Making the Most of Days Free From Migraine Pain

by BARBARA LEECH

Embracing Migraine Free Days

Some days, you wake up and there is no sign that you ever suffer from migraine pain. Your head is clear and there is no aura or any sensation to indicate a headache is approaching. You have no idea what combination of medication and self-care came together to produce this symptom-free day, but it's a great feeling.

There are days like this scattered throughout the month for me, where sometimes the pain I went to bed with magically lifts and I actually sleep more than a couple of hours. When I wake up, I feel normal. I feel like I can face the day and I have to say it is a beautiful, weird and confusing thing. What happened? Why am I me again and how do I hold on to it? I silently whisper, “Please, please, please let it last.”

I would like to tell you it lasts, but a migraine usually finds me sooner or later, even if I avoid my triggers. I have not figured out what might guarantee a "good day" with migraine. Believe me, if I did, I would share it with everyone or bottle the secret and cure the millions who suffer from migraines.

What to Do With a Pain-Free Day?

What I can say is when a pain-free day happens for me, I embrace that day with every cell within my body. I encourage you to make the most of those days, too, and focus on the freedom you have when you are migraine-free.

Make memories, express gratitude and accomplish some things you have been longing to do. Make yourself a good day list — basically a list of things you wish you could do, but migraines have interrupted or prevented you from doing.

This is part of not surrendering your entire self to the condition. It's easy to give up on making plans when you never know if you are going to be able to follow through with them. But I encourage you to seize the moment on good days — enjoy life while you are pain-free!

Make the list right now, even if you are in lying in bed wondering when your current migraine will ease — it's like writing down a goal, because it gives you hope to focus on — and have your list ready for that next good day so you can make the most of it.

Tips For Enjoying Your Good Day

Make a Few Fun Things Top Priority

The goal here is to not waste a good day folding laundry and cleaning your bathroom, but occasionally use it to remember who you are and what makes you happy.

Think of two or three things that you really have been longing to do, but have been postponed or forgotten about because of a migraine attack. Write those down at the top of your list. This is what you pick from on your fist good day that you are free to have some fun.

Next page: more tips for enjoying your migraine free days.

Tips For Enjoying Your Good Day

Do for Others

Migraines affect those who love us and care for us when we are down. Who is there for you during those times and what can you do for them while you feel well? This is next on your list.

Run a few errands for your husband? Cook a special dinner? Pick up your kids early from school to make cookies from scratch or to go to a movie? The point is to celebrate the good day together and make it special.

Volunteer

You might think this is crazy, but helping out others when you can makes you feel amazing and, yes, proud of yourself. The self-esteem of migraine sufferers is beaten down with every attack we get that debilitates us. We don't feel like a hero very often; instead we lay there questioning our value.

So, if you choose to volunteer during your good days, it goes a long way in making you feel like you still are a person who contributes and makes a difference, and that feeds the soul. Even something small like going into your child's classroom to read or help with an activity for an hour grants you those good feelings of still being part of something that matters.

Savor Each Moment

While you don't want to go nuts and trigger a migraine attack, you do want to take advantage of feeling good. This means enjoying every last minute of this good period, even the small things like getting some shopping done or going out with your special someone for dinner.

Keep yourself in check to safeguard against triggers like certain foods and drinking alcohol, but if you feel relatively normal allow yourself to indulge in activities you might normally avoid. And take photos of your dinner out together. Laugh freely, without the shadow of migraine pain on your face. Make memories to sustain you through the next attack.

Just Breathe

Sounds weird, but when we experience pain and struggle our natural tendency is to hold our breath. We are like squirrels who sense danger and we just freeze everything, including our natural pattern of breathing. Take time to take in a few, deep cleansing breaths and pay attention to the feeling of no pain. It is an amazing feeling.

Let the stress and tension you hold onto as you anticipate the next challenge your condition might present leave your body with each exhale. Remind yourself to live in this moment, not in anticipation of your next migraine attack.

Final Thoughts

I believe that if migraine grants me a "good day" and I do nothing with it, afraid I will trigger another bad day, I have wasted a blessing. I have learned the bad days will eventually return no matter what I do, so I celebrate the good when I can.

I remember to keep myself in check on those days by watching what I eat and drink (avoiding known triggers) and I try and let stress and tension go. I think the more good days I enjoy the more I tend to have. Maybe it is the smiles, laughter or release of stress, but seizing the good days has improved my quality of life overall.

I am more than just a person who suffers migraines. My good day list keeps me and my loved ones going. It is my small miracle.

What's on your good day list to do?