

# "Help! I'm more tired than ever!"

From fearing the future to dealing with a deluge of decisions, life is exhausting these days. Here, easy ways to power up your drained batteries

### Outsmart overwhelmed

#### There's no 'right' answer

*Is it safe to eat out? Should we go on vacation?* Debating once-mundane decisions that now carry high stakes triggers "decision fatigue," dialing up self-doubt, says psychotherapist Jennifer Shannon. To tamp down anxiety, just jot down a good old pro and con list. "If you see the two columns are pretty even, it proves there is no 'right' answer, only the best decision you can make at the time." This helps you take charge of what you can and let go of what you can't.

#### Unfurl a 'net'

A huge part of emotional exhaustion is feeling like you're *reacting* to uncertainty rather than being *proactive*, says Shannon. That's

why coming up with a simple plan, such as regularly checking in on a loved one you're concerned about, soothes "what-if" worries. "A plan engages you—it's a safety net keeping you from falling into anxiety spirals."

#### Recognize your wisdom

We know life is short, but the pandemic is putting this in stark relief, causing us to kick ourselves for paths not taken. Indeed, regret is a hidden form of fatigue, says expert Suzanne Degges-White, Ph.D. "I



know someone who during this crisis, realized she wants to be a cosmologist and regrets studying something else," she says. "But her 'bad decision' is a type of *wisdom*, showing her what she wants to do. Even in this time of loss, life is full of second chances."



### Recharge fast

#### Dial up energy 2x

There are two types of activities proven to boost our mental batteries, says psychologist Christine Padesky, Ph.D.

"*Pleasure tasks and accomplishment tasks*," she reveals. While it's clear why, say, curling up with a beach read is revitalizing, it may be less obvious why ticking off tiny accomplishments is so important. "Competence is energizing—for me, it's cooking a meal. For you, it might be gardening or doing a puzzle—it's anything that lets you say, *I did that*."

#### Replenish with 'start-ups'

What do plane engines and your "engine" have in common? "Takeoff uses 80% of a jet's fuel," says Shannon. "And we use the most energy just to

begin an activity. That's why I urge 5-minute start-ups." If you want to start walking, get out your hat and sunglasses, and if you still don't feel like it, sit down and reward yourself for beginning. This builds *start muscles*, boosting momentum.

#### Let yourself be 10 again

Tapping into a curious frame of mind, where you don't need to have answers, is "beginner's mind," and it boosts energy, says Degges-White. "I like to watch squirrels run along my fence—I don't have to know what's going to happen next, and I can be a kid again, a 'beginner' letting thoughts pass. We're all still 10 years old; we don't lose any part of ourselves. Getting back there is just a matter of letting life unfold around us a few minutes a day."

## Our expert panel



**Jennifer Shannon, LMFT**, author of *Don't Feed the Monkey Mind*, is a psychotherapist specializing in anxiety. More at [JenniferShannon.com](http://JenniferShannon.com).



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