

Are you feeling 'pandemic fatigue'?

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(HealthDay)—As COVID-19 case numbers surge across the United States, some people are experiencing pandemic fatigue after many months of social distancing, mask wearing and quarantines.

Experts from Penn State Health stressed the importance of continued vigilance and following established safety efforts to slow the spread of the virus, while also offering suggestions for minding [mental health](#) while being creative about social get-togethers.

"Since those early days, there's been a lot of evidence overall that wearing masks may definitely slow the spread of the virus and help people from transmitting it to others, especially if they're asymptomatic," said Dr. Jonathan Nunez, an internal medicine physician at Penn State Health Milton S. Hershey Medical Center.

Be creative about social gatherings, Nunez suggested, offering virtual game nights as one idea.

He also advised that anyone considering in-person activities like dining out or shopping make sure that everyone in those places is abiding by the rules.

"Are they wearing masks, covering the whole face, sitting six feet apart?" he asked, adding that even with these measures, "there is no absolute decreased risk."

The relentlessness of the pandemic has been exhausting and stressful, said Dr. Julie Graziane, a psychiatrist at the Milton S. Hershey Medical Center.

"We've been watchful with mental health as individuals experience significant emotional stress during the pandemic," Graziane said in a Penn State news release. "And we're especially concerned as we head into the winter months that play a role in some people's depression."

But people can mitigate those emotions by emotionally reframing the quarantines and restrictions, she said.

"Don't think of them as things we're being forced to follow, but rather as actions we're freely choosing to do to help others," Graziane said. "We shift it into an altruistic action as we do these things to help our loved one, our neighbor, even the stranger in the community that we care about."

To help with stressors, Graziane suggests having regular awake or sleep times, and scheduling meals. Check in with yourself on your feelings each day. Incorporate pleasurable activities, as well as healthy activities such as exercise and mindfulness. Reflect on what was important to you before the pandemic to help find strength and purpose.

"And don't be afraid to reach out for help. If you feel like you're struggling with getting through this, talk to someone such as a loved one, a physician, a counselor or a friend," she said in a Penn State news release.

Nunez suggested taking the time to check in with others, too.

"Maybe someone you know is struggling and just because you don't ask, they don't mention it. We're all going through this. We are not alone," he said.

"I think what's important this [holiday season](#) is remembering that we're trying to stay healthy and we're also really trying to keep others healthy," Nunez added, "especially our patients who are vulnerable and at risk for severe complications of the disease."

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offers some [advice for holiday celebrations in the time of COVID-19](#).

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