Maintaining Your Self-Esteem With Fibromyalgia

by ERIC PATTERSON

Self-Esteem With Fibromyalgia

Fibromyalgia makes your body hurt. When your body hurts, your mind becomes preoccupied with pain and spends fewer resources on keeping your mood positive. Fibro adds negatives and removes the positives which is why there is such a strong relationship between fibromyalgia and depression.

One of the pillars of depression is low self-esteem. Whether you call it self-esteem, self-worth, self-respect, self-love, confidence or another variation, self-esteem is how you evaluate yourself. People with stable, firmly-based esteem see themselves as valuable, productive members of society. People with low self-esteem tend to view themselves as flawed, inferior and weak.

Counselor Eric's Tips for Maintaining Self-Esteem

Fibro triggers depression and depression triggers low self-esteem. Answer these questions to push against the momentum of low self-esteem and find confidence:

- **What three words/phrases best describe you?** Don't settle for neutral or slightly positive words to describe yourself. Saying that you can be kind might be accurate, but will not yield the same results as confidently saying you are compassionate or altruistic.
- **What do you do best?** Everyone has unique talents and abilities — find yours by taking an accurate inventory of your life.
- **What is your biggest accomplishment in the last year?** If fibro and depression have been a longstanding part of your life, you likely feel that the last year has been void of any accomplishments. Look deeper — achievements come in all shapes and sizes. Depression works to minimize your triumphs, but shedding light on them magnifies their impact.
- **What are three successes in your life?** When you look at your lifetime successes, you begin to see how effective and valuable you can be. You understand your value and build your self-esteem.
- **What are you working on?** Having goals and direction in life limits depression. Completing those goals adds another accomplishment to your list and boosts esteem.
- **What is your biggest mistake?** Focusing too much on your mistakes is never good for depression but ignoring them is unwise.
- **What did you learn from that mistake?** Learning how to accept your mistake while finding positives that came from it is an advanced skill that can improve self-worth and empower you to fight depression. Rather than feeling like mistakes are pure failure, search for the lesson learned.

Adriel's Tips for Self-Esteem and Fibromyalgia

I'm sure many would agree with me when I say chronic illness changes you as a person. As much as you may try to maintain a positive attitude, it is hard to not let these changes cause negative thoughts and feelings. A damaged self esteem is a common problem for those of us that suffer from chronic illnesses. Much of what makes

you “you” may be impacted by this new reality.

Independence

It might be necessary to rely on others for help getting to and from the doctor, going grocery shopping, or getting house work done. You may even have to use mobility aids, at least on occasion, to get around. This reliance on others can be very frustrating. It can make you feel incapable of caring for yourself. It can make you feel like a drain on your family and friends.

Employment

What type of work you do and how much you are able to do are likely to be affected by fibromyalgia as well. You may even find you have to give up working altogether. Many people define who they are by their career, so this would be especially difficult for them. But even if you were like me and viewed your job as a means to an end, not being able to work can be scary. It can even make you feel like you are not a contributing member of society.

Relationships

Your relationships with family and friends may be altered by this illness. If you were used to being the one that cared for others, it can certainly be a rude awakening to now be the one that needs to be cared for. It may be a difficult transition for everyone involved. This transition may cause you to feel like what made you worth something to others is gone.

Hobbies

If you are no longer able to participate in your favorite activities and hobbies you may feel like you have lost another piece of yourself.

Redefining Your Self Worth

Your self-esteem might be altered by fibromyalgia, but there are still plenty of reasons to feel good about yourself. You may have to look for new and different ways to help others, to contribute to your family and friends lives. You may be able to find new and exciting activities that fit into your lifestyle. You might even uncover talent you didn’t even know you had.

Once upon a time, I worked as an administrative assistant, but after some time it became too hard for me to work in an office on a regular basis. It was then that I started pursuing my interest in writing. Eventually this thing that was once just a passing hobby is now a means for supplementing my family’s income. Better than that, I am able to use writing as a way to help others, support fibromyalgia awareness, and connect with others in a similar situation as myself.

As I said, this illness changes you, but all of those changes may not be for the worse. It is important to remember we all have something that makes us useful and important, and fibromyalgia can not take that away from us!