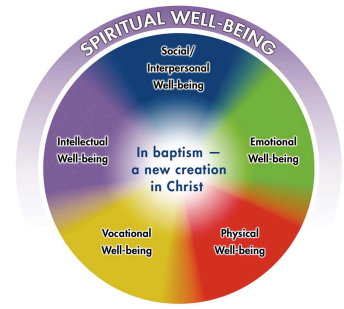


Fatigue

From the Bethany Lutheran Church Health and Wellness Cabinet

“As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning. When Moses’ hands grew tired, they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held his hands up—one on one side, one on the other—so that his hands remained steady till sunset. So Joshua overcame the Amalekite army with the sword.” – (Exodus 17:11-13)



Copyright 1997 InterLutheran Coordinating Committee on Ministerial Health and Wellness of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

If you are feeling like Moses, called by God to hold up your staff until you can't hold it up anymore to keep the Amalekites at bay, you're not alone. In 2008 the journal *American Family Physician* featured an article that claimed that one fifth of all family practice patients present with fatigue as a primary complaint. Many times we tell ourselves that at some point things will just "get better" if we just keep holding on. Historians tell us that the Israelites were plagued by the Amelekite tribes; off and on for much of their early history. We can count on the fact that our personal Amalekites will probably not just go away either.

Some aspects of our Western society normalize and even encourage fatigue. Many of us are all about achievement. And sacrifice for others is worthy, but only up to a point. And in a stressed economy there is even sometimes an implied or perceived threat that if we are not working beyond our best effort our job may go to someone else. Being tired after good hard work is normal, but chronic weariness is not. At the point that multiple air traffic controllers are falling asleep on the job (as noted by recent news stories), we better pay heed.

Fatigue is one of those key indicators that things need your attention. It can impact physical health, relationships, and our mental health. The Mayo Clinic lists not only lifestyle factors as causes of fatigue, but also psychological factors and at least eighteen physical or medical factors that commonly produce fatigue. Men and women differ in the way they perceive fatigue. Men typically just admit to feeling tired, whereas women may say they feel depressed or anxious.

You probably already know some of the remedies for fatigue, and it can be just a matter of giving ourselves (and our loved ones) permission to seek wellness. Recommendations from the *American Family Physician* article include daily exercise of some form, sustaining interpersonal relationships, adequate sleep, even naps. And to Lutherans' joy, they even endorse coffee as an occasional pick-me-up. In the category of "no kidding," the article states that, "Time off from work also minimizes fatigue and decreases stress." We like to think we are indispensable, and our employer may even share that thought, but balance between work, rest, recreation, and being connected to others in life is very important to our wellness.

And there is definitely a spiritual aspect to fatigue. Some of us can identify readily with the idea of being "weary unto my soul", as the Psalmists are fond of saying. The demands of life can take a toll on our outlook, our appreciation of ourselves, and our awareness of others. We can even begin to think that, like Moses, it really is up to us to continually extend ourselves beyond our capabilities to prevent defeat.

But Moses had help -- and not just from Aaron and Hur. As Isaiah exhorts us: "Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak." (Isaiah 40: 28, 29).

Don't forget to recharge your soul as well as your body and mind. We can exercise our spirits with prayer, fellowship, ministry to others, and hanging out with our fellow Christians in worship. So how are you taking care of yourself? – JL

© 2010 Bethany Lutheran Church, Denver, Colorado – To request permission to reprint this column call 303-758-2820 or navigate to <http://www.bethany-denver2.org/about-us/contact/>