National Indian Health Board
NATIONAL TRIBAL
COVID-19 RESPONSE

Caution Fatigue During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Caution fatigue, a natural reaction to prolonged stress that leaves us feeling worn out and less motivated to adhere to safety guidelines, affects American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/ANs) across the country. We are all tired of hearing about COVID-19. And, it's not uncommon to feel drained from watching the never-ending news reports, statistics and graphs, and wondering when life will be normal again. After months of dealing with the virus and waiting for life to return to "normal," it may be tempting to let down your guard, but it's too soon to stop taking every possible precaution to keep yourself, your loved ones, and people in your Tribal community safe.

Caution Fatigue

- This is when you understand the actions you need to do to be cautious and protect your health, but you are willing to stop doing them because its just too exhausting
- Thinking about risky actions and the precautions needed to do them (going to the grocery store, taking a walk, etc.) takes up a lot of mental energy, exhausting us. Because of this burden, we become more easily influenced to bend the rules
- It can be especially difficult to stay motivated to be cautious when neither you nor anyone you know has gotten sick

Alert Fatigue

- This is when people become less receptive to alerts and warning messages the more often they see them
- With the overload of information from social media or news sources on the pandemic, people are constantly receiving alerts and updates
- Being flooded with varying information may cause you to struggle in deciding what information is actually useful. This can be very stressful
- To reduce the stress, you may become desensitized, or start to ignore these alerts and view them as "noise" or nuisances

Do I Have Caution Fatigue?

Ask yourself:

- Do I understand the risk of getting sick, but choose to not take precautions I was taking at the start of COVID-19?
- Have I stopped looking for updates on the pandemic?
- Do I find alerts annoying?

How do I fight it?

- Try reframing why you are taking precautions:
  - "I am being cautious to make sure my [grandparent, parent, elder, close friend, etc.] doesn't become sick."
  - "If I am cautious now, my reward is better health in the future."
  - "I am attending a virtual powwow so that in the future we can go back to having them in-person."
- Remind yourself of the habits and routines you had at the beginning of the pandemic, such as attending ceremonies, drum circles, sporting events, etc. When you forget to follow a guideline, immediately correct it.
  - Ex: If you forget your mask at home on your way to a community gathering, go back and get it as soon as you remember.
- Look for a variety of news sources. If you read different forms of news, you will be more likely to see it as "new" and pay attention.
- Focus on the immediate future so that uncertainty about the longer-term outlook doesn't make you feel hopeless or stressed out.
- Work on your emotional fitness.
  - Ex: Keep a journal to list things you are grateful for or to track your mood, stay connected with loved ones via a regularly scheduled video chat, or find ways to boost your mood
- Try not to fall into "thinking traps," such as assuming since you haven't been sick yet that you won't get sick in the future, or convincing yourself that an outing is necessary when your motivation behind it may just be boredom.
- Find ways to reduce stress, such as yoga, meditation, prayer, breathing exercises, or other spiritual activities.
- If your normal routine is off, try building a new one.
- Incorporate goals of enjoyment and mastery into your daily routine. These are things you can work toward that you enjoy doing in the moment and that will offer some value or sense of accomplishment to you in the future.
  - Ex: Picking up a new hobby, learning a new language, reading a new book, etc.

https://www.nm.org/healthbeat/covid-19/emotional-health-covid-19/do-you-have-covid-19-caution-fatigue
https://www.breastcancer.org/community/podcasts/quarantine-fatigue-20200618
https://news.northwestern.edu/stories/2020/04/caution-fatigue-could-dent-efforts-to-stay-safe/
https://health.clevelandclinic.org/are-you-experiencing-coronavirus-quarantine-fatigue/

For more information, visit NIHB's National Tribal COVID-19 Response page at www.nihb.org