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Because We Matter ☺

## What is fibromyalgia?

Fibromyalgia is a long-term (chronic) condition that causes widespread pain in the muscles, tendons and ligaments. It's quite common – it's thought that as many as 1 person in every 25 may be affected. More women than men are affected and the condition varies a great deal from one person to another and from day to day.

In the past, other terms were used to describe the condition, including muscular rheumatism and fibrositis. The condition may even have been misdiagnosed as degenerative joint disease.

We now know that fibromyalgia isn't inflammatory or degenerative. Although the pain can be severe and have a significant impact on your daily life, long-term studies suggest that it isn't progressive and, unlike arthritis, it won't cause permanent damage to your muscles, bones or joints.

## What are the symptoms of fibromyalgia?

There are usually no visible signs of fibromyalgia. People with fibromyalgia often look well even when they're in a lot of pain.

### Most common symptoms of fibromyalgia

The main symptoms of fibromyalgia are:

- widespread pain in your muscles
- tiredness (fatigue)
- sleep disturbance.

The severity of symptoms varies from person to person and from day to day. Many people have flare-ups from time to time when their symptoms become suddenly worse. People with fibromyalgia often say that the fatigue is the worst part of the condition and that they can't seem to think clearly or remember things properly (this is sometimes called 'fibrofog').

The pain may feel as though it affects your whole body, or it may be particularly bad in just a few areas. Some people find that their pain feels worse in very hot, cold or damp weather.

### Less common symptoms of fibromyalgia

Less frequent symptoms of fibromyalgia include:

- poor circulation – tingling, numbness or swelling in your hands and feet
- headaches
- irritability or feeling miserable
- feeling an urgent need to urinate, especially at night
- irritable or uncomfortable bowels (diarrhoea or constipation and abdominal pain).

## How is fibromyalgia diagnosed?

Fibromyalgia is often difficult to diagnose as the symptoms vary considerably and can be similar to the symptoms of other conditions, for example an underactive thyroid gland (hypothyroidism). There aren't any specific blood tests, x-rays or scans that can confirm a diagnosis of fibromyalgia, but your doctor may suggest you have blood tests to rule out other conditions.

Until recently, the diagnosis of fibromyalgia was made based on specific tender points in certain areas of your body, which can be tender even when pressed very gently. However, many people find that other areas are also painful.

Guidelines issued in 2010 recommend that healthcare professionals should also consider fatigue, waking up feeling un-refreshed and cognitive symptoms when making a diagnosis, as well as a history of pain lasting three months or more.

## What causes fibromyalgia?

We don't yet know exactly what causes fibromyalgia, but research suggests that there's an interaction between physical, mental and psychological factors. The pain we feel is often affected by our emotions and moods – depression or anxiety can make the pain seem worse. At the same time, being in pain can lead to stress and anxiety.

Some people with fibromyalgia report that their symptoms started after a viral infection, a physical or mental trauma (like a car accident or bereavement) or following a period of stress and anxiety, for example in a relationship. But in other cases, there seems to be no particular event leading up to the onset of symptoms.

Usually, pain is a result of a physical injury or illness that has damaged part of the body, but in fibromyalgia there is no damage or injury. The pain doesn't have a physical cause but is something to do with the way the brain and nervous system process pain. This doesn't mean the pain is any less real, but because there's no physical cause that can be healed it's often difficult to stop
the pain. The pain of fibromyalgia therefore tends to be long-lasting (chronic) even though it doesn't cause any permanent damage to the body's tissues.

Research has shown that people with fibromyalgia are more sensitive to physical pressure. This means that what would be a relatively minor knock for most people could be extremely painful for someone with fibromyalgia. This increased sensitivity isn't fully understood but it's thought that it could be related to changes in the way the nervous system processes pain. Some researchers have shown using special brain scans that these processes are altered in people with fibromyalgia.

Sleep disturbance may also contribute to this increased sensitivity. Brainwave studies show that people with fibromyalgia often lose deep sleep.

A number of things may lead to sleep disturbance, such as:

- pain from an injury or another condition such as arthritis
- stress at work or strain in personal relationships
- depression brought on by illness or unhappy events.

In an experiment where healthy volunteers were woken during each period of deep sleep, a number of them developed the typical signs and symptoms of fibromyalgia. Not surprisingly, a combination of pain, sleep disturbance and anxiety or depression can turn into a vicious cycle. A poor sleep pattern will contribute to the severe tiredness that often goes with fibromyalgia.

## What conditions may be related to fibromyalgia?

Some people who have fibromyalgia also report being affected by:

- chronic tiredness (fatigue)
- depression and anxiety
- headaches and / or migraines
- joint pain in various parts of their body
- restless leg syndrome – spasms in either one or both legs
- irritable bowel syndrome (IBS)
- temporomandibular joint disorder (TMJD), which causes problems with the joint connecting the jawbone to their skull, resulting in pain in their jaw and areas nearby
- underactive thyroid (hypothyroidism).

The symptoms of fibromyalgia are often very similar to the symptoms of chronic fatigue syndrome, which was previously known as ME (myalgic encephalomyelitis). People with chronic fatigue syndrome can often recall a viral infection before symptoms appeared and may have less pain than people with fibromyalgia, but we need to know more about the conditions before we can say whether they're the same thing.

## What treatments are there for fibromyalgia?

There's no cure as yet for fibromyalgia, but there are ways of managing your symptoms.

**Drugs for fibromyalgia**

Your doctor can prescribe medications to help with pain, sleep disturbance or depression associated with fibromyalgia. However, they won't usually get rid of the pain completely so it's important to discuss your treatments with your doctor to find the right balance between pain relief and the possible side-effects of some of the drugs.

**Painkillers like paracetamol** can help to ease pain. Where paracetamol isn't strong enough, some people find drugs like co-codamol or co-dydramol useful. These contain paracetamol plus a stronger painkiller such as codeine, but they can cause side-effects such as constipation.

**Opiate drugs** include tramadol, codeine and buprenorphine or fentanyl patches. They're very strong painkillers with many side-effects and it can be difficult to stop taking them once they're started. Doctors, especially in pain clinics, may offer these if the pain is seriously affecting your quality of life but they don't always work in fibromyalgia and should be used as sparingly as possible due to the risk of long-term side-effects.

**Capsaicin gel** or **non-steroidal anti-inflammatory gels** rubbed into the painful areas may help you, but there's no convincing evidence that they're effective in most people with fibromyalgia, especially as many different areas of your body can be affected at the same time.

**Drugs such as low-dose amitriptyline and dosulepin** can reduce muscle pain and improve your sleep pattern. These drugs need to be taken 2–3 hours before you settle at night. They may not work straight away, so you may need to try them for a few months to see whether they help. Your doctor will gradually increase the dose to an effective level.

**Antidepressants**, such as fluoxetine or paroxetine, can help with both pain and low mood. Antidepressants are often prescribed even if you are not showing signs of low mood. The main reason for this is because they relax your muscles. Thus when muscles are less tense, there can be less associated pain.

**Drugs such as pregabalin and gabapentin** have been used to treat pain. You'll need to take them for a period of 6 weeks to assess whether they're helpful. These can cause side-effects such as dizziness and weight gain.

**Duloxetine** can help with pain and sleep disturbance.

**Physical therapies for fibromyalgia**

**Your doctor may refer you to a physiotherapist or occupational therapist for further treatment and advice.**

**Physiotherapy**

Physiotherapy can help you to improve your posture, stretch and relax your muscles, and gradually become more active. Physiotherapists can also advise you about relaxation techniques.

**Occupational therapy**

Occupational therapy can help you to manage your everyday jobs without increasing your pain or wearing yourself out. Your occupational therapist may suggest pacing yourself, changing the way you work or using labour-saving gadgets.

**Self-help and daily living for fibromyalgia**

Many people with fibromyalgia have learnt to manage their condition so that they can continue to live their lives enjoyably despite their symptoms. The following sections look at some of the things that might help.

**Exercise and fibromyalgia**

If you have fibromyalgia your muscles will often feel stiff and tense, making them more prone to sprains and strains. It's important to reduce this tension by stretching your muscles regularly.

Aerobic exercise improves fitness and reduces pain and fatigue in people with fibromyalgia. It should also improve your sleep and general well-being.

Aerobic simply means increasing the circulation of oxygen through your blood, so any exercise that gets you breathing heavily and your heart beating faster is aerobic. Swimming is particularly recommended for people with fibromyalgia, but walking and cycling are also helpful.

Build up your exercise at a rate you can cope with, pace yourself and be patient. You may find that your pain and tiredness become worse at first as you start to exercise muscles that haven't been used for a while. Try to do the same amount of exercise each day so that you build up your muscle strength and stamina. Increasing your exercise little by little will also improve your fitness and flexibility. Yoga has been shown to help some people with fibromyalgia.

**Diet and fibromyalgia**

No particular diet has been proven to help fibromyalgia, but we recommend keeping your weight within a healthy range by eating a balanced diet with plenty of fruit and vegetables.

**Complementary therapies and fibromyalgia**

Some people with fibromyalgia find that complementary medicines help their symptoms. Treatments like massage and acupuncture or manipulation by a chiropractor or osteopath may temporarily ease the pain and discomfort.

Like prescription medication, what works for one patient may not work for another patient. But are certainly worth a try.

Generally speaking complementary therapies are relatively well tolerated. However, you should speak to your doctor before trying them as some can interact with prescribed medications.

**Sleep and Fibromyalgia**

Poor sleep is a key symptom of fibromyalgia, so getting enough proper sleep is an important part of the treatment. Not only will it help with tiredness and fatigue but you may also find it helps with your pain. To make sure you get a better night's sleep:

- avoid alcohol, tea or coffee (or any other form of caffeine) late at night
- develop a sleep routine, settling down and getting up at the same time each day
- try to stop smoking or at least don't smoke late at night
- avoid watching TV in your bedroom
- keep a notepad by your bed so that if you think of something you need to do the next day you can write it down and then put it out of your mind
- relax and try gentle exercise as this can reduce muscle tension.

Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) may be helpful for some people who have severely disrupted sleep.

**Other tips**

Fibromyalgia varies from person to person. We suggest you try some of the following tips to find out what works for you:

- Learn about fibromyalgia. Understanding it can help to ease your fear and anxiety.
- Find out if there's a support group in your area, or think about joining an online fibromyalgia forum or expert patient programme. Discussing your experiences with others who have fibromyalgia may help.
- Encourage your family and friends to find out more and discuss your condition with you – you could show them this information to help explain your experiences. It's especially important that they understand you may be in severe pain even if you look well.
- Learn to take time out for yourself to relax your mind and your muscles.
- Pace yourself. It's tempting to do a lot on one day, but doing too much can make your symptoms worse the next day. Spread things out over a longer period and make sure you do things you enjoy as well as things you have to do.

- Try the medications your doctor has to offer and discuss which ones are helpful.
- Find effective ways of communicating feelings such as anxiety or anger. Counselling or CBT can help to break the cycle of anxiety, depression and pain and has helped many people keep their pain under control – your GP will be able to refer you.
- Unhappiness at home or work can make pain feel worse. Addressing the causes of this unhappiness could help. Ask for help from people at
  your work, such as a friend, colleague or manager. You can also seek advice from experts such as those mentioned in the "Useful Contacts at the end of the booklet. They can work with you and your employer to find the best solution for everyone.
- Some people have found that meditation helps relieve their pain.

**Research and new developments for fibromyalgia:**

**The Author hopes to be able to fundraise in order to help with research into Fibromyalgia.**

**Biomedical Research will help better understand, and possibly find a cure for**
**this Chronic Debilitating Condition!**

- investigate how people experience pain
- understand the biological basis of pain in Fibromyalgia patients.
- develop new drugs to treat pain more effectively
- improve the effectiveness of currently available pain-relief drugs
- investigate basic pathways of pain perception to identify new targets for developing treatments.

**We Look so Well**

In view of the constantly changing levels and sites of pain you may have thought that the person troubled with Fibromyalgia was going mad or simply being idle. Don't feel guilty if you have,
for many of us have had the same thoughts about ourselves. How can we look so well and feel so bad?

Fibromyalgia is often referred to as the invisible condition or the irritable everything because there are no visible signs, but inside we are hurting and our self esteem can be very low. We may feel that we are letting everyone down.

Try to talk about these feelings and learn to recognise mood swings and down days. Work together to reduce daily levels of stress: everyone will benefit.

The two main symptoms of fibromyalgia are pain and fatigue, but muscle stiffness is also a very troublesome symptom. This usually occurs after sleeping or lying in one position. Once we get moving the stiffness will normally ease after an hour or two, but in some people it can last all day. Stiffness and pain can also occur if we sit in one position for too long. This needs to be considered when planning journeys.

**Making the Most of a Good Day**

We may not be able to do all the things we used to do, but it is important to have fun and mingle with the outside world. List ideas for short outings to places with room to move around; keep up with visits to and from friends and family; visit parks and gardens where a walk can be enjoyed and then a rest on a bench (or more comfortable seat). There are lots of places to go. Just getting out for half an hour can make all the difference.

It is important that you do not become isolated. You may not be as caring and understanding if you feel trapped and resentful; make sure you keep up with your own social life.

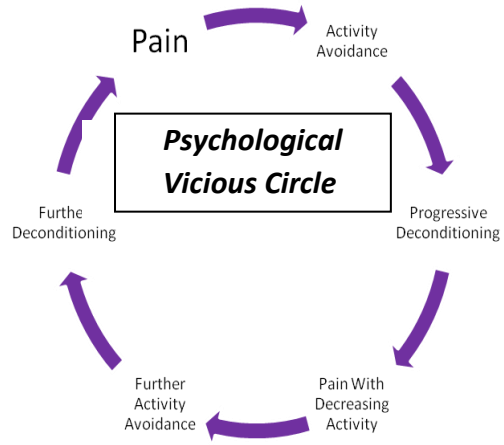
## ***You've Been Called To Manorhamilton To Stay – What Next?***

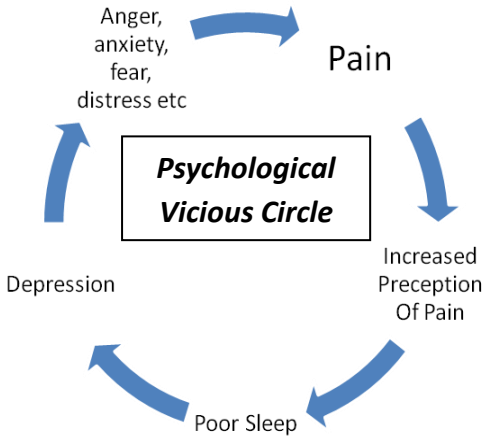
So you've finally been called to Manorhamilton (or any Rheumatology clinic) to stay as an inpatient. It may seem like a scary ordeal if you've never been before. But working with the Team there, you will hopefully come home with some new techniques and advise that is suitable for home use.

The main piece of advice is ASK QUESTIONS! Don't be afraid to ask the experts, while you already the appointment. Make a list (it's easier to write it out as it's easy to forget) of queries or concerns about your condition, your medications or the long term prognosis.

The following list has been compiled from tips kindly given by members who have attended Manorhamilton. It can be tweeked to your needs. Most importantly – ENJOY YOUR STAY ☺

- Bring a list of your medications – past and present
- Make a list of medications tried and how you felt about them
- Also a list of treatments tried and how you reacted to them – positive or negative
- Keep a diary of the week before you attend – write down everything – from your pain levels and where pains are and when, energy levels, sleep patterns, your limitations on daily basis and feelings
- Laptop & Charger
- Phone & Charger
- Swim Gear for Hydro Pool
- Comfortable clothes including shoes for the physio sessions
- P.J.'s
- Heat Pads / Cool Pads
- Joint Supports / Walking Aid
- Books
- Towels
- Hairdryer / Straighteners for the ladies ☺
- Toiletries such as toothbrush / paste etc
- Mirror
- Ear Plugs / Ear Phones
- Notebook & Pen to write down what treatments you felt help there at time
- Night time Snacks ;-)
- Money for the café – directions courtesy of Joanna Xx ☺
  *When you go through front door, instead of turning right towards the nurses station, turn left & go to the end of the hall. You'll see a vending machine on the left (which is handy at night!), you'll see you can turn right – there's a door which takes you to the wee chapel, go through that and then another door to the left is the Cafe*




**7. Types of Fibromyalgia Pain**

By Adrienne Dellwo, About.com Guide *Updated May 10, 2011*
*About.com Health's Disease and Condition content is reviewed by the Medical Review Board*

You hear a lot about "fibromyalgia pain," but those of us with fibromyalgia (FMS) experience several *kinds* of pain.

Medically speaking, only a few of the fibromyalgia-pain types I talk about here have names and definitions. But just as Eskimos have several words for snow, I think we need to have several ways to name, define and categorize our pain. I've created some of my own categories, based on my experience and on conversations with other fibromites. My hope is that understanding the medical terms will help us communicate better with doctors, while my categories will help you understand your illness and let you know you're not alone.

**Types of Fibromyalgia Pain**
The first 3 types of fibromyalgia pain are medically defined:
Hyperalgesia Allodynia Painful Paresthesia
The next 4 types are my own creation, which is obvious by their names. Don't use these terms in a doctor's office (unless you want to be seen as crazy), but these labels may help you get to know your body's quirks, triggers, patterns, etc.:

**Knife in the Voodoo Doll**
Randomly Roving Pain
Sparkler Burns
Rattled Nerves
First, the medically defined types of fibromyalgia pain.

**Hyperalgesia & Fibromyalgia Pain**
"Hyper" means excess and "algesia" means pain. Hyperalgesia is the medical term for pain amplification in FMS. Our brains appear to take normal pain signals and "turn up the volume," making them more severe than they would normally be.
Most of the drugs used for managing fibromyalgia pain are aimed, at least in part, at reducing hyperalgesia.

## Allodynia & Fibromyalgia Pain

Is your skin painful to touch? A symptom that perplexes a lot of us is allodynia. That's what it's called when mild pressure from clothing or gentle massage causes pain. A lot people describe allodynia as similar to a bad sunburn. Allodynia is a fairly rare type of pain -- other than FMS, it's only associated with a handful of conditions, including neuropathy, postherpetic neuralgia (shingles) and migraine. Allodynia is believed to be a hypersensitive reaction that may result from the central sensitizationassociated with FMS. The pain signals originate with specialized nerves, called nociceptors, that sense information about things like temperature and painful stimuli right from the skin.

Allodynia comes in 3 forms:
Tactile, which is pain from touch or gentle pressure
Mechanical, which is from something moving across your skin
Thermal, which is pain from heat or cold that's not severe enough to damage tissues

Some people get relief from topical pain creams or medication. Paying close attention to the way you dress can help alleviate allodynia as well.
If you have allodynia, massage therapy may make it worse. If you feel other aspects of your health would benefit from massage, be sure to discuss allodynia with your doctor and massage therapist and keep track of how treatments impact this symptom.

## Painful Paresthesia & Fibromyalgia

Paresthesias are odd nerve sensations that can feel like crawling, tingling, burning, itching or numbness. Sometimes, these sensations can be painful. Paresthsias are also associated with peripheral
neuropathy, chemotherapy drugs, multiple sclerosis and migraine.

Many common FMS treatments can help alleviate paresthesia-related pain, including selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) and serotonin norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors(SNRIs). Some people also have good luck with vitamin B12, capsaicin cream, massage and acupuncture.

## My Own Fibromyalgia Pain Categories

Once again, the following categories are not medically recognized -- they're things I came up with to fill a gap in how we classify different types of pain. They're intended to help you track symptoms, gauge effectiveness of treatments, and to let you know you're not alone.

## Fibromyalgia Pain: Knife in the Voodoo Doll

Sometimes, out of nowhere, I'll get an intense stabbing pain that seems to cut through my body. I've also described this as a fireplace poker in the ribs or being impaled on a spear.
For me, the voodoo doll pain is often my body's early warning system -- it tells me that I need to stop what I'm doing and rest. Other times, I have no idea why it strikes. I generally get this pain in my chest or abdomen, but some people say they get it in other parts of the body. It can be so intense that it can double me over and make it hurt to breathe. It usually goes away as after a few minutes. I have no idea how to prevent this type of pain, other than by pacing myself. (If only I could find that darned doll.)

## Fibromyalgia Pain: Randomly Roving Pain

This is one of those things that remind you FMS just doesn't make a lot of sense. A lot of us get pain that migrates around the body, sometimes moving between certain places, sometimes striking in new areas. If you also have myofascial pain syndrome, it can be especially hard to tell randomly roving pain from the referred pain caused by trigger points.
For me, this pain responds to treatments about the same as hyperalgesia.

## Fibromyalgia Pain: Sparkler Burns

One 4th of July, when I was young, I hung onto a sparkler for too long and some sparks hit my hand. They caused tiny pin-pricks of pain almost identical to sensations I now get regularly. They make me jump, and scratching them triggers tactile allodynia. These sensations usually just last a few seconds. I have no idea what triggers them or how to prevent them.

## Fibromyalgia Pain: Rattled Nerves

Most people won't understand why I call this a type of pain, but I'm sure most fibromites will get it. Certain things tend to get my whole body on edge, jumpy, and feeling rattled. It makes me ache all over, and sometimes I get nauseous, dizzy and anxious. Things that rattle my nerves generally involve sensory or emotional overload, such as:
Certain sounds (repetitive, loud, shrill, grating)
Visual chaos (crowds, flashing lights, busy patterns)
Stressful situations (busy traffic, confrontations, fibro-fog induced confusion or disorientation)
When my nerves are rattled, I try to get out of the situation as quickly as possible and relax, preferably somewhere quiet.

## Working with Your Doctor

**Tips based on information by Jenny Fransen, R.N.**

- Within the working relationship between you and your medical professionals you have responsibilities that need to be recognised in order for the partnership to work and for you to receive health care that meets your needs.
- Prepare for the visit ahead of time to make the best use of your short time together:
- Provide concise, accurate information (e.g. if seeing a medical professional for the first time -medical history, current symptoms, sleep quality, current and past medications)
- Accurately report adverse fibromyalgia symptoms and any side effects of medication.
- Use the information below to help record details that needs to be reported to your medical care team.
- Become educated about your condition – this will enable you to ask the appropriate questions
- Be an active participant in your treatment. (Listen, ask questions, give feedback, and follow through with treatment to the best of your ability.)
- Be honest in expressing feelings and concerns.
- Be sensitive to your own symptoms and concerns and give some thought to the questions that you might ask your doctor.
- Keep a list handy to jot questions down between visits to the surgery.
- Consider other resources for information, such as your pharmacist for medication questions.
- As there is no magic bullet for fibromyalgia, great patience is required to find a combination of therapies and medication to bring about improvement.
- Recognise that there will be inherent frustrations for patients and doctors when treating a condition that continues to hold many mysteries for the researchers.
- Realise much of your treatment is up to you: exercise, relaxation, stress management, pain management, pursuing additional therapies and treatments such as stretching and massage.
- Learn as much as you can about your own illness, since you are the one who will manage the day-to-day problems that occur.
- Actively manage fibromyalgia -related problems, such as pain, sleep problems, etc.
- During surgery visits be prepared to ask for what you need to manage your fibromyalgia. Be as specific and as concise as possible. Don't ramble.
- Work with your doctor to develop a plan of action should you have a flare-up so you can initiate treatment on your own. Can you increase your sleep medication or take ibuprofen for pain? What else can you do during a flare-up to reduce symptoms and feel better?
- If you are having symptoms of depression, inform your doctor. Depression can further disrupt sleep cycles and will need treatment.
- Reinforce and thank the doctor for specific behaviours and techniques you find helpful "I appreciate that you really listen to me, Dr. Jones."

- Learn to ask for what you need from your doctor. "Would you explain to me what could be done to help me sleep better?"
- Develop a good relationship with the doctor's nurse and receptionist. Identify rules of the surgery: doctor's day off and when the best time is to call and leave a message. Know the nurse's name and ask for him/her when you call. Be patient if they are unable to call back immediately
- Avoid angry or defensive communication.
- If your physician has told you to return in three months, you can make an appointment earlier to discuss your questions or concerns if necessary.
- If a problem arises with medication or treatment, ask if you can call for an answer rather than make another appointment.
- Be assertive and take responsibility for your own treatment.
- Remember you are in charge of your own treatment programme.
- Don't be afraid to bring someone with you, or a notebook to write any advice down – fibro fog may make you forget what the doctor ordered!

**How To Love Yourself**

Stop all criticism. Criticism never changes a thing. Refuse to criticise yourself. Accept yourself exactly as you are. Everybody changes. When you criticise yourself, your changes are negative. When you approve of yourself, your changes are positive.

Don't scare yourself. Stop terrorizing yourself with your thoughts. It's a dreadful way to live. Find a mental image that gives you pleasure, and immediately switch your scary thought to a pleasure thought.

Be gentle and kind and patient. Be gentle with yourself. Be kind to yourself. Be patient with yourself as you learn the new ways of thinking. Treat yourself as you would someone you really loved.

Be kind to your mind. Self-hatred is only hating your own thoughts. Don't hate yourself for having the thoughts. Gently change the thoughts.

Praise yourself. Criticism breaks the inner spirit. Praise builds it up. Praise yourself as much as you can. Tell yourself how well you are doing with every little thing.

Support yourself. Find ways to support yourself. Reach out to friends and all them to help you. It is being strong to ask for help when you need it.

Be loving to your negatives. Acknowledge that you created them to fulfil a need. Now you are finding new, positive ways to fulfil those needs. So, lovingly release the old negative patterns.

Take care of your body. Learn about nutrition. What kind of fuel does your body need to have optimum energy and vitality? Learn about exercise. What kind of exercise can you enjoy? Cherish and revere the temple you live in.

Mirror work. Look into your own eyes often. Express this growing sense of love you have for yourself. Forgive yourself looking into the mirror. Talk to your parents looking into the mirror. Forgive them, too. At least once a day say : "I love you, I really love you"

Love yourself – do it now! Don't wait for until you get well, or lose the weight, or get the new job, or new relationship. Begin NOW – do the best you can.

© 1988 Louise Hay

And Finally – Dance as if no one is watching, Sing as if no one is listening & Love as if you've never been hurt before ☺

***20 Tips For A Good Night's Sleep***

Ban Blue Light in the Bedroom
Insomnia feeds on the minor details of modern life, like the soft blue glow from a cell phone, PDA, or digital clock resting on your bedside table. The short waves of blue light may interfere with sleep.

**Tip:** Turn off TVs, computers, and other blue light producers an hour before sleep. Cover any blue displays you can't shut off.

***Avoid Naps***

Napping makes matters worse if you have trouble falling asleep. But if you must nap, keep it brief, 20 minutes or less -- and do it early in the day. Any shut-eye within eight hours of your bedtime can sabotage a good night's sleep.
**Tip:** When an afternoon slump hits, go for a short walk, drink a glass of ice water, or call a friend.

***Block the Clock***

When you glance at the clock in the wee hours of the night, your sleep will suffer. You worry about how few hours are left before your busy day begins. Clock watchers should put their alarm in a drawer, under the bed, or turn it away from view.
**Tip:** Use black tape for the blue LED digital clocks on the bedroom DVR.

***Try a Leg Pillow for Back Pain***

Mild low back pain may not wake you, but it can disrupt the deep, restful stages of sleep. A cushy solution is to place a pillow between the legs for better alignment of the hips and reduced stress on the low back.
**Tip:** Back sleepers can tuck a pillow under their knees to help ease pain at night

***Put Your Neck in Neutral***

If you wake tired with a stiff neck, blame your pillow. Pillows that are too fat or too flat cause problems. Your pillow should be just the right size to support your neck in a neutral position. For side sleepers, the nose should align with the center of the body. Stomach sleeping twists the neck and is best avoided.
**Tip:** Keep your neck neutral before bed, too. Don't crane your neck to watch TV.

Seal the Mattress

The sneezing, sniffling, and itching of allergies can cause fragmented sleep -- and your mattress may be to blame. Over time, it can fill with mold, dust mite droppings, and other allergy triggers. Avoid these sleep wreckers by sealing your mattress, box springs, and pillow.
**Tip:** Air-tight, plastic, dust proof covers work best.

***Reserve the Bed for Sleep and Sex***

Experts say sleep and sex should be the only pastimes pursued in the bedroom. Don't balance the checkbook, talk on the phone, or watch TV. Everything about the room should be associated with rest and relaxation.
**Tip:** The best sleep temperature for most people is between 68-72 degrees.

***Set Your Body Clock***

Go to sleep and wake up at about the same time every day -- including weekends. This routine will put your brain and body on a healthy sleep-wake cycle. In time, you'll be able to fall asleep quickly and sleep soundly through the night.
**Tip:** Get out in bright light for 5 to 30 minutes as soon as you rise. Light is the most powerful regulator of the biological clock.

***Cut the Caffeine***

Coffee in the morning is fine for most people, but as soon as the clock strikes noon, avoid caffeine in foods and drinks. Caffeine interferes with the deeper stages of sleep, so even small amounts found in chocolate and decaffeinated coffee may impact your rest.
**Tip:** Read labels: Some pain relievers and weight loss pills contain caffeine.

***Exercise Right, Time It Right***

Regular exercise has been shown to improve sleep quality, as long as you don't work out too close to bedtime. A post-workout burst of energy can keep you awake. Aim to finish any vigorous exercise 3 to 4 hours before you hit the hay.
**Tip:** Gentle mind/body exercises are fine just before sleep. Yoga, tai chi, and similar routines are a perfect, sleep-inducing nightcap.

***Eat Right at Night***

Avoid heavy foods and big meals late in the day; they tax the digestive system and make it hard to get high-quality sleep. Some people do well with a light evening snack of sleep-inducing foods. Complex carbs and dairy foods fill the bill, such as cereal with milk or crackers and cheese.

**Tip:** Finish any snack at least an hour before bed.

***Rethink Your Drink***

Although the tranquilizing effects of alcohol may make you sleepy at bedtime, beware -- after the initial effects wear off, alcohol actually causes more frequent awakenings at night and less restful sleep.

**Tip:** Warm milk or chamomile tea are better beverage choices in the evening.

***Stop Sipping After 8 pm***

Treat yourself like a child: Nothing to drink within two hours of bedtime. It'll help prevent those sleep-wrecking middle-of-the-night bathroom trips. And it can be difficult to get back to sleep quickly after hitting the cold bathroom floor.

**Tip:** Keep a nightlight in the bathroom to avoid bright light at night.

***Lower the Lights***

Starting two to three hours before bedtime, dim the lights around the house and put aside any work, arguments, or complicated decisions. It takes time to turn off the emotional and intellectual "noise" of the day. Lowering the lights signals your brain to produce melatonin, the hormone that brings on sleep.

**Tip:** Use a 15-watt bulb when reading in the last hour before bed.

***Neutralize Noise***

A dripping faucet, a child's cough, or a barking dog can add up to big-time sleep loss. And parents may be hypersensitive to noises in the night long after after children outgrow the baby stage.

**Tip:** Soothing "white noise" covers up bumps in the night. You can use a fan, an air-conditioner, or a white noise generator available in stores. Ear plugs also work.

***Skip the Smoke***

Need another reason to quit smoking? Nicotine is a stimulant, just like caffeine. Smoking can keep you from falling asleep and worsen insomnia.

**Tip:** While you're planning your quit strategy, you may sleep a little better if you smoke fewer cigarettes in the four hours before bed.

***Keep Pets Off the Bed***

A cat or dog's night moves can prevent you from settling into the deep sleep you crave. They can also bring fleas, fur, dander, and pollen to your bed, triggering sleep-wrecking allergies.

**Tip:** Ask your vet or animal trainer how to recondition your pet to sleep, happily, in its own bed.

***Free Your Mind at Bedtime***

Establish a "winding down" period in the evenings about an hour before bedtime. Read something calm, meditate, listen to music, or take a warm bath. Try making a list of any worries, along with a plan to deal with them, to bring closure to your day.

**Tip:** Even a 10-minute pre-sleep ritual may help when time is short.

***Use Caution with Sleeping Pills***

Sleeping pills may be tempting on those nights when sleep just isn't coming, but exercise caution. Some sleep medicines can be habit forming and may have bothersome side effects. Ideally, they should be used as a very short-term solution, while other lifestyle and behaviour changes are put in place.

***When Insomnia Means Something More***

Sleep tips are nice when your insomnia is fleeting. But if your sleeplessness persists for at least a month, it’s time to delve deeper into what's going on. Insomnia may be a symptom of an underlying problem. Depression is notorious for causing insomnia, as are other medical conditions, such as acid reflux, asthma, arthritis, and some medications. Chronic insomnia deserves a closer look and evaluation by a doctor.

## *Useful Contacts / Information*

**Donegal Fibromyalgia Support Group** **0863945008**

*(no private numbers please)*

Monthly meetings in Milbrae Health Centre, Stranorlar, Co. Donegal – on the

1st Friday of each month
(excl. Jan & Aug)
6.30 – 8.30pm
Contact Jude Fibromyalgia Bromley on Facebook / mikejay1@eircom.net

www.fibroireland.com
This gives up to date information about fibromyalgia and also details about support groups throughout Ireland

www.fibromyalgiasupport.ie
The Cork based support group has set up this informative page

**Fibromyalgia Awareness N. Ireland**
(F M A N I) is a registered charity organisation dedicated to providing help and
support to Fibromyalgia sufferers and those who care for them.
***SUPPORT, EDUCATE, ADVOCATE.****

Helpline: +44 (0) 845 600 3213 *Mon-Fri 9am -5pm*
**Email: info@fmani.uk** *Mon – Fri 9.30am – 5.30pm*

www.arthritisireland.ie
Helpline :
1890 252 846 or 01 661 8188

An excellent website which gives various information on all types of Arthritis, including Fibromyalgia. You can access information on upcoming events / courses throughout Ireland.

www.myknee.ie
You can guess what this page is about!!!

www.chronicpain.ie
**01 8047 567**
A well established Support Group for all types of Chronic Pain. They provide vital support, education and lobbying on patients' behalf.

***NowDoc***
**1850 400 911**
An out of hours doctors service. This is a vital service for many patients in Donegal, especially those living with Chronic Pain. However, the service may be withdrawn in near future

*www.iwa.ie*
*Irish Wheelchair Association*
Main Branch Letterkenny
**07491 77448**
Sub Branch
Manorcunningham (covers Malin, Gweedore, Killybegs & Ballyshannon)
**07491 57393**

This is the Group to contact if you are considering applying for a Disabled Parking Permit. The Irish Wheelchair Association (IWA) is a national orgaisation which provides a range of services to people with disabilities and other mobility imparements in the own homes & communities.

www.hse.ie
The HSE provides all of Ireland's public health services, in hospitals and communities across the country

www.mhfi.org

The Men's Health Forum in Ireland (MHFI) is a diverse network of individuals and organisations, men and women, which seek to …

* identify the key concerns relating to male health;
* increase understanding of these issues;
* tackle the impact of this inequality.

MHFI works on an all-Ireland basis to enhance the health and well-being of men and boys through research, advocacy, training, networking and demonstration projects. The work of MHFI is heavily reliant upon the input of volunteers.

**1890 303 302**

www.aware.ie

To provide support and advise for those feeling depressed or low mood. They
run online C.B.T. courses as well as various other courses and information.

www.samaritans.org

Free Call **116123** from R.O.I. or **0845 790 9090** from N.I.
A vital helpline for those feeling alone and in need of immediate support and advise

www.migraine.ie

**1850 200 378**

This wonderful group give advise through the website & also the helpline – who is answered by those who also live with Migraines

www.endometriosis.ie

**01 873 5702** (Leave message)
Another great website and contact for those ladies who suffer with endometriosis, which is another common co-condition with fibromyalgia

www.arthritisresearchuk.org

This is a fantastic website with vast amount of information – you can even download leaflets – they contain advise & support about various arthritic conditions & tips for those living with these conditions.

www.disabilityaidsdirect.ie

This is an online shop to order a variety of Aids

www.lupusgroupireland.com

Lupus Group Ireland was established in Nov 2011 as a support & awareness network for people who suffer from the condition, Lupus. The Group was established as a Facebook Page & due to the phenomenal response it has grown from strength to strength

www.imet.ie

The Irish ME Trust was established to provide information & a counselling service to those affected with ME as well as targeting individual problems on behalf of sufferers. We aim to create awareness in the general public & the medical profession as to the plight of ME sufferers in Ireland and contribute to quality biomedical research studies.

www.irishmecfs.org

The Irish ME / CFS Association, strive to improve the situation for people with ME/CFS and to give them information to empower themselves. The group, which has been run entirely by volunteers for the last seven years.

www.citizensinformation.ie

**Ballyshannon**
**076 107 5480**
**Buncrana**
**076 107 5490**
**Carndonagh**
**076 107 5500**
**Donegal Town**
***076 107 5510***
**Dungloe**
***076 107 5430***
**Letterkenny**
**076 107 5530**
**Milford**
**076 107 5450**

**Citizen's Information**
(previously Citizen's Advice) can help with a range of issues, including filling out forms for applying for Medical Card / Social Welfare etc. Please contact your nearest branch for further information / to make an appointment

www.mabs.ie
***076 107 2000***
Mon – Fri 9am – 8pm
**Derrybeg**
***076 107 2650***
(Please Phone for an appointment)
**Letterkenny**
**076 107 2460**
(Mon / Tues / Thurs / Fri)
(9.30am – 1pm & 2pm – 5.30pm)
**Buncrana**
**076 107 2470**
(Mon – Fri)
9am – 1pm & 2pm – 5pm
**Donegal Town**
**076 107 2480** (Please Phone for an appointment)
Sadly, when you live with a Chronic Illness and are unable to work full / part time, money may become a worry. Money Advice & Budgeting Service are an excellent contact to give you tips and may even work on your behalf with your
Creditors. Here's what they say on their website : "The Money Advice and Budgeting Service is the State's money advice service, guiding people through dealing with problem debt for more than twenty years.

www.lwc.ie
**Letterkenny Women's Centre** ***07491 24985***
womenscentreletterkenny@eircom.net

Another vital service in Donegal. This group often run courses, such as C.B.T. and can arrange counseling services also. Why not give them a call / check out their site to see how they can help

www.donegalcoco.ie/yourcouncil/yourcouncillors
This provides an up to date list of your local Councillors. They often help with many situations, such as lobbying on your behalf in a Social Welfare Case, where appropriate.

www.pieta.ie
See page for Contact numbers of your nearest centre, they are opening more venues in the near future. This is a Charity group for those who self harm or are feeling suicidal

## *Others Contacts*
The following are other points of contact that people may consider when they need someone to talk to (you can check out your phonebook for your nearest contact)

Your local Religious Group – they usually have Ministers / Priests etc who are trained to listen. Some groups even do Weekend Retreats which can be vital respite for the Fibro Patient / Carer

Your local Hotel - they usually have a pool that you can avail of – heated pools especially have been found to be an advantage to those with fibro. Why not
find out about membership.
Your local Family Resource Centre, Your local Men's Shed &
Your local Community Centre

**Disclaimer:**
While every effort is taken to make sure information is correct at time of putting together this leaflet.
The Author has listed medications that have been listed on the NHS Websites. PLEASE make sure you talk to your GP/Medical Professional, and do not try to self medicate in any way.
If you feel your medication is not working for you. Again get in contact with your GP/Medical Professional.
These are only guidelines I have put together.
The author will not be held responsible in any way for anyone who does not follow guidelines, and work along with their GP/Medical Professional.