

BRAIN HEALTH BOOST



Brain Health Matters: Avoiding Quarantine Fatigue Makes a Difference

After more than four months of staying safer at home, most of us are beyond ready for life to return to normal. But it looks like safer at home is going to be with us for some time to come. As we continue to practice physical distancing, how do we avoid “quarantine fatigue?”

Quarantine fatigue is that physical and emotional exhaustion we are feeling because of this new lifestyle. Symptoms that put our brain health at risk can include, but certainly aren’t limited to:

- Tension, irritability, or anxiety
- Changes in eating or sleeping habits
- Lack of motivation
- Difficulty concentrating
- Social withdrawal

We all were eager to get back out in the world when businesses started reopening, but the numbers show that action was premature. Cases of COVID-19 in Florida continue to skyrocket since the reopening began in June—more than 250,000 new cases in the past four weeks and the number increasing by more than 10,000 every day. It’s clear that we are not even close to returning to normal.

Socializing can help, but it doesn’t cure that fatigue. We want to be physically closer to family and friends – maybe even give and get a warm hug. But when we have just finished a day with six Zoom meetings, the last thing most of us want to do is get back online or on the phone. After feeling the effects of quarantine fatigue for so many weeks, what can we do to alleviate our fatigue? The key is to find ways to support and manage our brain health without putting ourselves and others at risk of contracting the virus.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TODAY TO PROTECT YOUR BRAIN HEALTH

Tips to Deal with Quarantine Fatigue

Our partners in the Department of Psychiatry at Massachusetts General Hospital offer the following tips for dealing with your quarantine fatigues:

1. Do Not Ignore Your Physical And Emotional Symptoms. What you are experiencing is real and should not be ignored. Recognize that the physical and emotional symptoms are your body's way of communicating that something is not right. Find positive and proactive ways to address what you are experiencing and to support your brain health.

2. Practice Mindfulness: Mindfulness can be an effective strategy for managing stress and changing your brain. It involves being present, purposeful, and nonjudgmental in the moment. Practicing mindfulness can activate and strengthen the connections in your prefrontal cortex which helps focus your attention.

3. Restore Your Mood Through Eating, Sleeping And Exercise: Eating a brain healthy diet, exercising for at least 30 minutes a day, and getting good sleep each night can improve your brain health and performance and fight brain illness. These lifestyle behaviors boost your mood, immune system, and memory and concentration.

3. Stay Connected: You may need to be physically distant from your friends and loved ones, you don't need to be socially distant. Your brain health and happiness are directly linked to the quality of your relationships. Continue reaching out to your distant family and friends, plan fun activities at home with your immediate family and continue to invest in the relationships around you.

4. Take A Break And Ask For Help If You Need It. If you are feeling overwhelmed, give yourself a break, take a step back from the news and social media and find something that brings you joy. Take a walk, go for a bike ride, paint a picture, listen to music, dance, or read a book. And don't hesitate to reach out for professional help if you need it.

The Brain Health Initiative (BHI) is a cutting-edge, new approach to protecting brain health and fighting brain illness across the lifespan. The BHI works collaboratively with Massachusetts General Hospital, a Harvard Medical School Teaching Hospital, and the Academy for Brain Health and Performance to build brain healthy communities through education, research, innovation and action, with a specific focus on *brain health promotion, prevention, early detection, evidence-based intervention, and performance optimization*. The BHI is creating a culture that promotes brain health protective factors and decreases risk factors, thereby improving brain health and optimizing brain performance outcomes for the Florida Suncoast region and beyond. Join the brain health movement, ***because brain health matters, and lifestyle makes a difference.***

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