

Becky's corner: COVID fatigue

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It's been some time since I've written to you all about anything COVID-related. We're into another year of COVID and I can only imagine the fatigue some of you must be feeling.

People across the United States and around the world are experiencing the fatigue.

As health care workers, we care for our patients. But many of us have caregiving responsibilities at home as well. Those responsibilities may involve children, elderly parents or both. Sometimes care extends to siblings, aunts, and uncles.

With that in mind, the layers of care in the COVID onion keeps getting peeled back to reveal new challenges.

Restrictions are relaxing somewhat, but the vigilance and practice remains. Not only can we become physically exhausted, but emotionally exhausted, too.

What is emotional exhaustion?

Emotional exhaustion is not a specific clinical syndrome, but mental health experts say it can lead to, or be accompanied by, other mental health conditions like a major depressive disorder. The phrase is usually used when talking about burnout, when feelings about stressors and responsibilities mount to the point that someone feels they don't have any energy left to expend.

It often occurs when the resources we use to perform daily tasks, work, and care for ourselves and others are depleted. Some stress and anxiety is always present, but when we're emotionally exhausted, that stress is prolonged and becomes chronic. The systems we draw from to function deplete, and we effectively burn out.

Anyone experiencing chronic stress is susceptible to burnout, but it's especially common in fields such as health care and law enforcement, where there's a significant amount of stress and caregiving responsibilities.

With emotional exhaustion comes irritability, feeling jittery or nervous, frustration, lack of concentration, feeling ineffective, muscle tension and aches, headaches, nausea, vomiting and interrupted sleep just to name a few.

In past articles, I've shared ideas and suggestions about enhancing coping, stress management and the daily dealing needed with this virus. I hope you found those posts helpful. It may be time to revisit them.

Importance of resiliency

Recently, there has been a lot of discussion about resiliency. Resiliency can feel elusive when we're confronted by such challenges. Resiliency is out there and it can be yours. Such interventions as meditating or prayer, doing acts of kindness, writing down at least three things that you're thankful for each day, can bring huge benefits. Building up your resiliency muscle means you have it available when you need a good dose of resiliency.

Seeking resiliency is a process and remember, progress not perfection. Investing in ourselves has a great payoff. In the end, you'll feel stronger and you'll be in a much better position to help those around you.

You are all super heroes, but even super heroes need self-care. Once again, thank you all for your support of our patients, families and each other.

Be well everyone.