



Maryland Career Development Association

December 2020 Newsletter

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Upcoming Events

As we close out the year 2020, be sure to mark your calendars for these upcoming MCDA webinars!

[Guiding Your Client Through the Federal Job Search](#)

December 04, 2020 1:00 PM, Zoom

[Paying It Forward: Leveraging LinkedIn For Others When You're Gainfully Employed](#)

December 16, 2020 12:00 PM, Zoom

Pandemic Fatigue

By Karol Taylor

“Pandemic fatigue” is a feeling of restlessness that people are experiencing after months of confinement and dealing with the restrictions of COVID-19. Some people are beginning to participate in pre-pandemic activities to help them cope with recent changes. These same people are becoming less likely to adhere to safety guidelines. It is perfectly normal to feel burned out right now. It is also important to stay the course and slow the spread of the coronavirus.



If you notice any extreme changes in your mood – highs or lows, extreme energy or none whatsoever, or more anger or irritability than normal – pay attention. You may be experiencing “pandemic fatigue.”

According to a [study](#) by the Kaiser Family Foundation, nearly half (45%) of adults say the pandemic has affected their mental health, and 19% say it has had a "major impact". As numbers continue to rise, and people keep up with the daily updates, sometimes the situation is going to feel overwhelming.

For many, activities normally done to cope with stress are no longer available. Working from home can intensify these feelings. Many people made home a peaceful place of refuge to escape from the worries of the world outside. When our work life is incorporated into our home life, it can have a stressful connotation that might cause us not to be able to focus as well as we would like.

What Is Pandemic Fatigue?

Wrestling with intense emotions day after day drains your energy, causing pandemic fatigue. The fatigue can stem from a number of emotions you experienced during the pandemic, including:

- Fear
- Anxiety
- Loneliness
- Hopelessness

Signs of Pandemic Fatigue

The hallmark sign of pandemic fatigue is a sense of inner weariness. You may also feel:

- Helpless
- Sad
- Worried
- Frustrated
- Irritable

You may notice that you:

- Eat or sleep more or less than usual
- Have trouble focusing (brain fog)
- Feel edgy or nervous
- Snap at or argue with others
- Lack motivation
- Are unable to stop racing thoughts
- Withdraw from others

Healthy Ways to Cope

Adapting to the increased uncertainty of the pandemic is challenging. To reduce the toll it takes, it is essential to pay attention to your emotional and physical needs. Take these steps to renew your energy and feel more in control:

#1: Take care of your body

When you are wrapped up in what is going on in the world and at home, it is easy to forget to take care of yourself. Make sure you are getting enough sleep (at least seven hours a night) and maintaining a nutritious diet. Though it may be difficult to drum up the motivation, exercising every day is important too. Doing these things will boost your energy, lift your mood and strengthen your immune system.

#2: Limit your news intake

It is good to stay up to date on the latest coronavirus information. But too much news can overload you with negative emotions and zap your energy. Take a break from the news for a day or two and see if you feel better.

You can also limit your news consumption to once a day for an hour or less. And be sure to choose an accurate source of information, such as the [CDC](#) or your local news.

#3: Lower your stress

Focusing on activities that are calming or bring you joy can lower your stress level — whether that is cooking a fancy meal or bird watching or practicing meditation for 15 minutes a day. Anything that offers you stress relief can be helpful. Activities to consider include:

- Breathing exercises
- Yoga
- Nature walks
- Reading
- Watching a comedy

#4: Connect with others

Humans are social creatures by nature. Being alone and feeling isolated can be stressful. Therefore, it is crucial to connect with others during the pandemic. Although you should limit your physical contact with people outside your household, there are other ways to connect socially. You can:

- Make phone calls
- Arrange video meetings
- Chat on social media
- Write letters
- Take a live class online
- Attend online religious services

#5: Accept your feelings

Challenging situations stir up a mix of emotions. Stuffing feelings down and ignoring them does not make them go away. Instead, acknowledge and name your feelings. Allow yourself to have them.

Then refocus your mind and energy on things you can do to feel better. If your feelings are overwhelming or all consuming — and getting in the way of your daily activities — reach out to a health care provider. Protecting your emotional health is just as important as caring for yourself physically.

#6: Try positive self-talk

Sometimes fear and anxiety can make our minds leap to the worst scenario, even if it is most unlikely. You might become plagued with “what if” thoughts. Try catching those negative thoughts and replacing them with more realistic statements. For example, replace thoughts about acquiring COVID-19 with what you are doing to stay safe.

#7: Create new traditions

Usher more joy into your days by creating new traditions. You will have something fun to look forward to and you might even decide to keep it up once the pandemic has passed.

For instance, you might set aside Sunday nights for self-care. Do anything that makes you feel good physically, mentally, or emotionally. You might focus on a hobby such as playing guitar or scrapbooking or do something for your body such as giving yourself a facial or going for a long run.

When you are feeling restless and experiencing "pandemic fatigue," one tip is to remember to stay connected with family and friends via video calls. But even that should be done in moderation. Each day try to set aside 30 minutes to an hour for doing something that makes you happy.

To socialize, you might make Friday your family movie night or picnic in the backyard every Saturday. You can also organize a video call with friends as a mid-week check-in. Be creative and come up with ideas that work best for you.

Check out these helpful resources: [free guided meditations](#), [sample meal plans](#), and tips for starting an [exercise program](#). If you have health concerns, consider scheduling a video visit with your doctor. And definitely be sure to check with your doctor if you have [COVID-19 symptoms](#).

Please remember that self-care is key to your long-term survival. When you feel challenged to take an action that might be at risk, keep in mind that pandemic fatigue could be setting in. Be mindful of your feelings, stay in the moment, and find something meaningful to do that brings you joy. Such an activity will keep you fulfilled and focused on things that truly matter – a physically and mentally healthy future.

Source: <https://connect.uclahealth.org/2020/07/07/7-steps-to-reduce-pandemic-fatigue/>



Karol Taylor has been a member of MACD/MCA and MCDA for more than 17 years, 13 as an MCDA Board member and executive leader, and 8 on the MACD/MCA Board. Karol is an award-winning expert in the federal job search, but she also has expertise in leadership and organizational development. The emergence of COVID-19 motivated Karol to consider how people might respond in the new telework-place.

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Supporting Internal Interview Success Through Selling Techniques

By Carol Sommerfield

This article originally appeared in NCDAs web magazine, Career Convergence, at www.ncda.org. Copyright National Career Development Association, (November, 2020). Reprinted with permission.

A human resource goal of organizations is to get the right person in the right job. As logical as that may sound, it is a daunting task. Often internal employees with proven track records, who already know the organization and culture, are excellent and talented candidates. However, they may not present well in interviews. This is a loss to both the organization and the employees: organizations overlook the best candidate for the job and employees miss out on development opportunities and career progression. Additionally, employees may get discouraged after numerous rejections and begin to look outside the organization to advance their careers.

Why do talented employees fail in the internal interview process? My interviews with managers and HR professionals reveal some common reasons. The internal candidate is:

- Unable to communicate his or her fit for the position
- Provides too much detail to interview questions, losing the audience
- Does not demonstrate enthusiasm for the position
- Fails to succinctly communicate his or her fit and strengths
- Neglects to answer the interview questions accurately or concisely
- Displays a lack of knowledge about the position/department
- Lacks competitive interviewing techniques

I then conducted interviews with internal employees who were unsuccessful in obtaining jobs for which they were qualified. They listed some key barriers to their success:

- Modesty: speaking about themselves is seen as egotistical and disingenuous
- Nerves: failing to attentively listen, diving into too much detail, and appearing wooden and unenthusiastic
- Preparation: failure to research the position, understand the specific ways in which they are the best candidate for the position, and develop a strategy to succinctly communicate the fit
- Positioning: not spending time prior to the interview to network, contact the hiring manager, or interview other people associated with the job.

Intervention

My interviews with managers and employees in two large global corporations pointed to an overriding problem: the employees' inability to sell a unique value proposition. What if those very talented and qualified employees were taught selling techniques to help them overcome their poor interview performance? My hypothesis was that a focus on sales techniques could help employees:

- Craft solution-focused targeted communications
- Listen attentively to identify the problems to be solved and opportunities to be exploited
- Provide a model and process to help employees successfully navigate the interview process.

The 3P Model

Internal employees are not sales professionals and so a simple selling model was needed to help them navigate the interview process. I developed an easy to remember model, the 3 P's, as a roadmap to successfully sell a solution (the employee) to a problem/opportunity (the purpose of the position).

HR professionals and career management consultants may want to coach their employees and clients on the techniques of Preparation, Pitch and Post activities to increase interview success.

Preparation (prior to the interview):

- Clarify the goal for the interview
- Know the audience – who are they and what information do they need?
- Do the research on the position, the manager, and the department
- Know who the decision maker is
- Understand the problem/opportunity and how to specifically address the problem or opportunity
- Anticipate concerns and be prepared to address them
- Develop questions for the interviewers to show knowledge of the position/department, and to communicate interest
- Define and prioritize the key messages to deliver
- Practice!

Pitch (during the interview):

- Build rapport/trust by being vulnerable, honest, and asking questions
- Be yourself. Remember that you, as a whole package, are a solution
- Ask questions to showcase research, analytical thinking, and interest in the position/department
- Be succinct, clear, direct
- Sell the solution to the problem, which is the interviewee's value proposition
- Keep it high level – resist the urge to go into details. Ask if further explanation or detail is needed after providing a succinct, high level answer.
- Use the power of stories. Tell concise stories using the STAR format to be clear and prevent rambling. ST: What was the story or task? A: What action did you take and why? R: What was the result?
- Actively listen
- Read body language
- Be positive and honest
- Demonstrate an ability to solve similar problems
- Know the key messages and communicate them consistently.

Post Activities (after the interview):

- Immediately follow-through on actions
- Thank them for their time via email or a note
- Follow-up on the status of the position
- Maintain the relationship with the interviewers
- Don't take rejection personally
- Ask for feedback on what was done well during the interview and where improvement may be needed.



Exercise to Build Skill

When working with one or more employees on improving their interview skills it is sometimes useful to provide a low risk, fun practice exercise. Instead of using the 3P model by selling themselves in a real interview, ask them to first practice selling a highly unusual product that is for sale on the Internet (e.g. hissing cockroaches, edible insects). This exercise is enjoyable and provides the following benefits:

- Builds skill in preparation, listening, identifying the problem, seeking a solution for the problem, and selling the 'fit' between problem and solution.
- Increases confidence in the ability to sell with integrity
- Allows for constructive feedback and practice in a safe environment
- Provides easy bridging to selling a value proposition for a job using the 3P model in an interview.

After the exercise, then ask them to use the 3P model to sell themselves and to perform mock interview with you or others to build skill.

The Principles of Selling Work

The 3P model increased interview success and confidence for those who used it. The 3P model also helped internal employees sell their ideas and proposals within their organizations. The process forces preparation and practice prior to the interview or presentation and builds confidence. It also stresses the importance of focusing on the customer (the hiring manager) and ensuring there is a good fit solution (the employee). The 3P model also works for external job searches.

The 3P model reinforces two key selling principles: It's not about you – it's about them and sell the suit and not the buttons.



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communication training and coaching to organizations and individuals. Prior to starting her own business, she was a corporate HR and IT executive with large global corporations. She can be contacted at carol.sommerfield@gmail.com.

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Military Spouse Employment Issues – Part Two

How Do We Fix This? Remedies and Recommendations

By Karen Francis

In Part One of this article, which appeared in the November 2020 MCDA newsletter, https://mdcareers.org/resources/Documents/Newsletters/Newsletter_2020_Nov.pdf

I addressed the difficulties that military and veteran spouses have in finding a job that they want and progressing in their chosen career. How, as career advisers, do we help solve that? We must educate – not only one side of this unequal equation, but both the spouse and the future employer. How to do that? Let's start with the basics on the future employer and recruiter side. Remember, in part one of this article, I described why a military spouse resumé can often resemble a doily. Recognizing that the military spouse's resumé often does not show the linear career progression that is typically seen by a recruiter, that recruiter may consider this military spouse a 'job hopper'.

Educating the Recruiter

Knowing that, often, the first set of eyes to see a resumé might be a recruiter without much experience interviewing or hiring military spouse candidates, specific steps to educate the recruiter are needed. Educating that recruiter can be as simple as:

- Describing why employment gaps and career changes occurred
- Demonstrating that the spouse took a job that was available even if was not a logical career progression and/or did not reflect the education level or match the subject of the spouse's education
- Communicating the relevant skills and knowledge gained through many hours of volunteer work and not to discount unpaid work experience
- Crafting a compelling cover letter that addresses the points above and connects the dots for the recruiter, and, when appropriate, including the statement that they are now staying in the area!

Some spouse employment groups are beginning to assemble training for recruiters. For example, in this area, the Virginia chapter of MSEEZ (Military Spouse Economic Empowerment Zone), a program of Hiring our Heroes is available to work with companies looking to hire military spouses.

<https://www.hiringourheroes.org/mseez/mseez-locations/virginia-state-mseez/>

Educating the Military Spouse

As the spouse's career usually doesn't follow a 'traditional' path, writing an effective resume requires some inventive skills. The first, and often the most difficult strategy for many to accept, is to not include volunteer work in a separate category. *I heard that gasp!* YES, the spouse should list all of their work history, in the same section. When someone works for an organization of any size, as a leader, senior financial person, or in another role, it doesn't matter if they were paid for the work. An effective resume provides examples of how the spouse utilized their skills to make an impact in the

organization, whether the work was paid or not. Details about the spouse's transferrable skills, accomplishments, and end results for the organization should be highlighted in the Job History section of the resume as well as in the LinkedIn profile.

Cover letters are the best place to explain gaps and/or emphasize the accomplishments and skills that make the military spouse perfect for the job. There is a continuing debate about whether recruiters read cover letters. However, feedback I have received from a very high-level hiring manager for an internationally known company, is that a strong cover letter will draw his attention and put that person in a leading position as compared to other candidates. As a result, I strongly encourage the use of a cover letter to increase the chance of putting the military spouse in a more competitive position in the selection process.

After crafting an effective resume and cover letter, the next step is to prepare for the interview, where practice makes perfect. Mock interviews can provide valuable practice in answering difficult questions. Some questions that may arise are, "are you married, are you a military spouse?" Finding a military spouse employed at a company where your client is (or may be) interviewing who is willing to assist with practice or informational interviews should be arranged by the career advisor if necessary. LinkedIn is a good place to start to identify individuals who may be currently employed at the target company.

Don't overlook opportunities for remote work. If you, as a career advisor, are working with a military spouse who is still in the active duty community, remember that remote/virtual work has been a mainstay of the military spouse employment experience. Prior to the recent pandemic-imposed virtual employment experience, this may have necessitated taking lower pay, or having that work experience less valued by employers. Many military and veteran spouses have been successfully working remotely for many years. As a result of the pandemic, the fact that the military spouse has experience working remotely, often in different time zones or countries, is a positive experience to be emphasized with employers!

Career advising a military spouse requires some creative thinking as well as the use of a military spouse network (we have deep networks and are happy to help our fellow spouses). Military Spouse support groups such as Blue Star Families, the USO etc., are available to currently serving military spouses, but may not be available for the veteran spouse. This creative thinking may also lead the advisor and client to think about entrepreneurship, which has been the fall back for many spouses. Programs such as IVMF's Arsenal provide training and support in this area.
<https://ivmf.syracuse.edu/programs/entrepreneurship/>.

As Williams, Mariani et al., state, military spouses deserve a good job, a well-paying and satisfying career, not only because everyone deserves that, but also because a military spouse has done her/his share to keep a service member in the military and, as such, is seen as a crucial part of the retention strategy. It is harder to find that perfect job, but a career advisor can be an important part of that search.

Sources

Military Spouse Unemployment: Exploring solutions to a local problem of national importance.

By Rosemary Williams, Joe Mariani, Adam Routh, Akash Keyal, Megan Hill

Found at

<https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/industry/public-sector/military-spouse-unemployment.html?id=us:2sm:3li:4di6601:5awa:6di:072220:&pkid=1006981>

Employing Military Spouses – The Force Behind the Force Series

Found at

<https://ivmf.syracuse.edu/research-analytics/military-spouse-employment-series/>

Bradbard, D.A., Maury, R., Armstrong, N.A. (2016, July). The Force Behind the Force: A Business Case for Leveraging Military Spouse Talent (Employing Military Spouses, Paper No. 1). Syracuse, NY: Institute for Veterans and Military Families, Syracuse University.

Blue Star Families: <https://bluestarfam.org/for-mil-families/careers/>

USO Pathfinder: <https://www.uso.org/programs/uso-pathfinder-transition-program>



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Newsletter Article Submissions

MCDA welcomes article submissions on topics of interest to the career practitioner community. We are seeking articles that address emerging trends, best practices (especially as we navigate these uncertain times) and training opportunities. For best consideration, please submit articles (maximum length 700 words, although shorter is preferred) by the 15th of the month prior to the desired month of publication. The newsletter will be published monthly. The article deadline for the January 2021 issue is December 15th. For article submissions or questions, please email: Rachel Loock, Editor,

MCDA.Newsletter@MDCareers.org

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