5 Strategies for Coping With Fibromyalgia Fatigue

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Fighting Fibromyalgia Fatigue

Coping with fatigue is one of the most difficult things to do. Most people naturally think that if you're tired, then you rest and presto — everything is better. Unfortunately, fatigue (known as extreme or excessive tiredness) isn't fixed by a quick rest. In fact, we can sleep for days and still not feel any less tired.

That's why it's important to have a systematic approach to your fibromyalgia fatigue and practice as many coping strategies as possible.

1. Schedule Rest

I know I said resting won't fix your fatigue, but dashing around the place will definitely make it worse. If you're anything like me, you rest when your fatigue is bad because you don't have any other choice, and then go nuts when you've got a bit of a boost. That is not the work of a good fibromyalgia patient.

I've recently learned to build rest periods into my life, which consist of doing absolutely nothing. I block out full weekends at a time, tell my friends I'm busy and do nothing whatsoever. What does a dream rest day look like to you? Mine includes eating croissants, watching films and sitting in my pajamas all day. It's marvelous.

Everyone's idea of a rest is different, so if my dream rest day sounds like your idea of hell, then plan something that suits you better — just don't strain yourself in any way.

2. Change Your Routine

We don't all have the luxury of being in total control over our schedule or daily routines. There are school runs to be done and shifts to be worked, but if you are able to make changes now is the time to do it.

My fatigue tends to be worse in the cold weather and is always worse during or after a flare-up. I recently asked my employer if I could start and finish work one hour later than usual to accommodate my particularly bad fatigue, and he was more than happy to agree to the change. It's a small thing that makes a big difference.

3. Gentle Exercise

Finding the energy to exercise when you suffer from fatigue is quite possibly the most difficult thing in the world, but it's so important. I'm not suggesting you run a marathon, but *gentle* exercise on a regular basis ensures you maintain muscle strength and keep your respiratory system in good working order.

By keeping your muscles strong and remaining as flexible as you can, you will see a reduction in your pain — or rather, an increase in your ability to cope with your pain.

Gentle exercise also helps to cope with the emotional impacts of fibromyalgia, such as depression and anxiety. These emotional states are often made far worse by fatigue as we feel too tired to cope, but regular exercise and fresh air can help you cope with this feeling of exhaustion and despair.

4. Stay Hydrated and Eat Healthy

I know, we're all being told to eat healthily all the time and it starts to sound boring. But the food and drink we put in our bodies will undoubtedly affect our level of tiredness. Too much alcohol or too many fatty foods leave us sluggish which, when combined with existing fatigue, only make us feel worse.

Drink plenty of water, eat lots of fruit and vegetables and avoid large amounts of caffeine. Eating healthy and staying hydrated will help to keep your energy levels up for when you need them most.

5. Use Your Energy Wisely

Take breaks and pace yourself. It is not a race to use those bursts of energy to get as much done as you can. You will pass out from exhaustion, not to mention find your pain levels become worse, so take your time and prioritize.

For example, I want to stop buying my lunch at work — it's expensive and not very healthy. So my plan is to make a big salad when I have more energy and use this for lunch during the week. I also want to clear out my wardrobe, but I know that's less important than the lunch, so it's just going to have to wait. If it helps you, make a list. Just don't try to do everything all at once.

What have you found helps with your fibromyalgia fatigue?