

COMBATTING FATIGUE AND BOOSTING WELLBEING

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Agenda



- A year in review
- Understanding the neuroscience of change
- Combatting fatigue and burn out
- Supporting others

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A year in review...

Humans draw on a collection of adaptive systems, both mental and physical, in the face of stressful situations such as natural disasters. Pandemics are, however, very different. In pandemics, we find ourselves relying on these adaptive systems like our stress response, for extended periods of time, instead of short bursts like they were intended for. As a result we found ourselves in a sort of holding pattern, a pattern which definitely took a toll on many people's wellbeing and left many of us fatigued.



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The Amygdala: Operating from the stress response

When we experience change, our stress response kicks into high gear and it can stay there for a while.

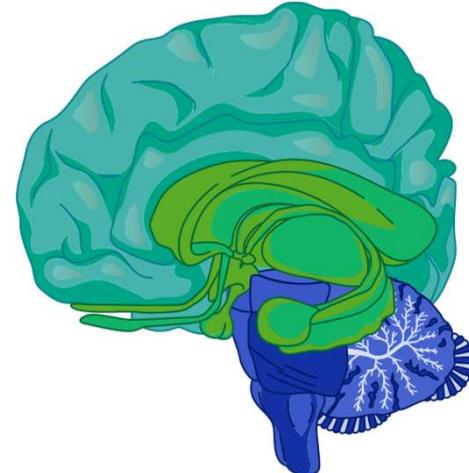
When we are operating from the emotional part of our brain for extended periods of time, we experience fatigue.

When we are fatigued, our emotional brain takes the 'steering wheel' more often because it takes a lot of cognitive energy to get the neocortex firing. This means, our emotions are closer to the surface.

Neocortex – A cluster of brain structures involved in advanced cognition like planning, decision-making, reasoning, language, thought and impulse control.

Limbic System – Primarily responsible for our emotional life and the formation of memories. This combined with the reptilian brain, is often described as the 'primitive brain'.

Reptilian Brain – This part of the brain controls the most vital functions such as sleep, heart rate, breathing etc.



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What is the psychological impact?

- Feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion
- Increased mental distance from one's job and life goals
- Feeling a sense of increased resistance to more change
- Increased anxiety
- Feelings of negativity or cynicism
- Memory Lapses, lack of focus or ability to concentrate
- Feeling numb
- Headaches or insomnia
- Heightened emotionality: Tearful, Angry
- Loss of confidence



Why?

1. Our brains default to survival mode (fight or flight) whenever we are in transitional periods which, over a prolonged time, can lead to a state of emotional exhaustion
2. With our routines upended (again and again) we are having to make many more decisions about our daily lives and this fatigues our brain further
3. The ever present threat of further changes (organisational or life) re-activates our stress response and drains already low energy reserves

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What are your early warning signs?



Physical



Behaviours



Mood



Thoughts

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Top tips for combatting fatigue



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HOW DO WE MANAGE FATIGUE?

1. Reduce the drain – Control, influence, accept
2. Conserve – Emotion regulation
3. Recharge – Develop a recharge and recovery plan

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Reduce the Drain

When I spend my time and energy in my circle of concern this drains my emotional resources

=

Reactive

When I spend time and energy in my circle of influence it boosts motivation

=

Proactive



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Acceptance through Mindfulness

The human mind believes it can think its way through a period of uncertainty. But it doesn't work that way. Trying to think our way out can create a negative, downward spiral. Breaking the cycle starts with letting go and getting comfortable with just *being*. You're no longer in a battle you can't win.

One of the best ways to achieve this is through **Mindfulness** practice

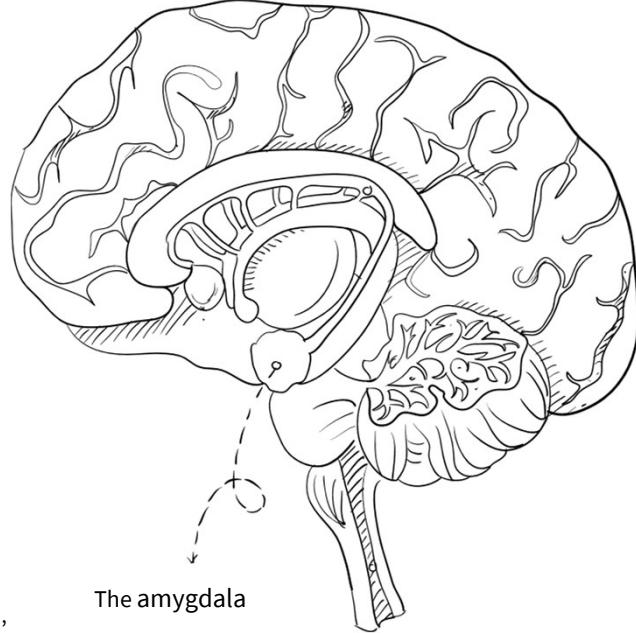


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Conserve by effectively switching off

- ✓ Write your to-do list for tomorrow
- ✓ Decide on a Beginning and End of Day Ritual
- ✓ Play music – choose your playlist
- ✓ Out of sight, out of mind
- ✓ Use smells
- ✓ Visually change the ‘look’ of your work area (if working from home)
- ✓ Plan your weekend – even if it’s to do “at home” things
- ✓ Know your transition points and personal ‘rhythm’



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Recharge



Get a routine sleep

Your brain can regenerate after stress...it is a good idea to go to sleep at the same time every night



Remember to breathe

70% of cortisol can be removed from our bodies by simply breathing...



Take time to exercise

Exercise is your body's natural antidepressant



Stay Connected

Talk with a friend or colleague. Debriefing releases the stress hormone oxytocin.



Practice Gratitude

Reflect on and engage in activities that give you purpose and meaning. Enjoy the “small moments” each day. Wellbeing is balanced when the positive to negative emotion ratio is 3:1. Be active to get hits of positive emotion.



Plan leave/weekends

Give yourself something to look forward to, even if it is small and local



Manage News

Feeds/Digital Detox

The average smartphone user checks their device 221 times a day
95% of people use their tech in bed



Speak with an Expert

Call an expert via EAP and encourage your family to do so too if needed



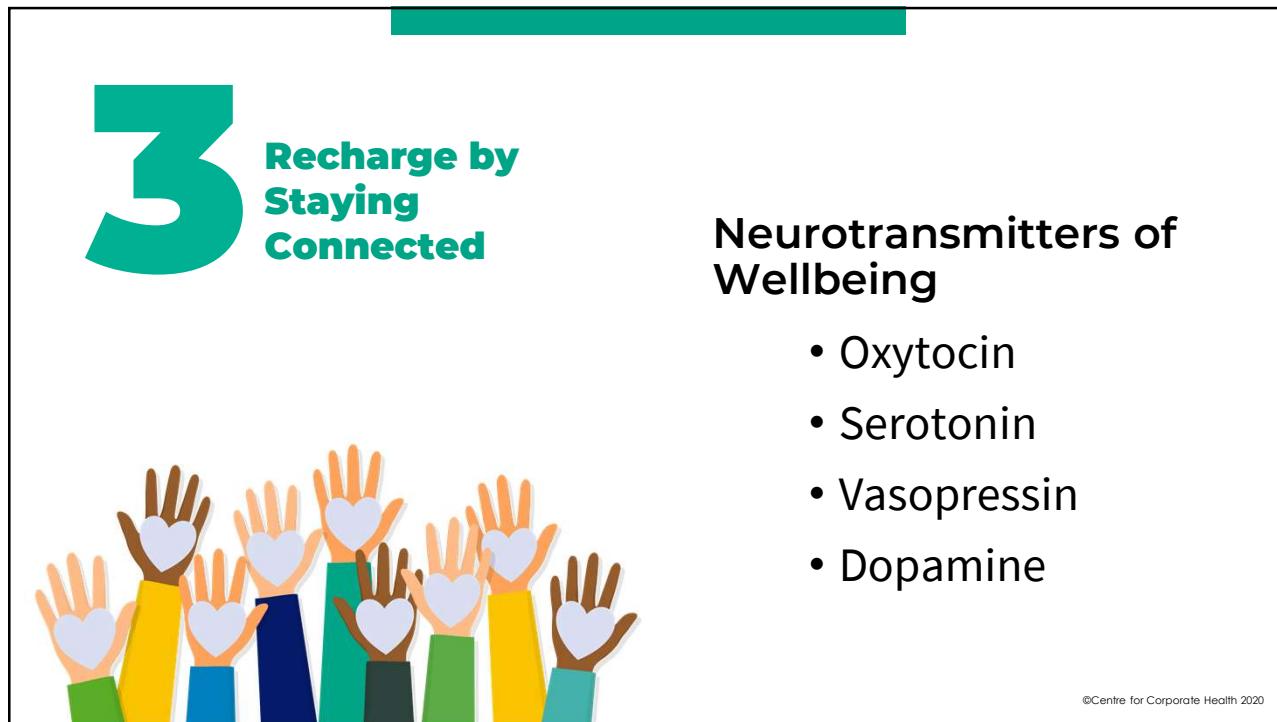
Practice Creativity and Mindfulness

Mindfulness matters...whether you try yoga, meditation, colouring-in, creating something, or just reading...staying present in changing times helps rest and repair



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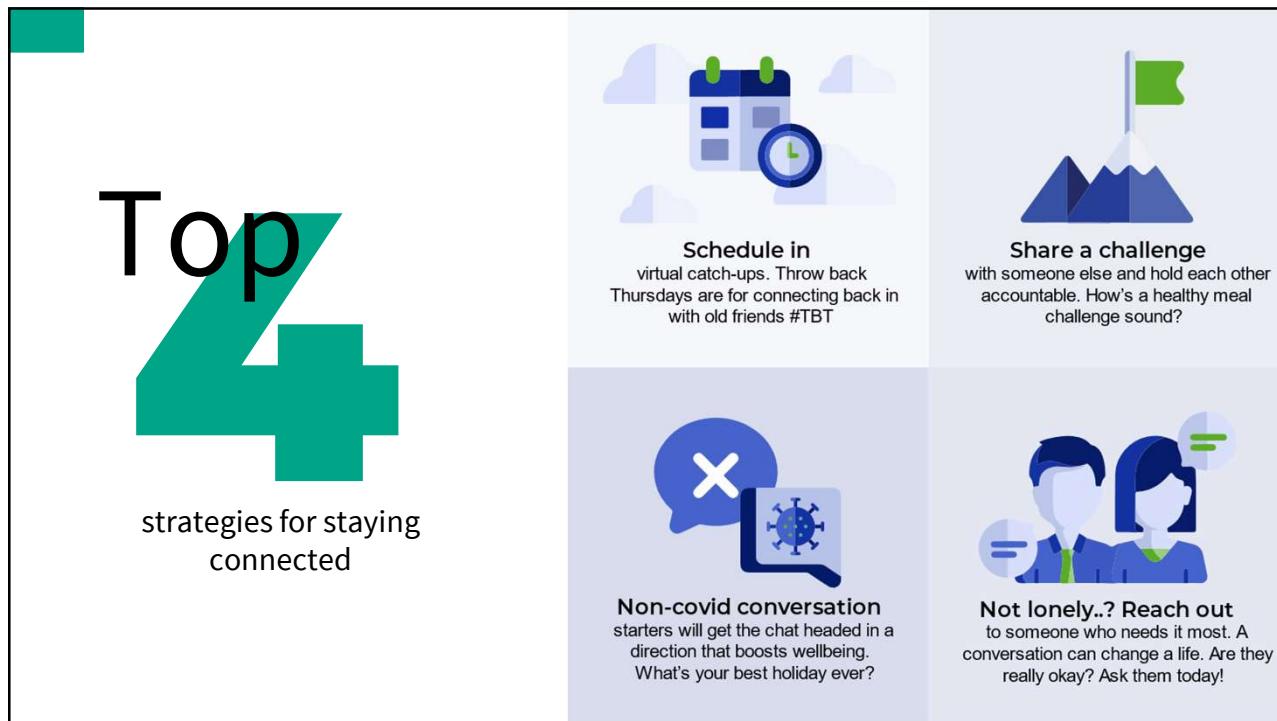
**3 Recharge by
Staying
Connected**

Neurotransmitters of Wellbeing

- Oxytocin
- Serotonin
- Vasopressin
- Dopamine

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Top 4
strategies for staying connected

Schedule in
virtual catch-ups. Throw back Thursdays are for connecting back in with old friends #TBT

Share a challenge
with someone else and hold each other accountable. How's a healthy meal challenge sound?

Non-covid conversation
starters will get the chat headed in a direction that boosts wellbeing.
What's your best holiday ever?

Not lonely..? Reach out
to someone who needs it most. A conversation can change a life. Are they really okay? Ask them today!

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Thank You

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