Why You Should Become a Fibro Advocate

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Become a Fibro Advocate Today!

You already know the symptoms of fibromyalgia extend far beyond the physical symptoms. Of course, your doctor assessed your pain, tenderness and sleep symptoms to make the initial diagnosis, but these signs of the condition do not tell the complete story.

Fibro impacts all aspects of your overall health and well-being including your:

- Mental health
- Social health
- Spiritual health
- Financial stability/employment standing

Whenever a condition is so pervasive and so multidimensional, people in your life and in the community will begin to take notice. For them, fibro will move from a condition relegated into the background to something in their daily consciousness.

They will seek more information on the subject to better their understanding. In many ways, this change is welcomed as increased awareness is usually a positive.

Trouble comes when others take information from anecdotal, biased or misleading sources and apply it to you. Just because they read one article about someone with fibro online does not make them an expert. Just because they heard a story about a friend of a friend that experienced specific fibro symptoms does not mean you will experience the same.

From here, you have options. The first is for you to quietly allow the spread of this information throughout your community without trying to modify the flow. This passive approach is fueled by fear or a feeling of powerlessness.

The second option is to convert yourself from a fibro sufferer to a fibro advocate. This active approach empowers you to inform, educate and enlighten those around you.

By doing so, you help others managing fibro symptoms by providing accurate information. Additionally, you help yourself by establishing realistic expectations of those around you.

Being a fibro advocate represents a task that is the perfect balance of selfishness and selflessness. Everyone wins! Do you want to become an advocate?

Find Your Acceptance

Before you or anyone else can become an advocate for fibro, you must take an important step: you must acknowledge and accept your condition. Fibro is manageable, but it is not changeable.

Accepting fibro is like the process of accepting the death of a loved one. You will experience feelings of shock, confusion, disbelief, disorientation, sadness, anger and isolation before you begin to find hope, readjust to life, and reinvest energy towards the future. This experience is healthy and helpful in your quest to being an advocate.

People who attempt to advocate before they have processed their feelings will encounter problems along the way because their advocacy will be overly emotional and irrational.

Certainly, having an emotional connection to the condition will be helpful in some situations, but too many strong emotions will distort your views, information and tactics. The best advocates can adapt their emotions to the situation rather than being ruled by their emotions.

Become the Expert

An advocate is someone who publicly supports an opinion, view or belief. They will recommend interventions and strategies to address their cause and improve the outcomes.

The most effectual advocates are ones who become authorities in their field. Perhaps, the greatest way of improving your standing is through education.

Whatever you choose to advocate for or against, you must know the subject matter thoroughly. One of the worst things an advocate can do is give incorrect or incomplete information on their topic.

If you are describing fibro to someone only based on your experiences, you will give a narrow view of a condition that affects so many. Becoming an expert will help you to separate your advocacy from your condition.

Do your research by collecting information from reputable and respected sources. Check with your doctor about the publications or online sites she uses to gather information. Investigate the availability of training courses provided by educational companies using renowned experts in the field.

Whether online or in-person, the best information will make you a better advocate. As an added bonus, this process will serve you well in your ability to understand and accept your condition.

Establish Your Purpose

Being an advocate is a great decision, but what are you advocating for? Do you want fibro to be better understood by your family? Do you want the government to provide more money for research? Do you want your doctor to respect your symptoms?

Your purpose should serve as a mission statement of what you hope to complete along with methods and a target timeline. It can be a goal you think of each day to provide motivation to remain active and engaged. As long as your advocacy will benefit you as well as those who come after you, there is no “bad” reason to advocate.

Balance Your Communication

Now that you are fully outfitted with an arsenal of information and a purpose, you can focus on your plans to disseminate the material. Remember, what you say is rarely as important as the way you say it.

Do you plan to only causally share the information verbally with people in your life? Do you plan to formally give presentations on the subject? Should you start your own blog on the topic to reach a wider audience? Will you create written handouts identifying the myths and realities of fibromyalgia?

Knowing your audience and method of contact is key when planning your style of communication. You will want to

address family members much differently than you would community leaders or medical professionals.

As mentioned, the level of emotion needed will vary from person to person and situation to situation. Do not underestimate the power of a concise, clearly written or spoken statement regarding your position and what you hope to achieve.

The decision to become an advocate is not for everyone, but if you are looking for a way aid yourself and others with fibro, it might be a great choice for you after you have accepted your state. From there, education, building a purpose, balancing your communication will boost your efforts. Every voice counts — what will yours say?