

## August Wellness Article

### Good sleep critical to good health

"I'm tired." I've been hearing this a lot lately from people. And if I were honest, I am tired too. Life has been a roller coaster of events and emotions for the last three years, starting with the earthquakes and followed soon after by a prolonged pandemic. While the specific causes of fatigue may differ for each of us, there has been a cumulative strain that has compounded weariness with fear, anger, frustration and anxiety. Now supply shortages, economic strain, global conflicts have pushed many people's emotional wellbeing into overload. It's important to recognize that many of these influences cannot be changed by any single individual. And as we navigate this "crisis fatigue," make sure to extend grace to yourself and others.

One thing we do have more direct control over is how to make healthy choices to help us stay motivated, energized and passionate. Keeping a journal or just taking time to write down what you enjoy and finding ways to fit them back into your life could be a start. Staying physically active, connecting with others and eating well are also important. But one often overlooked component is how getting enough good sleep can impact our wellbeing and ability to handle stress.

Most adults require about 7-8 hours of sleep, but it is estimated that 1 out of 3 Americans is not reaching that amount. Adequate sleep promotes better focus, higher job performance, quicker reaction times and better mood regulation. Getting enough sleep also plays a role in overall health, including reducing your risk for obesity, heart disease, and high blood pressure.<sup>1</sup> Sleep is just one example of how something can have a large impact on how we are feeling.

According to research from the Sleep Foundation, there is also a link between sleep patterns and mental/emotional health. While sleep and mental health are both complex issues affected by a multitude of factors, improving sleep is proven to have a positive impact on mental health disorders. Your brain activity fluctuates during sleep, and each stage plays an important role in brain health. Allowing activity in different parts of the brain to ramp up or down can enable better thinking, learning and memory.

Bear in mind that sleep is not always the issue for people who feel exhausted. Examine the other areas in your life to help pin-point the causes of your fatigue. If you are feeling like you need help navigating your energy and mental wellness, visit <https://www.rrh.org/treatment-care/mental-health/> to find out what resources are offered in our community. If you would like more information about how a health coach could help you, call 760-499-3825.

#### 1. At a Glance: Healthy Sleep (nih.gov)

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