Fibromyalgia and Friendship: The Christmas Edition

by SARAH BORIEN

Fibromyalgia and Friendship During the Holidays

The festive season is upon us and before you know it everyone is celebrating, shopping, and visiting Christmas markets and winter wonderlands. There are decorations to be hung, parties to attend and Santas to visit, and somewhere in all of that chaos is your fibromyalgia.

Friends and family are at the heart of our Christmas celebrations but it can be difficult to socialize when you're exhausted and sore, so today I want to share some simple ways to ensure your festive cheer doesn't disappear in what is easily one of the most hectic months of the year — with or without fibromyalgia.

Make an Effort

Spending hours decorating your house isn't particularly appealing when you're in pain and exhausted, but that doesn't mean you should let the Christmas spirit pass you by. It's time to make a bit of an effort and get into the spirit of things, and it's a good opportunity to get your friends involved.

If you couldn't cope with the office party or drinks at the pub, invite some of your close friends over to help you decorate the house.

We all have days where we feel like a burden to those around us, but don't you love to help your friends out? Well they love to help you, too.

This week I ordered a three-foot-tall Christmas tree and got it delivered to my door; my partner dug around to find last year's decorations while I made a Spotify playlist of our favorite Christmas songs. We put up decorations slowly on a lazy Sunday with no fuss and no pressure, and I felt good for making a bit of an effort.

Make Online Shopping a Thing

I can't speak for everyone, but I know one of things I really miss at this time of year is Christmas shopping with my friends. We used to traipse around the shops buying gifts for our families and moaning about the lines and the prices; we would stop for hot chocolate or go for dinner after late night shopping, and I miss that.

But let's get creative. There's a way to bring that experience — and your friends — to your front door. Invite your friends over, buy some mulled wine and some mince pies, and refer to my previous point about making an effort.

Get the laptops out and start online shopping with Christmas songs playing in the background. You might not get the buzz of the high street, but you also avoid the mess and queues and the stress and, more importantly, the pain.

Soak Up the Atmosphere

Just because you can’t skate at the ice rink or wander through the winter wonderland doesn’t mean you can’t soak up the atmosphere.

There are so many things going on at this time of year, so you’ve got the chance to get your friends together and have some fun. Have a good look online and see what’s happening in your area and go and be a part of your community.

For example, there is a huge ice rink and Christmas market in London, which I would love nothing more than to experience. It costs £16 for an adult ticket to enter the ice rink, which allows you to skate away until your heart’s content, but if you can’t skate it’s a bit of a waste of money.

I tweeted the organizer of the event and said: “Ooh I really want to experience your skating world, but can't do the skating bit. Do I need a ticket to just wander?” They replied and said I didn’t need a ticket; I could come along and experience the magic and make use of everything other than the ice rink.

There are coffee shops and bars and market stalls so I still get to soak up the atmosphere with friends over a hot chocolate next to the Christmas tree.

Host

Cooking Christmas dinner can be pretty distressing if you have fibromyalgia, but that doesn’t mean you can’t host it. Invite friends round and get people to cook in your place while you serve wine and play music and laugh with friends.

And if no one will cook, order in. If you don’t have the energy/desire to host, at least be the guest at a dinner party. The important thing is not to be a hermit, to surround yourself with the people you love, and remember you can enjoy the holidays with fibromyalgia.

And After Christmas?

These recommendations will remain long after Christmas is over and the New Year has begun. It’s really important that when you have a condition like fibromyalgia you don’t distance yourself from those around you.

Fibromyalgia and friendship can be a difficult combination; you lose some of the people you were closest to because they don’t support or, worse, don’t believe you and that can be incredibly distressing.

However, you will also discover that some of your friends become more supportive than you ever thought possible. Don’t lose sight of those people and be sure to let them help you — just remember to give them the support they need too. We’ve all got our own pains and being surrounded by people you love provides a kind of comfort that no form of medication can offer.