

Quick and Dirty: What Works for Me

By Melissa Reynolds

I have shared about my journey in hopes that the information helps someone on theirs. I am in a much better position than I was for the entirety of my early and mid-twenties. I didn't manage to get on the path to better wellness until I was 25 and even then it was a slow process, I am still working on it.

Without rhetoric, without frills, I thought I'd share what has worked for me:

1. **Reduced work hours** - my body simply couldn't maintain full time work, plus the one hour travel each way, and cope with the pain and fatigue levels.
2. **Supplementation** - I just don't absorb some vitamins and minerals. I eat plenty of meat and leafy greens and still my iron levels hover, unassisted at the lowest of the very large "healthy" range. Finding out that they should be much higher and working toward that made a huge difference. A potent multivitamin also seems to make a difference for me, so there must be other vitamins for which absorption is an issue.
3. **Physiotherapy** - this is my body's necessary physical support. Through much trial and error, I have found that my over-reactive muscles needed less activity and a specific treatment plan. This includes neck tractions, acupuncture needles inserted into key points (neck, shoulders, upper back, lower back, glutes). If I ever try a massage instead of physio, my neck pays for it dearly - nothing else activates, releases and keeps it released for two or three weeks. And my neck can cause headaches, dizziness and nausea when bad.

4. **Sleep** - I have to take low dose amitriptyline in order to get to sleep, take pain relief for my neck, stay in bed for nine or 10 hours and accept that I wake every one or two hours (therefore not making a full sleep cycle very often). But if I can get eight hours, no matter how broken, it makes a dramatic impact on my pain and fatigue levels the next day. I have to go to bed by 9.30/10pm in order to hope for enough sleep before my son wakes up, reducing night activities.
5. **Reduced activity levels** - my body does not cope with too much, so in addition to my reduced work hours, I must also limit my activity levels. I have to include rest periods also. We don't often go out at night, and when we do I really struggle to stay awake and get quite sore, so it never feels worth it. This is one part of the lifestyle to cope that I am constantly struggling with.
6. **Meditation** - I can't nap no matter how exhausted and miserable I am, so meditation has been a lifesaver. Lying down for 30 minutes with my heat pack and a guided meditation makes a huge difference for me. It's the difference between a nice afternoon and a long, tiring, painful afternoon.
7. **Exercise** - stretching sore, tight muscles is crucial to keeping them moving and should never been underutilised. Gentle walking, yoga and Pilates have been useful for me to keep me active but not overdo it. My muscles tend to respond to too much AND not enough exercise, my sweet spot tends to hover at 20-30 minutes per day.
8. **Pain Management Techniques** – through a lot of trial and error, I have a key list of pain management techniques that I enact every day. This includes natural and medicinal options, with a heavy focus on natural options. I have found great relief from low dose naltrexone.
9. **Hope** - never will I allow myself to lose hope. There's always more to try, there's always a silver lining. We need to hold onto this as we journey because pain and fatigue can really do a number on your emotions, making things seem worse at your worst.

To a person without pain and fatigue this seems really limited, to a person in the place I was several years ago (and to me now) it's a worthy compromise to go from just surviving to actually living. Everything is worth less pain and fatigue. Pain to the point of nausea and dizziness, and fatigue to the point of needing match sticks to hold your eyes open by lunchtime is worth trying anything for.

You will see from my journey that I have tried a great many things, do follow other things in addition to these eight key points and have many other things on my list to try, but this is the quick and dirty list of what works for me.

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My book [Melissa vs Fibromyalgia: My Journey Fighting Chronic Pain, Chronic Fatigue and Insomnia](#) is available on Amazon from the 29th January 2018.