Fibromyalgia Brain Fog — How Do We Cope?

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Dealing With Fibromyalgia Brain Fog

Fibromyalgia brain fog is a strange phenomenon. In fact, I am struggling to know how to explain it. Maybe the best way is to talk about how it affects me. So, here goes.

Firstly, I don’t always realize when I'm being affected by fibro fog. I’m a pretty sensible, intelligent, articulate woman, and although I am prone to getting stressed, I am fairly good at sorting out administrative matters; bills, accounts, telephone calls, problems with utility companies, letters and so on. I am usually the one who deals with those things in our household and it’s easy — or at least it used to be.

Things are different now. When I start sorting out those thing I’m usually fine, but as time progresses my brain begins finding it difficult to take in information and to process things. It seems to come out of nowhere; I can’t feel it happening. My brain just seems to grind to a halt, get clogged up. It can no longer cope with concentrating.

I enjoy doing crafts and sometimes when I am reading instructions or a pattern, the fog descends and I cannot make any sense of what's in front of me. Believe me, when you are someone who has always prided herself on being able to work with words, money and so forth, it badly affects your self-esteem when those same things cause utter confusion and panic.

What Are the Symptoms of Brain Fog?

Symptoms of brain fog can range from mild to severe and vary from day to day. Not every patient has every one of them so this can vary from person to person. The following are common symptoms:

- Difficulty recalling known words
- Use of incorrect words
- Slow to recall names that should be known
- Forgetfulness
- Inability to remember what had been read or heard
- Becoming easily lost
- Trouble remembering where things are
- Trouble with multitasking
- Forgetting the task one was doing if distracted from it
- Easily distracted
- Trouble processing information
- Difficulty doing simple math
- Trouble remembering numbers
- Transposing numbers
- Trouble remembering number sequencing

Causes

I know there has been quite a bit of research into why this cognitive dysfunction happens. Some theories that have emerged for causes include:

- Poor sleep
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Mental distraction due to pain
- Lack of oxygen to the brain
- Changes in the brain's blood vessels
- Premature ageing of the brain
- And even the very medications we take to help us with fibromyalgia.

Tips for Coping

However, knowing these reasons doesn't really help you to cope with the problem, does it? So, what might help? Here are a few suggestions.

I haven't tried them all, so can't say how effective they might be, but they are probably worth trying. After all, trying can't be as bad as suffering from the fog, can it?

- **Try to get enough rest.** Yes, easier said than done. However, if you know you are going to need a clear head, try to rest beforehand.
- **Make a list.** It helps to be able to see exactly what needs to be done. Your first list probably won't be the one you end up with, but that's fine, it's a great place to start.
- **Decide what isn't important.** Then scratch those things off your list. Deal with the important stuff first. If your list is long it can feel quite daunting so have one list for the most important things, and another for those that are less important.
- **Prioritize.** Which thing is most urgent, which can be dealt with quickly, which will take more time? Do they really have to be done in a hurry?
- **Make your goals achievable.** List tasks in a way that makes them achievable. Instead of "Clean the bedroom," how about "Dust the shelves," "Clean the mirrors," "Tidy the dressing table," and, "Vacuum the carpet"? Crossing tasks off your list is very satisfying and helps self-esteem.
- **Give yourself time.** If you can feel yourself struggling, stop. Take a break, and allow your brain to have a rest.
- **Keep a diary and use it.** Write down anything that needs to be done by or on a particular date, and also note when you have done it. (Twice recently I have bought two lots of [non-refundable] tickets for the same event.)
- **Use timers/alarms.** Watches, phones and other electrical items have timers. If you need to remember to do something, set the timer to remind you.
- **Declutter.** If my home, or even just my craft room, is cluttered, my mind also feels cluttered and it doesn't function as well as usual. Clearing the clutter can help to clear your mind.
- **Keep calm.** If you can keep calm, it will help you to think clearly or to explain why you are having a problem.