

Bath Centre for Fatigue Services

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Managing the Impact of Fatigue

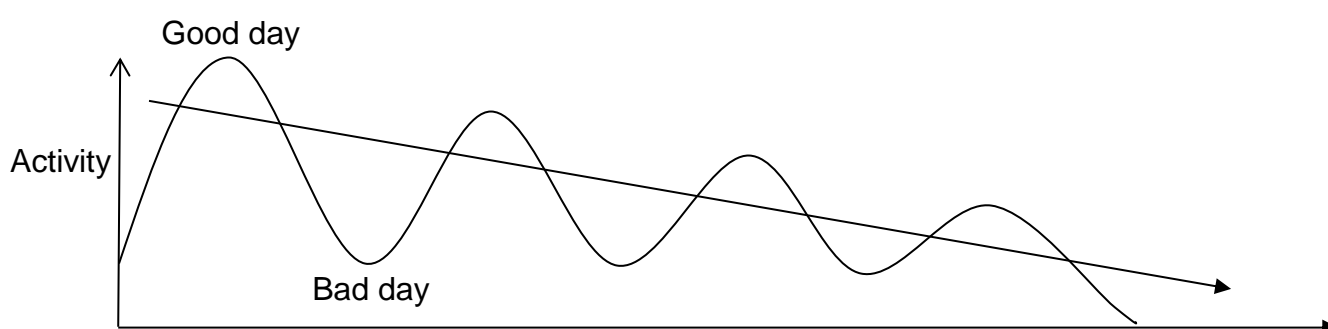
- Activity Cycling “Boom and Bust”
- Pacing and Managing your Energy
- Fatigue and Sleep
- Stress and Relaxation
- Five Ways to Wellbeing

Bath Centre for Fatigue Services (BCFS)

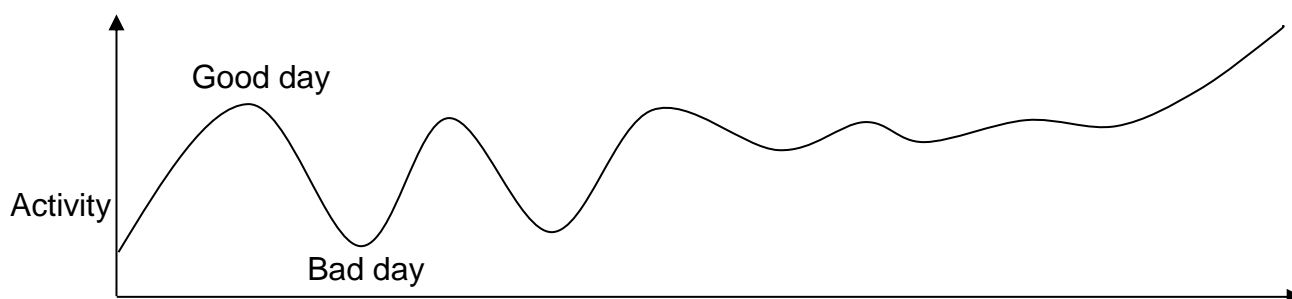
Specialist help for Adults with enduring fatigue

Activity cycling - 'boom and bust'

Most people tend to do a lot when they feel good and not a lot when they feel unwell. This can lead to big swings in activity and you may find if you overdo it one day you may have several days recovering.



Taking a balanced, steady approach to activity counteracts the common tendency to swing from one extreme to another; we call this "pacing". Over a period of time you can very gradually increase your activity and balance the boom and bust cycle.



Pacing – Managing Your Activity

What is pacing?

- ❖ Pacing is looking forward and planning your life to make sure you have a regular amount of activity and exercise from day to day.
- ❖ Activity can be physical, mental and emotional.
- ❖ Pacing can be difficult to get used to and can take time but it is important in managing your fatigue and being able to do what you want to do.

How to pace

- ❖ Ensuring enough rest and relaxation.
- ❖ Continue a certain level of exercise irrespective of ‘good’ days or ‘bad’ days.
- ❖ Base your activity levels on your plan and not how you feel.

Benefits of pacing:

- ❖ Enables you to plan and continue to do activities/work/hobbies without overdoing it, and therefore lead a more fulfilling life.
- ❖ Increases your control over your life.
- ❖ Can gradually increase how much you can do and builds stamina for different activities.
- ❖ Feel better about yourself for having done something.

Principles of pacing – the three P’s:



Prioritise Does it need to be done today?
Can I get someone to help me?
Does it need to be done at all?



Plan What do I need to carry out the job?
What basic activities does each stage involve? e.g. walking, sitting, standing, listening, concentrating etc.
What time of day is best for me to carry out larger activities?



Pace Can I break the job down into different stages?

Pacing Ideas

- Sit down to carry out tasks when possible e.g. sit on side on bath whilst brushing teeth
- Shower in the evening rather than the morning or the other way around depending on when is best for you
- Use dry shampoo
- If you are going to have a busy morning, prepare anything you can the day/evening before
- Walk up slopes rather than stairs and low parts of pavements
- Only fill the kettle with as much water as you need and hold with both hands
- If making a meal, prepare enough to have leftovers and freeze for re-heating
- Make simpler meals where you can sit to wait for the next step rather than standing over the cooker for a long time
- Use smaller pans if possible so they are easier to lift
- Buy precut vegetables and other convenience foods
- Use ready meals when needed
- Online shopping
- Make sure washing up water is hot to make dishes easier to clean
- Bend properly by bending your knees, do not hunch over
- Find a seat close to the door on a bus/train
- Take micro breaks
- Plan ahead e.g. call ahead if going to a shop to check it is open/has what you need and plan your journey and what you need so you do not walk back on yourself
- Do one activity at a time
- Take a taxi if possible or take a lift from somebody
- Write things down, keep a diary

Fatigue and Sleep

Common sleep problems for those experiencing fatigue

- Taking a long time to fall asleep at night (more than 30 minutes)
- Frequent or prolonged awakenings during the night
- Waking up early and unable to fall back to sleep
- Sleeping for prolonged periods of time

Tips for improving sleep

Establish a routine

- Get up at the same time each day even if you have not had much sleep the previous night. It may be helpful to set your alarm clock.
- Do not nap during the day even if you feel very tired, this will affect your sleep the following night.
- Do not go to bed early even if you feel very tired, or to make up for lost sleep.

Preparing for sleep

- Try to wind down in the hour or so before you go to bed. Include relaxing activities such as watching television, having a warm bath, listening to music in your schedule.
- Avoid stimulating activities which will keep you alert, for example work, studying or decision making.
- Develop a regular order of doing things, e.g. locking up the house, turning out the lights, brushing your teeth etc. This will act as a signal to your body that it is preparing for sleep.

Problem solving strategy for reducing worries at night

- Lying in bed at night worrying about problems can make you feel tense and prevent you from going to sleep.
 - Set aside 20 minutes in the early evening, write down any problems or worries
 - Write down possible steps to resolve the problems
 - Allocate time to do the actual work.

Waking in the night

- If you haven't been able to get to sleep after about 20 minutes or more, get up and do something that is not too stimulating – return to bed when you feel sleepy.

References:

Centre for Clinical Interventions (www.cci.health.wa.gov.au)

The Sleep Foundation (www.sleepfoundation.org)

Walker, M. 2017. *Why We Sleep: The New Science of Sleep and Dreams*. Allen Lane. Lond

Stress and Relaxation

The Stress Response

- Breathing becomes fast and shallow
- Heart rate increases
- Muscles tense
- Blood is directed to brain and major muscles
- Increased perspiration
- Fight or flight

The Relaxation Response

- Opposite to the stress response

Just as the stress response becomes a habit it is possible to adopt relaxation as a habit in its place

Relaxation:

- Is a skill that can be learned
- Should be practiced every day
- Becomes easier with practice
- Once mastered can be used effectively anywhere

Relaxation as Part of Daily Life

- Begin to recognise when you feel tension rising, rather than waiting until you are very tense or upset.
- Check for increased tension. It could be a stiff neck or a clenched jaw.
- If you become aware of tension, focus on your breathing. Try to breathe the tension away, feeling it lessen as you breathe out. Try to slow your breathing down and lessen the effort you are putting into it.

Five ways to wellbeing

Connect	With the people around you – family, friends, colleagues and neighbours. Think of these as the cornerstones of your life and invest time in developing them. Building these connections will support and enrich you every day.
Be active	Go for a walk. Step outside. Cycle. Play a game. Garden. Dance. Exercising makes you feel good. Most importantly, discover a physical activity you enjoy and that suits your level of mobility and fitness.
Take notice	Be curious. Catch sight of the beautiful. Remark on the unusual. Notice the changing seasons. Savour the moment, whether you are walking to work, eating lunch or talking to friends. Be aware of the world around you and what you are feeling. Reflecting on your experiences will help you appreciate what matters to you.
Keep learning	Try something new. Rediscover an old interest. Sign up for that course. Take on a different responsibility at work. Fix a bike, learn to play an instrument or how to cook your favourite food. Set a challenge you will enjoy achieving. Learning new things will make you more confident as well as being fun.
Give	Do something nice for a friend, or stranger. Thank someone. Smile. Volunteer your time. Join a community group. Look out, as well as in. Seeing yourself, and your happiness, linked to the wider community can be incredibly rewarding and creates connections with the people around you.

Aked J, Marks N, Cordon C, Thompson S, (2008), The Mental Capital and Wellbeing Project, centre for well-being, nef (the new economics foundation)