Five Things to Be Thankful for With Fibromyalgia

by SARAH BORIEN

Being Thankful With Fibromyalgia

When you have a chronic illness like fibromyalgia, it can be easy to get caught up in the stress and sadness of managing your health. It can even lead to feelings of self-pity, self-doubt and a loss of self-worth.

With the feeling of loss and sadness that can sometimes feel all consuming, it can be difficult to find the energy to be thankful. But sometimes it's important to take a step back, take a deep breath and look around because there's an awful lot to be thankful for.

Be Thankful for Your Helpers

When I was first diagnosed eight years ago, I didn't know what was going on. I felt pain everywhere, I couldn't work and I didn't know what was causing the deterioration of my health.

During what was one of the most challenging times of my life, the struggle with my health brought out the best and the worst in the people around me, and while my mind often focused on the worst, it's so important that I don't ignore the best.

Coping with fibromyalgia would be so much more difficult if it weren't for the incredible people around us. Whether it's your partner, a parent or child, a friend or a work colleague, the people who help us get through the day are the people we must never forget to thank.

They are often the people that bear the brunt of our frustration, and they're the people who are patient and kind and caring and loving when we need it most. Those helpers are more important to us than they will ever know.

Be Thankful for the Medics

Being diagnosed with fibromyalgia is — more often than not — a long and difficult process to go through. Finding a doctor who believes us seems to be the first of the many hurdles we encounter during our medical journey, and what follows is a series of appointments that we spend a lot of time and energy preparing for only to leave disappointed.

I sometimes think that the hunt for a good doctor is the fibromyalgia equivalent of looking for gold at the end of a rainbow! That's possibly a little mean on the medical community, but the struggle to find a doctor who really listens to us is real.

That's why, when you finally find a medical professional who not only listens but really hears us, you should be truly thankful.

I've experienced this lately. I recently moved house and my new doctor understands my condition, openly

discusses my options and empathizes with my frustration.

He calls me to see how I'm getting on with my latest meds, and he allows me to make the decisions without passing all responsibility on to me. When you find your dream doctor, don't forget to thank them. It may be their job, but it's a tricky one and some do it so much better than others.

Be Thankful for Social Media

Many people moan about social media. We all spend so much time on our phones and laptops, supposedly staring at a screen instead of interacting with those around us.

But as a spoonie, I find social media to be one of the most welcoming and supportive environments for coping with chronic pain.

Imagine having fibromyalgia in the 1980s or 1990s, at a time when the medical community didn't believe you and there was no one else who understood. These days you just need to sign up to a blog or follow a hashtag and you are surrounded by thousands of other fibromyalgia sufferers.

We talk openly to one another, we share our stories and our successes, and we provide tips and techniques to help each other out. We learn about other chronic illnesses like lupus and MS, and we discover through 140 characters on Twitter that, actually, we are all experiencing something very similar.

When I think about the five things I'm most thankful for, I feel lucky to be living with this condition at a time when I can curl up under a blanket and talk to hundreds and thousands of fellow spoonies at the click of a button.

Be Thankful for Binge-Watching (or Whatever Your Hobby May Be)

Can you imagine a world without on-demand television? How did we ever cope?

Binge-watching is my thing, and for a long time I thought it was because I was lazy. And in part, it is! But it's also because fibromyalgia sufferers spend a lot of time on the sofa, and it's important to find a hobby that requires no physical effort, but that is distracting and engaging enough that you can forget your pain — or start to.

For some that hobby is cross-stitch, for others it's art therapy, and for others it's reading. For me it's sitting in front of Netflix and watching back-to-back episodes of the latest drama, finding characters and story-lines to take me out of reality and in to a world that's mesmerizing.

Thank goodness we don't have to trek to a video rental store like the old days!

Be Thankful for Your Health

This may seem like a strange thing to be thankful for when my health can be the cause of so much stress and worry, but I think it's incredibly important to recognize the good that comes out of chronic illness. Fibromyalgia is frustrating and painful, but I have good days. I still work full time, I manage my pain and I know that, actually, things could be worse.

This year, take a moment to be thankful for the days you can cope. For the days when things feel manageable, for the moments you feel strong, and for those rare occurrences when you forget that you're chronically ill.