Using Mobility Aids With Fibromyalgia

by SARAH BORIEN

Fibromyalgia Mobility Aids

I've been toying with the idea of using mobility aids for a few years now. I bought my first walking stick back in 2013 and I use it occasionally. The thing is, when you suffer from fibromyalgia, mobility aids have their pros and cons.

If I were a person who had bad legs but a strong upper body with arms and wrists that could hold my weight, a walking stick would be helpful. But I'm not – I have fibromyalgia.

If I were a person who had occasional bad legs but could carry around a bag full of handy equipment to help me when things get bad, a mobility aid would be helpful. But I'm not – I have fibromyalgia.

And so, like many of you, I contemplated a walking stick for a long time but knew it wasn't quite the solution I was looking for.

And it doesn't stop there. If you are used to being a relatively healthy person, the feeling of walking with a mobility aid is quite uncomfortable. I am a young woman who looks perfectly healthy, so I often feel embarrassed to be walking with a stick. For some reason I worry that people will think I am faking to get a seat on the bus.

Even if you're not a young woman, there is something about using mobility aids that makes you feel older than you are. My father is 64 and has a temporary bad foot, but he refuses to use a walking stick to help him. He has a clear limp but mobility aids make him feel old before his time and therefore he would rather struggle.

Sound familiar?

Tips for Choosing a Mobility Aid

But, perhaps it's time we forget about the stigma and the embarrassment, and instead think about the practicalities of mobility aids and the positive impact they can have. Here are my top five tips:

1. There are lots of different types of mobility aids, so do your research to see what's available. A walking stick might not be the most appropriate option so work out what's best for you.

2. Identify when you need it and what for. Perhaps a trolley for around the house would be better than a walking stick, or a mobility scooter would be more useful.

3. Look at charity shops and support services to see what they can offer. Buying equipment can be expensive but local community and charity shops may be able to help.

4. Be clever and look out for modern twists on traditional mobility aids. For example, my walking stick is ultra-

lightweight and folds up to fit in a small bag. Very handy!

5. Finally, and most importantly, try to overcome the embarrassment and the fear factor. Mobility aids won’t always be the solution to your pain problems, but if they are then you need to be bold and take the plunge.