule time in each day to only listen to music. Any music will do, provided it has a beat and a melody. Subscribe to a music platform with its variety of domestic and international tunes.
3. **Connect to Nature:** Find time to be present in the nature around you. This could be simply gazing over a body of water. Check out <https://www.amazon.com/Blue-Mind-Surprising-Healthier-Connected/dp/0316252115>. If you're land-based, take a walk in the grass – better yet, lay down in the grass and stare at the sky. If you're lucky enough to live in a place where you can see the stars, take a gander. During the day, watch the clouds move.
4. **Connect with Colleagues:** Make a point to talk about non-work related things during the work day. Begin all your meetings with a check-in for how folks are doing, what they're watching on Netflix, or their latest book recommendation. Connect at a human level and find common interests and experiences.
5. **Laugh:** Humor is the great equalizer. From the earliest days of our ancestors, it was guttural sounds of happiness that indicated warmth and safety. A little giggle brings us together. It breaks down barriers. Seek out and create joyful moments where you can laugh at what life throws your way.

Hang in there. We'll make it through.