JumpStart Special Edition: Check Up From the Neck Up

**Three tips for better energy** **budgeting**

By Colleen Best, PhD, DVM and the Ontario Veterinary Medical Association

Living through a pandemic is exhausting! It’s been several months since our world was turned upside down. The uncertainty and added stress of this time takes a lot of energy to manage. The amount of strain the pandemic puts on our day-to-day functioning can’t be underestimated. As a result, many are battling feelings of exhaustion, weariness and fatigue.

As we look forward and wonder how we’ll get through the hours, days, weeks and months to come, one thing is certain: we need to steward our personal resources carefully. Each of us has a finite amount of resources on a given day, including time, decision-making, patience and cognitive capacity. Acknowledging this is a critical step in figuring out the best ways to allocate our resources; if we don’t, we risk overextension and diminishing returns for our efforts. How can we use our resources judiciously? What happens when we hit that wall of exhaustion? Here are some things for you to try:

**1. Plan what you can**. We all need a certain degree of predictability in our days. Without it, we would need to make an overwhelming number of decisions, which would prevent us from functioning at a high level. We need to adapt our old routines to the current situation. We all have different needs for predictability and spontaneity, so ensure that you create routines that are right for you. Take some time to create new daily routines that are appropriate for your current situation—doing so will free up valuable time and energy so you’re better able to meet the needs of the day. Create a weekly or monthly schedule for meals, household maintenance, laundry and shopping. It’s been suggested that every minute of planning can save up to 10 minutes of doing. Investing time in creating a schedule will help you be efficient and diminish the demands on your energy on a daily basis.

**2. Value-based energy budgeting**. Particularly in times of stress, it can feel like all we do is run from one urgent task to another. Whether it be juggling multiple patients at once or managing homeschooling, bath-time and cleaning the house, our to-do lists can often seem endless. Unfortunately, if we let the demands of others and the moment dictate how we spend our energy, we run the risk of not attending to the things that are truly important in our lives. To avoid this, you need to determine and allocate your time based on the things that are most meaningful to you (i.e. values and priorities). Doing so will help you feel fulfilled and satisfied.

**3. Rest and rejuvenation.** Remember, you can’t pour from an empty cup! Be sure to always set aside time for self-care.

*For more mental health and wellness information and advice, visit i-matter.ca.*

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