Making Your Home a Fibro Safe Haven

by STARLA RICH

Creating a Fibro-Friendly Oasis

Fibro warriors Starla and Adriel share their experiences with creating a fibro safe haven.

Starla's Advice For a Fibro-Friendly Home

Whether out of necessity or desire, those dealing with the effects of fibromyalgia spend more time in their homes than the average person. It could be due to the pain, flare-ups and fatigue that hinder excursions, running errands and various outdoor activities; or possibly due to the fact that you do not work outside the home or that home has become your safe haven.

So what do you do when home becomes hazardous to your health due to various aspects of the environment you live in on a daily basis? Rather than allowing your home to be an obstacle course, make it fibro-friendly! This may sound easier said than done, but there are simple steps you can take to create an environment that is conducive to the lifestyle necessary in reducing pain and minimizing triggers and pitfalls.

Most tasks we perform on a daily basis require some level of bending, reaching, lifting and pulling — all of which cause pain and often lead to flare-ups. There are adjustments you can make to your home and movements, as well as tools you can acquire to make life easier and create a safe haven for you.

For instance, use a stool in the kitchen while preparing food or cooking. If you feel more comfortable standing, try using a footstool so you can alternate propping your foot on it, shifting your weight during the task. The same stool can be used to step up on to reach items on shelves, and if you have to stand to sort laundry or iron in your laundry room.

Home Remedies

Even your bedroom — the place made for rest and relaxation — can be a pitfall instead of a haven when you have fibromyalgia. Sleep can be a rare commodity, and finding the best mattress for fibromyalgia is imperative to making your bedroom more conducive to restful sleep. If your mattress is too firm or soft, purchase a topper.

Use an electric blanket to heat your mattress before crawling into bed and make sure you have lots of comfortable pillows. I need a pillow between my knees, under my feet and even one to prop my arms on at times. The head pillow needs to be flexible enough not to put your head and neck in an uncomfortable position through the night.

Creating a less stressful environment in your home also comes down to organization. Some days a flare-up, complete with fibro fog, can cause even the simplest of tasks to be challenging. For that reason, I assign certain drawers where essentials are kept and each item placed in the exact same spot so I don’t have to think about where to look.

For instance, my bathroom drawer is organized so the toothpaste tube is always in the exact same spot, the night cream on the left, and my medicine in the middle. Sounds simplistic, but those of you who understand fibro fog, know how even the most minute details can fade from your mind on a fog day.

Organization in the bathroom, your desk, or kitchen countertops and drawers makes your home much more fibro-friendly. If you have certain utensils that you use on a regular basis in your kitchen, place a caddy on the counter top at arm's length for easy access. This cuts down on the reaching, pulling and even the thinking of where you stashed something in a drawer. It's the little things sometimes!

A comfortable chair with neck and back support is a must for your desk, as well as pillows to support you. For me, I even have a stool under the desk with pillows on top to prop up my legs, giving my lower back and legs relief. I couldn't work a day without this!

Those Out-of-Reach Places

While it doesn't seem like much initially, the after effects of bending and reaching during household chores can be crippling in the days that follow. Try purchasing cleaning tools and accessories that will make house work less cumbersome for you.

Long-handled dusters for hard-to-reach areas are great, as well as long-handled mops for scrubbing the floor so you don't have to bend over or squat. Even if you have a spill on the floor, using a large towel you can hold on one end and use your foot to rub up the spill with allows ease in an otherwise uncomfortable task.

An Oasis

Your home should truly be a safe haven, a place where pain is diminished, stress is relieved, and comfort is maximized. Soft lighting can do wonders; I have multiple lamps in each of my rooms to adjust lighting based on my pain level and moods of the day.

Another tool to make your home fibro-friendly might be a playlist of your favorite music ready to go. Music soothes and is like warm oil pouring over your weary muscles some days.

Speaking of oil, essential oils offer wonderful health benefits. Do a little research to find a blend of oils that will best benefit your symptoms and issues.

There's No Place Like Home

Finally, if you do spend many hours at home, or even work from home, solicit help from those who share the space with you! Understanding and sharing of household duties go a long way towards creating a safe haven.

The more they feel involved in the process, rather than being shielded from it, the more they will understand and appreciate both what you are going through and what you do to care for home and family. Love is the safest haven of all and when you show love and kindness for yourself, it motivates others to do the same. A better you makes a better them!

Next page: Adriel's tips for creating a fibro safe haven.

Adriel's Tips for a Fibro-Friendly Home

When you have fibromyalgia, the world around you becomes a giant minefield.

Will standing in line at the grocery store cause your legs to throb and ache for the rest of the day, or even the rest of the week? Will an uncomfortable desk chair at work make your back spasm so badly you are forced to leave early?

Our own home should be a place of comfort — as much as that is possible with fibro. Our home should be a sanctuary for us. How though can we make a home that is fibromyalgia friendly?

Find a 'Comfy Spot'

Make at least one spot in your house a comfy spot for you.

Have a pillow or two nearby. Keep a blanket and heating pad close. Have a table close enough to keep a glass of water and a snack. Make sure there is a place to put your feet up or to lie down.

Be sure everyone knows that this is your spot — in a kind way, of course!

Easy, Accessible Kitchen

Keep things you use frequently where you can get to them easily.

Do you have to strain or bend to reach glasses or dishes you use daily? Maybe it would be a good idea to reassess and switch things up, possibly asking a family member or friend to help you do that.

You may find it is easier to do certain tasks while sitting down, such as mixing baked goods. The kitchen table can serve as a good prep station for you.

Would certain tools make preparing food easier for you? For instance, could a food processor be used to chop veggies and nuts? Would that help reduce some of the strain of cooking?

Easy, Accessible Bath

Baths and showers can be a challenge when you have fibro, for multiple reasons. So anything we can do to make it easier is a good thing.

Using an extendable showerhead and chair can make things a little easier. Epsom salt fibromyalgia baths are a nice way to relax and to soothe sore muscles. But you may find yourself getting overheated and feeling dizzy and lightheaded. You don't necessarily have to give up baths altogether, though.

Try easing yourself into the bath slowly, perhaps sitting with your feet in the water for a few minutes, letting your body have time to adjust to the heat. And be sure to have a glass of water with you to drink as soon as you get out. This will help to replenish any fluids you lost.

Medication

Keep your meds, vitamins, and supplements where you can get to them easily every day.

I have found having a pill organizer for my daily morning and nighttime pills helps me keep on track. Any pills I need for occasional use are also organized in a way that I can quickly find what I need.

Stairs

Obviously having a one-story home is ideal when you suffer with chronic pain. But, as I know all too well, we may not all have ideal circumstances.

If you have stairs in your home it is important to find ways to minimize the strain that this can cause.

During the times I lived in multi-story apartments, I found it was helpful to keep a basket or container at the top and bottom of the stairs. When something needs to go up or down, place it in the basket, then take everything at once only when you have to use the stairs anyway, avoiding any extra trips.

Declutter

The more stuff you have, the more stuff there is to clean, organize, and maintain. The more stuff you have, the more stress you have. So adopting a less-is-more attitude can benefit you in the long run.

One suggestion is, a little at a time go through your home and find things you don’t use or need. Maybe once a week, look through a cupboard, drawer, or closet. Have a bag or box somewhere out of the way and place the unwanted items in it as you find them.

Once it’s full, drop it off at a charitable thrift shop. This helps you to declutter and destress, plus you are helping those in need — a win-win situation.

There is so much that is out of our control while living with fibromyalgia. One thing we do have a small amount of control over is how we live and function in our own home. Making our homes a refuge from the un-fibro friendly world, puts us one step closer to improving our health, one step closer to healing.