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The Fatigue Solution

Written by Dr Eva Cwynar
with Sharyn Kolberg

Published by Hay House

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The Fatigue Solution

Increase Your Energy
in Eight Easy Steps

DR EVA CWYNAR

WITH SHARYN KOLBERG



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Contents

<i>Foreword by Felicity Huffman</i>	xi
<i>Introduction</i>	xiii
Chapter 1: The Quality of Your Life.....	1
Chapter 2: Step #1: Feed Your Energy Furnace	15
Chapter 3: Step #2: Get Your Gut in Shape.....	53
Chapter 4: Step #3: Improve Your Sleep and Reduce Your Stress	83
Chapter 5: Step #4: Supercharge Your Sexuality	121
Chapter 6: Step #5: Move Your Body and Boost Your Metabolism ...	159
Chapter 7: Step #6: Check Your Thyroid.....	185
Chapter 8: Step #7: Prepare Yourself for That Time of the Month (or That Time of Your Life).....	209
Chapter 9: Step #8: Have Yourself Tested	249
Chapter 10: Parting Thoughts: Getting Back to You	273
<i>Appendix I: Dr. Eva's Energy/Fuel Matrix:</i> <i>Meal Plans and Recipes</i>	275
<i>Appendix II: Resource Guide</i>	315
<i>Appendix III: References</i>	317
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	329
<i>About the Author</i>	332

Foreword

My children were two and three years old when I started *Desperate Housewives*. I had a wonderful husband, two perfect children, and the best job I could ever hope for. I was even in a movie that was getting a lot of attention; in short, all my dreams were coming true. Except I was tired—I am talking algebra-class tired—you know, where you put your head down on any surface and fall asleep drooling? Time passed, and I went from tired to exhausted to fatigued, chronically fatigued. My immune system was so compromised that every two or three days I was sick with a sore throat or a slight fever. I went to chiropractors, homeopaths, internists, gynecologists, GPs, and gastroenterologists. One doctor put me on estrogen, progesterone, and testosterone. I stopped eating dairy; I stopped eating wheat; I stopped eating sugar; I just plain stopped eating. Nothing worked. I began to doubt my own symptoms and started to blame myself for feeling so terrible.

Then I found Dr. Cwynar and everything changed. She sat me down in her office and talked to me for an hour. She listened, she questioned, and she took my symptoms seriously. She looked me in the eye and said, “It’s okay, we are going to figure this out and you *will* feel better.” I wasn’t just a patient and she wasn’t just another doctor; we were a team and she was dedicated to improving my health. She put me through a battery of tests (many of the ones she recommends in this book) checking for vitamin deficiencies, hormone levels, cortisol levels, and digestive track efficiency. Everything. I mean *everything*.

It worked. Dr. Cwynar, with her comprehensive approach, was able to get me the sleep I needed, the proper hormones for my body, and the supplements to support my health. It has not only transformed my day-to-day experience but also allowed me to be hopeful for the future. I have a core of energy that I haven’t had since before my two children were born.

If fatigue is an issue for you, you will find yourself in this book. Even if it takes until Chapter 4 or 5 for you to suddenly say “Aha! That’s what is going on with me!” As you continue to read you’ll realize that most conditions overlap and nothing stands alone. So the whole book becomes very pertinent. *The Fatigue Solution* gives you simple yet powerful tools to help you and your doctor figure it all out. Or to realize that perhaps it is time you find a new doctor.

Dr. Cwynar empowers you to take charge of your health and gives you the information and tools to make a difference. The most important message of this book is that no matter how hectic or demanding your lifestyle or what stage of life you are in, you don’t have to settle for feeling bad. Fatigue is not inevitable. You deserve to feel better. And you can feel better—you can even feel great.

— Felicity Huffman, television and film actress

Introduction

I wrote this book to help you get the “F” word out of your life. You know what I’m talking about. Maybe you’ve lost that lust for life you had when you were younger, and you wonder why it’s gone. Maybe it’s that you want to “bring the sexy back” into your life but you just don’t know how to reignite that flame of desire. Maybe you want to find a way to relieve some of the stress in your life—the stress that’s been keeping you anxious all day and preventing you from getting a good night’s sleep.

Or maybe you’re just tired of being tired all the time, and you’re determined to get the “F” word—fatigue—out of your life once and for all.

Whatever your reasons, you’ll be glad you picked up this book.

Women all over the world have similar concerns. I hear it over and over again from the women who come to me for help, women who feel overwhelmed and undertreated, women who are looking for ways to take control of their lives and their health. Women who have busy lives and are looking for real solutions—simple steps they can fit into their daily routines. Women who are just like me.

You Don’t Have to Take It Anymore

Too many women are willing to accept that the older they get, the less energy they will have. The myth that has been perpetuated by doctors and patients alike is that there’s nothing you can do about most of the problems associated with getting older. You have aches and pains? That’s to be expected. You’re putting on weight? That’s to be expected. You’re losing your hair? That’s to be expected. You’re losing interest in sex? Of course; you’re getting older.

I am here to tell you that it is unacceptable to view any of these things as inevitable consequences of aging. I’ve helped

grateful women around the world not only boost their energy levels but also get back the enthusiasm they had for life when they were younger. After successfully integrating the Fatigue Solution program into her life, one patient felt so different that it was noticeable to everyone around her. Her friend even remarked about how she must be thrilled by her “new” self. To which my patient replied, *“No, this is the old me. I got the old me back, and that’s what I really wanted.”*

That’s what I always expect to hear from my patients, and that’s what I want for you. Obviously, I can’t treat every woman in the world. That’s why I wrote this book. I wanted to teach as many women as possible these eight easy steps, so they can reenergize and revitalize their own lives, and feel empowered to take control of their own health and their own futures.

It’s All about the Hormones

Most of my patients have been referred to me by friends or family members whose lives have been changed by learning about the eight essential steps to energy revitalization that are laid out in this book. When they come to my office, many of them are not even quite sure that I’m an M.D. They might think I’m a family practitioner, a nutritionist, or a homeopath. But they come to me because they are at their wits’ end. They’ve seen several other doctors, and they don’t know where else to turn. I hear it over and over again: “You’re my last resort. If you can’t help me, I’ll just crawl into a cave somewhere and eat my way into old age.” They feel that they have no other options left.

What I am is an endocrinologist—a hormone specialist—which means that I help women (and men) deal with the effects of hormones on the body, both inside *and* outside. An endocrinologist is a physician who has completed four years of medical school and then three years of training in internal medicine and then an additional two years studying hormones. Essentially, endocrinologists have twice the amount of training

of most other physicians, with a particular focus on hormones and metabolism.

We are currently facing a nationwide shortage of endocrinologists, with approximately 2,400 practicing in the United States. These specialists, most of whom are in New York and California, focus on treating adults. That's a relatively small number when compared to most other medical specialties. That means there are very few of us who have the training and specialized knowledge to fully understand hormones—what they do in the body and how they do what they do—and I am proud to be among that small group of medical specialists.

Hormones are powerful chemical messengers that are produced by a number of different glands, circulate through the bloodstream, and generate a wide range of biological responses. Hormones affect both your physical and emotional well-being. If you're happy or sad, depressed or elated, or angry or tired; if you feel hungry or sleepy or sexy, your body is responding to hormones.

Some doctors (and patients) don't take fatigue seriously. But it is a real disease. It has its own International Classification of Diseases (ICD-9) code. The ICD-9 is a listing of all diseases so that they can be billed for insurance reimbursement.

If you're chronically fatigued, chances are it's because of hormones. If you're experiencing unexplained weight gain, hair loss, or dry skin, chances are it's because of hormones. If you look in the mirror and notice your skin looking older than it did yesterday, chances are it's because of hormones. If you can get your hormones rebalanced, you can also turn back the clock, both internally and externally. When your hormones run as they should, your energy, youth, and overall health can be restored.

From the Bush to Beverly Hills— A World View of Medicine

Medicine is in my blood. My mother is a physician who devotes her life to the underprivileged children of the South Bronx. It's part of my identity and why I've spent years trying to

better understand who I am to better help my patients understand who they are . . . and who they can be.

Many of my patients come to me in a state of frustration because they don't understand what's happening to them, and other doctors can't seem to help them. I recently had a patient who flew in from Florida, and when I asked why she had flown all the way to Los Angeles, she said, "Because I described my symptoms for my doctor, and he just tuned me out. I told him I wanted my thyroid checked, and he just ignored me. When I told him I just didn't feel like myself, I could tell he wasn't listening to what I was saying." I hear this all the time. If a symptom is not site specific (e.g., stomachache, chest pain), doctors don't know what to do about it. In the Western world, physicians are taught how to treat life and death and disease almost as individual components, not as part of a larger picture.

I look at medicine with a much broader perspective. By the time I was 30, I had traveled to more than 100 countries, and I have continued my travels throughout my life in my quest to find out how indigenous peoples deal, both medically and philosophically, with the issues and ills they face. I've traveled throughout the entire continent of South America and lived there for a year to learn about native Indian cultures and the tremendous amount of medicinal herbs that come from this continent. I went to Australia to learn about Aborigines' survival habits. I climbed Mt. Kilimanjaro with my husband on our honeymoon to see how people responded to the extreme changes in climate and altitude, from tropics to frozen weather at 19,342 feet above sea level. (My husband wasn't expecting to hear "Not tonight dear, I can hardly breathe" on his honeymoon!) I've been to many parts of Asia to learn about meditation as well as local medicinal customs with the monks; I've also visited such out-of-the-way destinations as Burma, Mongolia, and Tibet, where I gathered information on how these cultures deal with issues of aging and fatigue.

In the summer of 2011, I traveled to Africa to study with the tribal doctors of the pygmies of Gabon. I was able to do this only by invitation of the president of Gabon, as these tribes are isolated and want to remain that way. I was thrilled to be one of the very

few people to have the privilege of traveling into the thick of the jungle, by small plane, helicopter, and canoe, to spend time with these fascinating people, especially with their tribal doctors.

I've been to all regions of Africa to study with tribal doctors and shamans. What I found most interesting was that, despite the fact that Zambia has more than 70 tribal languages, Botswana has more than 30, and South Africa has hundreds more, I couldn't find a word among them that translated into *fatigue*. Perhaps they don't experience fatigue in the way that we do, and therefore don't have a word for it.

Western society is beginning to incorporate some "alternative medicine" into its practices—mostly Chinese herbs and acupuncture. But we've ignored the traditions from the land where humanity started and what we can learn from the *sangoma*, the African tribal healers. We rarely study the medicine that comes from that part of the world, and yet it's been around almost since the birth of mankind. The most important lesson I have learned from their practices is that they don't just give their patients potions and powders and send them on their way. They look at everything that's going on in their lives—at their daily routines, their relationships with family and friends. So, depending on their illness, a patient might be given medicine plus instructions on what time to get up in the morning, what kinds of food he must eat, and how he must treat his mother-in-law. It's all a part of the healing process.

So now when I ask personal and sometimes embarrassing questions of my patients, I explain that it's not because I'm intruding into their private lives. I ask questions because unless I understand how they function in their family, in their job, in their travels, and in their daily life, I can't understand what's going on with them hormonally. It's not just the body that's involved; it's everything in their lives that led them to me.

I believe that by studying the ancient cultures, by studying the best of what has survived for thousands of years, we can enlighten our futures. Our ancestors have much to teach us; we cannot afford to ignore these teachings if we want to survive.

“ . . . our search for a future that works keeps spiraling back to an ancient connection between ourselves and the earth, an interconnectedness that ancient cultures have never abandoned.”

—HELENA NORBERG-HODGE,
FOUNDER OF THE INTERNATIONAL
SOCIETY FOR ECOLOGY AND CULTURE

I Am Woman . . .

I believe that women can do it all (although maybe not all at once) because we are incredible multitaskers. I know it is possible because I do it every day. As you read this book, you will discover that it is not only about your fighting fatigue—it’s my story, too. There have been times when I was not in the best of health, and I needed to do something about it. I needed a way to get more energy into my life and to sustain it for as long as possible. After all, I am a wife, a mother, a daughter, and a doctor. Needless to say, my life is exceedingly hectic.

My point is that if I can survive all this and do it all reasonably well, that alone should make me something of an expert in the subject of energy. My hectic life, which is just like a million other hectic lives, is the reason I developed the Fatigue Solution program. I don’t have time to be tired all the time; I don’t want to be tired all the time; and for the sake of my husband, my children, and myself, I can’t be tired all the time. The more I thought about it, the more I realized there were areas of my life I could definitely improve to get my energy back, and they became the eight steps of this program. They had to be simple; they had to be doable; they had to improve the quality of my life. As you read my story, you will see that when my life got off track, I got my energy (and my life) back by following the Fatigue Solution program. And you can, too.

The Eight Easy Steps

Although many of the women who come to me complaining of fatigue are in their late 30s and older, it's never too early (or too late) to start the Fatigue Solution program. When we're in our 20s, our hormones are usually strong and plentiful. However, hormones start to diminish in both quantity and quality by the time we reach our 30s. That's when we need to start preparing ourselves for the aging process. By the time we're in our 40s or 50s, ingrained habits are difficult to break.

This book will show you how to maintain your energy and vitality. You'll learn how your hormones create a delicate balance throughout your body's systems and how, when some of those hormones are out of balance, it can throw your overall health way off course and sap your energy resources. You'll also learn what energy is all about—how it is produced in the body and what we need to do to keep it going throughout our busy, demanding lives. Then you'll discover the eight essential metabolically and scientifically based steps to restoring your personal power, your health, your longevity, and your quality of life. Each of these steps is important on its own, but they all work together to restore and repair your energy resources:

- ❖ **Step #1. Feed Your Energy Furnace:** Red meat, anyone? Whole milk? Omelets made with egg whites *and* yolks? The first step to revitalization is knowing which foods—including, surprisingly, the ones just mentioned—fuel your energy furnace and ensure a healthier, more vital future. (In Appendix I, you'll be introduced to “Dr. Eva's Energy/Fuel Matrix,” a protein-based way of eating that will get your eating habits on track and fuel your body's energy needs.)
- ❖ **Step #2. Get Your Gut in Shape:** The foods you eat and your lifestyle in general can be causing your body a great deal of stress. It may seem a little odd, but the truth is that your gastrointestinal tract is tied

into your energy levels, and simply by clearing out toxins, you can help rejuvenate your entire system. You don't have to be a fanatic; there are simple things you can do to keep your body free of pollutants and toxins.

- ❖ **Step #3. Improve Your Sleep Habits:** No doubt about it: sleep deprivation equals energy depletion. It's the quality of sleep that counts (getting up even once a night to pee is one time too many) if you want to make it through the day at the top of your game. The truth is that getting the right type of sleep is more important than just going to bed. Discover the step-by-step guidelines for creating physical, mental, and emotional calm and healthy sleeping schedules to keep your hormones balanced and your energy flowing.
- ❖ **Step #4. Supercharge Your Sexuality:** A good sex life increases overall energy. Sex does a body good; it releases endorphins and revs up your metabolism. But as with sleep, it's the quality of your sex life that makes the difference. You may want to turn to this chapter first . . . and that's okay. It can be a great way to revitalize your relationship and get the juices flowing in the rest of your life!
- ❖ **Step #5. Move Your Body and Boost Your Metabolism:** Simply put, exercise gives you energy. It helps you lose weight, keeps your heart healthy, and lessens depression. There are specific exercises, however, that are designed to increase energy output throughout the day. This chapter will also reveal the secret "sexiness" of exercise—there's something about a sweaty woman after a workout that turns a man on and boosts his metabolism as well as yours. There are plenty of ways to exercise without having to step on a treadmill (for example, boxing releases

aggression along with a whole lot of calories). Learn quick techniques to promote physical health between phone calls or business meetings, and things to do at your desk that pay off with bursts of burned calories. It's easy to get the maximum benefits with these fun exercise options.

- ❖ **Step #6. Check Your Thyroid:** Current estimates show that millions of Americans have some type of thyroid condition; however, millions more have a thyroid condition and don't know it. How much energy and stamina you have on a daily basis is directly related to the thyroid hormone. The vast majority with thyroid conditions are hypothyroid, which means they have an underfunctioning, slow, or sluggish thyroid. When women are run-down and overweight, many automatically assume they are having thyroid problems. For some women, that is indeed the case. For others it is not. It's important to know how you can find out if your thyroid is doing its job and how to keep it working efficiently.
- ❖ **Step #7. Prepare Yourself for "That Time of the Month":** Out-of-control hormones can spin you out of control every month if you're not careful. However, there are several steps (such as increasing certain B vitamins and decreasing caffeine consumption), as well as herbs and supplements you can take before, during, and after that time of the month to keep from suffering debilitating energy loss. Women who are experiencing perimenopause and menopause will also find special sections on retaining and maintaining energy reserves as they get older.
- ❖ **Step #8. Have Yourself Tested:** There are many different diagnostic tests available today. Some must be done in a doctor's office and some you can do at home. Your doctor may not even know about some

of these tests—not every doctor knows what cutting-edge medicine has to offer these days. They will tell you if you are deficient in certain trace minerals and other micronutrients or if you have neurotransmitter imbalances that are contributing to the problems of energy depletion and fatigue. The tests recommended in this chapter will quickly let you know what and how much you need to get your body back on track.

As you will hear from many of my patients throughout this book, it is definitely possible to get back to the “you” you used to be. If you’ve lost that feeling of excitement and anticipation about what might happen tomorrow, don’t you want it back again? At what point is “just getting through the day” not okay anymore?

Why not leap into the rest of your life? There’s no reason to accept what others may see as an inevitable slowdown when following the Fatigue Solution program can help you regain mental clarity, restore your vitality, and reclaim your life.