

5 WAYS TO JOLT COVID-19 JET LAG

Life Hacks

By Andrew May



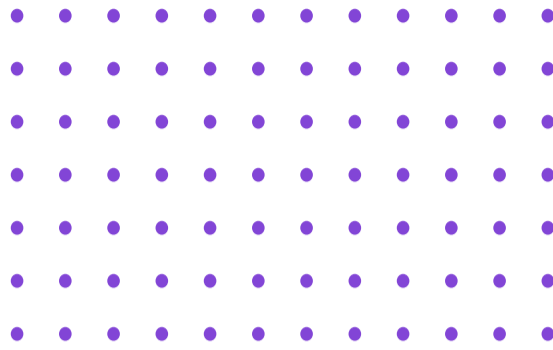
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he first lockdown in March 2020 was almost novel for those of us privileged enough to work from home (hello, leisurewear!). But nearly 1.5 years into the pandemic, constant change, uncertainty, and ambiguity have removed any novelty. The longer Covid-19 continues to disrupt our lives, the more people are feeling flat, fatigued, and in many cases, like they have a constant case of jet lag.

Recently, a participant in one of my company's 30-Day Boost programs commented, "Most days I feel jet-lagged or slightly hungover. But without the Qantas pajamas and no champagne on the tarmac."

I think she summed up how many people are feeling: jet-lagged, but without the travel. The key to understanding why you feel like this is first delving into the science of chronobiology (the body clock). Then I'll share five strategies to re-energize you and your routine.

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Understanding Your Body Clock

The internal clock, or circadian rhythm, has taken thousands of years to develop. Yet our modern lifestyle—with stimulants from electric lighting to caffeine, shift work, and alarm clocks—is comparatively new to the human species. Covid-19 is even newer, but many of our adaptive behaviors brought on by working from home, home schooling, and social distancing are playing havoc with our internal rhythms.

Circadian rhythms determine the sleeping and feeding patterns of all humans. Brain wave activity, hormonal secretion, body temperature, metabolism, heart rate, blood pressure, cell regeneration, and other important biological activities are all linked to this 24-hour cycle. In a regular 24-hour day, there are times when energy and alertness levels are at a peak and times when you most likely feel tired and low in energy. Research suggests most people have two peak alertness times each day: around 12 noon and between 6 and 7pm. Almost everyone's body clock is programmed to make them feel sleepy in the middle of the afternoon (around 3pm).

For many people, Covid-19 has changed this. We have lost natural rhythm in our days, weeks, and even months. Every day feels the same without structure guiding us subconsciously to know what day of the week it is.

Covid-19 Fatigue and Burnout

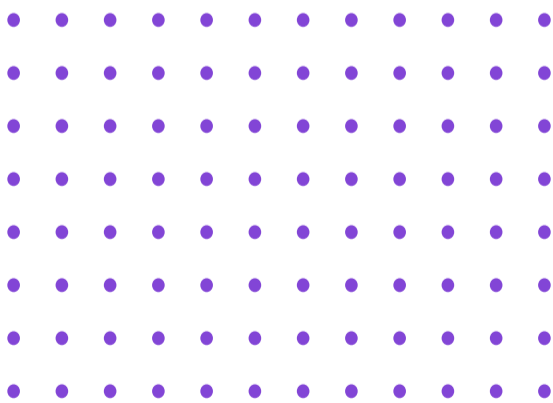
Covid-19 has exacerbated fatigue and burnout among workforces around the globe. Anxiety, trauma, and depression are emerging in research studies as big challenges in the fallout of this pandemic.

These psychological factors, combined with ongoing questions about how our workplaces will function moving forward, can all play a big part in causing fatigue and increasing the risks associated with burnout.

Once you reach that point of exhausting yourself, your health, productivity, happiness, and quality of life all plummet. So it's important to be proactive now.

Jolting Covid-19 Jet Lag

The following five strategies help reset the body clock, create explicit borders that demarcate the start and finish of your working day, add rituals to enhance mental well-being, and prioritize activities each week that nurture your soul and connect you to what is important. Together, these practices should help you stave off Covid-19 burnout.



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1.

Transition time. Create rituals at the end of each working day to transition from work to home (even if you've been at home the whole time). This can include activities like an evening walk, ocean swim, bike ride, warm bath, listening to music, or calling a family member or friend. Create your own activities to help your body and brain disconnect from work and transition to your personal life.

2.

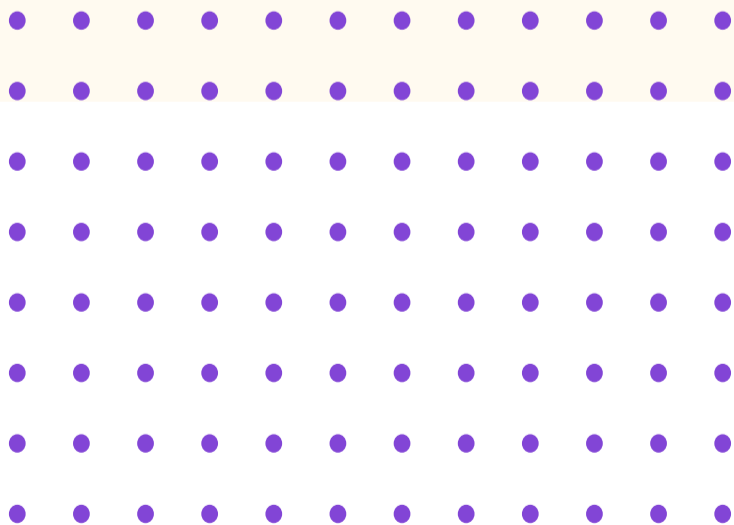
Daily sunshine. Vitamin D is essential for mitochondrial function and cell health, so get outdoors more often. Aim to spend 30 minutes each day in nature, ideally in sunlight, for maximum immune-boosting and mental well-being benefits. One easy way to up your outdoor time? Do as many walking meetings as you can during the day.

3.

Regular sleep and wake times. Your body doesn't know Wednesday from Saturday. Changing up your sleep routine messes with your biological clock. When it comes to our wake and sleep cycles, our circadian rhythm thrives on routine and consistency.

4.

Physical activity "double dip." Regularly train/move with others to strengthen relationships. Exercise is a great way to build physiological capacity, get a dose of nature, and connect with other people.



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5.

Laughter, fun, and play. Build joy and play into your schedule, especially when you're managing weeks of constant back-to-back video conferences and meetings. Watch a comedy, call a friend, go to the park with children, family, or friends. Focus on the good things in your life and practice gratitude.

It's easy to anticipate jet lag when you travel. Maybe you schedule a couple of light days when you return or plan for a few early bedtimes until your body recovers. Nobody predicted Covid-19 jet lag, but you can still take steps to get your body back on track. A little bit of self-care can make a significant difference in giving you the energy you need to face continued change and uncertainty.



Author: Andrew May is the founder and CEO of StriveStronger and is recognized as one of the world's leading human performance strategists. He's the creator of the 30 Day Boost, an evidence-based digital program supporting employees to stay productive, boost physical well-being, enhance their psychological resilience, and improve team cohesion. Protect your team against burnout and sign them up at <https://www.strivestronger.com/30dayboost>.