

## Committee

**Founder/President**  
Michelle Greenwood

**Vice President**  
**VACANT**

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**Treasurer**  
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**Database/Membership Coordinator**  
Toni Buckland

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Kripa

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**Loyalty Manager**  
Philips Thomas

**Events Coordinator**  
Deb Brzich

**Newsletter Editor**  
Michelle Greenwood

**Website**  
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**Fundraising Coordinator**  
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Deb Brzich  
Michelle Greenwood  
Andie Ward  
Oliver Reid  
Ann Clarke  
Le-mar Garrett  
Kel Stoeckel  
Bec Ogden  
Carol Harris  
Sheree Beaton  
Gina Stonehouse  
Nicole Woolridge

## PRESIDENT'S PRATTLE

Christmas is hurtling towards us at a great rate of knots and we have so much for you to keep up with in the coming weeks.

The Fibro & Us team have quite a busy time ahead of us. We have a number of rural agriculture shows, markets and other events happening as well as our, Christmas Party on the 15<sup>th</sup> December 2018 and Bogan Quiz Night on the 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2019.

We also have our AGM 9<sup>th</sup> February 2019. A number of roles will be up for renewal as well as a few new ones that will be created early 2019.

We have been growing at a rapid rate and need more volunteers to help us out. We are looking for people who can host Coffee & Chats in different areas. Our Wheatbelt Leader Ann Clarke needs some assistance with her committee and our Joondalup Leader Le-Mar Garrett needs some in her area. If you're available to help please email us at [info@fibro-us.org](mailto:info@fibro-us.org)

Now the weather is warming up we are using the hydro pool at Aqua Jetty in Warnbro on a Sunday. We are looking at other areas as well. If you wish to join us keep an eye on our public events page [www.facebook.com/fibro.us.events](https://www.facebook.com/fibro.us.events).

Next year we aim to make a few different changes to make sure we meet our aims of being a partner with Act Belong Commit. We are hoping to start a Group Fitness which will include Yoga, Ti-chi, Chiball etc. We will be looking for fitness guru's to help with the classes as well as a Coordinator. We are also hoping to implement more workshops. We want to do something different each month such as learning computer, card making, jewellery making, etc If you're interested in being part of this please contact me.

We are also looking at different group events such as Taste Sensations Mystery Bus Tour which would include visiting wineries, cheese factories or the chocolate factory, Crown Casino Bus Trips, Dolphin Cruises etc. This would be a great way to get out and meet others.

We have been looking at different ways to make the group self-sufficient so we don't have to rely on grants etc. One of the many things we have been looking into is an Op-shop. We have been looking at different locations. We will be looking into a business grant to get us established.

2018 has been a busy year for Fibro & Us and we have met almost all of our aims that we set out at the beginning of the year. 2019 will continue to see us implementing different ways of helping our members. We are currently establishing a Loyalty Program and looking for businesses to get involved. We are restructuring our Helping Hands Group and became a Centrelink Work for the Dole provider to help meet our commitments and we have set up a database research team to help find Fibro Friendly professionals.

We will be taking a much needed break until Mid-January 2019. So on behalf of the Fibro & Us team I would like to wish you a Very Merry Christmas & Happy New Year  
Michelle  
Founder/President

## 'Embarrassing' Side Effects of Brain Fog We Don't Talk About

As if the physical challenges of chronic illness weren't difficult enough, many chronic warriors also experience brain fog as a side effect — difficulty remembering things like names, tasks, directions and words, as well as an overall “foggy” feeling, like your brain has lost its way a little bit. And what's even tougher is that other people might notice that you're not thinking quite as clearly as you used to, which can lead you to feel a bit embarrassed occasionally. Of course, it's completely OK if you don't get embarrassed by your brain fog slip-ups — you may even find it a bit funny sometimes, and that's OK. Don't let us change you!

But if you do feel embarrassed sometimes about your forgetfulness due to brain fog, you are most definitely not alone. Yet, these embarrassments aren't talked about openly very often. Hearing other people's struggles with brain fog can help reassure you that you're not the only one going through this, so we asked our members to share an “embarrassing” side effect or challenge of brain fog they experience that we don't talk about. We never have to feel embarrassed about our brain fog, but for some of us it does happen now and again, so hopefully we can all support each other in this chronic illness challenge.

Here's what our community told us:

“Knowing that you used to have an excellent memory and now you're drowning in lists and reminder notifications on your phone just to remember simple things. I guess it wouldn't be so bad if this was just how I'd always been, but it's knowing I used to be sharp that sucks. Managing to remember something these days feels like a big deal. It's one thing to have my body betray me at 28; it's another to have my my mind do so as well. To say it's frustrating is an understatement.”

“Slurring or tripping over my words, not a great look when I work in marketing.”

“Losing things. I never used to lose anything. Now I bet I lose things 20 times a day.” Simple things like losing your glasses when they are on your head are so frustrating

“If someone asks me to look something up online for them, I open the browser and have to ask them again as I forgot. I have to write everything down, unless I forget to write it down.”

“Suddenly realizing that you have seriously offended someone because you didn't answer their question. Not because I didn't want to. I was barely working out you had asked a question but now it's too late to fix.”

“Other people getting angry or impatient because I haven't done something I said I would or because it takes me a week to remember to do something.”

“Losing your sense of direction in places you've been a thousand times, and please for your own sake, do not ask me for directions.”

“Answering phones and booking appointments at work! I mess up my words, space out and forget the proper greeting I'm supposed to use when answering. The other day I answered a call ‘Hey it's Maegan’ instead of ‘Thanks for calling \_\_\_\_\_, how can I help you?’

“My kids tell me, ‘You already asked me that,’ and I answer them, ‘If I ask it is because I do not remember, so if I ask you 1,000 times, please answer me 1,000 times more.”

“Feeling like my head is empty, like I have lost the words I was just thinking. Not being able to think rationally/logically because my mind is too foggy.”

“Almost poisoning my husband with salmonella! I often forget how long I am cooking something. After a few raw chicken incidents, I have been relieved of my cooking duties.”

“I forget mid-sentence what I'm saying which can be embarrassing and having to get them to remind you of what you've just said.”

“Thinking I've done things but I haven't — I remember having the thought but lose focus/get distracted/forget to carry out the actual task but I remember going to do it, so I think it's been done. So many missed calls, unsent emails, etc...people think I'm really lazy or disorganized but I really do try my best!”

“I looked at my phone to text someone, and I couldn't do it. It was more [like] I never knew how to text than forget, and it has scared me [to] no end.”

“Not remembering what you were talking about “I'm a degree educated person with a good vocabulary but when I can't remember a simple word it's not nice. I can laugh it off but it's a horrible feeling. And losing my train of thought halfway through talking about something is frustrating.”

“Not being able to remember a word — like fork — and having to describe what you're talking about.”

“Forgetting plans or something you talked about with someone. Then they get upset because they think you were ignoring them when in reality you literally don't remember what you guys had talked about, and they don't believe you when you try to explain.”

“Being so conditioned that I am going to make a mistake, that I have fear to try. Even just emailing my strata council (apartment building manager), I took a whole day to write the email... I then reviewed it for mistakes a dozen times! Really!... Best thing ever was when my doctor wrote me a note stating that I require written communication only. Verbal communication has even more challenges for my brain fog and I don't attempt it often. I keep all my communication very limited and keep it simple. This helps me use energy to self-care and rest.”

“I get tongue-tied when speaking and I can literally stand up to do something but sit right back down because I forgot what I was going to do in a split second.”

**Facebook Group**

[www.facebook.com/groups/fibro.events](http://www.facebook.com/groups/fibro.events)

**Facebook Events Page**

[www.facebook.com/fibro.us.events](http://www.facebook.com/fibro.us.events)

**Twitter**

[www.twitter.com/FibroandUs](http://www.twitter.com/FibroandUs)

**Instagram**

[www.instagram.com/fibroandus](http://www.instagram.com/fibroandus)

**LinkedIn**

[www.linkedin.com/in/fibro-us](http://www.linkedin.com/in/fibro-us)

**Website**

[www.fibro-us.org](http://www.fibro-us.org)

**Email**

[info@fibro-us.org](mailto:info@fibro-us.org)

**Phone**

08 6102 8600  
0410902247

**Postal**

PO Box 8042  
Warnbro WA 6172



Are you in any of these areas: Pinjarra, Waroona, Ballajura, Marangaroo, Girrawheen, Guildford, Bayswater, Rossmoyne, Bullcreek, Winthrop, Innaloo, Wattle Grove or Kalamunda? Then we need you!! We have a number of members in these areas and would like to start a Coffee & Chat in the areas. If you're interested please contact [Deb](#)

## Coffee & Chat

Our hosts & committee members will be taking a much needed break over the Christmas period.

We will be back fresh and ready to support you Mid-January 2019



### UPCOMING EVENTS

**Kids Christmas Party**

15<sup>th</sup> December 2018

**Aussie Bogan Quiz Night**

2<sup>nd</sup> February 2019

**AGM**

9<sup>th</sup> February 2019

**Unmask Fibromyalgia Masquerade Ball 2019**

12<sup>th</sup> October 2019

All events can be found on our website at [www.fibro-us.org/bookings](http://www.fibro-us.org/bookings)

## On Facebook....

### How supportive is your significant other or your family with your symptoms of fibro?

Very supportive, especially my husband

My other half is amazing so supportive and I can't praise him enough

Some of My family are slowly starting to understand and get on board. The rest of my family don't understand and don't want to unfortunately

Not very understanding at all

Not at all 😞

My family and my partner is very supportive most of the time.

Used to be now zilch it sucks when you're having a flare up and you're not supported

My marriage broke down due to lack of understanding of how one day I could do lots but the next day I couldn't get out of bed

My husband is just amazing. He set me up in the master bedroom, with TV, stereo, all my books and he took the spare room, so I have my own space. If I'm not well, he takes over completely, cleaning, cooking, takes little one out, so I don't have noise. He's the best and I'm very blessed.

My significant other is now my insignificant other. He couldn't hack it 😞

Not at all either, hubby or family plus a few other conditions and a 3 year doesn't know why mum is sore and unwell.... no support only 1 friend that understands what it is but that is it...

I haven't had the best luck with girlfriends over the past few years... ; )~I don't have anyone in my life at the moment (though not for lack of trying), but in the past things could start off pretty good with a new girlfriend. We'd then spend a few wonderful months dating before she'd start to understand just how much of a sacrifice (& how damn frustrating) it can be to be in a relationship with someone who has Fibromyalgia. Eventually this would be enough to end it (and my Fibro-fog scrambled brains would make it difficult to stay as just friends). I'm hoping that the next time will be different 'cause of the significant improvements in my situation.

None what so ever, have struggled this illness alone for 10+ yrs 😞😞

My family think it's a joke

## FIBRO FRIENDLY DOCTORS

We all know how difficult it is to find an understanding and knowledgeable doctor.

Fibro & Us are creating a database of fibro friendly doctors but we need your help.

We have set up a database research team to help create a database. This will be an ongoing project. If you would like to be involved please let us know [info@fibro-us.org](mailto:info@fibro-us.org)



How many doctors did you have to go through before you received your diagnosis? People without chronic health challenges may be shocked to hear how high that number can go, especially for women, people with invisible illnesses and people with rare diseases.

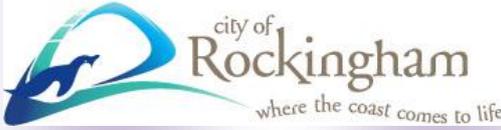
Throughout history, women have been diagnosed with "hysteria" or told their physical symptoms are due to mental illness. This false notion that women are "overreacting" or don't understand their bodies has resulted in women not being believed or taken seriously. Sexism continues to be widely prevalent in medicine, with the National Pain Report reporting in 2014 that over 90 percent of women with chronic pain feel the health care system discriminates against female patients.

Doctors' responded to health concerns differently, from brushing off symptoms as a mental health issue; prescribing medications, treatments and lifestyle changes that were not just ineffective, but often harmful; to dismissing symptoms entirely. For many women with chronic illness, these experiences may sound painfully familiar.

**It's time to break the stigma**

## SPONSORS/PARTNERS

A huge thank you to those businesses that sponsor us. Please support those who support us



We are always looking for people to partner or sponsor with us. If you're interested in being part of this amazing group please contact our Publicity Coordinator [Serafina](#)

## LOYALTY PROGRAM

Loyalty programs improve customer retention and provide incentives for your customers to buy. Loyalty programs can help do this by increasing that number of repeat customers and also increasing the amount of repeat purchases

Depending on your business it can be as simple as 50c of a cuppa/drink, 10% off, buy 1 get 1 free if you're a café/restaurant

Free safety check if you're a mechanic

Free blowdry for hairdressers

The list is endless

In return we would advertise your business on our Facebook Page which gets around 100 hits a day. In our newsletter which goes out to over 400 people. In our support group which has over 670 members and growing every day and on our website

If you would like to be involved please our Loyalty Program Manager [Philips](#) with what you can offer.



Imagine experiencing the worst pain ever

Now imagine living with that pain every day and not being able to get any help...

We need your help! Please make a donation so we can continue our awareness program

Together we can make a difference.

# END OF YEAR REPORT

Fibro & Us is a registered Not for Profit in person support and social group for those who suffer with Fibromyalgia in WA. We understand what it's like to feel alone while struggling with this illness and support not only sufferers but those that support sufferers as well.

The group was founded by Michelle Greenwood in 2016 after establishing a need for a local support group for those who suffer with or support those with Fibromyalgia, in the Rockingham/Kwinana/Baldivis - Mandurah area. Michelle was approached by Rockingham City Councillor Matt Whitfield asking if there was a need for a support group as he would like to help set one up. After a meeting with Matt the group was formed. Matt helped pay for the initial set up costs.

Within a short period of time what was meant to be a small local group increased to include other areas from Perth and Western Australia.

From the time the group was founded most Committee Members are those who have been diagnosed with Fibromyalgia. Because of the unpredictability of symptoms of this condition, we have tried to maintain a large Committee to minimise the work load on each Committee Member. All Committee Members work voluntarily and are rewarded by the fact that Fibro & Us - Fibromyalgia Support Group provides education, support, raising awareness and networking opportunities for several thousand people throughout Western Australia.

Over the last 2 years we have implemented many ideas making us a unique support group. We have an off-shoot group called "Helping Hands" which assists those who are having problems at home with housework, gardening etc. Our volunteers can also help with cooking, transport and shopping. We are a registered Centrelink approved organisation for those who have to volunteer for certain amount of hours to be able to receive their benefits.

We have a small team of volunteers that are currently working on finding information for GP's, Specialists and other members of the medical and holistic field – Massage Therapists, Acupuncturists etc. Our eventual aim is to be able to send out surveys and information to be able to ascertain their knowledge of Fibromyalgia so that we are able to make suitable recommendations to our members of those who are fibro friendly and non-judgemental. We would also invite them to our events and information sessions so they can learn more about Fibromyalgia and the challenges we deal with on a daily basis

Our Coffee & Chats are an informal get-together for people with Fibromyalgia and their supporters. They are a great opportunity to meet people who really do understand. These Coffee & Chats take place in various areas throughout the metro and spreading into rural areas. People can talk about anything and everything not just Fibro.

As well as our Coffee & Chats we hold numerous fundraising events throughout the year. Our most successful is generally our Quiz Nights. We also hold an annual Unmask Fibromyalgia Masquerade Ball in October. We frequently heard our members say that they couldn't afford the cost of tickets, even though we have kept them at a minimal cost, so for 2019 we are offering a layby system so they can pay their ticket & accommodation off over 11 months.

We have started a Loyalty Program where we are asking business to give our members some sort of discount when they produce their membership card as well as placing a "We support Fibromyalgia" poster in their windows.

During 2018 we started different workshops and we aim to continue this during 2019 adding a wider variety of workshops from easy meal prep for those days, card making, sewing etc. Our jewellery workshop will continue

This year saw us partner up with Act Belong Commit as part of our mental health support. Not long after partnering with A-B-C we placed a Group Councillor onto our committee to help with those struggling with depression etc due to living in relentless pain. We aim to add more in different regions.

2019 will see us implement a number of new initiatives so that we can keep with the A-B-C practices. We will be putting in place a fitness group program offering our members different fitness classes such as Tai-Chi, Yoga, Chi Ball etc. We already have a regular Sunday Hydrotherapy Session at Aqua Jetty in Warnbro. Another new initiative will be our Wellbeing program. This will include having beauticians, nail techs, massage therapists, hairdressers etc volunteer their services.

We are a self-funded group. Most of our income comes from membership fees, fundraising, grants and the few items we sell at different events.

We constantly advocate the awareness of Fibromyalgia by attending many different markets, fairs, shows etc through the metro & rural areas. 2019 will see us attending many more including the Healthy Living Expo & the Perth Royal Show. During 2019 we will be opening an opshop in the Port Kennedy/Rockingham area. We have sourced an office with the collaborative Factory in Rockingham and just waiting on the grant to be finalised so we can move in ready to kick off 2019.

We have a very active, friendly and supportive Facebook group for our members who discuss symptoms, share information and resources.

We also have our public events page where we share all of our own events and fundraisers plus the markets we attend to raise awareness. We have created a website that we are growing and increasing the information that is put on it

To help our continued growth we will be putting in different sub-branches. We already have Northam and Joondalup starting up in early 2019 and working on other areas such as Albany, Bunbury & Kalgoorlie and hopefully Geraldton.

To help take the load of our Committee Members we decided that everyone would have a role but we would work as a team to achieve our goals. These positions include

Founder/President  
Vice President  
Secretary  
Treasurer  
Events Manager  
Group Councillor  
Helping Hands Coordinator  
Loyalty Program Manager  
Members/Birthday Coordinator  
Newsletter Editor  
Publicity Coordinator  
Website Manager  
Admin Assistant  
Database/Research Coordinator  
Fitness Group Coordinator  
Fundraising Coordinator  
Governance Coordinator  
Grants Writer  
Information Session Coordinator  
Unmask Fibromyalgia Masquerade Ball Coordinator  
Wellbeing Services Coordinator  
Workshop Coordinator

To make sure we reach our goals and aims the committee generally meets for 4 hours once a week for a work day and a committee meeting once a month. As we are spread far and wide our committee members are able to SKYPE into a meeting. Even though the committee works hard Michelle always says that family & health always comes first. As a committee member there are always different workshops and training available to improve oneself.

### **Our Mission**

Help facilitate a change in knowledge, understanding and behaviour

Improve pain management and quality of life

Spread awareness & breakdown stigma associated with chronic pain

### **Our Aims**

1. Provide support and education for people diagnosed with the condition of Fibromyalgia. Our Annual Unmask Fibromyalgia Masquerade Ball and our social Coffee & Chat's along with our engagement of social media, meet this particular aim. We support each other by being involved with these important events and forums. We can observe how wonderful we are all looking; confirming for us all that it is possible to live a good life despite the diagnosis of Fibromyalgia.
2. Educate health professionals in the management of symptoms of Fibromyalgia. We are increasing the knowledge base of many health professionals by being the face of Fibromyalgia at our medical consultations, by asking difficult questions and by requiring answers and referrals. Many GPs would not yet be aware that the first medication for Fibromyalgia, Milnacipran (Joncia) was approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration in Australia in November 2011. The education of Health Professionals is ongoing. We are currently in the process of sending out questionnaires to Health Professionals to gauge their knowledge and understanding of Fibromyalgia. From the responses we collect we are creating a database of Fibro Friendly Professionals in all fields. We can all play a part in our accurate descriptions of symptoms of Fibromyalgia during medical consultations.
3. Increase community awareness of the implications of a diagnosis of Fibromyalgia. Increasing community awareness is an ever moving invisible force that again comes from us as we talk to our neighbours, friends, family and work colleagues. Anybody really! We need to talk about what Fibromyalgia is; we need to educate our communities that for many of us with this condition, we may not always be at our best, at our most reliable. We have to overcome the stigma of our supposed hypochondria and educate the uneducated in this matter. This is what increases community awareness. We know it is sometimes easier to just be quiet and adjourn to wherever without an explanation. We also attend shopping centres, markets & other events where we hand out leaflets and speak to people about Fibromyalgia. We hear far too often "I didn't know there was support available" or "I thought I was the only one" We encourage you all to start talking! By talking about Fibromyalgia it will help break the stigma that has become associated with Fibromyalgia and raise awareness.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Bogan Quiz Night

2<sup>nd</sup> Feb 2019 6:00 pm – 11:00 pm

Darius Wells Library & Resource Centre Kwinana

#### Oi You!

You're in for a real treat so round up ya mates then dress in ya finest flannies, ugg boots & denim mini's

There will be a Fun Night of Aussie trivia, air guitar comp, prize for best mullet, king and queen bogan award plus much more.

Come and enjoy a hilarious night of fun and games at the Bogan Quiz Night with many prizes to be won

\$15 pp Tables of 10 [BOOK NOW!](#)

[BYO](#) or order your platters when you book your ticket



### Christmas Party

15 Dec., 12:30 pm – 3:30 pm

Kwinana Adventure Park, Walgreen Cres, Calista

We're having a Christmas Party. We hope you can come.

You can bet your antlers it will be second to none.

Santa will be coming with his big red hat. Bring a present to put in his sack.

Kids can bring their bathers to play in the water park

Hamburgers & Sausage Sizzle available [BOOK NOW!](#)



This is to advise you of the upcoming **AGM** for Fibro & Us - Fibromyalgia Support Group Inc.

The details of this meeting are as follows:

**9<sup>th</sup> February 2019 11.30am**

**8 Picardie Place Port Kennedy**

At the meeting, members will have the opportunity to:

ask questions about the operations and finances

speak about any items on the agenda

vote on any resolutions proposed.

At the meeting, members will be asked to vote to:

accept the minutes of the last AGM

accept the annual report

elect directors.

Come and meet your current committee and have lunch with us

# AGM

Annual General Meeting

# To My Loved Ones Who Can't See the Pain I Feel Inside

People just can't see it. I am shouting inside but silent on the outside. I want to run away, escape or just return to who I was before everything happened.

I don't know what to do to make my family feel better. Knowing they are suffering because of me creates a burden to me. They just keep telling me, "Be strong, you can make a bigger effort." But the problem is that they just don't understand that isn't always possible.

Yes, I am angry at what I am going through. I am 17 and I have a chronic illness that will be beside me for the rest of my days. I am scared of the future, because I know it won't be the way I imagined it would be before everything happened. I used to dream about the future, and now I just dream of having a second without pain.

It's very hard feeling pain 24/7. You are always exhausted and you can't recharge your energy. I feel like I was burned, pinched, stabbed, cut, that painful feeling when you have your hand in a bucket of ice and more. I never thought it would be so hard doing all my daily activities. Today I just thought of lying in bed because it's just too much.

I keep fighting for all my loved ones even if they don't understand at all what I am feeling. I know they will always be there for me, but sometimes I wish they didn't know me so they didn't have to go through this. They don't deserve it.

Nobody deserves living with this or other diseases, but I believe everything happens for a reason. And people going through this are stronger and learn to appreciate life pain-free.

If you are a patient, know you can do this and that you have to live through this because you can get over it. If you are family, don't be hard on him or her, just be there with them and try to do something to make them feel better, not worse (because it's very easy for that to happen — even if what you are saying has the best intentions, be careful). If you are a friend, be there for him or her and never leave him or her, even if they ask you to or it starts to get difficult, because they will always need you, even if they don't say it out loud.

Having someone you can count on is the best thing. It helps us get through this easier, so please never leave.

# A Caregiver's Guide to Easing Aches and Pains

It's hard to see someone you care for in pain. It can feel good when you help ease some of it. That isn't always easy to do, so talk to a doctor about it first.

You can try these ways to help relieve their aches and pains at home:

**Ask First** Some people hold back from talking about pain. They may not want to be a burden, or they may feel that it's a sign of weakness to admit it. Encourage them that it's OK to let you know how they really feel, so you can help them take care of it. It's important to help treat pain, so your loved one can keep up with daily activities, stay as independent as possible, and feel better mentally and physically.

Ask the person you're caring for if they are in pain. Many of the signs are obvious -- crying, moaning, clenched fists, "knitted" eyebrows. A poor appetite may also be a clue.

**Soothe With Heat** A warm shower or bath, hot water bottle, or warm cloth can help relax muscles and ease muscle spasms. A heating pad with an automatic off switch is better than a regular heating pad, which can burn skin if left on too long. Be careful with microwavable heating pads, as these can have hot spots that burn. Apply heat to the sore area for 20 to 30 minutes every 2 hours. Don't use heat on open wounds.

**Cold Therapy** Cold can numb pain and ease swelling. Try a cool cloth, cold pack, cold compression wrap, or ice massage. To make an ice pack, put crushed ice in a plastic bag and cover it with a towel. Don't put the bag of ice directly on your loved one's skin. Or you can use a bag of frozen peas. Do it for 15-20 minutes at a time, 4-8 times per day. Stop icing when the area feels numb.

**Deep Breathing** Slow, quiet breathing helps relax the body and mind and ease pain. You can show your loved one how to do this: Lie or sit with one hand on your belly and take a deep, slow breath. Imagine filling a balloon in your belly with air. Then breathe out, as if you're letting all the air out of the balloon. Think of breathing out stressful thoughts and breathing in relaxation. Aim for about six long, deep breaths a minute.

**Massage** This can be as simple as a foot, back, or hand rub. With your whole hand, the heel of your hand, or your fingertips, apply gentle pressure in slow, steady, circular movements. Warm oil or lotion may help. Massage in one area for 10 seconds first to see if it feels good. Notice if they prefers a light stroke or a firm one. It shouldn't cause pain.

**Medication** Ask your loved one's doctor what nonprescription pain medicines are OK to use, if needed. Acetaminophen is probably the safest for mild to moderate pain. Never use more than your doctor recommends. There are also pain relievers that go directly on the skin, such as creams, gels, sprays, and patches.

**TENS** This small machine uses a mild electrical current to ease pain. It has electrodes that go on your skin and deliver a low-level electrical charge, which can lower pain signals and may help relax muscles and stimulate your body's natural painkillers, called endorphins.

# workshops

*They're fun and exciting and a great chance to socialise*

**Jewellery Workshop** will be back in 2019

Do you have a craft that you enjoy doing and would like to run a workshop? Please [email us](#) and tell us more

## hydrotherapy

We now have a group meeting at Aqua Jetty Warnbo on Sundays at 1pm to walk in the hydro pool. Come down and join us. No need to book just turn up.



Now that the weather is warming up we are starting to implement some walking groups in different locations. WATCH THIS SPACE

## JUST FOR A LAUGH

Why did I get divorced? Well, last week was my birthday. My wife didn't wish me a happy birthday. My parents forgot and so did my kids. I went to work and even my colleagues didn't wish me a happy birthday. As I entered my office, my secretary said, "Happy birthday, boss!" I felt so special. She asked me out for lunch. After lunch, she invited me to her apartment. We went there and she said, "Do you mind if I go into the bedroom for a minute?" "Okay," I said. She came out 5 minutes later with a birthday cake, my wife, my parents, my kids, my friends, & my colleagues all yelling, "SURPRISE!!!" while I was waiting on the sofa... naked.

Teacher: "If I gave you 2 cats and another 2 cats and another 2, how many would you have?"

Johnny: "Seven."

Teacher: "No, listen carefully... If I gave you two cats, and another two cats and another two, how many would you have?"

Johnny: "Seven."

Teacher: "Let me put it to you differently. If I gave you two apples, and another two apples and another two, how many would you have?"

Johnny: "Six."

Teacher: "Good. Now if I gave you two cats, and another two cats and another two, how many would you have?"

Johnny: "Seven!"

Teacher: "Johnny, where in the heck do you get seven from?!"

Johnny: "Because I've already got a freaking cat!"





## HELPING HANDS

Do you have time to help our members?  
Do you want to give back to the community?

Helping Hands is people who can help members of Fibro & Us - Fibromyalgia Support Group Inc. with their everyday needs.

Fibromyalgia is a disorder that causes muscle pain and fatigue. People with fibromyalgia have pain and tenderness throughout the body.

Sometimes the simple things are extremely difficult and hurt and we can take days to recover from simply doing our housework or gardening.

Our members pay a small "Thank You" fee of \$10 per hour to those that can help with cleaning, gardening, general household chores such as washing, making beds, folding etc. Some of our members are unable to drive and may need help to do shopping, get to appointments or events. Many of our members are on a pension or work part-time. Unfortunately a lot are not entitled to services such as Silverchain etc, hence why we have set up Helping Hands.

Some are lonely and feel isolated because of the pain and loss of cognitive function so they just want some company.

A police clearance will be required.

If you can help please email [Kripa](mailto:Kripa) with your resume and a passport size head shot photo



## What Is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness teaches you to be aware of your feelings and when you practice mindfulness, you live in the moment. You focus on your breathing, how your body feels, and what's around you. It helps you understand your emotions and realize that they come and go -- they don't define you. Once you accept your feelings without thinking of them as "right" or "wrong," you can change any unhealthy thought patterns.

Regular mindfulness can physically change parts of your brain. Practicing mindfulness -- especially meditation -- can make the area of your brain that controls your attention span grow over time. It can also fatten up your brain stem and increase the grey matter in your brain, all of which helps you process your emotions better and stay healthier.

Practicing mindfulness can affect your genes. The relaxation you feel when you practice being mindful might play a part in which genes are active in your body. Specifically, it can make the ones linked to inflammation less active. This can not only improve your health, but it may help you live longer, too.

The practice of mindfulness has roots in Religion. Buddhists have used the basics of mindful meditation for thousands of years. It isn't a religious practice, but it does have a lot of the same features as some types of prayer, which can have similar effects for some people.

Mindfulness helps with stress by changing how you react to it. Over time, it gives you more control over your emotions and helps you process them differently. This may also help with anxiety and mood disorders.

Meditation and self-awareness have been shown to help children as young as 7 have more self-control and learn to concentrate better. These practices may be especially helpful for children who have ADHD

Practicing mindfulness may help you fight off illness. Some studies show it may boost your immune system and even help with the effects of aging. But more research is needed to understand exactly what those effects are and how it works.

Mindfulness can help with chronic pain because it helps you react to it differently. Mindfulness may not be able to take away pain or cure what causes it, but it can help you feel all your emotions, including positive ones. It also can help you take control of the pain and your feelings and handle your condition better.

Mindfulness may help with depression. Early studies also show that people who have bipolar disorder or an anxiety disorder might benefit from it as part of their treatment plan as well. And if antidepressants have helped and you're in remission, mindfulness may work just as well as medication to keep it at bay.

## WORD SEARCH

Word searches are fun, first of all, once you get the low-down on how to solve them. They also bring benefits you may not realize and can play an important role in keeping you mentally fit.

### Butterfly

```

M V G                               N H D
B R O V Y N                         W S T B V R
E W N G M P I S                     L C L M F S O W
Y I A K I G W R R                   N E W E S C Y U M
Y B D Q L M V B C X                 U J A D G
S H Z Y K B X T L C L               Q L T T D V C
T R L X W C E C R W E               V F C I B I L
I Q V G E N C H D C B H           O T T E X H F
X V R B E H L C J W J S Q A S V C D Q A I Z X L L G O X O D A Z B
C V V T D A M R W J D D Q L O U X H J M P E   O Q W V E J Z L B E R
R M Y L R M J A F A P M T Y M P W T A G T U V M S I L A S Y R H C
T A I V F V H N T S I B E N O J C X S D L H P U S A W I I N G I E
W A A S H A O O W Y W X R X T F D A J O U P C D K V J S G N I W O
A V Y U B A M V L W B D K H R Y W T G R L R M B D Q Z V S L Z
      N J M W T S F G G K L Q P Y Y F E Z D T H V E J Z O F I
          G Q J D R W M M M C L N F R V R S N L H Q M P E
              Q S U X Q E A Q F P C A X E H Y S P T C L T T Z G M
                  S V J G N X T R T R U D N D G O O H Y I Y E K N X G B K
                      B C W P M W T T Z A A M T O X N A L J Z L R K F X U X X
                          N B G I O I C U S A T C R S N E L A N N V F L P Q J J D Y D
                              W B F M K Z T B U U C B B R D G Y Q K B P S L A B N O F N E
                                  T C V L R O S T M W E H C R F K G D S P N Y N U R L P E X N
                                      G U S A I E U L W C I N Q A L I X U J C G H T Y T T O C F O D X
                                          A N T E N N A N D A P X G Y Y G N D Y D D Q G V C W T X S P D Z
                                              T C E H T X F L E F S           K V K A Y Y           Q J F B K L E X W G T
                                                  I D U B E Y A S           K C L B           K X H Q L R R D
                                                      W H H L           M H           V F S G
    
```

ADULT  
ANTENNA  
BUTTERFLY  
CATERPILLAR  
CHRYSLIS  
EGGS  
FLOWERS  
FLUTTER

FLY  
GARDEN  
LARVA  
MILKWEED  
MONARCH  
MOTH  
NECTAR  
PLANTS

PUPA  
STRAW  
WINGS

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As Awareness Day 2019 falls on Mother's Day we will be holding our  
**Awareness Lunch on the 11<sup>th</sup> May 2019.**

Next year we will be holding a  
**High Tea at the Hotel Clipper.**

Details will be available on the website when finalised.

# Stress Relaxation and Natural Pain Relief

Chronic pain is complex. Research over the past 25 years has shown that pain is influenced by emotional and social factors. These need to be addressed along with the physical causes of pain. Chronic stress is one factor that contributes to chronic pain. The good news is that you can get natural pain relief by making relaxation exercises a part of your pain-management plan.

## The Body's Response to Stress

To understand how natural pain relief works, it's important to understand how stress affects your body. Pain and stress have a similar effect on the body: your heart rate and blood pressure rise, breathing becomes fast and shallow, and your muscles tighten.

You can actually feel your body's response when you're faced with a sudden, stressful event, such as fearing that a car is about to hit you. The car misses you and, in time, your system returns to normal. You relax.

With chronic stress, such as worrying about health or finances, feeling stuck in a bad job or marriage, or fearing that something bad will happen, the nervous system keeps the body on alert. This takes a big toll on your body. Levels of stress hormones increase, and muscles remain in a nearly constant state of tension.

Here's just one example: Studies that measure site-specific muscle tension in patients with chronic back pain have shown that simply thinking or talking about a stressful event dramatically increases tension in back muscles.

## Relaxation Techniques for Natural Pain Relief

Relaxation exercises calm your mind, reduce stress hormones in your blood, relax your muscles, and elevate your sense of well-being. Using them regularly can lead to long-term changes in your body to counteract the harmful effects of stress.

Don't get stressed trying to pick the "right" relaxation technique for natural pain relief. Choose whatever relaxes you: music, prayer, gardening, going for a walk, talking with a friend on the phone. Here are some other techniques you might try:

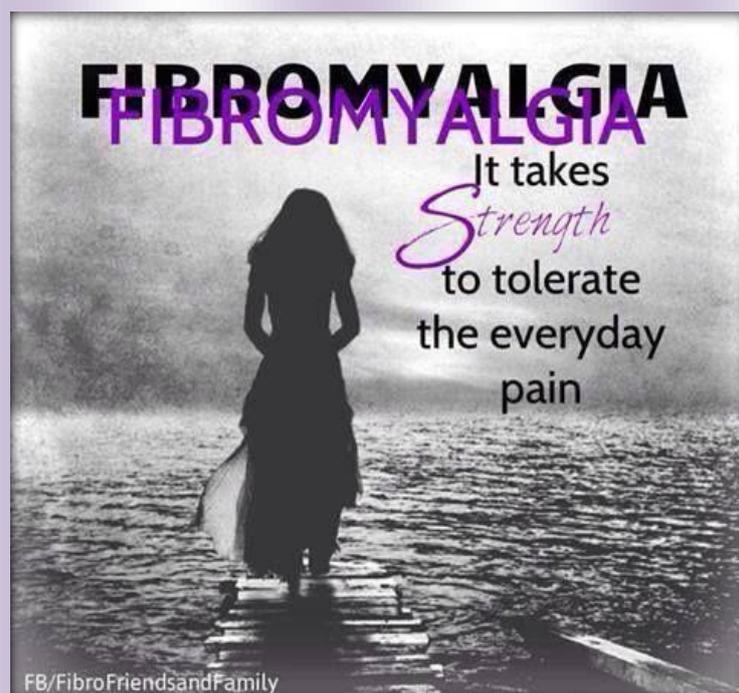
**Foursquare breathing.** Breathe deeply, so that your abdomen expands and contracts like a balloon with each breath. Inhale to a count of four, hold for a count of four, exhale to a count of four, then hold to a count of four.

**Guided imagery.** Breathe slowly and deeply. For example, imagine a tranquil scene in which you feel comfortable, safe, and relaxed. Include colours, sounds, smells, and your feelings. Do five to ten minutes each day.

**Self-talk.** Change how you think about your pain and yourself. For example, change "Pain prevents me from keeping house the way I used to -- I'm a failure" to "No one will die if the house isn't perfect. I can get a lot done by breaking down tasks into baby steps."

**Hypnosis.** Hypnotherapists can induce hypnosis and implant suggestions, such as, "You're going to sleep soundly tonight." Audiotape the session so that you can repeat it at home.

**Mindfulness meditation.** Sit or lie quietly and notice your breathing without controlling it. If pain or thoughts interfere, simply notice them without trying to push them away. Think of them as a cloud passing over; then return to observing your breath. Do this for about 20 minutes.



# How to Avoid Caregiver Burnout

## Take Time for You

Even just a few minutes can make a difference and help you recharge. Try yoga before breakfast, slip out for a 10-minute walk, and keep up with your favorite hobby. This lowers your stress, which may help you be a better caregiver.

## Know Your Limits

List all the tasks you need to do in a week, including dressing and bathing a loved one, rides, cooking, and household chores. Consider which ones someone else might be able to do. Remember to say no when you need to, and set boundaries so you can stay ready to help

## Stick to a Routine

Your daily habits can make your life simpler. A routine can help you feel in control and can let your loved one know what to expect. Consistency is especially important for people with dementia, because it provides a sense of security

## Ask for Help

Even a few hours "off duty" can help you recharge. Think of family, friends, or neighbors to call when you need a break. Insurance may pay for a home health aide. Adult day-care centers can give you a breather while your loved one enjoys some social activity. Your local Area Agency on Aging can tell you where to find help. And hospice programs can help terminally ill people and their families.

## Get Enough Sleep

Relaxation exercises, such as deep breathing, may help you at bedtime. If your loved one sleeps during the day but is awake much of the night, try to take naps. You may need to hire an aide or ask a friend or relative to stay with your loved one overnight so you can get a good night's rest.

## Join a Support Group

No one understands your situation better than another caregiver. You may want to look for support groups related to your loved one's illness. Your local Area Agency on Aging may keep a list. Or consider joining an online community, where you can connect with others, ask questions, vent when you need to, and share ideas.

## Use Timers and Reminders

Technology can be a caregiver's best friend. Buy pillboxes that sound an alarm when it's time for the next dose, or try a smartphone app or an online medicine reminder. They can send an automated text or phone call to you or your loved one when it's time for their medication. Pill organizers are a low-tech way for you to portion pills in little drawers by day, meal, or hour.

## Get an Emergency Alert Device

Consider an electronic "help" button for when you can't be there. It's called a personal emergency response system (PERS), and your loved one wears it like a pin or a necklace. Most connect to the phone system. Some work like a walkie-talkie, so the wearer can talk to an emergency operator at any time. Some will notify a family member or call 000, depending on your preference. You'll pay a monthly fee for the service.

## Set Up Cameras and Sensors

To chat with your loved one or keep tabs when you can't be there, you could set up a webcam -- a video camera connected to the Internet. Video chat apps can also help involve faraway family members in care decisions. If your loved one might wander away, you can install sensors that alert you when someone opens a door.

## Tap Into Creature Comforts

Could you bring a well-trained cat or dog in for a visit? Spending time with an animal can be very soothing to people who aren't well or who can't get out the way they used to. Pets can lower blood pressure, cut stress -- even make elderly people more alert. And seeing a loved one perk up can make you, the caregiver, happier, too.

## Tune In

Music and art can spark fun shared moments for you and the person you're caring for. Familiar melodies can bring back memories and may lead to clapping or dancing. Keep art projects simple and safe but not too childlike. Painting or making a collage from magazines are two good options. Listening to music or working on an art project can be a great stress reliever for you, too.

## Pace the Day

If your loved one has dementia, watch for "sundowning," in which people become confused or agitated in the evening. Plan activities early in the day, and serve an early dinner. Turn the lights up in the evening. Check with a doctor about any physical or sleep problems that may be part of the sundowning effect.

## Make It a Team Effort

Hold regular family meetings to discuss how your loved one is doing, caregiving needs, financial concerns, and your need for support. These meetings should include everyone who might be involved in caring for your loved one, including paid caregivers. Connect distant family members through a speakerphone or online video chat. Follow up with a written agreement and a calendar of tasks.

## Draw on Workplace Support

Thanks to the Family and Medical Leave Act, larger companies must offer up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave for employees with a parent, spouse, or child who is seriously ill. If you can't take leave, look into whether you can work flexible hours. Be clear about how you will get your work done. Employee assistance programs can help you find care for your loved one while you work.

## Please note:

*All opinions expressed in our newsletter are those of individuals and not necessarily those of the committee or membership. Any advice, either explicit or implied is not intended to replace qualified medical advice. Individuals should consult with their own doctor or health professional for specific medical advice.*

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