

**Subject:** RIST Wellness Moment

***From your RIST team:***

**David Lapin (Blog)**  
**R&R (Fatigue vs Depletion) Sept '20**

We are currently in the toughest phase of our pandemic experience. To explain what I mean, consider two different states of being: fatigue and depletion. Fatigue is when a muscle or the mind has been used almost to the point of failure and it requires rest to recuperate. Contrastingly, depletion is when our inner resources of energy have been drained—and this may have no connection to exertion. One can be depleted without feeling tired. And one can be tired without feeling depleted.

Consider an empty glass of water. You can rest it for as long as you will, but rest won't replenish its contents. Similarly, your body and mind are just containers. Your emotions, your intellect, and your spirit are the contents. You can only give emotional, intellectual, and spiritual output when your container is overflowing with content. This means you always need more emotional, intellectual, and spiritual input than output. If you continually draw from your content, you quickly become depleted. People with this overflow are the people we find energized and energizing. On the other hand, depleted people who need others to fill them are often the individuals who drain us!

But here's the problem: Because fatigue and depletion can feel the same, we often misdiagnose our condition. We think we are fatigued, so we rest. But in fact, we might be depleted, in which case no amount of rest will restore our inner resources. When we are depleted, we need restoration rather than rest or relaxation.

Leaders are currently suffering more from depletion than from fatigue, but few recognize this. Some took summer leave and came back as exhausted as before, because rest and relaxation alone don't restore depleted inner resources. This is why I think we are in the toughest phase of the pandemic, because we aren't just exhausted—we are depleted. We are depleted because our usual channels of restoration are not readily available to us anymore. We are normally restored by human contact through the exchange of energy and discourse, even in the form of passing interactions with other travelers at airports, servers at restaurants, or attendants in stores. Virtual meetings keep us going, but they don't restore our inner energy. Moreover, on a Zoom call, we're interfacing with a screen, not a person.

So how do you know if you are fatigued or depleted, and how do you treat depletion? Fatigue generally applies to your body and your mind. Depletion generally applies to your emotions, your intellect, and your spirit. Depletion can give you the feeling of physical or mental exhaustion. But you know it's not fatigue you're suffering when rest and relaxation don't replenish you.

The way to treat depletion is with restoration, not with relaxation. While relaxation is a passive state of "not-doing", restoration is a deliberate, active choice of activities different from your routine activities, which add energy instead of consume energy.

Here are some examples of restorative activities: regular prayer or meditation; walking in nature and pausing to notice all the sounds, sights, and textures around you; reading something beautiful or inspiring rather than useful; physically meeting and spending quality time with loved ones for nothing more than connecting and sharing; listening attentively to music that is harmoniously complex and rich in sounds and themes; applying your mind to a challenge totally unrelated to work; regular journaling.

Check in with yourself, your partner, and your team. Are they fatigued, or are they depleted? Explain the differences to them and help them diagnose their state correctly by asking them guiding questions. Even just a conversation about depletion can help.

***At any time if you are struggling please reach out to our RIST team who can help support and provide resources.***  
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