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What's Making You So Tired?

By Susan Dunn

What's Making You So Tired? by Susan Dunn, MA Psychology, Professional Coach

Mary was always exhausted. Despite working out, eating well, taking supplements, and even having therapy, there was something dragging her down she couldn't figure out.

When I first talked to her, she described a good job, a supportive spouse, a good set of friends, and some interesting hobbies. She had even just returned from a vacation, but the fact it hadn't refreshed her caused her to call for coaching. She wanted to brainstorm on what was going on and what she could do differently.

"What did you think about when you were on vacation?" I asked her. It seemed a good place to start.

"What I should've done before I left home," she replied, and went on to describe a long list of things that had piled up at home - a garage that needed cleaning, a lawn that had been neglected, files at work and at home that hadn't been taken care of, and a whole backlog of things that needed attending to.

"I thought a vacation was what I needed," she said, "you know to get some rest. But it didn't work."

Mary's on to something there. Sometimes you'll gain more energy by expending it to take care of what you need to!

Yes, our lifestyles are busy today, but, assuming you're taking care of your physical health, sleeping 8 hours, eating right, taking supplements and working out, there's a source of stress you may have been overlooking.

There's nothing so fatiguing as something you're supposed to have done and haven't done. In other words, those chores and tasks on the to-do list. This can be one large thing, or a number of small things. In fact the size of the task doesn't matter; they all create about the same amount of fatigue in your brain.

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When you have something nagging at you like this, it's a continual drain of energy. Why? Because it tugs at our emotions. You're reminded you need to do the task and immediately feel guilty, lazy, angry at yourself, or any number of other negatives thoughts about yourself. These are energy–draining in the short–term and detrimental in the long–term.

What do you do? You start making excuses - to yourself and to others. "I didn't have time," or "I had to do XX first." If someone else is dependent on the task, or wants you to do it, you can turn and focus your anger and frustration on them, and this adds more negativity to the mix. At the same time other people involved can become frustrated and angry with you. This sets up a force field of nagging, complaining, demanding, and other unpleasant emotions.

The longer you wait to complete the task, the less you'll think about yourself and your competence.

Rarely do these things go away. Instead they sit around and fester in our minds, or grow worse in reality. If you were supposed to weed the garden, doing it a month ago instead of today would have taken a whole lot less time. You would still have been weeding, which you don't like to do, but there would've been a lot less weeds to get rid of.

Now when you get out there to weed, and the task is overwhelming, you'll question your ability as a gardener, and maybe even your abilities in general. What would've been an easy task has become a large one, and will demand more of you.

In order to motivate yourself, think back right now on some task you had in the past that you took care of immediately. There are probably numerous examples, but you may not be able to think about them because you moved through them so quickly they didn't take up any brain–energy at all.

That's the take home point. Instead of staring at the files piling up on your desk (which will take up place in your brain and emotions as well) tackle it immediately. Don't let things pile up, because they pile up in your head as well, and that's energy you need for other things.

Here are some ways to get started:

- Take an inventory of all the things you need to tackle.
- Make a list where you can check things off when they're completed and see your progress.
- Celebrate each item you take off your list with some treat for yourself.
- Begin! Choose one thing and do it.
- Work with a coach for support.
- Declutter and simplify. As you go through the piled–up list, think of what things you could completely eliminate that would free up time and energy.
- Be ruthless in getting rid of tolerations.

It may take you a while to get through your list, but you will eventually. If you eliminate some things, you should be able to stay caught up and feel a whole lot better about things.

©Susan Dunn, MA Psychology, Coach, <http://www.susandunn.cc> . I help people make decisions that will get them where they want to go, create plans and offer the support necessary to get them there.

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What Time is It?

By Dave Balch

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Sometimes you're flying high. Everything is going great! You've finished something that you've been putting off for a long time, or you just got organized, or a big order came in. Don't you just LOVE feeling like that? You are full of energy and those impossible tasks are just sailing off of your desk. Your to-do list is shrinking like a cotton shirt in a dryer.

On the other hand, sometimes you're pretty discouraged. "How am I ever going to finish that project? How can I possibly do all of the things that I need to do in order to get to where I want to be?"

Don't you just HATE feeling like THAT? It's hard to move a single piece of paper from one place on your desk to the other. The easiest things look impossible to do. You are carrying a large stone around your neck and everything is an effort.

I think that most people are like that; highs and lows, ups and downs. Even the most productive people hit a brick wall once in a while and wonder to themselves, "What was I thinking when I took on this project??"

Naturally there can be a zillion reasons why you are down: outside pressures, just lost a big customer or big deal, fight with a family member, illness or accident, etc. What separates the men from the boys, however, is how you deal with it. Sometimes you can help yourself when you're down by asking yourself one simple question: "What time is it?"

WHAT??

That's right! I'm willing to bet that when you go from a high to a low rather quickly it is a function of the time of day. Here's why: when you are tired, everything seems

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worse than it really is.

It's much harder to cope with things when you are tired. The mechanism in our brains that keeps us from being overwhelmed requires a lot of energy, and when we are tired

it no longer functions properly.

Why is it important to know that? For the same reason it's important to know that your car won't run without fuel. If you're feeling down and you're tired too, give yourself a break! Don't be so hard on yourself... there is a good reason why you feel as you do.

Once you realize that, a glimmer of hope appears because you know you'll feel better in the morning. Try to divert your attention away from what is bothering you. If it is only bothering you because you are tired, give it a rest until tomorrow when your energy is back. Here are some ideas to try:

1. Spend your time doing low-brain activities, such as opening mail if you can't allow yourself to "goof-off".
2. If you have to press on because of deadlines, for example, take a nap or eat something that will give you more energy.
3. Take a walk. Get away from the pressure and let your mind relax. Give yourself this gift; you deserve it!

The main thing to remember is this: it's much harder to cope with life's stresses when you're tired. Get into the habit of recognizing that fact and put your worries to bed long before you get there yourself.

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