Have You Tried Creative Therapies for Fibromyalgia?

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A Look at Creative Therapies for Fibromyalgia

It’s easy to feel stressed and helpless when you are struggling with fibromyalgia fatigue and pain, but there are creative ways you can help yourself cope better with the condition.

Simply feeling you are being proactive in tackling the stress and anxiety you feel using art, crafts or music may go some way towards helping symptoms, including pain and sleepless nights, giving you more energy to use coping with everyday life.

It’s true that sometimes even thinking about taking ownership of the condition is exhausting in itself, but just a few small changes made gradually might just enable you to make bigger changes towards a more normal life.

Music as Therapy

Take music for instance. It has long been proved that music can affect mood, productivity and energy levels, so why not take advantage and absorb some of music’s healing powers?

Research has shown music relieves pain by distracting the listener from pain intensity by disturbing the body’s pain and stress feedback loop, which evaluates sensitivity to pain.

This happens because music influences different neurochemical effects, which distracts the listener from negative feelings and past experiences of pain.

Music can also inhibit the release of stress hormones and can influence the opioid system of the brain, which is responsible for the control of physical pain and negative emotions.

Therefore, music therapy or sound healing can be used to alleviate symptoms of pain and improve quality of life for fibromyalgia pain, by distracting you from the experience of pain and negative emotions.

Further research has shown the pain- and stress-relieving effects of music were increased further if relaxation techniques like meditation, breathing exercises or yoga were practiced during therapy.

Music therapists often create their own tailor-made programs for each client in a formal therapy session, but you can start at home using the radio, a CD player, computer or MP3 player to help you relax.

What Kind of Music Should You Listen To?

So what kind of music would be ideal to play to maximize the de-stressing effect?

Slow, quiet classical music is a good choice and typically works for many people, but only you can identify what

type of music you find relaxing.

Maybe classical music bores you and you would end up focusing more on the pain you are in — not helpful. If shouting along to loud rock music makes you feel calm and happy, go for it!

Get in on the Music Yourself

Some therapists recommend playing music for therapy, even for those who have never had a single music lesson.

Playing music with a specialist therapist can alleviate depression and stress, as playing instruments gives people — especially those who have trouble communicating because of disability, trauma, shyness, isolation or lack of confidence — an easy and gratifying way to express themselves.

The pure fun of playing an instrument, even a simple percussion instrument, with someone else is often enough to have a positive effect.

Not everyone finds music relaxing, though. Some people prefer absolute quiet, so what could they do to distract their mind from fibromyalgia symptoms?

Luckily there are many recognized forms of creative therapy that can be tailor-made to the person looking for stress relief.

Art Therapy

Art therapy, for instance, does not require you to have any aptitude for art. Simply working with paint, pastels, clay or other materials can be immensely satisfying and prove distracting and relaxing enough to have long-term benefits.

The point of it is not what art is produced, but the artist gets comfort, relaxation, stress relief and healing during its creation.

You can sign up for specific art or even art therapy classes — if you find it hard to leave your home you can even follow classes online or work with therapists via Skype or FaceTime.

Or simply pick up some basic materials, which can be bought cheaply in budget stores, and experiment with drawing, painting, modeling, needlework crafts or any other craft you think you might enjoy, and discover what proves most effective at taking your mind off your worst symptoms.

Be careful not to overdo it — set yourself strict time limits of 15 minutes to start with, otherwise you may end up overtired with painful hands, arms or fingers.

If sitting on an upright chair at a table triggers symptoms, invest in a lap tray for your bed or your favorite comfortable chair.

But what to create? You might find yourself looking at your blank canvas or lump of clay and have no idea where to start. Some therapists recommend clients experiment with representing their mood, or fibromyalgia itself, in whatever medium they choose.

Or you could try and make something to represent something, somewhere or someone who makes you happy, or even create the mood you would like to have, if only your symptoms would disappear.

Be as abstract as you like — it is the sensation, smell and feel of the activity which will have (hopefully) healing properties.