

Sometimes You Just Feel Tired; Neither Offended, Nor Alone, Nor in Love

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WHAT'S NEW

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Do you hear and even use phrases such as "I'm so tired!", "I can't even raise my arms", "I'm so tired that I don't see anything", "It's over" more often these days, especially as we approach the end of the year? Feeling tired and exhausted is a common problem that has many causes, reduces the quality of life, and makes people unhappy. If it is prolonged, it can also be described as avoidance of activity, deterioration in performance.

Fatigue can be of different types, depending on its causes, the way it is experienced, its duration, its frequency, the person's lifestyle and character. It can be of physical, psychological or mental origin, from excessive exercise to multiple roles in life (spouse, parent, child, employee, etc.), from heavy workload to anxiety-provoking thoughts. In addition, we can talk about the fatigue created by the pandemic that has taken over our lives recently, such as chronic fatigue that does not go away even after resting. Whatever the fatigue you experience, the important thing here is that the fatigue is "manageable".

Fatigue should not be perceived as a "negative situation" just because it causes discomfort, but should be considered as "a kind of alarm sign that tries to warn the organism against a disorder or attack that forces the conditions. There are some situations in which it is abnormal that fatigue does not occur. Therefore, fatigue signals from the body, mind and/or spirit must be taken into account so that they do not cause irreversible destruction later on. In particular, it is important to investigate the fatigue that is persistent, recurrent, accompanied by a medical condition, and evaluate it with the a specialist.

In this article which we will discuss all the types of fatigue, you will read about the reasons that can help you better define and understand the situation you are in. You can also see what you can do best for your situation and suggestions for functional solutions.

We wish you a healthy and a joyful summer holiday :)



Physical, Mental and Emotional Fatigue

Fatigue, which is a condition experienced in various periods of life for all people, can be defined as feeling sluggish, low energy and mood, avoiding activity, reluctance and decreased performance. Although it is not defined as a separate disease or problem, the feeling of fatigue can be a symptom or a precursor of many diseases as a symptom. Although physical fatigue is the first thing that comes to mind when fatigue is mentioned, studies show that fatigue has mental and emotional dimensions, symptoms and causes as well as physical.

Considering the physical dimension of fatigue, it is seen that the most important determinants of feeling energetic and not being tired are adequate sleep, healthy nutrition and exercise. Due to the conditions brought by modern life, it can become a difficult task in itself to move enough during the daytime in accordance with the biological

rhythm of a person, to eat healthy, and to sleep well and adequately in the evening and at night. Apart from these, factors such as anemia, vitamin and mineral deficiencies, hormonal imbalances, insufficient water consumption, excessive caffeine, alcohol and nicotine intake, which are seen in many people, can also cause fatigue.



When we look at the mental dimension of fatigue, behaviors such as thinking too much about any subject, problem, negative life experience or relationship, experiencing indecision too often, living impatiently at a fast pace are the determinants of fatigue. In addition, with the transition to modern life, many stress factors such as fear of earthquake, epidemic anxiety, financial uncertainty, overuse of technology, added to the anxiety of 'survival', can cause people to feel more tired. The fact that there are many options in many areas in life today causes the decision-making processes to become longer and more complicated; this can cause extreme fatigue. Being exposed to intense and negative agendas, endless social media notifications, posts, and e-mail exchanges are also important factors in keeping minds constantly busy.

Emotional problems encountered throughout life, which wear out individuals until they are resolved or not, it can put individuals' functionality into difficulties after a point and cause them to experience "emotional fatigue". Sometimes, individuals may have difficulty in managing their emotions in problematic situations, and instead of solving problems, they may ignore or mentally suppress them. Over time, these knotty problems can accumulate and reach unbearable dimensions and increase fatigue even more. This increased emotional fatigue can sometimes pave the way for some mental disorders.



What is the Difference Between Emotional Fatigue and Depression?

Emotional fatigue is often confused with depression, which is a separate psychiatric disorder that can be seen in all age groups. Although they are related to each other, these two concepts should be evaluated separately. Despite the constant feeling of fatigue, the main problem in depression is feeling depressed, loss of interest and pleasure. While fatigue occurs as a result of physical activity, stressful work or school, and intensity in emotional processes, there may be much more complex psychological and physiological conditions for depression to occur. Emotional fatigue manifests itself in the form of increased physical fatigue, impatience, hypersensitivity, and lack of motivation, while depression has symptoms that indicate a clinical phase such as hopelessness, decreased self-esteem, and thoughts of harming oneself.

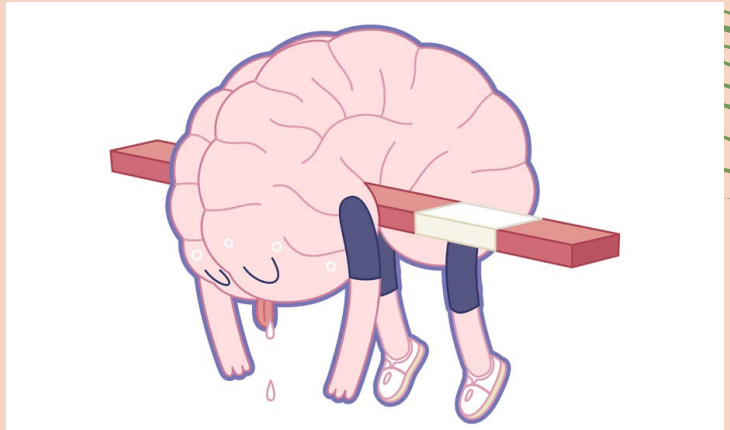


What can be done?

- Eating healthy, getting support from a dietitian if necessary,
- Having a healthy sleep pattern
- Limiting the use of technology, reducing the use of social media and staying away from digital devices after certain hours,
- Starting an exercise program suitable for age and body structure,
- Benefiting from meditation and relaxation techniques,
- Taking time for yourself to relax and clear your mind,
- Reducing caffeine, alcohol and nicotine consumption,
- Looking for solutions instead of suppressing emotional problems, focusing on emotion management, getting expert support if necessary,
- It may be beneficial to avoid insolvency by approaching emotional problems with a solution-oriented approach.

Chronic Fatigue and Burnout Syndrome

Chronic fatigue can be defined as a state of extreme tiredness that cannot be fully explained by a clear underlying condition, does not improve with rest, sleep, or with physical therapy, and has a long-term continuity.



As the symptoms of chronic and other types of fatigue are very similar, at the beginning it can be difficult to realize that what is being experienced is a chronic fatigue process. While experiencing tiredness after a busy day can be considered as normal, if you are experiencing tiredness that lasts longer than 6 months for no clear reason and that does not improve with rest, you may be experiencing chronic fatigue.

Individuals with chronic fatigue feel constantly sluggish, low-motivated, and therefore they need intense rest and sleep periods. In addition to this, they may tend to avoid situations and/or new experiences that require physical activity, and may experience memory and concentration problems. In some people, chronic fatigue may be accompanied by physical symptoms such as headache/body/muscle aches and mild fever. These symptoms can cause significant impairment in daily functioning and reinforcement of inadequacy beliefs, which may lead to anxiety and depressed mood, if not treated.



Although the causes of chronic fatigue are still being investigated, viral infections, imbalance in adrenal glands, stress, feeling of uncertainty and loss of control, lack of social support, overactive immune system, low self-esteem, low self-confidence and emotional problems can be listed among the possible causes.

What can be done?

- Paying attention to sleep patterns and avoiding daytime sleep as much as possible,
- Having a well-balanced diet and consuming foods rich in vitamins and minerals,
- Drinking water
- Doing muscle relaxation exercises and walking during sunny hours,
- For the correct treatment of possible medical causes, it is important and beneficial to undergo a medical check-up and to receive therapy support from a specialist if there are also accompanying psychological symptoms.

What is the Difference Between Burnout Syndrome and Chronic Fatigue?

Although chronic fatigue and burnout syndrome seem similar to each other, burnout syndrome is mostly related to the work life and areas of responsibility of the person. Burnout syndrome may result from the intensity of the individual's work life, pressure, stress, the sense of responsibility brought by the obligation to constantly making critical decisions, exposure to high goals and emotional demands created by himself or others. It can cause prolonged physical tiredness, increased feelings and beliefs of helplessness, hopelessness, anger, failure, and inadequacy, negative attitudes towards work, life and other people, and depletion of internal resources. In the development of the syndrome, some personal qualities such as difficulty in saying 'No', a perfectionist personality structure, and a tendency to self-sacrifice and effort to please others are also seen as important risk factors.

What can be done?

- Having a healthy sleep and diet patterns,
- Organizing daily routines, taking time for yourself during the day, having non-work activities that can provide emotional-physical satisfaction and relaxation (such as art, sports, spending time with loved ones, reading books, etc.) in the daily flow,
- Planning relaxing and pleasant vacations
- Having and enjoying new hobbies and making them a part of your routine,
- In the workplace; establishing groups for social support, increasing teamwork, trying to ensure a balanced or rotational distribution of difficult tasks,
- Asking for support from people you trust when needed,
- Reducing the pace of work under your control,
- Developing social relations with your colleagues,
- If you have problems in business life, try to avoid related thoughts outside of your business hours.
- Organizing a regular sports program and sticking to this plan also contributes significantly to the fight against burnout syndrome by increasing the levels of happiness hormones. You can also benefit from relaxation exercises and meditative work in this sense.

Pandemic Fatigue

The coronavirus pandemic, which has been at the center of our lives from the moment it started, has caused long-term changes in all of our lives. Most of us tried to become conscious by watching the news about what the epidemic was and what it could cause, and by reading countless articles. The restrictions and curfews that came with the rapid spread of the epidemic caused panic shopping. Since our hygiene standards have changed, we could not understand how time passed while we washed and wiped our purchases one by one. We planned countless activities about how we would spend time at home, suddenly cutting off social contact. We revived our hobbies that we gave up when we couldn't find the time. We discovered new things. We have prepared a list of series, movies and documentaries to watch during the pandemic. We started watching them all in order. "Mask, distance, hygiene" was now our life motto. Then summer came and we started to relax, thinking that we have reaped the fruits of our efforts. But when the winter came, the situation was worse than before. Then, it happened and we got tired.

The increase in the number of people who stop following the recommendations and restrictions adequately, the decrease in the effort to learn about the pandemic and the weakening of the risk perception related to COVID-19 have taken their places in the literature as "pandemic fatigue". Pandemic fatigue is a reaction to reasons such as the uncertainty that the epidemic will end, the unsolved problems in health systems, and the lack of vaccines. For this reason, there may be a decrease in the effect of the messages that were effective before, such as hand washing, wearing a mask, following appropriate hygiene steps, paying attention to physical distance, and a decrease in the motivation to implement these behaviors. Although the effect of the virus increases, people's perception of the threat may weaken as they get used to the presence of the virus, and this situation may become normal after a while.



The social and economic consequences of prolonged restrictions can strengthen the perception of loss. Especially since economic anxiety creates the fear that people cannot meet their basic needs, it can start to prevent the fear of virus infection. Not ending the process and constantly changing practices can negatively affect mental health by creating a feeling of lack of control. Initially, the hopes that the pandemic will end may be replaced by despair. In addition to all these, insomnia, even if there is enough sleep, fatigue, impatience, tension, distraction, reluctance may occur.

What can be done?

- Wearing a mask, paying attention to social distance and complying with hygiene rules in order to contribute to creating a safe space for both yourself and your environment by increasing your sense of control and responsibility,
- Knowing what causes emotional transitions will make it easier for you to get used to living with these emotions, so instead of avoiding or ignoring these emotions, trying to accept and name them,
- Focusing on different things, doing activities you enjoy,
- Trying to take action even if you don't feel like it because it will make it easier for you to take control,
- Talking to people around you, sharing your feelings and expressing the reasons for your negative reactions will support an open and selfless communication and contribute to the strengthening of your relationships.



Digital Fatigue



Virtual meeting platforms that become an indispensable part of our lives with the pandemic are used more often than ever in parent meetings, business meetings, and even communication with family members and relatives. We can do our daily work and meet our social needs, even if only just a little, thanks to digital platforms such as Google Meet and Zoom. However, the quick and sudden digital transformation process can lead to physical, mental, and psychological fatigue.

Communication is made up not only of words but also of nonverbal cues that refer to eye contact, facial expressions, tone of voice, and body language. Since people cannot establish eye contact on video communication, they cannot see each other's gestures and mimics. Sometimes the image or sound may be delayed, and generally people prefer to turn off their cameras, so they need to

be extra careful and show cognitive effort more to understand and empathize with each other, which can bring mental fatigue.

Research shows that increased awareness of how one looks or self-focused attention causes feelings of fatigue. It is also stated that self-focus may lead to negative emotions and bring along the psychological fatigue called mirror anxiety. Another factor that increases fatigue is the “feeling like to be caged” originating from the limited physical movement and the necessity of being in front of the webcam. Also, the tendency people have to overestimate that everybody looks at them may increase fatigue. Another significant point is that people tend to take fewer breaks between meetings due to the idea that “I am home anyway”. According to research results, this type of fatigue is more common in introverted individuals, young people, especially women, and people with high anxiety.

What can be done?

Companies must rethink how they organize for remote-working; for example, companies should plan a day each week with no meetings or let employees turn their videos off in meetings. Individual actions about what we should pay attention:

- Placing the top line of the screen below eye level, to increase the number of blinks, to use artificial tear drops, to have plenty of fluids each day, and to eat foods that are very high in vitamin A / Omega 3
- To prevent dry eyes and to give your eyes a rest by using the 20/20/20 Rule (to look at something at least 20 meters away from you for 20 seconds every 20 minutes)



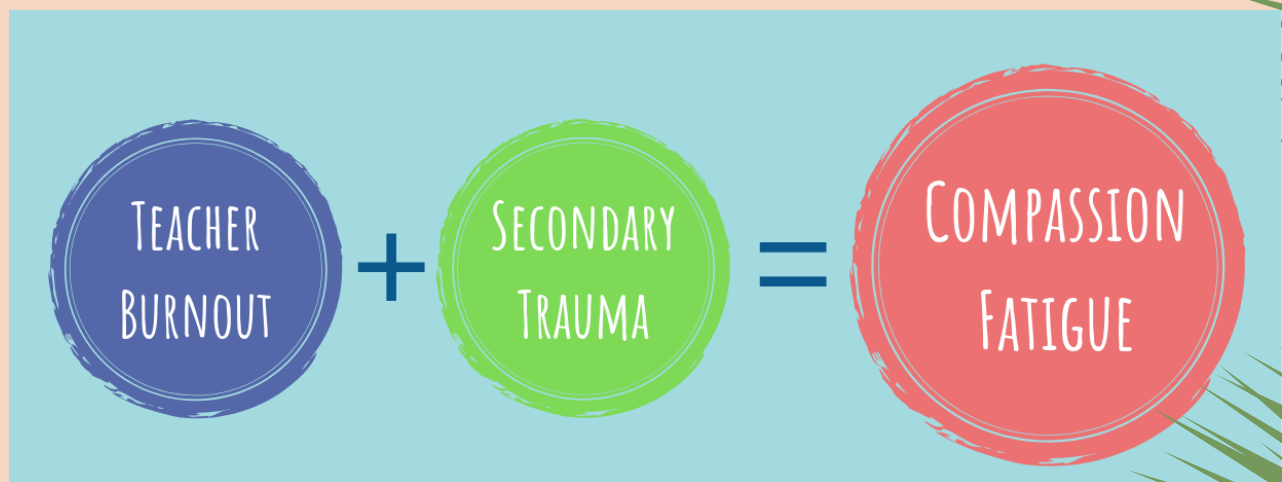
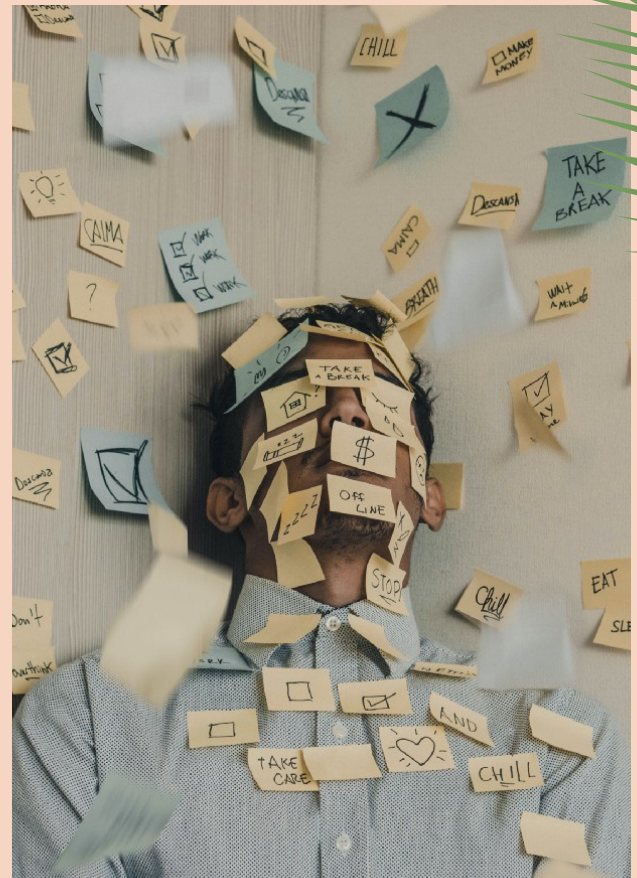
- Taking time for yourself between virtual meetings, doing activities which you want to do and having a real-life interaction such as meeting with friends, going for a walk, getting some air, etc.
- Establishing a daily routine and stick to it
- Not thinking that “I am at home, so I get tired less”
- Keeping your video off when it is not necessary to turn on the camera
- Making the necessary preparations (tools, equipment, water, etc.) before the meetings not to interrupt.
- Putting the phone on silent during meetings, turning off e-mail notifications, increasing your attention to the meeting by entering the conversation in a lonely place where you will be less interrupted.

Compassion Fatigue

Compassion is a very important and beneficial quality for our social relationships, enabling us to perceive and understand emotions as well as to put ourselves in someone else's shoes. However, compassion that is felt so intensely and continuously can make you suffer from a condition called 'compassion fatigue'.

"The concept of "Compassion Fatigue" was first explained by Nurse Joinson in 1992 as the emotional effect of indirect trauma on the helper, in the processes of helping people who experience traumatic stress. Individuals with compassion fatigue experience emotional difficulties such as physical tiredness, sleep problems, restlessness,

depressive symptoms, behavioral problems, and burnout symptoms over time, which can significantly reduce both the quality and functioning of their lives and the quality of compassionate services they offer. Occupations that are at risk in terms of compassion fatigue are those that help people such as health professionals, social workers, teachers, lawyers, judges, police, firefighters and emergency aid teams. Those who experience compassion fatigue may have difficulties in exhibiting the expected empathy and support behaviors in their professional fields, as well as having difficulties in their individual lives.



During the pandemic period, it is quite possible that we, as teachers, experience compassion fatigue since we also put our own problems and compelling emotions aside, strive to be useful to our students, and focus on our profession.

What can be done?

Institutions also have important duties, in occupational groups that are prone to experience this fatigue. It is important to provide individual or group psychological support mechanisms for all employees, to raise awareness and create sharing groups, to provide professional counseling, to plan activities that support physical and psychological relaxation, and to provide adequate rest breaks.

If we look at what needs to be paid attention to individually;

- Giving importance to individual and professional self-care along with self-awareness,
- Increasing the level of personal activity that gives pleasure and comfort,
- Doing sports and meditative exercises,
- Using humor
- Applying for individual or group psychotherapy support in order to dissociate from traumatic situations witnessed indirectly and to strengthen emotional resilience and coping mechanisms,
- Socializing and creating spaces to express your emotions can also help to counteract the effects of everyday stressors that increase compassion fatigue.

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