Asking for Help When You Have Fibromyalgia

by ADRIEL MALDONADO

The Importance of Asking for Help When You Have Fibro

Initially, my thought of this subject was, ‘I don’t think I am the right person to write about this.’ Asking for help is not the easiest thing for me to do. Being raised by a single mom taught me relying on others is not always an option.

Admitting You Need Help

From a young age, it was very important to me that I be able to take care of myself. However, insert a chronic illness into my life and suddenly I have no choice but to turn to others for help. This is a difficult lesson that I am continuing to learn.

My second thought about this subject was, ‘Maybe I am exactly the right person to write about this.’ I can’t be the only one that has a hard time having to look to others for assistance. Maybe my journey of accepting my current situation can be helpful to others that are in similar place as me.

Why is asking for help so hard? A major part of my difficulty is, as I said before, I grew up in a situation where there was no one person that my mom was able to rely on, she had to take care of herself and three children on her own.

I saw what a struggle that was for her. I told myself whether I grew up and got married or not, I would always be able to take care of myself. Because sometimes things happen in life we’re not expecting — I wanted to be prepared for that.

But even if you did not grow up in such an environment, the society we live in tells women that if they want to matter, if they want to be important, they need to take care of themselves.

This leads to the thinking that you must be able to care and provide for yourself. This leads to thinking you're not a strong woman if you rely on anyone, whether it be a mate, parent, or anyone else. But is this really healthy? And more importantly, is this really practical?

Changing Our Mindset

Looking at these questions from the point of view of someone with a chronic illness, I can wholeheartedly answer no to both.

When my fibro symptoms first started getting really bad, I was determined to prove I was just as capable of taking care of myself as ever. I would cause myself physical harm to avoid asking my husband to bring in the groceries. Was the mind set that I didn't need help from anyone healthy? Obviously not.

I have had to learn the hard way that when you suffer from fibromyalgia or any chronic illness, you will need help. You will need to rely on people for things you were previously able to do on your own. I have also had to learn that there is nothing wrong with asking for help.

Learning Not to Care About What Others Think

Not one of us is meant to do it all, so your worth is not based on whether you can do it all on your own. This is especially true when you are suffering with fibro — you simply cannot go at it alone. You need help. And that is okay, there is nothing wrong with that.

So how do you go about getting help? Just ask.

If you are married, the first person to turn to is your mate. If you are not, or if they are unwilling or unable to help, turn to family or friends.

Ask for help getting groceries, doing things around the house, getting to doctors visits. Ask them to pick up your medicine or other items you need when you are unable to get out of the house.

You can also turn to the government for financial assistance if you need it. You may even be able to get in home medical care if that is necessary.

Another aspect of help that can be difficult for many of us to accept is the need to use things like canes, walkers or wheelchairs. I think this is especially true for young people. It can be embarrassing to ride around a store on a motor scooter when you're in your early 20s.

You assume that everyone sees you thinks you are just playing around or being lazy, that you are taking it away from someone who really needs it. At least, these are the thoughts I have anytime I've had to use one.

But the fact is, it doesn't matter what anyone else thinks — I know I need it. I know I would be sitting at home alone, again, if I was not using it. Using mobility aids can not only improve your health, but also your quality of life. And isn't that more important than your pride?

I know how difficult it can be to ask for help, but at times it is necessary. And that is not something any one of us should feel ashamed of. Of course this does not mean you have to give up every ounce of independence you have, it just means there is need to be reasonable.

Recognize where your limitations are and do not be too afraid or too proud to ask for assistance. It has been my experience that the people that love and care about you will be more than happy to help you out.