Welcome to FibroGuide
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Expert Advice: Living With Fibromyalgia

Daniel Clauw, MD
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University of Michigan
I'm Dr. Daniel Clauw, a Rheumatologist and Professor of Anesthesiology and Medicine and Director of the Chronic Pain and Fatigue Research Center at the University of Michigan. FibroGuide is a symptom management program that provides a self-care approach for people living with fibromyalgia.

Fibromyalgia is a disorder characterized by chronic widespread pain, fatigue, and diffuse tenderness.

The program is based on my experiences over the past 15 years working with thousands of patients with fibromyalgia, including numerous patients in clinical trials, as well as the Live Well With Fibromyalgia program developed at the Chronic Pain and Fatigue Research Center. Working with a team of physicians and researchers, led by Dr. David Williams, we designed this program with the input from many patients with fibromyalgia.

FibroGuide offers information and insights on 10 different self-care topics, or Steps. The information presented within these Steps is based on key strategies, such as physical activity, education, and support, that have been shown to help people with fibromyalgia manage their symptoms.

The program is customizable, which allows you to focus on your current needs so that you may be able to do more of the things that you want to do each day. Please be sure to work with your healthcare provider to develop a self-care plan that is right for you.

One of the things that we focus on when we talk to patients about fibromyalgia is the notion of dually focused management, or dually focused therapy. By dually focused, we mean that we don't feel it works well to focus on fibromyalgia as being just a neurobiological disorder that can be treated simply with drugs. Nor do we view it as just a psychological or behavioral disorder that can be treated just with nondrug therapy, such as exercise or cognitive behavioral therapy.

For a number of reasons, it works best if people use both of these types of therapies. We recommend some type of drug or nondrug therapy that works physiologically to reduce the pain and other symptoms of fibromyalgia. But then we also recommend nondrug therapy, such as exercise and cognitive behavioral therapy, that do a better job of addressing some of the long-term functional consequences of having chronic pain and chronic fatigue.

The underlying approach that we suggest is to develop a disease management model for treating fibromyalgia, rather than a curative model. For example, if you were just diagnosed with diabetes, your doctor would not simply give you a prescription for insulin and syringes and send you home. Instead, your doctor would educate you about diabetes, teach you about the role of diet, exercise, and other self-management strategies, and therefore, the drug (in this case, insulin) would merely be one element of your overall treatment strategy.

This program uses the same disease management approach for fibromyalgia, because there are many things that happen to a fibromyalgia patient as a result of having pain, fatigue, and a number of other symptoms for years or even decades. These consequences of having longstanding pain and other symptoms need to be treated just as the underlying cause of the
fibromyalgia does. This is important because some people with fibromyalgia have unknowingly developed behaviors that may lead them to feel more pain and fatigue.

These behaviors can include:
- Overdoing it when they are feeling well, and then paying for it later with worsening symptoms or flares of their fibromyalgia
- Spending less time taking part in pleasurable activities, either individually or with family and friends
- Or becoming stressed because of what the disorder does to you and your ability to be a parent, a spouse, a friend, a coworker

It can be very difficult to change these types of behaviors. FibroGuide offers a wealth of information and resources that may help you.

Using FibroGuide can help you plan your discussions with your healthcare provider so that you can work together as partners in managing your care. It can also help you set realistic goals for becoming more physically active.

Patients with fibromyalgia often try to do too much exercise too soon, so setting realistic goals will challenge you to do a little bit more than what you are currently doing but not so much that you cause a worsening of your symptoms, or a flare of your fibromyalgia.

In addition, FibroGuide can help you learn how to pace yourself in daily activities. This way, you can be more active with less risk of feeling worse later or having flare-ups.

It can also help you find ways to enjoy yourself more so that you have balance in your life, and you don't only focus on the things that you have to get done. And finally, FibroGuide can help you learn about the many other helpful symptom management and self-care strategies.

As you use the FibroGuide program, here are some words of advice that I always share with my patients who have fibromyalgia. I hope they may help you have a more positive and productive experience in managing your symptoms:

Number one, focus on what you need to do to get better rather than focusing on what may have caused your illness. There's no worse prognostic sign for someone with fibromyalgia than someone who's constantly looking backward at who or what caused their fibromyalgia, rather than looking forward at what they can do to make their condition better.

Number two, play an active role in your treatment, including finding a healthcare provider who will work with you to manage your symptoms.

Number three, focus on looking for treatments and ways to help manage your symptoms, not on finding a cure, because at present, there are no cures for fibromyalgia.
Number four, take small steps to become more active as your symptoms start to improve.

For example, for every level of improvement you get in pain or fatigue because of a new treatment, whether that's a drug that you've just started, or nondrug therapy as part of FibroGuide, you should then try to correspondingly improve your overall function by that same level.

So for example, if you take a drug that leads to a 20 or 30 percent improvement in your pain level, you should try to improve your function in what you do in day-to-day life by 20 to 30 percent, to take advantage of that improvement in pain.

And always be sure to talk with your healthcare provider anytime you increase or change your level of physical activity.

Remember, when managing the symptoms of fibromyalgia, it's not always easy to change your behaviors, but it can be done. And as you do so, you may find that you feel much better and are able to do much more as a result of using this type of self-management strategy.

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Presented by David Williams, PhD
Professor of Anesthesiology and Medicine (Rheumatology)
University of Michigan
Associate Director, Chronic Pain and Fatigue Research Center

Consult with your healthcare provider to develop a self-care plan that is right for you.

I'm Dave Williams, Professor of Medicine and Rheumatology at the University of Michigan and Associate Director of the Chronic Pain and Fatigue Research Center. For the past 25 years, I've worked with people who have chronic pain and fatiguing illnesses like fibromyalgia.

FibroGuide shows you ways you can manage the pain of fibromyalgia so that you may be able to do more of the things that you not only need to do but want to do and love.

FibroGuide is adapted from the Live Well with Fibromyalgia program developed at the University of Michigan. It was developed with the help of experts in chronic pain management and individuals with fibromyalgia. The program provides you with facts about fibromyalgia and recommendations on lifestyle changes you can make to help manage your condition.

Although there is no cure for fibromyalgia, research suggests there are ways to successfully manage its symptoms using a combination of medication and behavioral lifestyle skills. This is the same approach that is used to manage diabetes, another chronic medical condition. Diabetes is best controlled by medication, such as insulin, combined with lifestyle adjustment, including proper diet and regular physical activity.

Managing fibromyalgia may involve a similar plan that includes education, physical activity, support, and a kind of talk therapy called cognitive behavioral therapy, along with medication.

FibroGuide offers you helpful information, tips, and resources for each of these areas in a format that allows you to personalize the information for your individual needs at any given time. The program is broken into topics for you to select depending upon your symptoms.

FibroGuide is designed for use over time. You probably won't need all the topics today, but keep the program handy. You can use it as a resource when new problems arise or to help modify your management approach as barriers resolve.

I hope that you find FibroGuide helpful. Information and educational programs have made a meaningful difference in the lives of people with fibromyalgia, and lifestyle improvements are one part of fibromyalgia that you can control.

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FibroGuide Tutorial

Using the Controller to Navigate

The FibroGuide menu is designed to help you navigate through the FibroGuide program.

When you are not using it, the menu rests on the bottom left corner of the screen. When you need to use it, click on the Expand icon. The menu will enlarge to full view so you can choose which section of the program you want to visit next.

When you are done using the menu, click on the Minimize icon. The menu will collapse and move back to the bottom of the screen.
The FibroGuide menu features a number of different buttons to help you learn about and move through the program. Let’s start with the 2 red buttons at the top of the menu. You have already selected the Tell Me How FibroGuide Works button.

The Steps for Me button, on the top right, takes you to a short list of questions. Your responses will help determine which Steps might be the most helpful for you to start with.

Beneath the 2 red buttons are yellow buttons that represent the main Steps featured in the FibroGuide program. Each button will take you to a different Step where you can learn more about fibromyalgia and strategies, skills, or tips that may help you manage your symptoms.

To read a short description of a Step before selecting it, roll your cursor arrow over the button.
Beneath the yellow Step buttons is a color key. The color key shows the 3 ways the Step buttons can appear on your screen.

Step buttons are yellow. If a button has a blue outline, the Step is suggested for you. Suggested Steps appear only after you have answered the questions located in Steps for Me.
If you have already visited a Step, the button will be gray. The button will turn gray even if you did not finish reading the whole section. You can return to the Step anytime by selecting the button again.

The FibroGuide program can keep track of your activity as you visit various Steps, even as you exit and restart the program. And because your symptoms can change over time, you may want to return to the questions in the Steps for Me button to answer them again. When you do, your original buttons will become yellow, and the newly suggested buttons will have a blue outline.

**Visiting a FibroGuide Step**

There are a number of features to help you as you view each FibroGuide Step. For example, you can use the scroll bar and scroll arrows to view additional content and use the blue arrow buttons to move between pages of the Step.
Relaxation

Learning how to relax and ease tension

Wide n reality, muscle tension is a major feature of fibromyalgia and may be one of the causes of fibromyalgia pain. By learning relaxation techniques, you may be able to teach your body how to relax, relieve the pain, and reduce the stress that contributes to muscle tension and pain.

Why does muscle tension cause pain?

Muscle tension can cause pain because the body is trying to protect itself from perceived threats or stress. When your muscle tension becomes too great, it can lead to pain. Learning to relax may help reduce muscle tension and pain, which may help improve your overall health and well-being.

Tips for managing muscle tension

• Use deep breathing techniques
• Use relaxation exercises
• Use imagery and visualization
• Use progressive muscle relaxation
• Use muscle stretching

The key topics of this Step are listed in the box as links. Click on the topic you want to visit.

You can also jump directly to different sections within a Step by using the links in the Inside This Step area. The topics for each Step are listed in the box.

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Click on the item that you would like to visit within a Step’s Added Features area.

Other helpful features are located in the Added Features box in the lower right corner of each Step screen. Depending on the Step, these can include video or audio clips, work sheets, a list of support organizations, or a downloadable PDF of the Step that you can print.
At the bottom right-hand corner of the screen are 2 controls: Text Size and Break Notice.

Next is the Break Notice feature. As discussed in Pacing Yourself, it is important to rest periodically so you don’t overdo it. The Break Notice lets you choose how often you would like to rest while using FibroGuide. If you want to take a break, rest for as long as you need.
Use the drop-down menu to select how long you would like to use FibroGuide before getting your next reminder to take a break. Then click on the Continue button in the pop-up when you are done. This will take you back to where you left off in the Step. If you do not want to take a break, choose Don’t Remind Me to turn off the Break Notice and return immediately to the Step. You can turn on the Break Notice feature by clicking on the clock icon.
What is fibromyalgia?

Fibromyalgia is characterized by chronic widespread pain, fatigue (overall physical exhaustion and lack of energy), and multiple tender points. If you have fibromyalgia, the pain and fatigue can affect many areas of your life, making it harder to work and do daily activities. It may result in less ability to enjoy hobbies, take care of your family, and do the things you love to do. Currently, there is no known cure for fibromyalgia, but its symptoms may be managed.

Because each person is unique, he or she may experience the symptoms of fibromyalgia differently than someone else with the disorder. That’s why it’s very important for you and your healthcare provider to put together a fibromyalgia self-care plan that is right for you. You can use the resources offered in the FibroGuide program as part of a plan that meets your specific needs.

What are the symptoms of fibromyalgia?

If you have fibromyalgia, you may be experiencing symptoms such as:

- **Chronic widespread pain lasting more than 3 months**—Head-to-toe aching that may be worse on some days than it is on others
- **Fatigue**—Deep physical and mental exhaustion that may make it hard to do daily activities
- **Body stiffness**, especially in the morning
- **Problems with memory, concentration, or disorganized thinking** (sometimes called “fibro fog”)
- **Emotional changes**, such as depression or anxiety
- **Sleep problems**—waking up frequently and having difficulty falling back to sleep

If you’re like many people with fibromyalgia, you may also experience other health problems, such as headaches, restless leg syndrome, irritable bowel syndrome, or irritable bladder. Be sure to talk with your healthcare provider about all of your health conditions and symptoms. Only your healthcare provider can diagnose you with fibromyalgia.

When you live with a lot of fibromyalgia pain and not much energy each day, it may be harder to enjoy life. The FibroGuide program shows you nondrug ways that may help you manage your fibromyalgia symptoms and live with less pain so you may be able to do more of the things you need, want, and love to do.

A word about fibromyalgia and arthritis

Sometimes fibromyalgia is confused with arthritis because of the pain and tenderness it causes. But fibromyalgia is not the same as arthritis. Arthritis causes painful swelling in the joints. Fibromyalgia does not cause physical changes or physical damage to the joints, skin, or tissue. Instead, pain usually occurs in the soft tissues around the joints and in the muscles and skin throughout the body. But because there are similarities, many patients with fibromyalgia are treated by rheumatologists—doctors who specialize in arthritis and other joint conditions. The Arthritis Foundation also offers information about fibromyalgia.
What causes fibromyalgia?
The exact cause of fibromyalgia is not known. Sometimes the onset of fibromyalgia is associated with physical and psychological stressors, including:

- Physically stressful or traumatic events, such as a car accident
- An infection, such as a viral illness, or autoimmune disease, such as lupus
- Emotional distress, such as a divorce

Also, once a person has fibromyalgia, continued exposure to stressors may keep the disorder active. These stressors may be the same as or different from the original ones.

A balancing act
The exact cause of fibromyalgia is not known. Fibromyalgia may be linked to abnormal levels of naturally occurring substances (such as substance P, serotonin, norepinephrine, and dopamine) in the brain, spinal cord, and body that let you know when you are experiencing pain. Abnormal levels of these substances may increase the sensitivity of your nervous system so that normally nonpainful stimuli become painful.

Some researchers believe that the imbalance of these substances may also increase sensitivity to other sensations, such as heat, noise, odors, and bright lights. It’s as if the “volume control” for pain and other sensations were set too high. That is why a person may feel pain and other sensations more intensely than people who don’t have fibromyalgia.

Why fibromyalgia hurts
Some researchers believe that several factors may contribute to fibromyalgia pain, but the exact causes are still not fully understood. According to some current theories, fibromyalgia patients may have:

- **Too much substance P**, a substance in the spinal fluid that sends pain signals to the brain when the body feels pain. Too much substance P may lead to too many signals being sent, which can lead to more pain
- **Too little serotonin and/or norepinephrine** may affect the body’s ability to dampen pain signals reaching the brain. Too little serotonin and/or norepinephrine has been found in some people with fibromyalgia
- **Too little dopamine**. Having low levels of this substance may make it easier to perceive pain
- **Changes in the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis**, which helps the brain and glands work together to regulate body chemistry. These changes can lead to abnormal levels of substance and hormones, which may cause someone to feel pain differently than someone without fibromyalgia

Fibromyalgia pain is real
Because your pain symptoms may not be physically apparent or obvious, others may not fully understand or believe what you are going through. But research has shown that pain in fibromyalgia patients is real. Increased pain sensitivity to pressure has been shown in experiments comparing people with and without fibromyalgia. In one study, participants were asked to rate pain intensity when pressure was applied to their thumbnail. Scans were taken to record brain activity as the pressure was applied. The people with fibromyalgia reported feeling pain at lower levels of pressure than did the people who did not have fibromyalgia. Brain scans from the study also showed that sensitivity to pain in a person with fibromyalgia was higher than normal.
How do you know if it is fibromyalgia?
Currently there are no diagnostic tests, such as x-rays or blood tests, to detect fibromyalgia. The symptoms of fibromyalgia may overlap with the symptoms of some other conditions. This is why fibromyalgia is sometimes difficult to diagnose.

Your doctor may use certain guidelines to help determine if you have fibromyalgia. According to the American College of Rheumatology, a person may have fibromyalgia if he or she:

- Has chronic widespread pain for more than 3 months. Widespread pain affects the right and left sides of the body above and below the waist
- Feels pain in at least 11 of 18 possible tender points (9 on one side of the body, 9 on the other) when pressure is applied

Only your doctor can determine if you have fibromyalgia. He or she may use the guidelines listed above, or other methods, to find out if you have the condition.

When discussing your pain with your doctor, you can do the following to help him or her make a diagnosis:

- Talk about all of the symptoms with your healthcare provider. Openly discuss how you are feeling and how the symptoms are affecting you
- Work together to create a plan that meets your individual needs
- Complete the Working With Your Healthcare Provider Work Sheet to help you prepare for your appointment

Teaming up with your healthcare providers
If you have received a diagnosis of fibromyalgia, you should not have to manage your fibromyalgia alone. There may be several healthcare providers with different areas of expertise to help with your care. Depending on your symptoms, your healthcare provider may refer you to a:

- Primary care or family physician—treats a variety of general health needs
- Rheumatologist—specializes in diagnosing and treating arthritis and fibromyalgia
- Pain management specialist—diagnoses and treats pain associated with various conditions
- Psychiatrist—specializes in diagnosing and treating mental and emotional disorders
- Physical therapist—helps patients increase their mobility, restore physical function, and alleviate pain
- Psychologist or social worker—helps patients work through emotional issues

You may also want to talk with your pharmacist. He or she may be able to answer questions you have about your medicines.

You are the most important member of your healthcare team. You can help yourself the most by taking an active role in your care. Try to talk as openly as you can with the members of your healthcare team about how things are going. Are you having a hard time following their suggestions for managing your symptoms? If you are, it may help to talk honestly about your concerns and work together to solve any problems. Your healthcare team’s goal is to help you feel better.
**Tips for talking with your healthcare providers**

It helps to stay in close touch with your healthcare team. You don’t have to wait until you are not feeling well to go see a healthcare provider. Regularly scheduled visits may help you and your healthcare team manage your symptoms over time and keep track of your progress.

Before you go to see your healthcare provider, try to choose 2 or 3 issues you want to discuss. For instance, you might focus on:

- Symptoms that bother you the most and how they affect your life
- What you believe is causing these symptoms
- Stressors that may be making your symptoms worse

Don’t worry about trying to discuss everything at one visit. By seeing your healthcare provider on a regular basis—not just when you have a pressing need—you may be able to talk about different issues at each visit.

The Working With Your Healthcare Provider Work Sheet can help you plan your conversations with your healthcare provider.

**Where do I go from here?**

It is important for you and your healthcare team to develop a fibromyalgia self-care plan that is based on your individual symptoms and lifestyle. Your healthcare provider can help you create a realistic plan that you can commit to and put into action. Your plan may include:

- **Education** to help you learn more about fibromyalgia and how to manage the symptoms that you are experiencing
- **Physical activity** based on your needs and abilities. Exercise may be an important part of managing your fibromyalgia. Be sure to talk with your healthcare provider before starting or changing any exercise program
- **Multiple medicines**, both nonprescription and prescription, depending on your symptoms. For example, your healthcare provider may prescribe medicines to help with pain, sleep problems, or emotional symptoms. There are also medicines approved by the FDA specifically for the management of fibromyalgia
- **Support** from family, friends, and support groups, or one-on-one therapy

The FibroGuide program can help you and your healthcare provider create your own plan based on what you can do right now. You can learn about ways to relax, read about the benefits of good communication and exercise, or track your progress with helpful work sheets. And with FibroGuide, you can customize and change your plan as your needs and abilities change over time by taking the Steps for Me assessment.

Your healthcare team is there to support you. There are also a number of organizations and support groups that can help you learn more about fibromyalgia and how to manage it. You can find a listing of these groups in the Support Organizations link located in Added Features in the lower right corner.

To learn more about managing fibromyalgia symptoms, watch Steps to Living With Fibromyalgia, featuring Daniel Clauw, MD, a leading fibromyalgia expert.
» A note for family and friends

Fibromyalgia has changed my life, too
If someone you care about has fibromyalgia, you may know how challenging the pain and fatigue of fibromyalgia can be. You understand that the disorder doesn’t just change the life of the person who has it; it may change your life, too. Fibromyalgia may limit the things you are able to do together. If you take over chores and errands, more demands are made on your time and energy. Learning and understanding all you can about fibromyalgia may help you be a strong source of comfort and support for the person who lives each day with the challenges of the condition. The FibroGuide program offers valuable information and useful tips that may benefit both of you.
Preparing for your office visit

With fibromyalgia, you may have a number of symptoms that you and your healthcare provider are managing over time. Keeping track of how you are feeling may help you organize and prioritize your concerns.

Sometimes it may be difficult to remember how you have been feeling over time, particularly if a few weeks have passed between office visits. Using this work sheet may give you and your healthcare provider a good start to your discussion. Then having regular visits with your healthcare provider—not only visits when you have a pressing need—may give you time to talk about what matters most to you. This work sheet may help you prioritize your symptoms and concerns so you can get the most from your office visits. It may be most helpful if you:

- Print copies of this work sheet to have on hand. Filling one out before each office visit may help you see how you are feeling over time.

- Check off the boxes for the symptoms that matter most to you. Then write down any questions and concerns you have about them for your healthcare provider. Focus on 2 or 3 key concerns at each visit. That way, you can discuss a manageable amount of information each time.

- Take the work sheet to your next office visit. The questions/concerns you have listed may provide a good start to your discussion with your healthcare provider. You can note the date and time of your next visit on the bottom of the work sheet.

### Working with your healthcare provider

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of visit: <strong>August 8</strong></th>
<th>Time: <strong>11:00 AM</strong></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Symptom/problem area</strong></td>
<td><strong>Questions/concerns for my healthcare provider</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>✓ Pain:</strong> After working at the computer, I am sore.</td>
<td>I want to be able to work at my computer with less pain. What can I do to reduce my pain?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>✓ Sleep:</strong> I wake up frequently and have trouble falling back to sleep.</td>
<td>Even though I feel exhausted, I keep waking up at night. What can I do to sleep better?</td>
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</tbody>
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See page 2 to track your symptoms and write down questions/concerns you may have for your healthcare provider.
## Working with your healthcare provider

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symptom/problem area</th>
<th>Questions/concerns for my healthcare provider</th>
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<tr>
<td>□ Pain:</td>
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<td>□ Fatigue:</td>
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<tr>
<td>□ Mood:</td>
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<tr>
<td>□ &quot;Fibro fog&quot; (Problems with memory, concentration, and disorganized thinking):</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Morning stiffness:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Other symptoms/problems:</td>
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### Date of next visit: ___________________  Time: ___________________
Realistic goals can help you manage your life
As you read through various FibroGuide topics, you may notice that many of them suggest making changes to your lifestyle and daily routines to help you feel better. Learning how to set realistic goals is an important skill that may help you make these changes successfully. Using the steps discussed in this section may help you set and achieve goals such as:
  - Maintaining good sleep habits
  - Taking part in some physical activity every day
  - Making time to relax
  - Pacing yourself to prevent overdoing it

You may want to visit **Sleep, Being Active, Relaxation**, and **Pacing Yourself** for more information about these goals.

Managing your fibromyalgia symptoms is an ongoing process. And goal setting, like riding a bike or playing the piano, takes practice, patience, and persistence. To start, focus on one area that is causing you concern. As you get used to the goal-setting process, you may be able to take on new goals and find additional ways to feel better and enjoy life. The **Setting Goals Work Sheet** may help you plan and track your goals and practice your goal-setting skills.

What is a realistic goal?
A goal is realistic if it both is achievable and pushes you to do a little more than what you are already doing. A goal that is too hard to achieve sets you up for failure and may cause you to lose interest. For example, a goal of exercising 30 minutes every day may not be realistic if you aren’t currently active. A more practical goal may be to start off walking 5 minutes a day and then slowly increase that time, using a pacing plan like the ones described in **Pacing Yourself**. Be sure to talk with your healthcare provider before increasing your exercise time.

To figure out what your goal might be, you need to assess what you are able to do right now. Choose an activity that you enjoy. Each day, monitor and track how long you can do this activity without your symptoms getting worse. If you are unsure of how long you should try an activity when you begin, talk with your healthcare provider. How long you can do an activity right now is called your **baseline**. Once you know your baseline, you can set a realistic goal for that task that is slightly beyond your baseline. For example, if your baseline level is walking for 5 minutes safely, try adding a few minutes to that and make that new level your initial goal.
Goal-setting steps
Taking the following steps may help you set and achieve your goals. Each step will be explained in greater detail below:
- Step 1: State your goal
- Step 2: Get information
- Step 3: Brainstorm ideas
- Step 4: Review your ideas
- Step 5: Make specific plans
- Step 6: Act on your goal
- Step 7: Evaluate how it went
- Step 8: Plan to reward yourself

→ **Step 1: State your goal**

One way to state your goals clearly is to use the SMART approach to setting goals. This helps make sure your goals are:
- **Specific**—know what you want to achieve, figure out how to do it, and set a time frame for achieving it
- **Measurable**—be sure you can tell whether you are achieving them; for example, if one of your goals is to walk 10 minutes a day, wear a watch so you can time yourself
- **Attainable**—make sure your goals are reasonable; start slowly and work up to larger goals
- **Realistic**—keep your abilities and limitations in mind when you think about what you would like to achieve
- **Trackable**—look for ways to keep track of your progress, such as using an exercise log

Choose a goal that is really important to you. Then:
- Clearly state the specific task you want to do or the problem you want to solve. For example, my goal is to exercise for 10 minutes every morning
- Break your goal into smaller steps and take one step at a time. For example:
  - Week 1: My goal is to exercise for 5 minutes every morning
  - Week 2: My goal is to exercise for 10 minutes instead of 5 minutes on 4 mornings during the week
  - Week 3: My goal is to exercise for 10 minutes every morning
- Try to work on goals for one lifestyle area at a time so you can focus your attention on being successful. Once I’ve reached my initial exercise goals, I’ll focus on some relaxation skills

Be sure to work with your healthcare provider as you work through these steps. This will help you set goals that are right for you.
→ **Step 2: Get information**

Sometimes it may take more effort to complete a goal than you first think it will. Collect information to help you decide how you will try to reach your goal. For example, if you have decided you want to exercise more often, you can:

- Start by thinking about what you know about exercising
- Talk with other people about their exercise habits. They may have some ideas you haven’t considered for exercises to try or ways to fit exercise into your day

If you don’t know what exercise routines you would enjoy or would help you feel better, you could:

- Get ideas from Being Active or the Support Organizations list, which you can link to in the lower right corner
- Try different exercise routines to see what works best for you
- Ask family members, friends, others with fibromyalgia, or your healthcare provider what types of exercises might be enjoyable and good for you to do. Always talk with your healthcare provider before starting or changing any exercise routine

→ **Step 3: Brainstorm ideas**

You may need to first change your lifestyle or solve certain problems before you can reach your goal. Brainstorming helps you think of many creative solutions by allowing you to:

- Free your mind so creative ideas can flow
- Think of ideas without judging any of them—there are no right or wrong ideas when you’re brainstorming
- Come up with many ideas. The more ideas you have, the better your chance of having a few really good ones

For example, if your goal is to exercise every morning, you could brainstorm these possible ideas:

- Get up when the alarm sounds, without pressing the snooze button
- Go to bed earlier so it is easier for you to get up early
- Find an exercise partner to work out with you in the morning
- Pick an exercise you can look forward to doing each morning
→ **Step 4: Review your ideas**

Review your brainstorming ideas by asking yourself: Is the solution something I will enjoy? Is the solution realistic? If your goal is to stick with a morning exercise routine, for example, here are ways you could apply these questions:

**Solution 1: Go to bed earlier**
- **Ask yourself:** Is the solution something I will enjoy?
- **Answer:** Yes, I actually like going to bed early

- **Ask yourself:** Is the solution realistic?
- **Answer:** No, there is too much activity in my house for me to go to bed early

**Solution 2: Find an exercise partner**
- **Ask yourself:** Is the solution something I will enjoy?
- **Answer:** Yes, it would be fun to work out with an exercise partner

- **Ask yourself:** Is the solution realistic?
- **Answer:** Yes, my best friend has offered to exercise with me

After reviewing all the ideas, choose the solution that is both enjoyable and realistic. That is the one most likely to work.

→ **Step 5: Make specific plans**

Once you decide which solution you are going to try, develop a plan to carry out your goal:

- Write out your plan so you can see it clearly. For example: I will exercise with a friend to help motivate me to exercise in the morning

- Identify and list barriers to carrying out your plan. For example: I must find someone to watch my 2-year-old while I am out exercising

- Resolve barriers. Use **Pacing Yourself, Thinking Differently**, and **Communicating** to find ways to help yourself overcome any barriers

If you can’t think of ways to overcome the barriers, it may help to:

- Break down your plan into smaller steps
- Brainstorm again to come up with more ideas
- Modify your goal to something more workable
Step 6: Act on your goal

It is now time to start working toward your goal. If your goal is to exercise in the morning by walking, put on a pair of comfortable walking shoes and start moving. To help yourself stay motivated, you might try the following:

- Place notes, your Setting Goals Work Sheet, or a printout of your personal collage from the Time for You Step on the refrigerator or a mirror to remind or encourage yourself.
- Ask a family member or friend to join you in meeting your goal.
- Keep track of your progress so you know how you are doing.

Step 7: Evaluate how it went

Think about how things went when you put your plan into action. Ask yourself these questions:

- Have I met my goal?
- If I had problems, how did I deal with them?
- What is the next goal I want to set?

As you answer these questions, you may find that:

You met your goal. Congratulations! Now you can think about setting a new goal.

Things didn’t always go perfectly. There may have been days when you altered the activity from what you had planned or skipped it altogether. Forgive yourself, refocus, and commit to trying again.

You didn’t meet your goal at all. Think about what changes you can make to increase your chances of succeeding next time. The important thing is to not give up. As you think about ways to adjust your goal for next time, you may want to:

- Review Step 1 to see if your goal was realistic.
- Use the topic Thinking Differently to help give yourself a better mind-set for reaching your goal.
- Use the topic Pacing Yourself for tips on learning a pace that works for you and keeps you from overdoing it.
- Use the topic Communicating to learn ways to talk to other people about what you are doing and ways they may be able to help.
- Talk with your healthcare provider so he or she can help you review your goals and find workable solutions.
Step 8: Plan to reward yourself

Feeling healthier and stronger may be all the reward you need for reaching your goal. But you also may want to do something special to reward yourself. Decide in advance what you want your reward to be, such as going to a movie or enjoying special time with a friend or family member. Giving yourself something special to look forward to may make working toward your goal a little easier if the going gets rough.

Use the Setting Goals Work Sheet to help guide you through each of these steps.

It is important to work with your healthcare provider as you set your goals and work toward achieving them.

To learn more about setting goals as part of managing fibromyalgia, watch the video, featuring David Williams, PhD, a leading fibromyalgia expert.

A note for family and friends

Setting realistic goals can help

Everyone, not just people with fibromyalgia, can benefit from learning how to set realistic goals. As a person who helps someone with fibromyalgia, you can use this information about goals to help the person make important lifestyle changes. You can help him or her:

- Identify problems
- Make a goal-setting plan
- Deal with obstacles along the way

You can also use this information to set your own goals. The same goal-setting process may make a big difference in your life, too.
A Symptom Management Program for People Living With Fibromyalgia

Setting Goals Work Sheet

An 8-step approach to setting and achieving goals
Setting goals may help you focus on what you want to accomplish. It is also a way for you to make important changes to your daily habits and routines so you can feel better. One way to state your goals clearly is to use the SMART approach to setting goals. This helps make sure your goals are:

**Specific**
Know what you want to achieve, figure out how to do it, and set a time frame for achieving it.

**Measurable**
Be sure you can tell whether you are achieving them; for example, if one of your goals is to walk 10 minutes a day, wear a watch so you can time yourself.

**Attainable**
Make sure your goals are reasonable; start slowly and work up to larger goals.

**Realistic**
Keep your abilities and limitations in mind when you think about what you would like to achieve.

**Trackable**
Look for ways to keep track of your progress, such as using an exercise log.

Look over the sample work sheet on the next page and then fill out your own goal-setting work sheet for a goal you would like to accomplish. Share your completed work sheet with your healthcare provider and discuss if your goals are right for you.
### FibroGuide: Goal-Setting Steps Work Sheet—SAMPLE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>STEP 1</strong></th>
<th><strong>STEP 2</strong></th>
<th><strong>STEP 3</strong></th>
<th><strong>STEP 4</strong></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>State Your Goal</strong></td>
<td><strong>Get Information</strong></td>
<td><strong>Brainstorm Ideas</strong></td>
<td><strong>Review Your Ideas</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| My goal: To practice relaxation for 15 minutes every day | What do I know about this goal?  
- I know relaxation is good for me  
- I can fit it into my day fairly easily | Things that I can do to meet my goal  
- Buy a candle and some soft mood music for meditation  
- Take a meditation class instead of trying to relax on my own  
- Get up earlier than everyone else so I have time for relaxation before starting my day | Are the brainstorming ideas in step 3 enjoyable and realistic? Try the most enjoyable and realistic idea.  
- Buy candle and music (very enjoyable, very realistic)  
- Take a meditation class (enjoyable, not realistic)  
- Get up earlier than everyone else (not enjoyable, not realistic) |
| Where can I get more information?  
- I can rent or buy relaxation CDs and DVDs  
- I can get books from the library or bookstore about relaxation | |

<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>STEP 5</strong></th>
<th><strong>STEP 6</strong></th>
<th><strong>STEP 7</strong></th>
<th><strong>STEP 8</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Make Specific Plans</strong></td>
<td><strong>Act On Your Goal</strong></td>
<td><strong>Evaluate How It Went</strong></td>
<td><strong>Reward Yourself</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| My plan: I will meditate for 15 minutes every evening for 2 weeks before I go to sleep  
- I will reward myself with flowers  
- Barriers to carrying out my plan  
- I might not feel like doing it  
- I might get interrupted  
- My options: Put my plan into action  
- I need to brainstorm fresh ideas  
  Go to step 3  
- My problem needs to be broken down into smaller problems  
  Go to step 1 | On Monday, I began relaxing for 15 minutes before going to sleep  
Ways I can encourage myself  
- I can put a note on the refrigerator to remind myself to meditate after dinner  
- I can ask someone to do relaxation exercises with me  
- I can write down in a journal how I feel each night once I'm done | What happened when I carried out my plan?  
Day 1: Just before I was going to do my relaxation, the phone rang and I talked to my friend for an hour. After the phone call ended, I was too tired to do my relaxation  
Day 2: At 11 AM, I did relaxation for 5 minutes. I practiced relaxation again at 10 PM before I went to bed | How did I reward myself?  
I bought myself some flowers as a reward |

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Fill out the work sheet below. Use the sample work sheet to guide you.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>STEP 1</th>
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<th>STEP 4</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>State Your Goal</strong>&lt;br&gt;My goal ____________________________</td>
<td><strong>Get Information</strong>&lt;br&gt;What do I know about this goal?&lt;br&gt;Where can I get more information?</td>
<td><strong>Brainstorm Ideas</strong>&lt;br&gt;Things that I can do to meet my goal</td>
<td><strong>Review Your Ideas</strong>&lt;br&gt;Are the brainstorming ideas in step 3 enjoyable and realistic? Try the most enjoyable and realistic idea.</td>
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<td><strong>Act On Your Goal</strong>&lt;br&gt;Ways I can encourage myself</td>
<td><strong>Evaluate How It Went</strong>&lt;br&gt;What happened when I carried out my plan?</td>
<td><strong>Reward Yourself</strong>&lt;br&gt;How did I reward myself?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barriers to carrying out my plan ____________________________</td>
<td>My options ____________________________</td>
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Fibro-what? Communicating so others can understand

Have you ever heard questions and statements along the lines of: “Fibromyalgia? Is that a real illness? But you don’t look sick.” Because symptoms such as pain and fatigue are hard for others to see, fibromyalgia may seem like an invisible illness. While you know only too well how your symptoms make you feel, others may not see or fully understand what you are going through. That can be frustrating to you and hard on your relationships. Effective communication may help your family, friends, coworkers, and healthcare providers better understand your needs as a person with fibromyalgia.

Avoiding common pitfalls

Communication, by definition, is an interaction between 2 people. While it is tempting to say, “I communicate well, but the other person just fails to understand,” it is important to realize that a communicator’s success depends upon someone else’s understanding.

Communicating well might seem easy to do, but many people make common mistakes that can get in the way. Communication often breaks down when a person:

- Does not listen to what is being said
- Plans what to say next, instead of hearing what is being said
- Forms an opinion about what the other person might say before he or she says it
- Responds to what he or she thinks the other person said, not what the other person really said

How do you communicate?

To improve as a communicator, it helps to understand what type of communicator you are. There are 3 common communication styles. Which do you use most?

- **Aggressive communicators** stand up for their rights at the expense of others. Such people often speak loudly, act superior, and may bully others. Their goal is to control, to win, and to force others to lose.
- **Passive communicators** find it hard to express their honest thoughts and feelings. They often put the feelings of others before their own. They tend to feel victimized, angry, and stressed.
- **Assertive communicators** are effective because they share their own needs. They show respect for themselves and others and make good use of compromise. They are direct, act confident, and maintain good eye contact while communicating. Assertive communication gives you the best chance of delivering your message successfully.
Your guide to communicating well
By becoming an assertive communicator, you stand a better chance of having your family members, friends, and healthcare providers understand what you are going through and how they can help. A few simple but important ideas may help you communicate well, including:

- **Prepare ahead of time** what you want to say before you say it
- **Stay on the subject**, and be direct and concise while sharing your needs and concerns. Don’t try to cover more than one or 2 things, even if there is more you want to discuss
- **Listen well**, and try to avoid talking over other people. Think of it like a tennis match: conversation goes back and forth, instead of just one person talking
- **Acknowledge other people’s feelings**, which lets them know they have been heard and may help them to be more understanding of your concerns
- **Find ways to compromise.** It might be hard sometimes to agree with other people, but if you can see a way to compromise, suggest it
- **Be specific.** Try to focus on what someone actually says or does in a certain instance, rather than making vague or broad accusations
- **Share your emotions.** Share how you feel about someone’s behavior. Try not to make broad statements
- **Clearly tell people what you want them to do next time.** Try to be specific and realistic. If you recognize that you were unclear in your request, let people know that you take some of the blame for the problem and that you want to help find an answer
- **Evaluate how your conversation went.** Take time to think about how your conversation went so you know what to work on for next time

Learning how to talk with family and friends
Fibromyalgia may affect your relationships with family and friends. Being able to communicate well may help you maintain your health and your relationships. You did not ask for this disorder, and no one—including you—is to blame for it. Talk with your family and friends about ways you can work together to manage your fibromyalgia and strengthen the bonds you share. It may be hard to talk about fibromyalgia with people you care about, but here are a few things you can try:

- **Be frank about your pain.** When they ask how you are doing, do not pretend it does not hurt. Because your pain can fluctuate, let others, including your healthcare provider, know how you really feel
- **Ask for help when you need it.** While it may be hard to ask for help, try asking in a way that makes it clear what you need help with
- **Be a cheerful receiver.** When someone helps you or gives you a compliment, say thank you. Do not feel discouraged that you needed the help or an emotional boost
- **Discuss communication problems.** If communication between you and a family member or friend becomes one-sided or tense, talk openly about it.

- **Write down your hardest communication problems.** It may help to see in print what you are feeling. Writing it down may give you time to calm down and practice sharing your feelings before you talk about them.

- **Talk about things other than your fibromyalgia.** Your relationships shouldn’t center on your fibromyalgia. Talk about things that are going on in the world and in the rest of your lives.

**Communicating with your family**
If you help your family understand and accept your disorder, they may be better able to support you. Some things you can do include:

- Helping your family learn about fibromyalgia—its diagnosis, symptoms, and effects on you. Encourage them to meet with your healthcare provider to get their questions answered.

- Sharing the **FibroGuide** program so that your family members can learn more about fibromyalgia.

- Working with your family to keep your home life as positive as possible.

- Letting your family know that when you feel well, you will do whatever you can to help but that you must also pace yourself so your symptoms don’t get worse. See **Pacing Yourself** for some pacing tips.

- Talking with your family about things other than your own health. Show an interest in what is going on in their lives as well.

**Communicating with your healthcare provider**
Your healthcare provider’s important job is to diagnose your condition to give you medical advice, treat your symptoms, and offer hope. Your job is to allow him or her to help you manage your fibromyalgia. You can do this by keeping the lines of communication open by:

- **Making lists** of your questions and symptoms before office visits. Write down your thoughts about how treatment is going. The **Working With Your Healthcare Provider Work Sheet** may help you with these lists.

- **Scheduling regular appointments** to talk about managing your symptoms, to address your concerns, and to track your progress. This can be a more helpful way to manage your symptoms instead of making appointments only when symptoms worsen. If you are unsure about what to go over first, show your list and work sheets to your healthcare provider and let him or her choose the most important items.

- **Taking notes** at office visits to make sure you understand and remember what you need to do. This may be a big help if your memory and thinking problems are making it hard to remember things.

- **Asking questions and being frank** with your healthcare provider so that he or she will be better able to help you. Explain how you feel physically, share your emotions, and give examples.
Keeping a medical folder of health papers, including those you take to office visits and those you get from your healthcare provider. A medical folder is good to have in case you switch healthcare providers, travel, or want to have a medical history.

Taking charge and following the plan your healthcare provider gives you. If you have problems, or your condition worsens or changes, call to report it. Do not wait for a problem to become too big before seeking medical help.

Not worrying that if you start to feel better, your healthcare provider will stop seeing you. Your treatment is an ongoing process, and he or she needs to know when you are having both bad and good days.

Working together with your healthcare provider to get the best treatment possible. Respecting each other and meeting regularly can help your relationship.

To learn more about communicating with your healthcare provider, watch the video, featuring Daniel Clauw, MD, a leading fibromyalgia expert.

A note for family and friends

Good communication helps everyone
When you care about someone who has chronic pain, as with fibromyalgia, you often go through the same emotions they do. If you are a family member, you may also feel a loss of control over your own life. The best way to deal with this is to talk openly with the person about your feelings so that you can try to:
  - Make a plan for how you can help the person without losing control of your own life
  - Share your feelings. You may learn that the other person has the same concerns you do
  - Talk about other things. Your relationship needs to be about more than just the fibromyalgia. If you dwell on the pain, it may actually cause the person’s pain to worsen
A Symptom Management Program for People Living With Fibromyalgia

Communicating Work Sheet

Becoming a better communicator

Being an assertive and effective communicator may help ensure that your needs and the needs of others are being met and respected. This may help you better manage your fibromyalgia. There are 4 steps you can follow that may help you become a better communicator.

**Step 1:** Be specific
When you bring something up, be specific and focus only on what you see or hear someone do.

*Instead of:* “You always seem mad at me.”

*Try saying:* “I notice that you are upset with me when I can’t go out to a movie with the family.”

**Step 2:** Share your emotions
Let the other person know what you are feeling.

*For example:* “Getting upset with me when I can’t go out with the family makes me feel guilty and sad.”

**Step 3:** Describe what you would like to happen next time
Tell people how you would like them to deal with a problem the next time the same thing happens.

*For example:* “The next time we talk about why I can’t do something, it would help if you didn’t get angry when you tell me what is bothering you.”

**Step 4:** Evaluate how your conversation went
Thinking about how your conversation went may help you figure out what you need to work on for next time.

*Things to keep in mind include:*
- How did the other person respond?
- Did you say what you wanted to say?
- Would you change what you do or say next time?
# Work Sheet Instructions

Use this work sheet to help you plan ways to make your communication more effective. Refer to these steps for help.

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<td>When you...</td>
<td>I feel...</td>
<td>Next time, I would like it if you...</td>
<td>It went well, but I'm not sure if it will change how he feels. Next time I'll suggest that we talk before an activity is planned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get upset that I cannot join in a family activity.</td>
<td>Guilty and sad.</td>
<td>Would tell me what is bothering you without getting mad at me.</td>
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Reframing negative thinking
Fibromyalgia may have brought many unwelcome changes to your life that may have left you feeling frustrated or angry. If so, you may be like some people with fibromyalgia who often experience negative thoughts. Don’t blame yourself. It is normal to think negative thoughts when you feel overwhelmed by symptoms such as pain and fatigue.

Over time these negative thoughts may prevent you from managing your symptoms and taking care of yourself. So how can you find a way to deal with these negative thoughts? A powerful process called **reframing** may help you learn how to recognize negative thoughts, challenge those thoughts, and turn them into positive ones. It may take some time to learn how to do this, but reframing your thoughts may help you feel better.

Thinking about pain can be painful
What you think certainly does not cause fibromyalgia, but it may affect how you react to and deal with the pain and other symptoms of fibromyalgia. In fact, the more you think about pain, the more physical pain and distress you may feel.

So if thinking about pain is distressful, why does your brain do it? It is important to realize that constant pain may lead to both physical exhaustion and mental fatigue. When you are mentally tired, you may not be able to concentrate and think clearly. Automatic thoughts are the first thoughts that come into your mind and, if those thoughts are negative, they may make you feel unhappy, frustrated, or discouraged. As a result, you may respond to the constant pain you are feeling by thinking a negative automatic thought, such as “I am always in pain.”
Here is an example of how it can happen:

- Carol, who has fibromyalgia, has returned from a short walk only to find that her pain feels worse. Her first thought is negative: “I feel worse than before I walked. I’ll never get better!”

- Because Carol feels pain, her automatic thought is “I will never get better.” Because of this, she feels hopeless and helpless. This is how she always reacts when she has pain.

- Even though the thought of never getting better makes her feel even worse, it is more automatic for Carol to have this negative thought than to think positively or constructively about how to deal with her pain.

- It can be hard and may take extra energy that Carol may not think she has to change her negative automatic thought into a positive one, but doing that is very important.

**Positive thoughts may lead to positive feelings**

Your mind plays an important role in how you feel. So if negative automatic thoughts lead to negative feelings, then positive automatic thoughts may lead to positive feelings.

Along those lines, because negative emotions may make your feelings worse, it makes sense that positive thoughts may help you feel better emotionally.
Thinking styles that can get in your way
Read examples of negative thoughts and how to turn them into positive ones.

→ Negative thought example: “Because I have fibromyalgia, I will never be happy.”

Thinking style—Black-and-white
Assumes that things are right or wrong, good or bad, all or nothing. Triggers emotional reactions that are extreme—things are either wonderful or horrible, with nothing in between.

Learn how to reframe
- Try not to use vague or broad statements to describe how you feel about a particular incident or challenge
- Try to see the situation as a chance to learn more about yourself and your behavior. This is also a chance to think of ways to avoid or deal with a similar situation next time

Negative thought example: “My pain is flaring up again today. It is ruining my whole life. I’m worthless when I’m in pain.”

Thinking style—Catastrophic
Assumes that one bad event is part of a never-ending pattern of disasters. Makes negative aspects of a situation seem worse than they are or are likely to be. Can lead to more physical pain and emotional distress and can make it harder to manage pain.

Learn how to reframe
- Try to identify when you are having these thoughts, and then challenge their logic

→ Negative thought example: “Despite my pain, I should have pushed myself to make dinner instead of ordering it.”
Or “My children should help me no matter what.”

Thinking style—“Should”
Assumes that you and others must act in a certain way, even if it does not make sense or may not be in your best interest. May make it seem as if you have not done the right thing if you move away at all from your usual standards.

Learn how to reframe
- Often, thinking this way means that what you “should” do conflicts with what you want to do or are capable of doing without a pain flare-up
- Try to choose activities and goals that are realistic and enjoyable
**Negative thought example:** Your healthcare provider said: “While fibromyalgia has no cure, there are ways to manage the symptoms.” You heard: “My doctor tells me there is nothing that can be done for fibromyalgia.”

**Thinking style—Filtered**
Focuses only on part of the situation, not on the whole picture. May cause you to hear only part of what is said.

**Learn how to reframe**
- Listen carefully in order to hear the whole message.

**Frank reframes his thinking**
Frank thought he was a burden to his wife and children because fibromyalgia slowed him down and kept him from doing all that he wanted to do for his family. His negative thinking left him feeling helpless and depressed. It also made his pain seem more unbearable.

At first, Frank automatically thought about the things he could no longer do for his family. He felt that he had failed as a husband, father, and son. Then he reframed his thinking and thought about the many things that he was still able to do for his family despite his fibromyalgia:
- He helped his daughter with her homework
- He talked with his wife about her troubles at work
- He took care of his son when his son was sick
- He helped his mother in her recent move to a senior citizens’ apartment

Reframing helped Frank think more realistically and constructively about his many choices. For Frank, reframing did NOT involve:
- Convincing himself that everything is fine when it is not
- Fooling himself into thinking that he has no problems

As it did with Frank, reframing may help you draw on your strengths and abilities to deal positively with fibromyalgia and find solutions for some of the problems you face. It may also help you feel better. Use the **Thinking Differently Work Sheet** to help reframe your thoughts.

To learn more about negative automatic thoughts and how to reframe them, watch the video, featuring David Williams, PhD, a leading fibromyalgia expert.
Thinking Differently Work Sheet

Practice reframing your thoughts
This work sheet on reframing negative thoughts may help you:
- Become aware of what situations make you feel frustrated, angry, sad, or guilty
- Practice reframing your negative thoughts as positive ones. If you reframe painful negative thoughts,
you may not feel the physical and emotional effects that negative automatic thoughts may have on you
- Talk with your healthcare provider about negative thoughts

Start by reading the following example. Then, using the 4 reframing steps, fill out the work sheet with your own experience.

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<tr>
<td>Identify the situation that causes negative thoughts</td>
<td>Describe your negative thoughts</td>
<td>Describe your emotions</td>
<td>Reframe your thoughts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| I haven’t done the laundry in weeks, it just hurts too much. | • I’m a terrible wife  
• I can’t do anything anymore  
• My husband will be angry with me | • Guilt  
• Worthlessness  
• Anxiety | • Having fibromyalgia is not my fault, and it does not mean I am a bad wife  
• There are many things I can do without help, but laundry is not one of them  
• If I explain to my husband about my pain and ask for his help, he’ll understand |

Use the chart on page 2 to write down your own experiences.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STEP 1</th>
<th>STEP 2</th>
<th>STEP 3</th>
<th>STEP 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify the situation that</td>
<td>Describe your negative thoughts</td>
<td>Describe your emotions</td>
<td>Reframe your thoughts</td>
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<tr>
<td>causes negative thoughts</td>
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Being active may help

Does the thought of being physically active with fibromyalgia seem difficult to you? You may feel that you are too tired or have too much pain. Or you may worry that being more active might make you feel worse. These are all valid concerns, but being more active may eventually have the opposite effect. Taking part in regular physical activity may help you manage your fibromyalgia. Benefits can include:

- Helping you sleep better
- Reducing your pain and fatigue
- Helping you feel better

The good news is that a little bit of physical activity—even minutes a day—can make a difference. The key is to start slowly and with activities that are easy for you to do. Over time, you can gradually increase your activity and start to do more. But be sure to talk with your healthcare provider first before you change or increase the amount of activity that you do. This can help you make sure that your symptoms are under control and that it is safe to start. It can also help you avoid overexerting yourself, which can lead to a flare-up, or worsening, of your symptoms.

Myths and facts about physical activity

**MYTH:**
People with fibromyalgia are not, should not, and cannot be physically active.

**→ FACT:**
Studies have shown that people with fibromyalgia benefit from being active. In fact, exercise is a key part of managing fibromyalgia.

**MYTH:**
You will feel worse if you are more active.

**→ FACT:**
Over time, being active may help improve your mood and physical function, although you may feel more pain at first.

Your muscles may have become deconditioned, or weaker, due to inactivity, but this may lessen as your body adjusts to being active again. Remember that overexercising can also lead to more pain. Talk with your healthcare provider about ways to help you be more active.

Why is physical activity so important?

Some research has shown that people with fibromyalgia have improved their fitness levels and reduced their pain by taking part in an exercise program—such as walking, jogging, swimming, or cycling—for a total of 30 minutes most days of the week. Because of your condition, this may not be a realistic goal for you right now. The right amount of the right activity for you, however, may help you feel better without making your symptoms worse. Always talk with your healthcare provider before starting or changing an exercise plan.
**What counts as physical activity?**
These are 2 different types of activity you can take part in:
- **Lifestyle activities** are things that you do or enjoy as a normal part of daily life, such as doing chores or playing with children
- **Structured activities** are traditional, planned exercises, such as aerobics, strength training, and stretching
Either of these types of activity may be right for you. The important thing is to try to be active, and to give yourself credit for what you may be doing already.

**Start with lifestyle activities**
When you’re thinking about becoming more active, it is important to find lifestyle activities that you will enjoy and are physically able to do. Remember to start with easy activities and build from there.

As you move from left to right across the activity spectrum below, you will see that the activities listed require more energy and physical effort. Depending on how you feel, it might be realistic for you to build up to activities in the mild and moderate ranges. Use the lists below as a general—but not complete—guide to the types of activities you can choose from in each category. As you become more active, you can try to work up to more challenging activities gradually. However, keep in mind that vigorous or intense activities are not recommended for most people with fibromyalgia. Any increases in exercise intensity should occur gradually over months, not weeks.

**Talk with your healthcare provider about the activity level that is right for you right now.**

![Examples of Activities](image)

**When should I add structured activities?**
Once you are comfortable doing some lifestyle activities, you may want to talk with your healthcare provider about starting a structured exercise program. Be open about your symptoms and level of activity. Remember to start at a low level and take it slow. *Setting Goals* and *Pacing Yourself* offer important guidance on how you can put together a safe exercise program to meet your needs.
Exercises for people with fibromyalgia
Talk with your healthcare provider about what type of exercise may be right for you. There are 3 types of structured exercise that have been shown to help people with fibromyalgia. Keep in mind that these activities can be done at a gym or at home.

→ Flexibility, or stretching
  • Stretching may provide pain relief and make tight muscles more flexible
  • Flexibility is important for good posture, strength, and balance
  • You may want to relax your muscles with a hot bath before activity
  • Do not bounce while stretching or stretch to the point of pain

→ Aerobic exercise
  • Includes walking, warm-water aerobics, and stationary cycling
  • Helps improve your circulation and strengthen your heart. Because it stimulates your cardiovascular system, this may help reduce fatigue if your muscles have become deconditioned
  • It is best to gradually increase the amount of time you do aerobic exercise. For some people, this may mean slowly working up to 30 minutes most days of the week

→ Strength training
  • Includes weight lifting, sit-ups, and using resistance bands or tubes
  • Helps your muscles become stronger
  • It should include upper- and lower-body strength training
  • It may help you function better and take part in more activities
  • It could counter muscle loss, and it may even result in muscle gain
  • Focus on strengthening and toning, and not on body building or “bulking up”

To learn more about being active as part of managing fibromyalgia, watch the video, featuring Daniel Clauw, MD, a leading fibromyalgia expert.

Exercise tips
Your results may differ from those of someone who doesn’t have fibromyalgia or from what you were once able to do. Your results will depend on the condition you are now in and the intensity of your symptoms. As you begin your new exercise program, keep these tips in mind:
  • Start at a low level and slowly work up to moderate activities as you are able
  • On bad days, exercise as planned, but consider doing it at a lighter level or for less time
  • Talk with your healthcare provider before starting or changing your exercise program
Scheduling tips
Whether you want to increase your lifestyle activities or start a structured exercise program, you may have trouble starting and sticking with a plan. It may help if you:
- Talk with your healthcare provider about starting or changing your exercise program
- Think about ways you can change less active times into more active ones. Use the Being Active Work Sheet to help you do this
- Pick a set time each day to be active so you are committed to it
- Plan to be active at times of the day when you feel your best or think it may help you the most. For example, it might be helpful to stretch in the morning if you feel stiff
- Start by scheduling small amounts of activity so you don’t overdo it
- Find a friend or family member to join you

For more tips about being active, visit Everyday tips for you.

Sticking with your activity plan
Being active on a regular basis is a challenge for many people. It can be a special challenge for people with fibromyalgia. Becoming more aware of your challenges may help you move past them.

- If you are afraid that being more active will cause a new flare-up, then:
  - Consider whether you may have done too much too soon in the past
  - Plan ahead and pace yourself, using the tips in Pacing Yourself to find the right activity level for you
  - Try thinking about being active as a way to help you feel better

- If you are not sure about what to do or how to start, then:
  - Think about your past and present activities
  - Pick one thing to do and start slowly
  - Keep track of what you do, how long you do it, and how you feel before, during, and after it

Don’t forget that everyone with fibromyalgia has different abilities and that every day may be different. Just do what you can each day and build from there.

>> A note for family and friends

Being active together
Many people with fibromyalgia are not active. They may not know what to do, what they can do, or how to start. Here are some tips that may help people become more active:
- Help identify activities they enjoy
- Encourage them to track their progress, using the FibroGuide work sheets
- Let them know that you would like to help them deal with concerns
- Help them create a good balance between rest and activity, using the tips in Pacing Yourself
- Do activities together to show support and improve your own health
# Being Active Work Sheet

## Make Your Physical Activity Count

Being physically active is an important part of taking control of your fibromyalgia. By taking part in regular activities, you may help manage your fibromyalgia symptoms, become healthier and stronger, and feel better. The goal of this work sheet is to help you to:

- Consider the activities you do now
- Recognize that what you are already doing is considered physical activity
- Consider ways to become more active

As you become more active as part of your daily routine, you may gradually be able to take part in a regular exercise program.

## 5 steps to increasing your physical activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 1:</th>
<th>Step 2:</th>
<th>Step 3:</th>
<th>Step 4:</th>
<th>Step 5:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Talk with your healthcare provider</strong></td>
<td><strong>Keep track of everything you do in a typical day</strong></td>
<td><strong>Place each activity on the physical activity spectrum</strong></td>
<td><strong>Learn how to balance your physical activities</strong></td>
<td><strong>Reward yourself</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Always talk with your healthcare provider before starting or changing your exercise program. He or she can help you determine what is the right amount of physical activity for you right now. | From the time you wake up until the time you go to bed, keep track of everything that you do during a day. Keep track of what you do on a weekend day as well. It might be different from a typical weekday. Write down the amount of time you spend doing each activity. | Write down each activity in the correct column:  
- Sedentary (still)  
- Light/mild  
- Moderate  
Keep in mind that vigorous or intense activities are not recommended for most people with fibromyalgia. Talk with your healthcare provider about the activity level that is right for you now. | Find ways to adjust your activities so that you gradually add more activity or increase your level of activity. For example, is there a long period of time when you are sitting? Maybe you could take 5-minute stretching breaks. | As you work toward becoming more active, it is also important to find ways to reward yourself for making the effort. For example, you may want to rent a movie you have been wanting to see or schedule time with a friend. |

The chart on page 2 provides an example of how to track and assess your physical activity habits.
**FibroGuide: Being Active Work Sheet—SAMPLE**

**STEP 1** Talk with my healthcare provider

**STEP 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time slot</th>
<th>Activities (chores, errands, work, child care, fun)</th>
<th>Sedentary</th>
<th>Light/mild</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6 AM to 8 AM</td>
<td>Showered, got kids ready for school</td>
<td>15 min</td>
<td>25 min</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 AM to 10 AM</td>
<td>Commuted, sat at desk</td>
<td>2 h</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 AM to noon</td>
<td>Delivered mail at work, walked during lunch, sat at desk</td>
<td>90 min</td>
<td>10 min</td>
<td>10 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noon to 2 PM</td>
<td>Sat at desk</td>
<td>2 h</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 PM to 4 PM</td>
<td>Sat at desk, walked to nearby office</td>
<td>90 min</td>
<td>15 min</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 PM to 6 PM</td>
<td>Sat at desk</td>
<td>2 h</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 PM to 8 PM</td>
<td>Did yoga tape, made dinner</td>
<td></td>
<td>25 min</td>
<td>35 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 PM to 10 PM</td>
<td>Watched TV, got ready for bed</td>
<td>90 min, 15 min</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 PM to midnight</td>
<td>Slept</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**STEP 3**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Time slot</th>
<th>Activities (chores, errands, work, child care, fun)</th>
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<td>10 PM to midnight</td>
<td>Slept</td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL** 660 min 60 min 60 min

**STEP 4** Notes about this day:
It was a pretty good day. I added some moderate activities today. I will try to do that more often—maybe get up and walk every hour or so.

**STEP 5**

My reward:
My reward will be to rent a movie.

See page 3 to track and assess your physical activity habits.
**FibroGuide: Being Active Work Sheet**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time slot</th>
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<th>Sedentary</th>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL**

**Notes about this day:**

**My reward:**
**Breaking the cycle of sleepless nights**

It is important to get a full, restful night’s sleep. Yet, night after night, many people with fibromyalgia have trouble sleeping. They might wake up often or have a poor quality of sleep. They may wake up in the morning feeling tired and not rested. If you have trouble sleeping, know that it is a common problem for people with fibromyalgia. While you may be frustrated and confused about what to do, there are ways you can help yourself sleep better and feel more rested and energetic.

![Diagram showing the cycle of pain and poor sleep](image)

**Often feeling fatigued**

Do you feel as if you have no energy? Are you deeply exhausted? You may be experiencing fatigue. A common symptom of fibromyalgia, fatigue is more than just tiredness from a lack of sleep. Some people with fibromyalgia have aching muscles and the feeling of being worn out.

People with fibromyalgia may also experience thinking and memory problems, which is sometimes referred to as fibro fog. Examples of these problems include difficulty thinking clearly, recalling things, and doing several things at once.

While not getting enough restful sleep may worsen the effects of fatigue, a person who is sleeping long hours may still suffer from fatigue because they aren’t getting the right type of sleep.
What happens during sleep?
Why do people need sleep? No one knows for sure, but scientists have learned that:

- During **slow-wave sleep**, brain waves are slow and steady. Blood pressure lowers, muscles relax, blood supply to muscles increases, tissue growth and repair occurs, energy is restored, and hormones are released for muscle growth and development.
- During **rapid-eye-movement (or REM) sleep**, brain waves are fast and choppy. Theories suggest that this is when the brain learns, thinks, and remembers new information.

Slow-wave and REM sleep happen in cycles about every 90 minutes, starting with slow-wave sleep.

Understanding sleep problems with fibromyalgia
In people with fibromyalgia, slow-wave sleep is disrupted, which may lead to muscle pain and to waking up without feeling rested or restored. People with fibromyalgia may also have trouble:

- Falling asleep
- Staying asleep without frequent awakenings
- Getting out of bed due to morning stiffness

Pain may lead to these problems. Stress may also increase the frequency of sleep disturbances and make it hard to function the next day.

What can I do about sleep problems?
Getting enough sleep—and the right kind of sleep—may help you manage the pain and fatigue of fibromyalgia. Changing your sleeping habits may be key to improving your sleep. Use the **Sleep Work Sheet** to help you and your healthcare provider make a plan for improving your sleep habits. The following tips may help you fall asleep faster, stay asleep longer, and wake up feeling better.

Sleep tips you can try

> **Sleep behavior tips**

To help you sleep better:

- **Get into or stay in bed only when you are tired.** Forcing yourself to stay in bed or fighting with your body to fall asleep may only make things worse.

- **Get out of bed if you are not asleep after 15 minutes.** If you have not fallen asleep in this time, your body isn’t ready to sleep yet. Go into another room and do something quiet, such as reading or listening to music. Go back to bed when you start feeling sleepy.

- **Reclaim your bed for sleep.** Do not do other activities, such as read, eat, or watch TV in bed.

- **Try not to watch the clock.** Watching the time pass and worrying about how much time you have left to sleep may make it more difficult to fall asleep. Turn your clock toward the wall so you can’t focus on the time.

- **Avoid stimulating activities before going to bed.** For example, do not watch action movies or get into conversations or projects that may upset or excite you.
Timing tips

It can be hard to change your sleep habits, but there are steps you can take to help your body adopt new habits. To help you start and stick with a sleep routine, try to:
- **Follow a schedule**, even on weekends
- **Go to bed at the same time each night**, even if you don’t feel tired yet, so your body gets used to a regular sleep pattern
- **Get up at the same time every morning** even if you didn’t sleep well the night before. This helps reinforce your regular sleep pattern. Use an alarm clock to help you wake up
- **Avoid napping a lot during the day.** While you may need to nap a little during the day, napping for more than 30 to 60 minutes may disrupt your nighttime sleep pattern. Although it may be difficult to change your napping habits, consider whether your daytime naps are making it harder for you to feel completely rested

Bedroom tips

Set up your bedroom to help you sleep. Be sure that your bedroom is:
- **At a comfortable temperature.** Temperatures that are too hot or too cold may disrupt your sleep
- **Dark.** Use shades or drapes to keep out the light. Try sleeping with an eye mask
- **Quiet.** Noise, even at low levels, may disturb your sleep. To help block out sounds that may keep you awake, you may want to consider using fans, which generate white noise, or ear plugs
- **Comfortable to you.** If needed, adjust the padding thickness on your mattress to your liking. If you have pain or soreness, consider adjusting or changing your pillows or mattress to better support those areas
- **Free of pets.** Consider keeping pets off the bed because they may wake you up or keep you awake when they move or make noise

Body temperature tips

Some research suggests that lowering your body temperature near bedtime may tell your body it is time to go to sleep. You may want to:
- **Take a bath before bedtime.** Your body temperature will drop naturally after your bath
- **Avoid exercise too close to bedtime.** Physical activity raises your body temperature and may keep you awake if done within 2 to 3 hours of going to bed
Eating, drinking, and other tips

You may find it helpful to:

- **Avoid eating a heavy meal or drinking too much before bedtime.** A light snack, such as a banana or small glass of warm milk, may help you sleep. But too much food or liquid may make it hard to fall asleep or stay asleep. Limiting fluids before bedtime may cut down on how often you need to go to the bathroom during the night.

- **Avoid caffeine for 4 to 6 hours before bedtime.** The caffeine in coffee, chocolate, some soft drinks, teas [including some green teas], diet medicines, and some pain medicines may keep you from sleeping well.

- **Avoid alcohol before bedtime.** Although alcohol may help you fall asleep, it may also increase the number of times you wake up or need to go to the bathroom during the night.

- **Do not smoke near bedtime or during the night.** Nicotine is a stimulant that can cause shallow sleeping and sleeplessness. For this reason, you may want to strongly consider quitting smoking.

Calming tips

To mentally prepare yourself for sleep, try to:

- **Do something that is calming to you.** Listen to music, read a magazine, or try using a relaxation technique, such as meditation. See Relaxation for different techniques you can try.

- **Write down your thoughts in a “worry book.”** Set aside time the next day to think about the problem you wrote down and how to solve it. Problems that cause worry at night often seem smaller in the daytime.
Myths about changing your sleep patterns

**MYTH:**
“I will sleep whenever I get a chance.”

**FACT:**
Going to sleep and waking up at the same time every day helps your body learn a pattern of sleep.

You may feel you have too much to do to set enough time aside to sleep each night. This may mean you are overdoing it and need more sleep than you are currently getting. **Pacing Yourself** may help you take the first steps toward figuring out the right amount of activity for you each day so you leave yourself enough time to sleep at night.

**MYTH:**
“I’ll be tired the next day if I change my sleep habits.”

**FACT:**
It’s true that when you change your sleep pattern, you may be a bit more tired at first.

Changing old habits and learning how to get a good, restful night’s sleep doesn’t happen immediately. Give yourself a few weeks to get used to the new pattern and for your body to adjust.

**Getting a good night’s sleep may help**
Helping your body get used to a new sleep pattern takes time and effort. Whatever challenges you face in sticking to your new sleep pattern, be sure to:

- **Pace yourself to keep symptoms from flaring up.** Flare-ups, or periods when your symptoms are more intense, may interfere with sleep. Use the ideas in **Pacing Yourself** to help you get through the day without overdoing it.
- **Keep track of your progress.** Use the ideas in **Setting Goals** to help you see how you are doing.

It may take up to several weeks to notice improvements in your sleeping habits. Know that your efforts are not wasted because improving your sleep may help ease the pain and fatigue of your fibromyalgia.

**» A note for family & friends**

**Making sure YOU get enough sleep**
Caring for someone with fibromyalgia can be stressful, which can make it hard for you to sleep, too. If the person you care for is your spouse or partner, fibromyalgia can make it hard to sleep in the same bed. When the person you sleep next to has trouble sleeping, you may be kept awake as well. Refer to the “**Sleep tips you can try**” section or **Sleep Work Sheet** for some helpful tips and advice.
### Sleep Work Sheet

**Good sleep habits can help**

Good sleep habits may help you sleep longer and more soundly so you can wake up feeling refreshed. Use this work sheet to help you and your healthcare provider:
- Recognize your main sleep problems
- Identify good sleep habits that may help you improve your sleep

---

#### Steps to getting a good night’s sleep

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Step 1:</strong> Keep track of your sleep patterns</th>
<th><strong>Step 2:</strong> Address your main sleep problems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Keep a log of your sleep patterns for at least 3 nights, including one weekend night. While it may be hard to know exactly how long it took you to fall asleep or how long you were awake at night, make your best guess.</td>
<td>As you track your sleep patterns, think about the kinds of sleep problems you are having. People with fibromyalgia may have a hard time:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Naps:</strong> Write down the time that your nap started and ended</td>
<td>• Falling asleep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bedtime:</strong> Write down the time that you got into bed and turned off the lights</td>
<td>• Staying asleep without frequent awakenings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How long it took to fall asleep:</strong> Estimate how long it took you to fall asleep after turning off the lights</td>
<td>• Getting out of bed due to morning stiffness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How many times you woke up:</strong> Write down the number of times that you remember waking up during the night. Use the notes section to write down any unusual events, such as a phone call, that woke you up</td>
<td>The tables starting on page 3 offer tips for managing each problem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How long you were awake:</strong> Estimate how many minutes you were awake each time during the night</td>
<td><strong>Step 3:</strong> Choose a sleep behavior tip that targets your main sleep problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Morning wake-up time:</strong> Write down the time that you woke up in the morning, even if you didn’t get out of bed at that time</td>
<td>• Try following the tip for at least 3 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Out-of-bed time:</strong> Write down the time that you actually got out of bed to start your day</td>
<td>• Using page 6 of the work sheet, monitor your sleep habits while you try the new tip. It can help you see how well the tip is working for you</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Step 1: Keep a record of your current sleep habits
For at least 3 nights, including one weekend night, keep a log of your sleeping habits.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My Sleep Habits</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daytime naps</td>
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<td>2:00-2:45 PM, 4-6 PM</td>
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<td><strong>NIGHTTIME SLEEP</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Time I went to bed</td>
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<td>10:30 PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>How long it took me to fall asleep</td>
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<td>45 min</td>
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<td>How many times I woke up</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How long I was awake each time</td>
<td></td>
<td>20 min, 10 min, 30 min</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Morning wake-up time</td>
<td></td>
<td>6:30 AM</td>
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<tr>
<td>Out-of-bed time</td>
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<td>6:45 AM</td>
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<td><strong>NOTES:</strong></td>
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<td>How did I feel when I woke up?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Did I get a good night’s sleep?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Review your record of sleep habits. Then identify your main sleep problem.

My main problem is: See:

- Trouble falling asleep page 3
- Trouble staying asleep page 4
- Trouble waking up or getting out of bed page 5

See next page for Step 2
**Step 2:** Address your main sleep problem — I have trouble falling sleep

Look down the column for tips and behaviors that you can use to manage your sleep problems. Check off the category of tips you want to try. Use the notes section to help you plan how to use the tips.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Tips for Falling Asleep</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐ Timing tips</td>
<td>- Go to bed at the same time each night</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Get up at the same time each morning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Avoid napping if you can. If not, keep it to 30 to 60 minutes maximum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Good sleep behaviors</td>
<td>- Get into bed only when you’re sleepy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Get out of bed if you can’t sleep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Try not to watch the clock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Don’t read, eat, or watch TV in bed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Bedroom tips</td>
<td>- Keep the bedroom temperature comfortable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Keep the bedroom dark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Make sure your bed is comfortable. If needed, adjust the padding thickness on your mattress to your liking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Consider adjusting or changing your pillows or mattress to better support sore or painful areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Keep your bed free of pets when you sleep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Be mindful of what you consume</td>
<td>- Avoid caffeine and nicotine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Eat a light snack before bedtime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Avoid heavy meals close to bedtime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Calming tips</td>
<td>- Do something that is calming before going to bed. Listen to music, read a magazine, or meditate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Avoid watching stimulating TV programs close to bedtime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- If you find yourself worrying about something before bedtime, write down your thoughts in a “worry book.” Set aside time the next day to think about the problem and how to solve it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Body temperature tips</td>
<td>- Take a warm bath shortly before bedtime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Avoid exercising within 2 to 3 hours of bedtime</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

See next page for more of Step 2
### Step 2: Address your main sleep problem — I have trouble staying asleep

Look down the column for tips and behaviors that you can use to manage your sleep problems. Check off the category of tips you want to try. Use the notes section to help you plan how to use the tips.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Tips for Staying Asleep</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Good sleep behaviors              | - Get out of bed if you can’t sleep  
- Use the bed only for sleeping  
- Don’t read, eat, or watch TV in bed  
- Try not to watch the clock      |
| Bedroom tips                      | - Keep the bedroom temperature comfortable  
- Keep the bedroom dark  
- Make sure your bed is comfortable. If needed, adjust the padding thickness on your mattress to your liking  
- Consider adjusting or changing your pillows or mattress to better support sore or painful areas  
- Keep your bed free of pets when you sleep |
| Be mindful of what you consume    | - Avoid caffeine and nicotine  
- Limit alcohol before bedtime  
- Avoid heavy meals and drinking too much fluid close to bedtime |
| Calming tips                      | - Do something that is calming before going to bed. Listen to music, read a magazine, or meditate  
- Avoid watching stimulating TV programs close to bedtime  
- Avoid exercising within 2 to 3 hours of bedtime |

See next page for more of Step 2
**Step 2: Address your main sleep problem — I have trouble waking up or getting out of bed**

Look down the column for tips and behaviors that you can use to manage your sleep problems. Check off the category of tips you want to try. Use the notes section to help you plan how to use the tips. If you are having trouble waking up or getting out of bed, it is important to try to get a good night’s sleep. Refer to the tips for falling asleep and staying asleep on pages 3 and 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Tips for Waking Up or Getting Out of Bed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐ Timing tips</td>
<td>- Go to bed at the same time each night&lt;br&gt;- Get up at the same time every morning&lt;br&gt;- Use an alarm clock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Bedroom tips</td>
<td>- Open the shade first thing in the morning to let the daylight shine into your room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Calming tips</td>
<td>- Remind yourself that you are trying to set a new sleep routine. Sticking to a schedule can help your body know when it is time to get up</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

See next page for Step 3
Step 3: Keep a record of your current sleep habits
For at least 3 days, try following the tips you’ve chosen. Refer back to the Step 1 chart to see how well the tips work for you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My Sleep Habits</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
<th>Saturday</th>
<th>Sunday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daytime naps</td>
<td>2:00-2:30 PM, 5:00-5:30 PM</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>NIGHTTIME SLEEP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time I went to bed</td>
<td>10:30 PM</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>How long it took me to fall asleep</td>
<td>35 min</td>
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<tr>
<td>How many times I woke up</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>How long I was awake each time</td>
<td>10 min, 30 min</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morning wake-up time</td>
<td>6:30 AM</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Out-of-bed time</td>
<td>6:45 AM</td>
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<tr>
<td>NOTES:</td>
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<tr>
<td>How did I feel when I woke up?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Did I get a good night’s sleep?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What can I do next time?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Category of Tips I Tried
Learning how to relax and ease tension
Widespread muscle tension is a major feature of fibromyalgia and may be one of the causes of fibromyalgia pain. But by learning relaxation exercises, you may be able to teach your body how to relax despite the pain. This may help release the tension throughout your body. With practice each day, relaxation techniques may help you:
- Lessen your symptoms, such as headaches and back pain
- Raise your energy level
- Sleep better
- Ease your stress
- Manage your emotional responses, such as anger or frustration

Why does muscle tension cause pain?
Your body naturally protects itself by tensing the muscles around an area it needs to protect, such as an area where you feel pain, and relaxes when there is no longer a threat. But when your muscles are tense for too long, it can make pain worse. Learning ways to relax more fully may help reduce this muscle tension and pain so it may be easier to move.

I try to relax, but it doesn’t seem to help
Do you still feel tense even after trying to relax? That’s because restful activities you may be trying, such as lying on the couch or watching TV, may not help you achieve the relaxation response. The relaxation response occurs when you teach your body how to relax more fully and on command by using active relaxation techniques, such as deep breathing. As you practice these techniques, they may become more natural and may help you reach a more calming state of relaxation. Use the Relaxation Work Sheet to help you in this process.
Achieving the relaxation response
A good relaxation technique is one you enjoy and will do on a regular basis. Your healthcare provider can help you choose an appropriate technique. The techniques listed below may help you train your body to produce the relaxation response.

-> Progressive Muscle Relaxation
   This technique involves tightening and then releasing, or relaxing, your different muscle groups one after another. When tension is released, your muscles become more relaxed than they were before you started. Practice releasing your tension by listening to a Progressive Muscle Relaxation audio exercise. You can also try it later by selecting the link in the lower right corner of the screen.

-> Guided Imagery
   This method, also called visual imagery, has you picture a calm and relaxing place or circumstance in your mind so your body can relax. For the best response, imagine scenes that use at least 3 of your 5 senses: sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch. For example, think of yourself on the beach. Feel the breeze and the warmth of the sun. Smell the salt air. Hear the sound of the waves and the call of the seagulls. Use this Guided Imagery audio exercise to help yourself relax. You can also try it later by selecting the link in the lower right corner of the screen.

-> Deep-Breathing Exercises
   These exercises can help you slow down and control your breathing. Taking a deep breath in and letting it out at a slow, steady pace helps calm your whole body and reduce stress. Use this Deep-Breathing audio exercise to practice this technique. You can also try it later by selecting the link in the lower right corner of the screen.

-> Meditation
   When you meditate, you focus steadily on a specific object, event, or idea to quiet your mind and body. This may help you manage stress and other symptoms, such as pain, fatigue, and shortness of breath. For example, you can listen to the rhythm of your breathing, focus your gaze on a candle, remember a soothing place or memory, or close your eyes and think of a calming word or phrase such as “I feel peace” or “I'm in control of my pain.”

-> Biofeedback
   Biofeedback machines help you visualize on a monitor what is going on inside your body, such as muscle tension. During a biofeedback session, a therapist applies sensors to various parts of your body. These sensors are attached to a monitor that shows your heart rate, blood pressure, and brain wave activity. Then the therapist will use relaxation techniques to help you. You will see the changes in how your body reacts on the monitor. You will then learn how to use these techniques yourself. If you are interested in biofeedback, talk with your healthcare provider about finding a biofeedback therapist at your local hospital, pain center, or rehabilitation clinic.
A note for family and friends

How you can help
When people we care about are in pain, it’s normal to want to help them. Helping someone with fibromyalgia to relax or practice a relaxation technique, even for just a few minutes, may have important health benefits. You may find these techniques helpful for you, too. You can support someone with fibromyalgia by:

- Helping with daily chores and tasks so he or she has more time to take care of herself or himself
- Doing a relaxation technique together
  - Deep breathing
  - Stretching
  - Muscle relaxation
  - Meditation
- Encourage the person you care about to take time to enjoy other calming activities, such as
  - Going for a walk
  - Watching a movie
  - Playing with a pet
  - Calling a friend
Techniques to help yourself relax
Learning active relaxation techniques may help you teach your body to relax more fully on command. This is called achieving the relaxation response. Using this work sheet may help you:

- Schedule time to practice relaxation techniques
- Practice different techniques to find the ones that you like
- Get in the habit of using relaxation techniques

Talk with your healthcare provider about specific relaxation techniques that may be right for you.

---

**Step 1: Choose a relaxation technique**

There are several common relaxation techniques that you can do on your own. Check the box of the technique you want to do:

- Progressive muscle relaxation
- Guided imagery
- Deep-breathing exercises
- Meditation
- Another technique you would like to try ________

**Step 2: Schedule times to practice**

Set certain times to practice the technique you choose. Make it a goal to practice as often as you can. To help you track your progress, write the name of the technique you want to try and the time you have scheduled to do it in the boxes on the work sheet.

**Step 3: Rate your levels of pain and stress**

Refer to the scale below to rate how much pain and stress you feel before and after your practice session. Write the numbers down in the work sheet boxes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pain</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No pain</td>
<td>A great deal of pain</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stress</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No stress</td>
<td>A great deal of stress</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Day</td>
<td>Relaxation Technique</td>
<td>Scheduled Time</td>
<td>Pain Rating</td>
<td>Stress Rating</td>
<td>Notes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>Deep-breathing exercises</td>
<td>3:30 PM - 3:45 PM</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

It took a few minutes to get into it, but then I started to feel less pain and stress.
Do more by pacing yourself
Have you ever done too much when you felt well and then “paid for it” later? If so, then you may have fallen into a frustrating cycle in which you overdo it and then feel worse, which causes you to then have more pain and fatigue. Overexerting yourself can cause a flare-up, which is the term that is used to describe a transient appearance or worsening in symptoms such as feeling muscle and joint pain, feeling tired, or having trouble getting the right kind of sleep.

Many people with fibromyalgia find it easy to fall into this cycle because tasks that used to be quick and easy, such as household chores, may now take longer to complete. This can make it hard to accomplish everything that you need to do each day. As a result, you may feel the need to make up for bad days by playing catch-up on good days.

When you get caught up in this cycle, you may:
- Feel well and do too much
- Have a flare-up
- Fall behind in tasks while you rest and recover
- Repeat the cycle when you feel well again

Learning how to pace yourself can help you break this cycle by teaching you how to alternate between periods of activity and rest so you can do more with less risk of flare-ups. Pacing may help you:
- Improve physical functioning
- Feel less pain and fatigue
- Reduce the likelihood of flare-ups

It’s time to pace yourself
Finishing a task first and then resting is often thought of as a natural way to get things done. For example, you might need to wash dishes. It might feel natural to wash all the dishes and then take a break. But you may risk having a flare-up when you do more than your body can handle at one time without resting. Instead, stopping and resting for a set amount of time when you are active may help you get more done and reduce your risk for having flare-ups. This rhythm of activity and rest, sometimes called time-based pacing, divides tasks into the following 3 steps:
1. Do the task for a set amount of time.
2. Rest for a set amount of time, even if you are not finished with the task.
3. Repeat steps 1 and 2 until the task is done.

Using time-based pacing, you would start by washing dishes for a set amount of time and rest when that time has passed, even if you were not tired or you did not finish the dishes. After your rest period, start again.

To learn more about time-based pacing, watch the video, featuring Daniel Clauw, MD, a leading fibromyalgia expert.
Put it into practice
Time-based pacing allows you to be active for a safe amount of time, which could be minutes or hours, depending on your personal needs. Certain tasks may take more effort and take longer to do than others, but only you can determine what your best pace is for each task. To create a personal pacing plan, try following the 6 steps discussed below.

1. Choose a task
You can use time-based pacing for any task you choose, such as household chores, yard work, personal care, shopping, and pleasant activities. To start, pick something you want or need to do. Start with a simple task, such as vacuuming one room, before trying something harder, such as cleaning the whole house.

2. Figure out a pacing rhythm
You can find your pacing rhythm for a task in just 2 steps. First, estimate how long you can do the task safely before risking a flare-up. Then figure out how long your body needs to rest after this period of activity. Remember, during your rest period, you are not recovering from a flare-up. You are recovering from a safe amount of activity. Everyone is different, but you may need only a brief rest period to allow your body enough time to restore itself before you continue the activity.

Your rhythm for each task will depend on how hard the task is and how much you are able to do right now. It may take you a little while to figure out the right rhythm, so don’t be discouraged if you don’t get it right the first time. Keep these ideas in mind:

- Pick simple goals that you can meet on good and bad days. For example, if you can get out of bed for only 10 minutes at a time, you might want to try a 5-minute activity and then rest for 15 minutes
- Divide your activity and rest segments into small, manageable portions spread across the day. For example, do three 5-minute walks a day 3 times a week rather than one 45-minute walk once a week
- Ask your healthcare provider or use the **Pacing Yourself Work Sheet** to help you figure out realistic pacing rhythm goals

3. Share your pacing plan
Discuss your pacing plan with your healthcare provider so he or she can better understand your symptoms, your symptom management, and how he or she can help you. Your healthcare provider may be able to offer additional support and ways to adjust your plan so you find the rhythm for each activity that’s right for you. For tips on speaking with your healthcare provider, see **Communicating**.
4. Try your pacing plan
Try your pacing plan for 3 to 4 days. This should give you enough time to find out how well it works for you. For example, for a period of 3 to 4 days, you could:

**Shop for 15 minutes and stop.** Rest for a set amount of time. Repeat the cycle until you’re done
- Stop and rest even if you are not tired or not done shopping
- Rest in a pharmacy area chair, the furniture department, in a dressing room, or at the front of a grocery store

**Work on your computer for 20 minutes and stop.** Rest for a set amount of time. Repeat the cycle until you’re done
- Stop and rest even if you are not tired or not done with your work
- Get up and walk, stretch, or use one of the relaxation techniques discussed in Relaxation during your rest time

Again, be sure to talk with your healthcare provider about a pacing plan that is right for you. Remember, everyone’s needs are different. These examples are just illustrations for how to use the pacing methods. With practice, time, and the help of your healthcare provider, you will find a pacing plan that is right for you.

5. Review and revise your plan
After you have tried your pacing plan for 3 to 4 days, review how you are doing. If you are able to do your task and still feel okay that day and the next day, consider revising your plan and adding time to your activity. To revise your plan:
- Slightly increase the time you are active, and gradually reduce your rest time. Be sure to talk with your healthcare provider any time you are planning to increase your activity
- Try this new plan for another 3 to 4 days to give your body time to adjust
- Use the **Pacing Yourself Work Sheet** to track your progress

While practicing and reviewing your plan, you may start to feel worse or you may experience a flare-up. Remember, flare-ups may still happen from time to time, no matter what you do. But don’t let this discourage you, and don’t stop your activity. Instead, reduce your activity intensity, but continue for the same amount of time so you can keep the fitness gains you have already made. For example, if you have been walking at a moderately fast pace for 15 minutes, slow down and walk at a slower pace for 15 minutes. Then very slowly work back to your first goal so your body has time to adjust.
6. Continue to revise and practice your plan

Keep practicing and revising your pacing plan until it works for you. To start, you may want to just try doing pacing plans for 2 tasks a day. With patience, time, and practice, you may be able to find pacing plans that help you avoid the cycle of overdoing it so you are able to do more of what you want and need to do.

A note for family and friends

You can help with pacing

The person you care about may not be able to do as much as he or she used to do because of the pain and fatigue he or she may feel. That is why it is so important for him or her to break large tasks into small steps and rest in between steps. This may have an impact on you as well. It may mean that the things you do together may also take more time to do.

To help someone with fibromyalgia get used to this new way of doing things:

- Stay positive and encourage the person to follow his or her pacing plans
- Try not to finish a task for him or her while he or she is resting, unless asked
- Ask if he or she needs help figuring out pacing plans
- Acknowledge what the person is able to do
- Suggest that the person speak with a healthcare provider if the person has asked you a health question you cannot answer

See Communicating, Setting Goals, and Being Active for more ideas on ways you can help.
Pacing Yourself Work Sheet

Learning to pace yourself by making a plan
Pacing yourself is an important part of managing your fibromyalgia and working with your body's needs. Time-based pacing teaches your body a helpful rhythm of activity and rest. It may help you:

- Improve physical functioning
- Reduce the likelihood of flare-ups
- Feel less pain and fatigue

Use the work sheet on the next page to help you make a pacing plan.

Step 1: Choose a task
Pick a task you want or need to do. Start with a simple task before trying harder ones. For example, you may want to make a pacing plan for vacuuming one room, instead of cleaning the whole house.

Step 2: Figure out a pacing rhythm that helps you do this task
Estimate how long you can do the task and still feel okay.

- If you are not sure how long is safe, see how much you are able to do over the next few days.
- You may also want to talk with your healthcare provider about how much is safe for you to do.
- Your safe time frame is how long you can do a task and still feel okay before you start to feel more pain and fatigue.
- If you start feeling more pain and fatigue, you may be at risk for having a flare-up.

Estimate how long you need to rest before you start the activity again.

- Remember to rest before you start to feel bad.
- It is okay to rest if the task is not done yet.
- You can finish the task when you are done resting.

Switch between doing the task and resting.

- Do the task for a set amount of time. Then rest for a set amount of time. Repeat this cycle until the task is done.
- It might take a few tries to find your pacing rhythm. This is normal and is a part of the learning process.

Example:
I can usually do the dishes for 3 minutes before my neck and back start to hurt. I think that I will need to rest for 2 minutes.

Step 3: Share your pacing plan
Share your pacing plan with your healthcare provider. He or she may be able to suggest additional ways to adjust your plan so that it meets your individual needs and has the right balance of activity and rest for your right now.

Step 4: Try, review, and revise your pacing plan as needed
Try your plan for 3 to 4 days. This should give you enough time to find out how well it works for you. Review how you did with your pacing plan. Revise the plan until it works for you. If you did your task and:

- Feel okay, try increasing your activity time slightly for a new 3- to 4-day period.
- Feel worse, reduce your activity intensity, but be active for the same amount of time and then work back to your first goal.
FibroGuide: Pacing Yourself Work Sheet

Follow the instructions on page 1 to build your pacing plan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Activity Time</th>
<th>Rest Time</th>
<th>Try, Review, and Revise</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>Paying bills</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
<td>2 minutes</td>
<td>I finished the task and did not have a stiff neck. I will try folding laundry next.</td>
</tr>
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Enjoying yourself is important to feeling better

Enjoying yourself is not only an important part of life, it is also an important part of treatment. But you may have sacrificed the enjoyable parts of your life because of your fibromyalgia symptoms. You may be doing only what is “necessary,” such as chores or work, but not be taking time for yourself. Taking time to enjoy yourself may help renew your mind and body, even though the pain and fatigue may make it hard to do the basics each day. It may also help you:

- Lessen or help distract yourself from your pain
- Improve your mood
- Connect with other people
- Add balance to your life

Enjoying yourself may seem selfish at first because you feel that you should spend your time taking care of your family, job, or chores. But what may be missing from your life is time to take care of you. Spending some time doing pleasant things may help you take control of your life by balancing your responsibilities with activities you enjoy. Think about your physical and emotional energy as batteries. When you use energy to take care of daily tasks, energy drains from your batteries. If you recharge both your physical and emotional batteries, you may be able to do more for yourself and others.

Deciding what to do

Pick activities that you enjoy. Activities could include:

- Creating or enjoying music or art
- Watching a movie or TV
- Finding a hobby, like reading, doing crafts, or playing computer games
- Playing with family members or a pet
- Spending time with a friend, either in person or on the phone
- Reading jokes or comics
- Exercising, such as taking a walk outside

Fibromyalgia may have changed what you are able to do. If a favorite activity seems too hard to do now, try not to let that stop you. Doing things you enjoy, even for a short time, may help you feel better. For new ideas, look at magazines or see what kinds of classes are offered on the Web or in your town. If you need to change the way you do an activity, you can:

- Do it for a shorter period of time
- Break it into smaller stages
- Pace yourself and rest at set times so you don’t overdo it, as discussed in Pacing Yourself
- Do it with a friend or family member who can help you if you need it
Finding time for fun
You are more likely to do something when you schedule an activity for your best time of the day. You won’t be as successful if you wait until everything else is done and you’re already worn out. Use the Time for You Work Sheet to help identify and schedule activities you’d like to try.

Overcoming barriers and challenges
Enjoying yourself may seem like a low priority to you when there are many demands on your time and energy. But feeling recharged benefits both you and those who depend on you. Below are some ideas to help you overcome barriers and challenges you may face.

I don’t have time to enjoy myself
Just as a car needs gas to run, you need to recharge and refuel your mind and body. Pleasant activities can be that fuel. Just taking 5 minutes to read a funny cartoon or a note from a friend may give you a little boost and help take your mind off your symptoms. But if you don’t take time to renew yourself, you may exhaust yourself and run out of gas.

It’s hard to make enjoyable activities a priority
One way to make pleasant activities a priority is to simply start somewhere, even if you start small. Setting small realistic goals—such as 5 minutes of an enjoyable activity instead of 15 or 30—is a way to get used to adding activities back into your routine. If you still aren’t able to set aside time to have fun, refer to Thinking Differently for help in finding new ways to think about making enjoyable activities a priority in your fibromyalgia management.

I want to take time to enjoy myself, but other people need me
Sometimes people may need to impose on your time. To protect this time, invite them to join you in an activity, or you may want to set up clear rules about how much they can expect of you and when. Tell them you will be able to help them more if you have time to recharge yourself. The Communicating Step may help you find ways to talk about this concern with them.

I’m having trouble enjoying myself
It can be frustrating when you are not enjoying your favorite hobbies the way you used to. Or you may be struggling to find new activities to enjoy. By setting aside time for fun and giving yourself enough time to try things, you may find:
- New activities you enjoy as much as your old hobbies
- New ways to enjoy your old pastimes
- New levels of energy that may allow you to do more

For more ideas of enjoyable things to do, try asking friends and family for suggestions or see what’s available in your local community. The topic Thinking Differently may help you think about activities that you’ll enjoy.
FibroGuide: Time for You

» A note for family and friends

Taking time for yourself
You may have given up personal time and interests to help take care of someone with fibromyalgia. As you help them, you also need to take time to enjoy yourself, which can mean doing activities that you both enjoy. Try:

- Scheduling time for yourself to recharge each day
- Using humor to help you stay positive
- Finding activities you can do together
Taking time to enjoy yourself

Scheduling time to enjoy yourself may help you recharge and find more balance between the things you have to do and the things you want to do. Think of taking time for yourself to do enjoyable activities as a prescription to help you relieve the symptoms of fibromyalgia. As having fun becomes part of your routine, you may begin to feel better and have a more positive outlook on life.

You can use the following work sheet to help you plan time for enjoyable activities each week. Begin by following these steps:

**STEP 1**  
Make a list of activities you enjoy doing  
Create a list of things you like to do. Include things that you:
- Have enjoyed doing in the past  
- Think you may enjoy doing in the future

If you need ideas, look at lifestyle magazines or find out what kinds of classes or lessons are offered on the Web or at your local community center or college.

**STEP 2**  
Select one of the activities you would like to try first

Put a star (*) next to the activities on your list that you want to do right now. For each activity, think about what you can do, based on:
- Whether you have the resources (time, money) to do it
- Whether you can get there or have access to it
- Who may be able to help you
- Whether you can pace yourself and adapt it to meet your needs
- The best time of the day to do it

**STEP 3**  
Make a plan for how to do the activity

While you may not be able to do activities you have always enjoyed, there may be many things you can still do. But you may have to plan how to do others. If you need to do less, consider breaking the activity into simpler steps. For example, if you like to cook:
- Look for new recipes in magazines or on cooking shows and Web sites
- Make a shopping list of ingredients
- Make one dish instead of a whole meal
- Prepare your dish in stages. Rest between steps
- Ask for help with certain tasks if you need to, such as cutting or mixing

**STEP 4**  
Plan a time to do the activity this week

- Set a time and stick to it as you would a meeting or a doctor’s visit
- Pick a time of the day when you typically feel your best

Remember, setting aside time to enjoy yourself is an important part of treatment.
Use this work sheet to help you plan time for enjoyable activities.

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<th>Pleasant Activity</th>
<th>Set a Time</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>Cooking: Read cookbook, make shopping list for new apple pie recipe</td>
<td>3:00-3:30 PM</td>
<td>It feels good to think about cooking something the family will enjoy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>Cooking: Make the crust and freeze it in the pan</td>
<td>3:00-3:30 PM</td>
<td>I plan to make the filling tomorrow.</td>
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How fibromyalgia can affect memory and thinking
People with fibromyalgia may experience problems with their memory and thinking. It can be normal for people to forget where they put their car keys, struggle to pay attention when someone else is speaking, or have trouble concentrating on a task like balancing the checkbook. But for people with fibromyalgia, these problems may happen more often and sometimes all at once.

These problems are often referred to as “fibro fog.” For some people, fibro fog may be very frustrating and worrisome. If you believe you are experiencing problems with fibro fog, there are ways that may help you deal with these effects.

What are the effects of fibro fog?
Not everyone with fibromyalgia experiences fibro fog. But those who do experience fibro fog report a variety of effects. These effects can come and go.

Fibro fog may make it hard to complete your job tasks or do simple daily tasks. You may feel confused at times and may find it difficult to:
- Think clearly
- Pay attention
- Remember new information
- Concentrate on things
- Make and remember plans
- Remember where you put things
- Express yourself or answer questions quickly
- Do complex mental tasks

What causes fibro fog?
Fibro fog appears to be linked to another typical symptom of fibromyalgia—pain. People whose daily activities are regularly disrupted by the pain of fibromyalgia also reported having problems with their memory and thinking. No one knows exactly why memory and thinking problems occur, but researchers are investigating the connections between these problems and chronic pain, as well as other symptoms, such as sleep, fatigue, depression, and anxiety.

Preparing to visit with your healthcare provider
If you experience memory problems when talking with your healthcare provider, it may help to keep track of the concerns you have and to prepare for a visit ahead of time. To help you address your concerns and work with your healthcare provider to plan your management strategies, you can:
- Keep a folder of all your medical papers. This way all your medical information is in one place and is organized for each visit
- Make a list of all of the questions and concerns that you want to discuss with your healthcare provider, or use the Working With Your Healthcare Provider Work Sheet in Understanding Fibromyalgia. Take the list or work sheet with you on your visit to help remind yourself of your questions or areas of concern
Ask a family member or friend to come with you to take notes and review with you what was discussed.

**Tips to help you with memory and thinking problems**

While healthcare providers don’t know yet exactly how to manage fibro fog, you may want to consider trying these tips, which are recommended for people with memory and thinking problems:

- **Give yourself the time you need to finish a task.** Don’t let others hurry you.
- **Try not to do too many things at the same time.** Break up tasks into a series of smaller steps or goals, and try not to take on more than you can handle. The less complicated you can make things for yourself, the better you may be able to cope with fibro fog.
- **Be active.** Being physically active can increase the flow of blood and oxygen to your brain. You may want to review the suggestions in the topic **Being Active.** And be sure to talk with your healthcare provider about an exercise plan that is right for you so you don’t overdo it.
- **Reduce distractions when you are trying to concentrate.** Turn down the radio, shut off the TV, and go someplace quiet.
- **Reduce the clutter in your home.** This may help you be more organized and remember where things are. Make a place for everything, and do your best to put things back where they belong.
- **Create a daily routine for yourself.** Sticking to a routine may help you remember what tasks you have to do each day and in what order to do them.
- **Use reminders to stay on track.** This may help you remember all the things you have to do. Make lists, leave yourself sticky notes, or write on a calendar or in a notebook. You can use technology to help—type reminders into your computer or cell phone, or use the alarm feature on your computer.

Use the **What Is Fibro Fog? Work Sheet** and **Everyday tips for you** to help find ways to cope with memory and thinking problems.

» A note for family and friends

**Helping to fight fibro fog**

Experiencing fibro fog can be distressing, not only for the person who has it but for family and friends as well. You can play an important role in helping your family member or friend manage the memory and thinking problems associated with fibromyalgia. Here are some things that you can do to help:

- Suggest how larger tasks can be broken up into smaller steps and complete one at a time.
- Suggest going together to medical appointments to take notes and to help remember and review important information.
- Talk openly about fibro fog with each other. This may help reduce any stress or distress that both of you may be feeling.
FibroGuide: What is Fibro Fog?

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