

June 24 Safety Message

Quarantine Fatigue and How to Overcome It

The experience of a pandemic is unique to most of us, and after living through stay at home orders, an economic upheaval, and 3 months of non-stop news coverage on a subject that seems ambiguous and distant, many of us just want to be done with it. As many communities reopen and begin to feel more like the normal environment we want to get back to, people begin to abandon the preventive measures they were willing to take weeks ago.



This is called “caution fatigue”, and manifests when we “become impatient with warnings, or don’t believe the warnings to be real or relevant, or de-emphasize the actual risk. We then bend rules or stop safety behaviors like washing hands, wearing masks and social distancing.”

Think about the last time you heard a fire alarm at work or home, and first assumed it was a test, or a malfunction, not taking it seriously because you’ve experienced it before. We all have a natural tendency to try to eliminate fearful thoughts we have, by attempting to minimize the threat and regain control over our circumstances.

Information overload, lack of immediate threats in our work/home circle, a desire to lower stress levels, depression and loneliness all naturally combine to create a desire for safety and normalcy. And for some people, their location may not be experiencing the same levels of new cases of COVID-19, so they don’t see sick people, don’t see people wearing masks, don’t pay attention to the news reports of COVID-19 cases. This allows a sense of minimal threat and justifies abandoning preventive measures.



And yet, right now, 28 US states have an upward trend of new cases. 12 states are experiencing a record number of new cases, some states are re-instituting more stringent prevention measures, and the impact of getting sick with COVID-19 on your family, co-workers and our business operations is still a critical concern.

So what’s the solution?

Like most Safety challenges, recognizing there is a risk is the first step, and being realistic about it allows you to normalize into your life preventive measures like handwashing, mask wearing and social distancing without feeling stressed about dire consequences. That's why it's called "the new normal".

Make safety practices into habits by setting up visual cues — for example, keep a face mask and hand sanitizer on your desk, with your keys and in your car to make them easy to use when needed. Practice 20 second hand washing and avoiding touching your face all the time – not just when you've been out with people. You'll instill Safety habits that require no thought to adhere to.



Implement the same type of habit forming behaviors to reduce stress levels by practicing self-care: take time to calm your thoughts during the day, get outside to exercise or enjoy the summer weather, get enough sleep and spend time on enjoyable activities that make you feel good. Ask yourself "What's the reward I get for the choices that I make relative to what I'm giving up?" Maybe the reward is your health, or altruistically the health of family members and friends. Or maybe the reward is the peace of mind that comes from regaining a sense of control and minimizing worry and uncertainty.

Here at BHI Energy, Safety is our #1 Value – at work and hopefully at home. COVID-19 is here for a while, and we have a responsibility to our customers, our coworkers and ourselves to accept that fact and simply incorporate the needed safety measures into our lives and then get on with living it!



200% Accountability = 100% for Me, 100% for You



Zach Taylor, Vice President, Center of Excellence

Excerpted from CNN.com article "Quarantine Fatigue: Why some of us have stopped being vigilant and how to overcome it" by Kristen Rogers 6/12/2020
