



## Tips for Living a Life You Love

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### Self-Care Tips for Managing Chronic Pain

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Recent information from The American Pain Foundation indicates:

- \* Pain affects more Americans than diabetes, heart disease and cancer combined
- \* 76.2 million people suffer from chronic pain
- \* More women than men reported that they were in pain

With so many moving through complex lives with pain, it seems fitting to share some support tips (from personal experience, mind you) for managing, and sometimes embracing, the unique gifts wrapped up in this bizarre package called pain.

You may be a breast cancer survivor in recovery, a person with low back pain that will not respond to treatment, a surprised individual dealing with Lyme's Disease and/or chronic fatigue, or you name it. If you and your family know the face of pain, this one is for you.

### Self-Care Tips for Managing Chronic Pain

1. Focus on what you can do, rather than on what you cannot. There are always, always things you can do. Example: While I have been less active I have had the opportunity to explore many things I never would have taken the time to do. Example: pencil sketching. I am loving it and it is something I always felt drawn to. (no pun)
2. Experiment daily with your body (in safe ways). Take those long hot baths (more than once a day if helpful) and leave the guilt behind; check out an infrared sauna – my current favorite; make sure to move your body each day, even if it is in small ways; use the ice; use the heat; be with your pain rather than being your pain through meditation. Experiment daily and let your body lead the way.
3. Be ok with not being your 100% right-on self. Someone said to me earlier today that when we live with chronic pain, we live through a veil that cloaks so much of who we are and how we may want to be in the world on our best days. Go easy on yourself 24/7.

4. Be honest with those around you. They cannot read your mind. When your pain is spiked you don't have to go around complaining all the time, but it does help to let those around you know that raw edge is exposed.
5. Allow your chronic pain to open compassion to the world of folks who suffer. Truly, I remind myself each day that what I may be experiencing is so small compared to some. In my case that is completely true. When I focus on compassion for others, it is hard to slide into self-pity, though I go there too; don't get me wrong.
6. Rest, rest, rest – and do so in creative ways.
7. Expect and accept that on some days you may not be firing on all cylinders, emotionally or physically. If you need to, make sure that someone has your back.
8. Be grateful for the body parts that are feeling just fine – thank you very much! When I focus on most anywhere but my hip, I am thrilled to say it all is working great and feeling fine.
9. Be ok with getting angry, depressed, frustrated but do not be OK with staying there. If you feel that you have slid into a place you cannot get out of, seek help. That is what therapists and other healing professionals are there for.
10. Take those pain meds if and when they can give you a break. Because I hate taking anything, I have had to retrain my mind to be ok with that Extra Strength Tylenol (or such) when I find myself becoming the pain.

Oh, and here is a bonus tip for you: feel free to buy yourself glorious flowers whenever the mood strikes. They always brighten my mood!

To learn more about managing chronic pain check out:

- The American Pain Foundation: [www.painfoundation.org](http://www.painfoundation.org)
- American Chronic Pain Association: [www.theacpa.org](http://www.theacpa.org)

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