Caring for Someone With Fibromyalgia

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Tips for How to Help Someone With Fibromyalgia

If someone you care about suffers from fibromyalgia, you may feel at a loss as how to help them.

Fibromyalgia can cause emotional sensitivity and is frequently accompanied by anxiety and depression. This means we may not always be the easiest people to deal with.

Especially when first diagnosed, we have a lot of difficult emotions that we are trying to process. We may not know how to express to you what we need.

Here are a few things that we do need, along with what we do *not* need. Hopefully this will help both you and your loved one!

Do: Talk About Yourself

We want to hear about you and your life. We want to know if you have been sick or if something is bothering you.

We also want to know if something good is happening in your life. We need to hear good news, but you don't have to shield us from the bad. We want to be able to support you — it makes us feel useful.

Don't: Compare Our Situations

If something is hurting you, tell us, but don't feel the need to compare. Your pain is your pain, my pain is my pain. There is no need to quantify one as worse.

Seemingly well meaning comments like, "My back is hurting, but it's nothing compared to what you go though," can get old. We do not need to compare.

You are allowed to voice that something is wrong. We care about you and we want to know.

Saying things like, "I am so tired because I didn't sleep well, now I know how you feel" or, "I have a headache, I feel the same way you do," is also frustrating for us, because these are not the same thing.

Do: Talk About Things Other Than Fibro

It is so easy for fibromyalgia to take over our lives. But we are a person with ideas and interests beyond being sick.

If all we hear from our friends and family is talk about our health, if all we get are questions about how feel and what is wrong, it makes it harder for us to remember the person we are.

Don’t: Ignore That We Have Fibro

Do we want to talk about our health issues 24/7? No. But does that mean we want you to pretend like nothing's wrong with us? No.

If you never talk about our health at all, that may come across as you not believing we are actually sick. Or we may to feel you just don’t care.

Balance is needed. Yes ask us how we are feeling, but ask us about something else too.

Do: Listen

Even the most patient, positive person with fibro needs to vent at times. We need people in our lives that we can turn to and let it all out.

When you live with a chronic illness, there will be days when the pain, fatigue, and everything else, gets to you and brings you low. When that happens we need to get that darkness out before it takes residence in our minds.

We need people in our lives that we know will not judge us. We need people in our lives we can count on to just listen.

Don't: Try to Fix Us

It is human nature to want to fix things when something isn't working right. But you don't need to fix us.

The fact is you can't fix us and that's okay. We don't need you to fix us or anything else. We need you to listen with an open mind and without judgment.

Do: Assist

Offering to help, especially with practical things like driving us to the doctor, picking up meds, picking up groceries, are great ways to help out. Perhaps the occasional meal or help with housework would be appreciated.

Don’t: Take Over

We are not helpless and unable to make decisions. When someone tries to take over our life and make decisions for us it is demoralizing.

We are not children. We don't need to be told what we can or cannot do. We don't need to be told when to sit down, when to take meds, when and what to eat.

We welcome kind suggestions or reminders. But please allow us to choose what we feel is best. Even if you do not agree with us, we ask that you please do not push your preferences onto us.

Do: Support Us

We just want to know that you support and love us. We need your help as we learn how to live with this difficult, life altering illness. Now more than ever we need you next to us lending a hand.

Don’t: Give Up On Us

We want to know that you will not give up on us, that you won't cut us out of your life because our circumstances are different.

Chronic pain can change a person. But that change is not always a bad thing. Look for the good new qualities that your loved one is cultivating.

Please never forget that we care about you and need you in our lives.