

DECISIONS, DECISIONS: WELLNESS TIPS FOR MANAGING

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Decision Fatigue has become a pronounced symptom of the ever-changing world of 2020. According to Psychologist Roy F. Baumeister in the online article Understanding Decision Fatigue found on Healthline, Decision Fatigue is “the emotional and mental strain resulting from a burden of choices”. When we become overstressed with prolonged external or internal stressors our cognitive functions can be greatly impacted. This can lead to decision fatigue and result in either the individual taking part in risky behaviors or avoiding the decision altogether.

There are signs that you are experiencing decision fatigue. According to the Understanding Decision Fatigue article on Healthline, these signs are procrastination, impulsivity, avoidance and indecision. Other common symptoms that folks may experience would include increased anxiety, irritability, tension headaches and digestive issues.

If you are experiencing decision fatigue, guess what, you are not alone. The stresses of dealing with COVID-19 is causing a high spike in experiencing decision fatigue. Even before the pandemic the daily stresses that individuals experience often resulted with decision fatigue. Now that people are experiencing the constant weight of the risks

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A Different Kind of School Year!

by Bonda Zeller

As I started this fall in a school counseling position, I was preparing to keep my own kids and others safe and healthy. Local private and public-school staff and homeschool programs alike are working to ensure that our kids can continue their academic growth.

Here are a few ideas for parents for helping kids to navigate through a whole new school year:



- Teach your kids about viruses and how they spread. Here are a few links that may help you explore this world of science with your kids: <https://kids.britannica.com/kids/article/virus/390098> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YS7vsBgWszl>.
- Teach them good handwashing. Regardless of their age and yours, this is great information to keep them healthy and happy all year round. Less sick days for them or you!! I find it is still important to remind them all to wash after returning home and every time they leave the bathroom. A link for teaching handwashing can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YBGsoimPXZg>.
- Make a go-to plan for childcare if your child does get ill. Work out options (at least 2) for working at home or taking sick leave before it occurs. Know who you can call to support you and your child in a bind and talk to them now about if they are comfortable with stepping up if needed.
 - This is the website for the Natrona County School District illness protocol. <https://natronaschools.org/ncsd-information-and-updates-as-related-to-coronavirus/>
 - Ask questions about your employer's policies and how the Family First Coronavirus Response Act would apply to you and your child(ren).

If utilizing the virtual school program, consider what needs your child and family may need to allow a better experience for all. A decent pair of noise-cancelling earphones or glasses with blue screen lenses might be an important part of your school shopping this year. During the Spring, our living room transformed into a working space for all of us: art supplies were close, the printer was on hand, and we made things work. Creating a functioning classroom space at home can help your child succeed.

Contact your child's teacher, nurse, or counselor, if your child is experiencing emotional stress with adjusting to the new school year. Some kids have been experiencing increased anxiety, anger, tearfulness, and fears during this time. School staff can help ease the transition or offer suggestions that have worked for other kids and their families.

Trust your gut. Throughout this 'unprecedented time' we have had so many conflicting ideas coming our way. Although it is important to be open to the discussions at hand, trust that you know the best for you and your child(ren) and that you have the right to change your ideas with more information without guilt.

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associated with the daily decisions that they must make; they are experiencing a high level of decision fatigue. We are faced with the decision on attending birthday parties, going inside a grocery store, eating out at a restaurant, spending time with relatives over Thanksgiving and weighing the risks associated with each of these decisions. When it comes right down to it, we are all tired of having to make these choices.

So, what do we do about it? We have it in our circle of control to be aware that we are in a journey of change and uncertainty and that requires more preventative self-care. If you know you are starting to get a head cold, do you not ramp up on your wellness routine. You might start to increase your supplement intake or use a sick day to get some much-needed rest. We need to do the same with our mental health. Too often we just push through it until anxiety has taken a large toll on our mental health system.

Some good examples from the Healthline article for focusing on self-care during this time include

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The More Things Change

by Jamie Leslie

This year has certainly been a year of change and uncertainty. For Three Trails EFAP, we said goodbye to one of our part-time counselors in July as she started a new job. **Bonda Zeller** started off at Three Trails EFAP in 2014. She was an amazing counselor at Three Trails, and we will miss her greatly. She has taken on a new job as a full-time counselor for Natrona County School District. All the staff at Three Trails wish her well in her new position.

We would also like to introduce to you **Julie Laib**, the new part-time counselor that started with Three Trails in late August. Julie graduated from the University of Wyoming with a Master of Science in Counselor Education and a Bachelor of Science in Human Communication. She also obtained an Associate of Science in Addiction Studies from Casper College. She is a Licensed Professional Counselor with the State of Wyoming and is also a National Certified Counselor.



Julie has maintained a private practice for the past decade providing mental health and outpatient substance abuse treatment in the Big Horn Basin area. She is certified by the Wyoming Department of Health to provide outpatient substance abuse treatment for adolescents and adults. She has worked with individuals, couples, families, and adolescents. She practices an integrative approach to counseling utilizing theoretical models that meet the needs of clients. She utilizes tools from cognitive behavioral therapy, dialectical behavioral therapy, motivational interviewing, solution focused therapy, client centered therapy and affirmation therapy.

Julie enjoys spending time with family, traveling, camping, snowshoeing, and riding with her husband on their Harley Davidson Road King and Polaris Razor ATV. She also enjoys spending time star gazing and photographing wildlife and scenery in Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks. She and her husband have three children, five grandchildren and two beautiful Pomeranians.

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taking time to set aside 10-minute breaks between tasks. If it is hard to make this happen consider stretching your arms in doorways as you walk through. At least you are giving your body a switch and utilizing some stretching to give yourself a brain break. I find that getting myself away from my computer or office and walking in the hallway also provides a brain break. Stepping away from your usual work environment provides a chance to ground yourself emotionally.

Another trick provided by Healthline is to make a list of decisions. In the counseling world, I will often encourage clients to chunk down their decision list and just start with the top priority or the most doable part. If we are given the task to eat an elephant -we must chunk it down to parts. You're more likely to finish the big eating task if you start with the tail instead of the whole elephant.

Also consider maintaining unchanging routines. The Healthline article notes that if you are able to maintain some unchanging habits such as going to sleep at the same time, using specific times to exercise, habitual times to go grocery shopping can help set it up so your day has fewer new decisions to plan out.

Using your resources is also a noted solution. Sharing the mental load for decision making can lessen the likelihood of feeling overwhelmed. Find a good battle-buddy that you know you can share the mental load with, and you might be surprised about how supportive this will feel.

In the end, take some time to be self-compassionate with yourself and give yourself some grace. Expecting perfection and expecting to be mentally okay right now might be unrealistic expectations considering the large amounts of external stressors you may be dealing with.



Key Information . . .

Information on hours for scheduling, how to schedule, and staff information

To schedule an appointment, we ask that you call our office. Currently our phone is being managed by one staff member mainly during these times: Monday–Thursday from 9am–4:30pm and Fridays from 9am–1pm. The office phone number is 237-5750.

You are welcome to call before those times or after hours and leave us a message. We ask as a courtesy that you include your name and a good phone number, so that we may return your phone call.

We will ask you some quick intake questions for scheduling your first appointment. We do not need any form of insurance, as this benefit is entirely covered by your worksite. We will need an email address to send you an Informed Consent and ask that you electronically sign it and return it via email at least 48 business hours before your scheduled appointment.

All adult clients are required to schedule their own appointment. Parents or legal guardians are required to set up appointments for minor clients. If a minor client is 16 or over, after the legal guardian has followed through with scheduling the first appointment, the client can take on the responsibility of scheduling their own follow-up appointments as long as the parent is in agreement with this.

Appointment times are mainly available during these times: Monday 9am–6pm, Tuesday 9am–7pm, Wednesday 9am–6pm, Thursday 9am–7pm and Friday's from 9am–1pm. Some counselors have a few after hours available. Counselor's schedule times to work with clients are subject to change.

Liz Kornkven is our full-time counselor. Her current scheduled work times are mainly during these times: Monday 9am – 5pm, Tuesday 9am – 5pm, Wednesday 9am–5pm, Thursday 9am–5pm and Friday 9am–noon. Liz has set times during her work schedule that she is required to complete paperwork or do consultation. These paperwork times are different each day, when you call to schedule an appointment with Liz, the Administrative Assistant can give you more information on times available.

Wes Bertagnole is a part-time counselor. His scheduled times are mainly during these times: Monday at 5pm, Tuesday he has openings at 5:30 and 6:30, Thursday he has openings at 5pm and 6pm.

Julie Laib is a part-time counselor. Her scheduled times are mainly during these times: Monday: 5pm and 6pm, Tuesday at 6pm, Wednesday 12pm, 5pm and 6pm, Thursday 6pm and Friday's 12noon and 1pm.

Shelly McAlpin is a part-time counselor. Her scheduled times are mainly during these times: Monday 12noon, 4:30pm, 5:30pm and 6:30 pm. Tuesdays at 12noon, Thursday at 12noon and Fridays at 12noon.

Jamie Leslie is the full-time Executive Director but does also work with clients on a part-time basis. Her available appointment times are - Monday 10am, 1pm, 3:30pm, Wednesday 10am, 1pm, 3pm, Thursday 10am, 1pm, 4pm.

Trish Hussion is the Administrative Secretary that responds to phone calls and schedules appointments.

COVID-19 Response with Services

Telehealth services are mainly being utilized. We utilize either over the phone or zoom for our telehealth services. All counselors have a telehealth account with Wyoming Telehealth that provides them with a free HIPPA compliant zoom account. Counselors are mainly working remotely from home and the main office has been limited to 3 people at a time.

Most of our availability is through telehealth. We have limited availability for individuals who cannot utilize telehealth. One counseling office provides 6ft distance and is currently being used by the Executive Director on a limited basis for clients unable to follow through with telehealth. She can have up to 4 clients on her in person case load.

One additional office space has recently completed construction with a clear PVC covering that separates the client from the counselor to provide safe in person session. The times counselors are using this office for in-person are limited. We can manage a case load of 3 people at a time and Liz can manage a case load of 4 people at a time. We apologize that we do not have the space or additional staffing resources to make in-person more available currently. We continue to monitor the situation with COVID-19 and if it improves, we may be able to increase our in-person availability.

