

Navigating Negativity Well & Increasing Awareness

LIVING WELL – JANUARY 2024

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From hurricanes, floods and wildfires to mass shootings, wars and pandemics, there is no shortage of negative news.

Exposure to disturbing events has increased with the use of technology, availability of social media and a 24-hour digital news cycle. Sometimes it can feel overwhelming, like the world is falling apart, and this impacts our mental health.

Our brains are wired to process stress by going into a 'fight, flight, freeze' mode while we process what is happening. Constant exposure to negativity can upset our ability to process it all or return to a relaxed state of mind. When we experience this toxic process again and again, our adrenal glands can become fatigued – leading to a lack of restful sleep, anxiety, depression, headaches, muscle tension and even aggression. Long term stress will damage your health and well-being. Here are seven tips to avoid negativity overload.

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I cannot always control what goes on outside, but I can always control what goes on inside.

WAYNE DYER



Filter News Sources

Ensure your news sources are objective and trustworthy, curate your social feeds so that you are fully informed from reliable, independent sources without excessive sensationalism – avoid 'doomscrolling' through social media links whenever possible as this can become addictive and harmful.



Topic Awareness

Notice which topics are particularly distressing, personal or triggering and accept that you feel the way you do, as avoiding our negative emotions can cause more stress - and also understand that you do have control over your reactions and how you view situations.



Take Notice

Pay attention to how you feel – when you are worried, overwhelmed, getting stressed, feeling numb, moody or irritated - whenever you feel like you are 'off', it is a signal that you need to stop, regroup and allow your nervous system to soothe.



Seek Assistance

When you feel stuck in negativity without the ability to recover even for brief periods, seek out professional help through your family doctor, community resources and your companies' Employee & Family Assistance Program.



Pace Yourself

Pace your consumption - start with setting a limit on how frequently you look at the news and social media to create the space and time for you to soothe your nervous systems' stress response and decompress - turn off 'push' notifications, set aside specific times during the day to look at updates and then set a daily curfew when you stop.



Positive Outlets

While it is important that we are informed and educated, we should offset this by striving for positivity whenever possible – try reading or listening to podcasts on areas of personal interest and enjoyment, listen to music, spend time with loved ones or be outside in the fresh air without any devices.



Label Your Feelings

Label your feelings and let them pass through by grounding yourself in the moment using the acronym APPLE:

- A**cknowledge - label the feeling as 'worry'
- P**ause - sit with the feeling of worry
- P**ull Back - do your best not to indulge the worry
- L**et Go - allow the worry to pass without engagement
- E**xplore - connect to the present moment

While there are often things we can do to help a situation; we may not be able to stop or change them entirely on our own. Accepting this is an important step in navigating negatively well. So fuel yourself with as much positivity as possible to cope in today's world.

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