

City of Milwaukee Employee Assistance Program

Pandemic Fatigue

Feeling sick and tired of the Pandemic? Have you found yourself saying this, “Enough of all this already...I’m tired of thinking about COVID!”? If so, you may be experiencing *pandemic fatigue*. The United States declared a public health emergency due to the coronavirus outbreak on February 3, 2020. Since then, most of the world has been in a state of change and adaptation.

These sudden changes have impacted the way we work, socialize, learn, care for loved ones and travel. Our daily routines have been upended to slow the pandemic. This has led to prolonged stress, isolation, frustration, anxiety and uncertainty.

National data from the Census Bureau (Household Pulse Survey – Phase 3 October 28, 2020 – March 1, 2021) show that the pandemic is causing an increase in mental health concerns. About 35-to-40% of people in the U.S. are reporting that they are regularly experiencing symptoms of anxiety and depression as they deal with the pandemic. That’s an increase from 25% before the start of the pandemic.

What can you do?

- **Keep a routine.** Having a schedule with tasks and goals helps us feel accomplished, in control and less stuck. Be sure to continue self-care routines like grooming, exercise, or meditation.

- **Practice gratitude.** This may be challenging after experiencing losses or when worrying about a future that feels uncertain.

Take time to reflect, grieve losses and process what positive ways help you cope. Be careful not to over worrying. Planning is helpful but over worrying can give a false feeling of control, a sense that we are doing something when all we are doing is creating more stress.

For example, instead of being angry about having to run an errand, take a second to be thankful for having a ride there, gas money and the health to run the errand in the first place.

- **Monitor your screen time.** Avoid “doomscrolling” on social media or being glued to cable news shows. Instead, set aside five minutes two or three times a day to catch up on news/events. Purposefully look for things that inspire and give hope for the future.

- **Get help.** You are not alone with these feelings. *Pandemic fatigue* is real and there are many resources to help.

For example, the City will be offering a presentation titled “Hitting the COVID Wall” on March 26th and 29th. For more information visit:

www.milwaukee.gov/WYCM

Employee Assistance Program



City of Milwaukee EAP

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EAP Contact Information

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Crucial Conversations

Crucial conversations are those that involve strong differing opinions and/or the consequences are high. These conversations feel like a ticking time bomb. Say or do the wrong thing and...boom!...it blows up.

Keeping the dialogue from going either silent (withdrawn/avoidant) or verbally violent (heated argument) is a key objective. Success rests on the strategies below:

“When, I...” Don’t start with a conclusion (“*you don’t care about...*”) Instead, start with your observations. *When this/that happened, I thought/felt...* Then invite the other person to share their viewpoint or motive. *“Maybe I got it wrong, help me understand what happened from your side.”*

Find Common Ground. It’s important to share a common reason

to cooperate. *“We both want to do our job well...this arguing isn’t helping...what can do about a solution?”* It is important for the other person not to see you as the enemy or the problem. Instead, the problem should be the “problem” and not the person.

Priming. Remember, it is important to continue the dialogue. If things go silent (withdrawn/avoidant), try to guess what the other person is thinking or feeling and verbalize it. The analogy is that of a water pump. Sometimes you have to pour a little water in to get it going. Offer a good faith guess as to what he/she may be thinking or feeling. *“Are you thinking...?” “Look, maybe you are feeling...?”* This good faith guess comes from 1) believing the other person is decent, reasonable and 2) you played a part in the miscommunication.

EAP Mission Statement

It is the mission of the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to assist employees who develop behavioral/emotional problems that may directly affect their work performance, and to provide Key Personnel with policy and procedural guidelines for the management of these problems.

City of Milwaukee Wellness Resources

- For information about current Wellness programs and services, visit: www.milwaukee.gov/WYCM
- Virtual EAP Support Groups Support groups are a safe and confidential place for participants to discuss personal issues, experiences, struggles and thoughts and an opportunity to share experiences. Three different support groups are offered: Parenting, Working Remotely, and Eldercare. Participants receive 5 Healthy Rewards points for each session attended. Contact Cris Zamora to join a support group: 414-286-3145 czamora@milwaukee.gov
- The City’s Workplace Clinic provides free, convenient, onsite and virtual health care services for employees and spouses regardless of enrollment in the City’s health insurance and dependents (18 mos and older) on the City’s health insurance. Call 414-777-3413 to schedule an in-person or virtual visit.

Sleep Hygiene

Restful sleep is a building block for overall wellness and wellbeing. Sleep hygiene refers to habits related to getting ready for bed. Healthy sleep hygiene practices prepare and encourage restful sleep. Below are a few common and helpful sleep hygiene tips:

- **Wake up and go to sleep at the same time.** Keep a regular sleep-wake schedule.
- **Avoid naps** during the day. If you must nap, limit to 20 minutes.
- **No alcohol, caffeine and nicotine.** Ditch the booze. At least 4-6 hours before bed.
- **Can’t fall asleep?** If 20 minutes pass by and you’re still awake, get up and do some light activity (like reading or meditating).
- **Reserve the bed for sleep.** No watching TV, reading, or use of electronic devices in bed. Be device free for at least two hours before bed.
- **Relax your mind.** Calm your racing mind with breathing and meditation exercises.
- **Write it down.** Get anxious thoughts out of your head. Put away after written out.