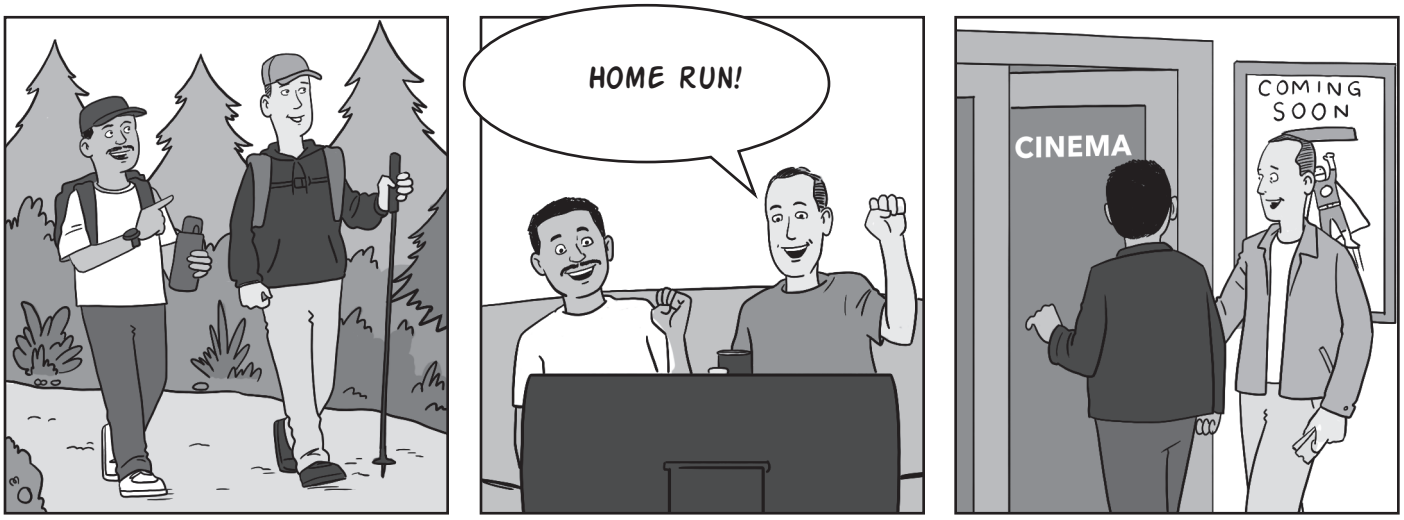
Managing Fatigue at Work After Traumatic Brain Injury

Stan and Rob became good friends through a support group after they each experienced a traumatic brain injury (TBI). They both enjoy hiking, watching sports, and going to the movies.



Since their TBI, they both have trouble with fatigue, especially at work. Fatigue is a feeling of exhaustion, tiredness, weariness, or a lack of energy. It is one of the most common challenges that people have after TBI.

Stan is an accountant for a large firm. His job calls for attention to detail and long hours reviewing financial data. These tasks often cause mental fatigue.



Mental fatigue happens when thinking takes extra effort after a TBI. Everyday tasks require more focus. This can make you feel tired.

Rob enjoys his work as an auto mechanic. But because of his TBI, he often has less energy for tasks that are physically demanding. His physical fatigue is often a challenge at work.



The body needs to work harder to do things that were easy before the TBI. This may cause physical fatigue.

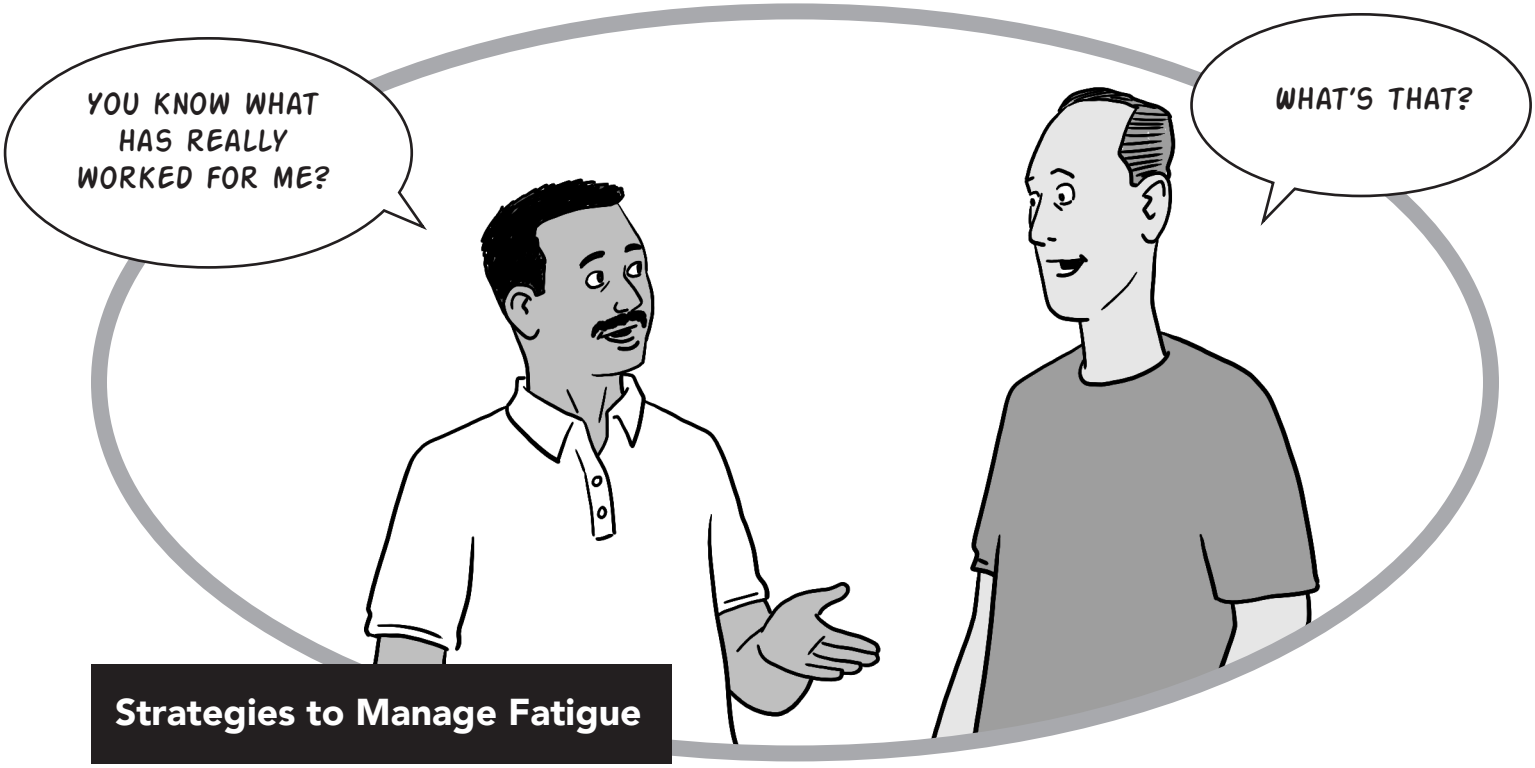
Stan and Rob both experience psychological fatigue. This is a type of fatigue linked to stress, depression, and anxiety. It's often worse in the morning and doesn't improve with sleep.



Fatigue after TBI may be due to the extra effort and attention it takes to do even simple activities such as walking and talking clearly.

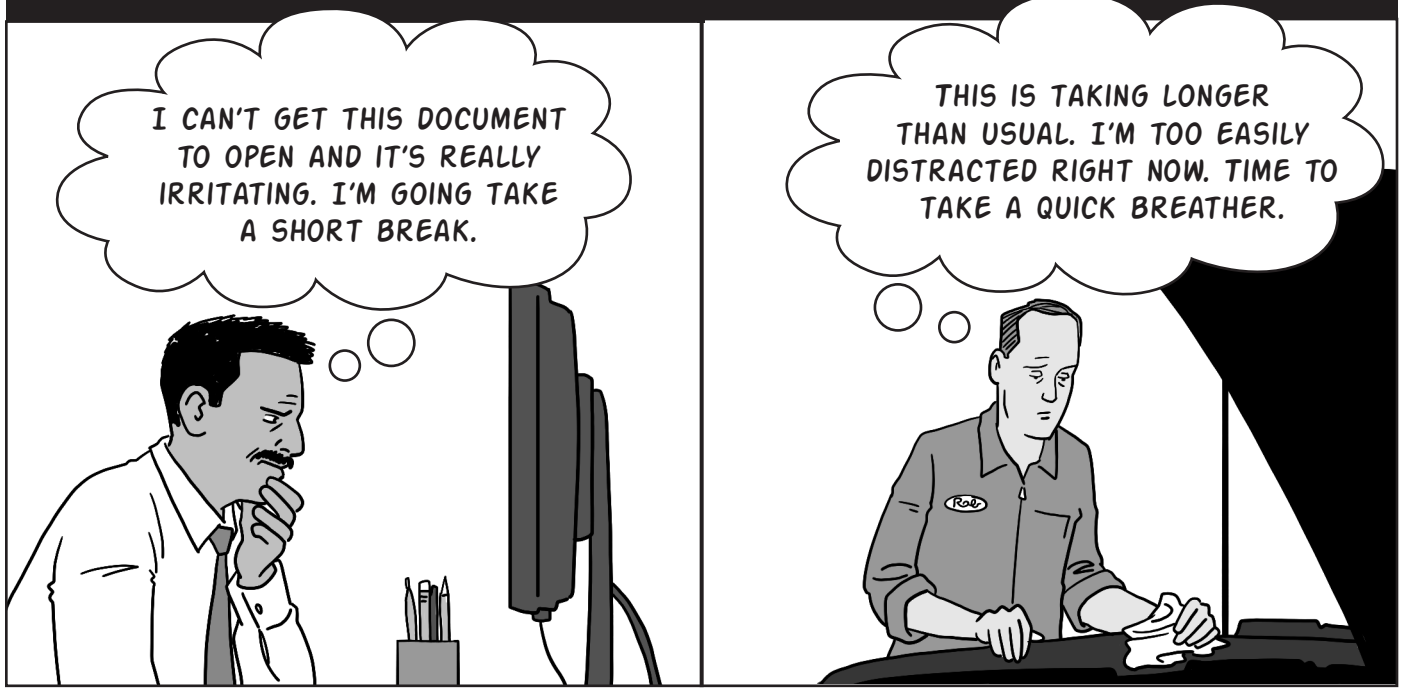


Although fatigue has been a challenge for Stan and Rob, they have found some strategies that have helped to support their success at work. To find these approaches, they worked with their health care team and took part in a peer support group. They also exchanged tips and personal experiences with each other.



Strategies to Manage Fatigue

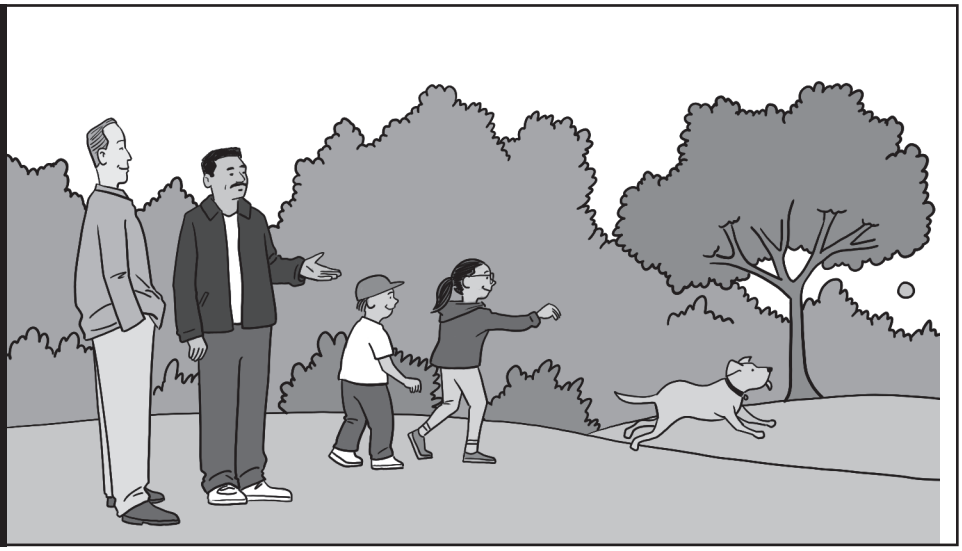
They both know how to spot the early signs of fatigue. These include becoming irritable or distracted. When they recognize one of these signs, they know it's time to **take a break**.



They also make sure that they **go to bed at the same time every day**. This helps their minds to be more efficient.



Stan and Rob used to enjoy having a beer after work sometimes. But they've learned that alcohol can make fatigue worse. Now they opt for activities that are recreational. They've also reduced their caffeine intake. They have learned that caffeine can contribute to fatigue.



People with TBI who exercise have better mental function and are more alert. Over time, exercising and being more active helps to lessen physical and mental fatigue. It also builds stamina. It may decrease depression and improve sleep. Because of this, Stan and Rob make sure to exercise routinely.



When they are at work, Stan and Rob make sure they use tools like planners and calendar reminders. These tools help them to manage their fatigue. They make sure to prioritize essential tasks by doing activities that are mentally or physically demanding early in the day. They avoid over-scheduling. This helps to prevent burnout.



To help reduce fatigue, both Stan and Rob resumed activities and hobbies slowly.

It's OK to resume activities and hobbies over weeks or months as needed. Try starting with tasks that are familiar and slowly increase the complexity of each task.

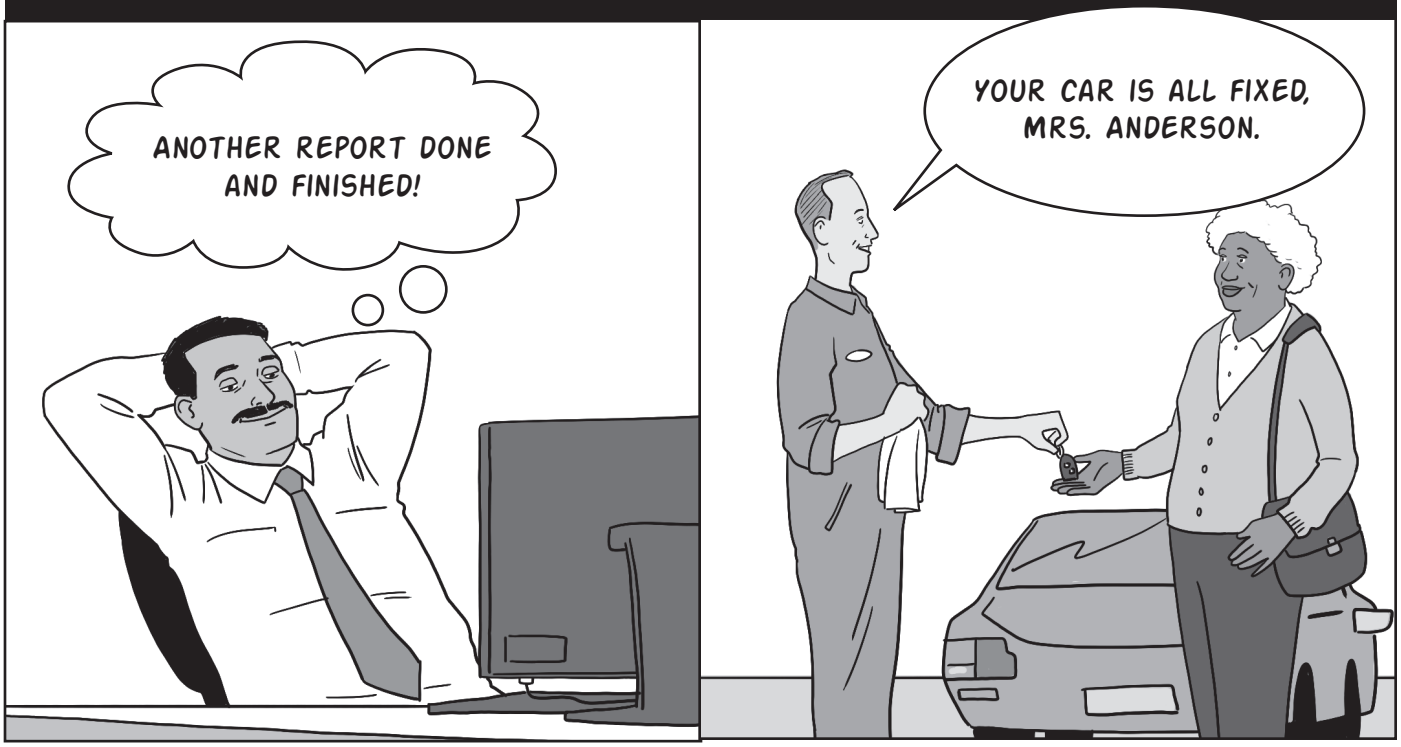


Stan slowly resumes working on his blog at home. This helps him to organize complex thoughts. This is a skill he needs for his job.



Rob slowly starts to perform the repairs that are more difficult on his classic car. This helps keep him prepared at the shop.

By following these strategies, Stan and Rob are ready for another productive day at work.



You may need to talk to a doctor to find out if any medical issues or depression may be causing your fatigue. A blood test can help to find potential causes.

Source: The content of this infocomic was adapted from the factsheet entitled Fatigue and Traumatic Brain Injury, which was originally developed by Kathleen R. Bell, MD, in collaboration with the Model Systems Knowledge Translation Center (https://msktc.org).

Disclaimer: This information is not meant to replace the advice of a medical professional. You should consult your health care provider regarding specific medical concerns or treatment. The contents of the resource were developed under a grant from the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR grant number 90DPKT0021). NIDILRR is a Center within the Administration for Community Living (ACL), Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The contents of this resource do not necessarily represent the policy of NIDILRR, ACL, or HHS, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.

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