



Lockdown Fatigue



Yes this is a 'thing' and I think an awful lot of families, adults and children are suffering from it – my family included. The truth is that lockdown has been a very new experience for all of us. With a huge disruption to our lives and for some of us it will take a very real physical and mental toll. For everyone, a period of adaptation and transition has been needed to get to grips with this new reality. It's much the same as a significant life event such as moving house or changing job; a change can be exhausting. Having spoken to several people I am hearing similar stories - "any get up and go I might have had has got up and

gone!"

In a very short time-frame, we were restricted in what we could do and our routines (habits) were broken. In addition to this, we had the added stress of the COVID-19 outbreak and many of us have the additional burden of having our jobs put at risk or the need to work from home. Research has identified that transition to a new environment will initially lead us to feel low as we adapt to the new way in which we are being asked to work and live in. This feeling is a result of the stress we are likely to have experienced and that for many of us, our daily routines will have changed significantly. This will include the challenges of being a parent, teacher, carer, and employee all at the same time rather than being able to separate them.

For those of us who may have started enthusiastically and whose children have been willing to knuckle down and do some work have probably begun to hit their wall. Your children may be showing more resistance and you may be running out of the energy to battle with them – this will be coupled with returning to work or work increasing and even more balls are added to the mix to juggle. For those whose children who have struggled to engage with school work at all through this season, will certainly be feeling hemmed in and trapped and no doubt many of us will be despairing at trying to find **yet another** route for a walk around where we live.

Some of us adults and children will be struggling for motivation please be reassured you are not alone. 3 months away from normal school and work routine is a very long time. Everybody, children, staff and parents will have days or moments when they struggle to get motivated. **It is OK sometimes not to be OK! Be kind to yourselves and each other.**

To be able to combat lockdown fatigue we need to consider, how do we get our energy back? Research tells us that we need to look at 'structure, exercise and sleep.' As we head into the last 4 weeks of our summer term we wanted to give you a few '**top tips and tools**' to help you get through this next month of juggle. Research shows that there are 3 main areas of focus to try and deal with lockdown fatigue and I am going to add a 4th!

The Importance of Structure

To gain structure we need to plan ahead. We need to think about how our days are structured, try and maintain a routine, and look at ways to fit in exercise and sleep into our daily planning. Structure means we plan our days and set a routine. This means we get up at the same time, 'go to work', plan lesson times, take regular work breaks, plan family time, keep in contact with friends and relatives, exercise and sleep. This sounds OK so far, but we also need to understand the importance of other factors such as getting outdoors. Being outdoors will boost your serotonin levels. This is good! And works in all weather conditions (as I write this it is raining outside!). Serotonin is associated with boosting mood and helps keep you calm and focused. A lack of serotonin has the opposite effect so will affect how you feel and can lead to mental health issues. Sunlight has other amazing properties, it provides a source of vitamin D, lowers high blood pressure and even improves brain function.

Ideas to keep structure for our children:

- Make a weekly visual timetable (you may have been doing this already with school work but now is a good time to take another look at that and make some adaptations.) If your children are struggling to focus on work ensure that you find times in the day that work best for them and for you – with more parents back at work or working from home is getting busier it may be worth looking at when you are free to support your child's learning and plan the times – so you know and they know and it is visible for all to see. Your children will have varying degrees of independence skills. Although at school we teach this as do you as parents, the skills of working independently, solving problems, dealing with feelings of frustration are things that develop over years (many adults are still developing these) – remember the children are in unusual circumstances they may not be able to be as independent as you want them to be. Although it is difficult do try to structure some time with them each day to support or go through what they have done (however small). Make use of grandparents – even if you can't see them they can still listen to your child read on the phone or FaceTime, chat through work that needs to be done or carry out a times table challenge by text.
- Plan for fun and connection. A good friend of mine says 'don't hope for happy times, plan them.' You and your children will be fed up of the monotony of lockdown. ***On your newly updated visual timetable plan in some things to look forward to.*** These don't need to be big but something for your children to see as 'different from the norm.' Write them down so they can be seen and looked forward to.
 - Plan a scavenger hunt to do with a friend (socially distanced of course) – create a list of things to find and tick off
 - Become penpals with a friend and write letters to each other
 - Plan a trip to Daisy Maid for an ice cream treat
 - Design a treasure hunt in your garden with a little prize and invite a friend over in the garden to do the treasure hunt
 - Create a 'fun things' jar – where everyone in the family writes things down on separate pieces of paper of things they would like to do (that are possible within the current restrictions) and once a week pull one out and plan to do it.
 - Make some biscuits for a friend and deliver them to them
 - Draw a map and a route for friends to follow when you go on a socially distanced walk
 - Plan a meal to cook for your family

Exercise is a Miracle Cure

Exercise is good for you and even better if it's done outdoors! The Government have been keen to allow outdoor exercise to continue during lockdown to maintain and improve the health and wellbeing during these difficult times, so make the most of it. We need melatonin from outdoor light to help our body know if it's light or dark. It helps us sleep and shows how structure, exercise and sleep are all connected to health. Unfortunately if we and our children are experiencing 'lockdown fatigue' the last thing many of us want to do is exercise, but it is one of the main things that will help us during this time. We may have started Joe Wicks enthusiastically at the beginning but for many I am sure this has petered off. We need to look at fresh ways to up our exercise and get us feeling more energetic.

Ideas for getting active even on rainy days

- Freeze Dance - Who doesn't like a good dance party? Shaking it off to a few favourite jams is a surefire way to get your kids off the couch. To brush up on listening skills, try freeze dance. The rules are simple: dance when the music plays and when the designated DJ stops the music, everyone freezes.
- Learn Some Moves - Thanks to helpful how-to's on YouTube, it's now easier than ever to learn how to (properly) bust a move. You can even try to teach your preschooler how to do the moon walk. The opportunities really are endless!
- Balloon Volleyball - Make a net by tying a piece of yarn from one chair to another. Then blow up a balloon and start practicing those serving skills! Change things up a bit by kicking or head-bumping the balloon.
- Book-Worm Workout - Story time doesn't have to be just a bedtime ritual. Pick a book that has a word that's often repeated. For example, choose the word "hat" if you're reading *The Cat in the Hat*. Every time the word comes up in the story, get your kid to do a jumping jack.
- Hallway Soccer - You don't need a backyard to play a game of soccer. Start by setting up a net on opposite ends of the hallway by placing some masking tape on the floor. After dividing into teams, grab a small plastic ball and let the fun begin.
- Yoga JENGA - Use a pencil to write down a yoga move on each JENGA block. Set up the tower and play the game as usual, but every time a block is pulled out, every player has to do the specific yoga move. If the tower falls, do the plank for 30 seconds.
- Marble Toe Race - Find two large bowls, fill the first bowl with water and place some marbles inside. Ask your little guy to pick up the marbles and place them in another bowl by using only his feet. The first one who can get all the marbles in the other bowl wins. If you don't want to get your floors wet, lay towels on the floor, or skip the water component entirely.
- Set Up A Maze - Turn the hall into a "laser" maze with yarn. Zig-zag yarn from varying heights and challenge your kids to get across without touching the laser.
- Check out GoNoodle - Tons of physical activities that you can do in a small space!"

Ideas for getting active outside

- Obstacle Course in the garden - Set up a course using any objects you can find (toys, shoes, boxes etc). Run from the start to finish as fast as you can, weaving in and out of the objects. See how many laps you can do in 10 minutes.
- Object Hide and Seek - You take it in turns to hide the toys and objects. On the count of 5, all go and find your things and bring them back to your towel. The first one to find their 5 toys wins!
- Wheelbarrow races - Make a start and finish line. Get into pairs and make a wheelbarrow, see how quickly you can get to the finish line. Swap places and race again. Keep playing for 10 minutes and try and beat each other's times.
- Go on a nature walk – write a list of things you might spot (particular trees, plants, birds, wildlife), take the list and tick off what you see along the way.
- Get on your bike, skates, skateboards and scooters (yes you adults too!)
- Photo walk – choose a colour or a shape and photograph things that you see that are that shape or colour as you walk. This can be fun and it will be surprising how many you can find!

Good Sleep is Vital

A good night's sleep is important for so many reasons and I would encourage you to do a bit of research why – you'll be surprised! We should try to get around 7-9 hours of sleep every night. But to get a good night's sleep we need to plan it. I am sure there are many of us whose sleep patterns and routines have been altered during this lockdown period. Bedtimes have probably got later and technology rules have perhaps slackened, routines may not have been so regular and therefore neither us, nor our children may not have been getting the regular and quality sleep patterns that we need. If you or your children are struggling with frustration and feeling low, it may well be worth exploring sleep patterns

Top tips for getting a good night sleep

- Maintain a good routine (perhaps bring bedtime a little earlier again), this will help to minimize stress
- Get outdoors and exercise
- Turn off screens and avoid sugary foods for some time before bed
- Think about your sleep environment.
- Plan to do something that winds you down, like taking a bath or reading
- Listen to a mindfulness script (Smiling Mind is a great FREE app that has specific sleep exercises for adults and different aged children) this is a great family activity to become part

Bringing it all Together

Lockdown has represented change for us all and a challenge for many. Some of it has provided us the opportunity to spend time where we have not been able to in the past. Some of us will have taken up learning a new language, studying subjects we've previously neglected, or taken on that creative project that's been in the back of our mind for ages? There have been unique opportunities for us to grow, but to do so we need to be happy and healthy, and in these uncertain times we need to make sure we're structured, exercising and sleeping well so that we can stay sane. If we and our children, are beginning to struggle to stay positive in these days, as well as re-looking at our structure, exercise and sleep it is important to introduce reflection and gratitude into your daily routine. There is so much going on in the world at the moment that can bring us down and heighten worry and anxiety it is difficult to focus on anything else. Spending some time at the end of each day focusing on the positives (however small) is proven to improve our well-being. It is not about forgetting all that is going on but it is about altering our perspective regularly to ensure that we don't forget all the good and what we have achieved.

Top tips for 'flipping our thinking'

- Use the phrase 'what we focus on magnifies' – draw a magnifying glass and write down inside of the magnifying glass all the things you have achieved during lockdown – however small they seem, they are all important – celebrate any successes.
- 'The best thing about the day' – at a regular time in the day, sit together as a family and take it turns to answer the question 'what has been the best thing about your day?' (a very different question to what have you enjoyed about your day.) Some children (and adults) find this very difficult to do but with practice we all can get better at choosing to find positives.
- What are you grateful four – each day think for 4 things you are grateful about for that day.
- High 5 – draw round your hand and in each finger right something that has been a 'high' (could be something you are thankful for, could be something you are pleased with, something you are proud of, something you enjoyed doing/eating/seeing). Cut out the hands and peg them on a makeshift washing line and keep adding hands to your line – a constant reminder of the positives.
- Gratitude Jar – have a jar/box and small pieces of paper. Encourage everyone in the family to write down good things that have happened, things that you are thankful for or excited about and pop it in the jar. When you get to the summer holidays – open the jar or box and read them through together.