Moving With Fibromyalgia: What to Expect

by SARAH BORIEN

Moving House When You Have Fibromyalgia

Since I first left home 12 years ago, I have moved house 13 times. Eight of those times have been since I was diagnosed with fibromyalgia six years ago.

Moving house is pretty horrendous at the best of times, but if you have fibromyalgia it can be incredibly hard to cope with. So hard, in fact, that you would think I'd learn to stay in one place.

The thing is, life isn't really that simple and we all find ourselves packing our bags and moving on for a number of different reasons. Often those reasons are out of our control, and other times we're choosing to move on and move up to something better.

Whatever the reason, there are ways to make it easier on yourself, so consider these tips before your next move.

Get the Good Stuff

Moving is an expensive business and it always seems like there is someone robbing you blind at every step of the process. Realtors, insurers, removal firms — it all adds up. But there are some things really worth investing in, and good boxes, marker pens and packing tape are three of them.

Assuming you haven't moved 13 times and don't have a stack of high-quality boxes shoved behind your sofa, order your boxes online and have them delivered to your home.

Be sure to order a variety of sizes, large ones for bulky light items and small ones for books and other small items. It's essential you have the right materials for this task — otherwise you're going to find it so much harder than it needs to be.

Stagger Your Packing

This is not the time to leave things until the last minute, so assuming you're not moving in a hurry and time is on your side, start packing months before you move.

I realize I am asking you to find both time and money, and we all know the two never come together, but give yourself as much as possible of both.

Put the empty boxes where you want to leave them, and slowly pack them over a series of days. You don't want to start trying to stack heavy boxes once they're full — it just becomes frustrating when you can't lift anything and makes the whole process more stressful.

When walking backwards and forwards from the box to the bookcase starts to get too much, just stop. You can

start again tomorrow.

Plan, Plan and Plan Some More

If ever there was a time for list-making, this is it. Make a list of everything you need to leave out until the last few days. These should be things you can't cope without: a couple of plates, mugs, some cutlery, your toiletries, medication, hot water bottle — you get the idea. Working to the list will ensure you don't have an entire house to pack up in those last few days.

You should also make a list of the things you need to organize at your old house and your new house — affectionately known as your "life admin." Your life admin list should include things like taking utility meter readings, sorting out tax, arranging for key collection, etc.

This will ensure you don't hand over your keys without forgetting something crucial, and as fibromyalgia patients we can often find ourselves being a bit forgetful.

Your final list should be a plan for moving day. Break the day into hourly chunks and make sure you know exactly when you are doing what.

Where possible, schedule in some breaks. In my most recent move, I had a three-day overlap between getting into my new place and having to be out of the old one which meant I had extra time for cleaning. It was a great relief.

Find Your Little Helpers

I am telling you now, you cannot move house by yourself. You will need people to lift the boxes and help you clean and you need these people to be reliable and hard working.

If you've got the money, employing cleaners and removal firms will ensure things get done quickly and get done well. However, I'd recommend surrounding yourself with some good friends too so they can help ease any stress and perform essential functions like making tea.

Your boxes should be clearly labelled with the contents and the room they need to go in. Make sure they get stacked in the order you need them, with the most urgent contents at the top of the pile.

Ask your friends to stack the boxes out of your way until you're ready to unpack, and then they can leave them spread out on the floor.

Unpacking Is Just as Difficult

Unpacking is just as draining as packing, so the above rules still apply. Unpack slowly, making sure you surround yourself with the things you need to help your pain levels as soon as possible.

When the boxes are spread out on the floor and clearly labelled, take your time to work your way through them in order of importance.

It can be so frustrating and sometimes depressing to feel like your mind wants to unpack and make everything homely but your body won't let you. As difficult as it is, follow that golden fibromyalgia rule of listening to your body and taking your time.

And if you can't sit still until your favorite bedside lamp is unpacked, at least you'll know exactly which box it's in.