The Link Between Migraines and Fatigue

by JAIME SANDERS

10 Helpful Tips to Manage Migraine Fatigue

I may look like I am being lazy sometimes, but the truth is I am physically and mentally exhausted. I need to exhibit *a lot* of self-control every day. My brain is constantly scanning for potential triggers and preparing ways to avoid them. I have to will myself not to eat the wrong things and stick to my gluten-free diet. Migraine fatigue is a real thing and it can be draining.

At different times of the day, depending on how or what I am feeling, I need to distract my mind from dwelling on any negative or self-deprecating thinking. Bouts of pain and migraine attacks force me into a state of limitation.

I must reserve any energy I have for a really important task, otherwise, I take the risk of burning myself out and becoming utterly useless.

In the past I would power through that exhaustion, which in turn left me in high pain and with high migraine fatigue. Before I knew it I was almost out of spoons!

Many of us who live with chronic illness (a.k.a. spoonies) know about the spoon theory, created by Christine Miserandino. We typically wake up each day with 12 spoons and we have to manage how we are going to use them without running out of them before the day is over.

I live a life of high stress, mostly due to the fact that I cannot predict when or where I will be knocked down by pain. Every day has the potential for pain and fatigue. So how do we manage them both? Here are my top 10 tips for doing just that.

1. Assess Yourself

When you wake up in the morning, gauge how you are feeling and then determine how much you can handle that day. If you were not able to get enough sleep the night before, do not push yourself too hard the next day.

Save your spoons for what you must do, such as showering, getting dressed, eating, taking medication, and going to work/school, or running errands.

2. Learn to Say No

Never feel obligated to push yourself past your limit. Your health and wellbeing always comes first. As much as you would like to attend a friend’s party, social gathering or a night out with friends, if you are not feeling well do not make it worse by going. Simply say “No, thank you. I’m really tired and do not want to jeopardize my health. Maybe next time!”

3. Delegate!

Delegate tasks and chores that you normally take on by yourself. As a mom of three, it was important for me to teach all of them how to do their own laundry by the time they turned 10 years old.

They are also responsible for cleaning their bathroom, bedrooms, and common areas that they frequent. And if I am not well enough to cook, I will drive them to the store and let them pick out what they would like to cook for themselves. If I do not have to overextend myself, then I will not.

4. Remember to Breathe

Take a few minutes out of your day to breathe. Many of us forget to stop and take a few breaths when we are beginning to feel overwhelmed or when our pain is spiking.

Doing this simple task can bring you back to center and potentially lower your pain a few notches:

- Inhale through your nose for a count of four.
- Hold your breath for a count of seven.
- Exhale through your mouth for a count of eight.
- Repeat three times.

5. Plan, Plan, Plan

Making lists and keeping a schedule helps me manage my day. I can write out what is most important for me to accomplish and set aside less important tasks for a later date. I use the calendar on my phone and reminders app to keep me on track with my appointments, tasks, due dates, and my kids' schedules as well.

6. Take Breaks

Take a moment to stop, sit and reenergize. If you feel yourself becoming fatigued, take a break. If you have a hard time sitting and doing nothing for a few minutes, try doing a five-minute meditation or listen to guided imagery for chronic pain. Both of these methods are great forms of self-care and can give you a mid-day energy boost.

7. Eat Right

Eat foods that will give you lasting energy. Incorporate foods high in protein and omega 3s and 6s into your diet.

Snack on healthy nuts and trail mixes to give yourself a mid-day boost. Mornings are the hardest for me, so I make sure to eat a breakfast high in protein and healthy fats to give me a lot of energy that will not make me crash early in the day.

Here is my recipe for refrigerator oats that is easy to make and gives you plenty for the week.

8. Listen to Your Body and the Cues It's Sending You

Your body knows what it needs and we do not always do a good job listening to what it is trying to tell us. Whether it needs food, rest, or fresh air, listen and do what is best for you and your body in that moment.

9. Do Your Best to Sleep Well

Sometimes being over-fatigued can lead to bouts of insomnia. Getting a good night's sleep is very important in managing migraine and our fatigue.

Having a bedtime ritual is a great way to ensure restful and quality sleep. Drinking a cup of herbal tea (find my favorite here) or hot turmeric milk will get you ready for slumber.

Turn off all electronics before going to bed. Using guided imagery for sleep helps to make sure that you fall asleep and stay asleep.

10. Stay Hydrated

Last but certainly not least, drink lots of water! Not only is it important to stay hydrated all day, drinking water helps to flush out toxins, which could be making us feel worse.

Drink half of your body weight in ounces a day and you will be good to go!