Surviving Family Gatherings With Fibromyalgia

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Attending Family Events

As we all know, fibromyalgia makes a lot of things difficult. This includes having a social life, and especially going to gatherings or parties. Why? Well there are a few reasons.

- **Pain** – Going somewhere that doesn't have comfortable seating plus the extra walking required to get there can lead to excess pain. And that's not even factoring in the pain that comes from getting ready to go out in the first place.
- **Fatigue** – The effort put into getting ready, traveling to where you need to go, and then socializing once you get there can all be energy drainers, leading to undue fatigue.
- **Sensory overload** - The loud noises, busyness and smells that often accompany a large gathering of people can be overwhelming for those with fibromyalgia, especially if you also suffer from anxiety. This may lead to cognitive fatigue, or fibro fog, making it difficult to think or focus.

I have heard many a fibro warrior mention, and I know from personal experience, that sometimes the very idea of dealing with these potential issues can lead to anxiety about going to large gatherings — and sometimes declining invitations.

Skipping some outings is entirely understandable, even necessary at times for the sake of your health. However, it's not healthy to completely isolate yourself either.

We need to spend time with other people — this is an important part of successfully dealing with fibromyalgia. We also need to have fun on occasion, in order to break up the monotony that so often takes over our lives. There needs to be balance. So what can you do?

Don't Dwell on the Negative

I often psych myself out of going to gatherings because I continually think about all the negative things that might happen. But if I choose instead to focus on the positive reasons to go, the friends or family I'll get to see, the delicious food that may be there, and the fun I'll have, it helps me to be excited about going rather than be apprehensive.

Rest Beforehand

If at all possible, take it easy the day of the gathering, or even the days leading up to it. Get as much rest as you can beforehand. Possibly even schedule in a short nap that day.

Be Prepared

While you don't want to spend too much time thinking about what may go wrong, if you are aware of those things

you can plan ahead to make the event go smoother.

For instance, try to start getting ready earlier in the day, doing a little at a time and resting in between. That way you won't be worn out before you even leave the house. Bring whatever pain meds you use and take them at the first sight of pain, so that it doesn't get too bad. If there is likely to be loud music, have earplugs with you to help with noise sensitivity.

Listen to Your Body

Sit and rest when you need to. Eat and drink when you need to. Say no to activities like dancing if you need to. Leave when you need to.

Limit or Avoid Alcohol

Alcohol often has a negative effect on people with fibromyalgia, especially if you are on medication that it may interact with. As such, it’s best to limit how much you drink or to avoid alcohol completely.

Accept That Not Everyone Will Understand

There will always be some people who won’t grasp how difficult social gatherings are for us. They may not sympathize when we can't come or when we have to leave early. This can be hurtful, but it is something we have to learn to accept.

The best thing we can do is assure our family and friends that we want to share their important moments with them and that we will always do what we can to be there.

You may not be able to attend every party you receive an invitation to, but that does not mean that parties have to be completely avoided. Fibromyalgia may make having a social life difficult, but it’s not totally impossible.