How to Help Others When You Have Fibromyalgia

by PUJA RIOS

How to Help Others When You Have Fibromyalgia

Fibromyalgia is a bewildering beast. It’s sunk its teeth into every aspect of my life, pinning me down from the moment I wake up, and tormenting me in my nighttime battles for sleep.

Like a wild animal, Fibromyalgia is unpredictable and lacks regard for its prey. It stalks, and it attacks at will. So, the thought of helping others while you’re fighting off a savage monster sounds crazy, right?

The truth is, being a chronic pain advocate has catapulted my healing forward.

To manage my spoons, scheduling daily downtime is a top priority, even when I don't want it. It was during these mandatory breaks that I came to realize that while I'm suffering, I have a unique opportunity to focus on making a change in the chronic pain community.

I’ve shut the door on urges to play the victim and instead, have committed to outsmarting the beast and using my voice to rebrand fibromyalgia. You can work, you can live a full and happy life, and you can change someone else’s life or lifestyle by sharing your story.

Let Your Inner Advocate Shine

Use Your Voice

When I was diagnosed in 2008, there were very few resources available for me to tap into. Now, with social media, fibromyalgia support groups and the local fibromyalgia communities, we don’t have to feel alone anymore. We can fight the beast together!

Since starting my blog, I’ve received hundreds of messages from people thanking me for using my voice. People who could never put into words, what was happening to their bodies and minds. Grateful people who have thanked me for saving their marriage because their partner finally understands what fibromyalgia is.

The more stories we hear, the more we relate to each other and feel supported. Your story could be a beacon of hope for a fellow warrior.

Now, I’m not saying you need to start a blog and build a website. Just sharing a bit here and there can make big waves. As you become an advocate, you can do so at your own pace.

The first step is going public with your conditions. You will be shocked by the support and love you’ll receive, not to mention the people you will inspire to go public themselves. Then, as you find relief, share it.

Share Healing Recipes

There’s nothing more soothing than an oatmeal, Epsom salt, and baking soda bath. (No pungent essential oils for me, please.) After a 20 minute soak, not only is my skin as soft as a rose petal but my joints get relief, and my feet are saved.

Now, what kind of friend would I be if I kept that magical remedy to myself? Sharing is caring, people. Whether it’s your favorite smoothie, bath bomb, lotion or afternoon snack, as highly sensitive people, any product that caters to our needs should be shared and celebrated!

Share Your Tips

If people ask you a question or are in need of a tip to deal with this or that, share your tips with them. I've come across questions such as:

- Do you have creative ways to combat fatigue?
- What treatments have you tried and what were the outcomes?
- Do you own the world’s most comfortable sweatpants?
- Have you taken a fibromyalgia dream vacation?
- How do you survive uncomfortable plane rides? (How does anyone, really?)

I'm going to share with you my favorite tip.

My favorite travel tip is that on many of the newer planes, there’s an outlet right under your seat. Heating pad, meet carry on. All of these things may sound trivial to some, but for us, a little relief is a big deal.

Tap Into Your Spidey Senses

Beyond becoming an advocate, we can use our fibro superpowers for good in any challenging situation. Much like Peter Parker, chronic pain sufferers are gifted with an almost superhuman skill. Sometimes a blessing, at times a curse, we become highly sensitive to the world around us.

We can feel moods and measure stress without verbal communication, making it possible to assist those around us uniquely. Let's say your partner comes home from work and seems upset.

Through these incredible senses, you can feel that they are out of sorts. Instead of bombarding them with questions, you can use your senses to figure out the best time to approach for them to talk it through. (And fix them a nice, stiff drink in the meantime.)

I’m in good company when I say that by helping others, you also help yourself.

- “When we give cheerfully and accept gratefully, everyone is blessed.” – Maya Angelou
- “The best way to not feel hopeless is to get up and do something. Don’t wait for good things to happen to you. If you go out and make some good things happen, you will fill the world with hope; you will fill yourself with hope.” – Barack Obama
- “Remember, if you ever need a helping hand, it's at the end of your arm, as you get older, remember you have another hand: The first is to help yourself, the second is to help others.” – Audrey Hepburn
- “Help others achieve their dreams, and you will achieve yours.” – Les Brown

Like each famous figure quoted above, we all have our bewildering beasts to fight in life. Whether it’s abuse, illness, violence, racism, addiction or other, we can rise above and turn our battles into blessings.