

Strategies: A Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and Fibromyalgia Journey

Tami Brady

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Reviewed by Paige Lovitt for Reader Views (1/08)

Tami Brady shares her story with us of her journey with fibromyalgia and chronic fatigue syndrome. Until she was diagnosed with these disorders, she really struggled with fears about her health and limitations imposed by her symptoms. She was diagnosed in 1997 and along the way has learned what works and doesn't work for her. She also made many personal discoveries about herself and how her perceptions of herself and her behaviors can influence her conditions.

Nine years ago, I was diagnosed with fibromyalgia. I already had two friends who had serious cases of it. When the doctor gave me eight prescriptions to help me deal with the symptoms, I decided that it was time to quit my stressful job and focus on recovering my health. I saw so many similarities between Ms. Brady's journey and my own. We both started out with overachieving personality types. We take on big goals that really just serve to put more pressure on our own health. For myself, I insisted on getting straight A's through two graduate programs, while sometimes working two jobs. As Ms. Brady discovered with her own overachieving efforts, it had serious implications on our health. We also both have gotten into heavy workout routines that our bodies are unable to maintain. I just went through a phase where I was trying to work out two to three times a day. I feel like if I am going to be in pain, I will give myself a reason to hurt. In the long run, as Ms. Brady discovered, this just hurts my self.

Another common issue that I see with people that have this disease is as she states, "No one sees scars or disfigurement so it's a shock to most people that you actually have something really wrong with you. That we become incredible actors to mask and hide the symptoms makes the situation that much more difficult." I know that most people suffering from CFS and fibromyalgia can relate to this. There are still a lot of professionals that will tell us that it doesn't exist and it is in our head.

Ms. Brady discusses many common symptoms that come with having these conditions. I think the most common symptom is the pain that occurs in the trigger points. She also discusses what she calls "Fibrofog." It brought me great relief to read about this because I have this happen so much, I get anxious that it could be the start of Alzheimer's disease, at forty! It was a relief to see that it is part of the condition. The interrupted sleep sessions definitely exacerbate the bouts. I also share her experience with her legs giving out on her. Mine happens at times when I get out of bed. It is a scary experience.

In addition to discussing what doesn't work, Ms. Brady also discusses what she found helpful. Moderation with everything definitely seems to be very important. Reiki is also a good healing practice. I also practice Reiki. I found that either doing it on my self or others is beneficial. Healthy eating is important as well. Getting into fad diets is not the way to go. Our bodies let us know with pain, that we are doing something wrong.

To help us with a healing plan, Ms. Brady offers a series of strategies to help with certain symptoms. She gives her own personal examples and then offers blank charts so that we can fill in our own information. This is an excellent strategy for tracking symptoms, causes and treatments. This is a great way for you to organize a program and keep track of what works. There is an extensive list of resources to help you on your way. Applying these resources to yourself helps you to take charge of your own health. "Strategies" is an excellent resource for people at all phases of the disease. It is a relief to hear someone else share their story, and know that you are not alone.