The Hidden Reality of a Fibro Warrior

by PUJA RIOS

The Hidden Reality of Fibromyalgia

Ask any Fibro warrior, and they'll agree that a perk of our condition is that while we rest, we catch a lot of television. That means we see tons of commercials too, commercials including those humiliating and cringe-worthy fibromyalgia ads.

Every time I see one, I imagine the plethora of stereotypes these ads perpetuate. A few that come to mind are: helpless, depressed, and pathetic. In essence, they portray Fibro patients as broken messes. I've always been offended by these ads because:

1. They’re shallow.
2. They enable society to view the Fibro community in an undignified light.

Up front, you should know, Fibro is nasty. It's careless, invasive; it's turn-your-life-upside-down-savage. I swell, I faint, I fall, I bleed, and all of my bones writhe in pain. There's no end to my suffering, and there's no end to the effects Fibro has on my life. Friendships end. Relationships are tested. Nothing is out of reach of the tentacles of Fibro.

You can imagine how living this way, day after day, would tear away at you. You can imagine how hard it might be to get in a good mood or keep a smile on your face. It's tough, but we do try. I don't enjoy highlighting the callous nature of Fibro but keeping these nuggets of truth to myself can't help anyone.

What It's Like to Live With Fibromyalgia

To gain a deeper understanding of what it's like to suffer from fibromyalgia, I'm offering you a peek into my world. Listed below are thoughts and things that I normally wouldn't feel comfortable telling people, but how can we change the stigma if we don't change how we react to it?

- I used to believe my pharmacist was judging me for all the meds I take.
- The worst things you could think of me are lazy, unreliable and incompetent.
- Despite not being pregnant, I'm greeted by morning sickness every day of my life.
- A reasonable diet goes out the window during a flare. I've survived for days on just gummy bears and M&M's. That's all I can stomach when things get so bad. That's what I call "Survival Mode."
- I've spent half a day curled into the fetal position, crying and begging the agony to stop.
- The reality of a flare hitting is similar to having the rug pulled out from under you then being thrown out of an airplane without a chute. The worst part is, it can happen at any time; during a super-important presentation, during a job interview, at the grocery store, on a date, even during sex!
- The energy it takes to get ready for the day is the same required for a Beach Body workout. (Well, it feels that way anyway.)
- If there were an Emmy for "Most Shows Ever Watched," I would win it. Fibro leaves me few other options

than resting in bed or on the couch. Lucky for me I live in the age of Netflix, Hulu, and Amazon! Plus, I get to snuggle with my pup, J.Z.

- "I regret to decline" is a worn-out response in my house. It's hard to imagine how many events and celebrations I've missed since my diagnosis but with Fibro, getting glammed up is a soul-sucking affair. My weekends are for recharging and getting my ducks in a row for the next week.
- Sometimes, I think the pain will win.
- Flares never sleep. With all of the tips, tricks and meds in the world, getting more than three hours of sleep mid-flare is nothing but a dream.
- I obsess over the weather because rain is to Fibro as kryptonite is to Superman. My powers of "functioning like a normal person" are diminished entirely.
- I am a warrior: not a day goes by without a fight. It's brutal and exhausting, and some days I get pretty beat up, but I made a promise to myself to never stop fighting for a life worth living. Mine and yours.

I hope my openness has given you a better understanding of the actual difficulty it is to live with Fibro. I wouldn't wish it on my greatest enemy.

To be clear, it's not sympathy I'm looking for; it's empathy. We all have our battles, and we treat each other so much better when we share them with one another. When we go deeper, we care deeper. And caring is what all the cool kids do.

If you're a warrior reading this, I feel for you. I hope you're not suffering in silence. I encourage you to share your story with people who care about you. Find a friend, a family member or support group that you feel safe in and let out your truth! You'll be moved by the support that follows.