

COPING WITH BRAIN FOG

Learn coping skills. The less fibro-frustration you have the more bearable this impaired cognitive cycle will be. The fear of forgetting something, etc. is a great stressor and will amplify the intensity of other symptoms.

Practice being methodical. Have simple habits, put things in the same place every time, such as your car keys, mailbox keys, glasses, mail, unpaid bills, shopping lists, medications, etc.

Use a large calendar in a prominent place. Write down every appointment the minute you make it and then check your calendar every morning and night. Before you have your breakfast and before you go to bed.

Make lists. Make a list of what you must do. Refer to lists several times a day. Never leave the house without your list or notes.

Keep pad and pen near your telephone and leave them there. Write your phone messages there. I like the ones with duplicates so if I need to tear off a copy I still have a record of my calls. I have phone message books at every telephone in the house.

Put up sticky notes where you will see them for important reminders such as turning off lights, locking doors, watering the plants, doing homework or turning in assignments, meetings, children's school practices, athletic practices. Post them on the dashboard of your car.

Make lists to take to your appointments such as doctor, child's teacher, boss, and clients. I take my list to my doctor's appointment so I will not forget to ask my doctor any questions or tell my doctor any facts.

When in severe fibro fog, do not drive or limit your driving or have someone drive you, take a taxi or bus, etc. Take your list with you on your destination. Drive to one errand at a time. Save complicated driving for when the fibro fog has lessened. Turn off the radio when driving this will help your concentration. Instruct your passengers to be quiet. Use surface streets when possible or drive on familiar routes.

Decrease your sensory input both at home and at work. Try to filter out background noise by closing the door to the room you are in. Even soothing music or noises aggravates fibro fog.

Start working on your projects early as your ability to do your work may take twice as long as it usually does when in fibro fog. Your information absorption is impaired at this level until the fog passes. If work is impossible then give it up and try again later. You may have to take a

break from a frustrating task.

Use a timer in the kitchen to remind yourself to do something.

From Dr. St. Amand's Book:

"The most horrifying facets of brain cycling are the sweeping mood swings. For the most part, patients are acutely aware of them but feel powerless to exercise control. Anger, frustration, fear, depression, and self-pity can attack with great intensity then disappear in a matter of minutes. Unfortunately, their negative effects linger on."

"The best way to cope with your mood swings is to recognize that you have them when you don't." On a calmer, better day, you might want to talk to your spouse and children. Explain that these emotional outbursts are triggered by the stress of being ill. You can tell them that you are sorry for the past times they have been hurt and hope that in the future they will understand when it happens again. Reminding everyone of this every so often isn't a bad idea, either. When you are in the throes of an outburst or pity-party, you may sense that something is off but not be able to admit it. So do your confession in retrospect when you are more in control."

"Meditation and warm showers or baths are other things you can do when you start to feel emotional. Both can take you away from everyday stresses. If it's possible, use the old strategy of counting to ten or taking a walk. Removing yourself from a problem before it starts isn't always feasible, but once you practice the technique it will get easier. When you feel the situation slipping from your grasp, get in the habit of saying, "I will stop now and try to deal with this later." Life will be a lot calmer."

"Recognize that all these cognitive impairments and emotional overreactions are a normal part of fibromyalgia, experienced to some degree by all those who suffer from the disease. "

Above all else...have patience and know that it will pass and you are on your way to wellness with guaifenesin.