5 Ways to Curb Fibromyalgia-Related Depression

by PUJA RIOS

How to Prevent Depression Tips for Fibro Warriors

When you live with never-ending chronic pain all day, every day, it's normal to feel sad and depressed. Who wouldn't?

As fibromyalgia wreaks havoc on the physical body, a heavy gloom settles in on the psyche. This gloom can seep into every part of your life and in time, change who you are as a person.

The things you once loved to do are no longer possible. A lot of time is spent in bed or on your couch recovering from the simplest of tasks like doing the laundry or grocery shopping.

Your friends stop inviting you to events because you have to cancel so often. (Not intentionally, but based on your pain levels that day.) Your family tries to understand your pain, but because they can't see it, they're still skeptical.

I've learned that to combat the feelings of hopelessness and depression, and it's wise to have coping mechanisms in place. Below are my top five.

1. Netflix Is Your Bestie

Three cheers for Netflix! Am I right? Good distractions from pain are entertainment, mystery, beauty, and inspiration. What's more inspiring than watching a fierce young girl with a shaved head fight to save the world from the bad guys?

No matter your taste, there's plenty to binge: sitcoms and dramas galore, nostalgic movies and breathtaking nature shows – I'm looking at you, Planet Earth. And how about the list of invaluable documentaries? Us fibro warriors can learn more in 90 minutes about how to treat our bodies right than in months of doctor visits.

A few of my faves: Lady Gaga's Five Foot Two, Forks Over Knives, Food Inc. and Cowspiracy.

2. FaceTime Your Family

Showing your Fibro-face to anyone while you're feeling blue may sound counter-intuitive, but this tool never fails me. Go ahead and turn the lights down low before you make the call, just make the call.

Nothing cheers me up more than seeing my nephew and nieces. These little love-explosions are full of energy and witnessing their zest for life inspires me. When Fibro and sadness get the best of me, I FaceTime my family, and for that moment, I forget about my pain.

3. Hang With Your Fur Baby

My English bulldog, JZ, is a character. When I'm feeling low, he gives me a look that says, "Mama, you betta turn that frown upside down!" He then proceeds to shower me with schnarfs and adoration. I have to laugh at the ridiculousness!

Just like that, when I couldn't crack a smile all day, my little loving pup melted my cold heart with just one look. It gets me thinking, why don't doctors write prescriptions for dogs?

4. Play the Pain Away

To quote Benjamin Franklin, "In this world, nothing can be said to be certain, except death, taxes, and those phone games are super addictive." I'm paraphrasing, but you get my point.

I could play my games for hours! Sometimes I do, and do you know what? I do forget my woes for a while. It's a great distraction!

BigFish Casino is my jam. Candy Crush is second. Remember Tetris? It's back!

When forced into bed because of my illness, I pull up my mind distracting games and feel like I'm "Winning!" in my fight against despair.

5. Order Yummy food

Shhhhh... This is a no-no, don't judge me. Every once in a while when I’m super over my illnesses, and I don't have any... cares left to give, I go for guilty pleasures.

Foods that will bring me joy going down, but may unleash hell on me later. It's worth it! I need a happy moment and chowing down on McDonald's gives me strange, yet warranted bliss. If a Happy Meal can make children happy, why shouldn't it make me happy too?!

Some of these coping mechanisms will hardwire happiness for the future, while others are just the savior for the moment. We need both of them to get through every day. Take note of little moments that bring you joy and embrace them. Milk them. Turn those seconds into minutes.

Most importantly, write down your little joys. When you reflect on them, you've turned what was just seconds of happiness into memories to look back on. Find the sunshine in your life and use it to fight the gloom!

There are endless ways to fend off misery, and I'd love to hear how you do it. Whether you have (un-winnable) staring contests with your cat, solve Sudoku, or are obsessed with the Great British Baking Show, use the hashtag #ShoutAboutPain and share your go-to's with your fellow Fibro warriors! Together, we can feel so much better!