



COVID complacency: Experts warn Maritimers to keep fighting pandemic fatigue

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HALIFAX -- As other provinces across Canada are reporting record daily case numbers under a second wave of COVID-19, experts on the east coast are warning that pandemic fatigue is a real concern.

“Pandemic fatigue would involve becoming emotionally exhausted, along with jaded and cynical,” says Dr. Simon Sherry, a registered psychologist.

More than half of Canadians say they are experiencing pandemic fatigue, according to a poll released by Angus Reid earlier this month.

“If you’re constantly told, ‘danger, danger, danger’, eventually we stop hearing that,” adds Sherry.

The pandemic has been really hard for singers and performers like Jason Davis.

“We’ve had to cap sizes, we’ve had to enforce mask-wearing,” says Davis, a singer and vocal instructor.

But his desire to perform in a packed theatre again someday means he’s determined not to let pandemic fatigue get the better of him.

“COVID fatigue is a really important topic. What we do over the next couple of months, is going to decide how much freedom and how much movement we’ll have,” says Davis.

After a recent uptick of COVID-19 cases in Nova Scotia, followed by a raft of public warnings about possible exposure in Halifax, Davis made an impassioned plea on Facebook, urging Haligonians not to let their guards down.

“It really does force us to make a decision between what we personally want, and what we personally know is best for all of us,” says Davis.

On Monday, Nova Scotia’s chief medical officer of health asked residents to continue to fight that fatigue.

“People not worrying about social distancing, people not wearing masks or wearing them improperly, we need to put an end to that,” said Dr. Robert Strang.

Experts say that constant state of vigilance can be literally exhausting for our brain, particularly the part that manages our behaviour.

“They don’t have anything left to control their behaviour, and so they go back to regular human nature, which is, ‘I want to socialize, I want to see people’,” explains Dr. Dayla Lee-Baggley, a registered clinical psychologist.

So, what is the best advice from experts on keeping pandemic fatigue at bay?

“We need to be deliberate, to schedule, and to do activities that have a high potential to be both safe and enjoyable,” says Sherry.

While at the same time, recognizing that things are still far from normal.

“Life in a pandemic completely sucks. It’s very hard, and we absolutely should be adjusting our expectations more,” says Lee-Baggley.

Experts also say that taking time for self-care and keeping expectations realistic is important, especially with the potential stress of the upcoming holiday season.