



SHaRE & REPaIR Programme

"I am exhausted from
trying to be stronger
than I feel."
-Unknown

SEVEN –Energy management.

Fatigue is known to be one of the other major symptoms associated with FM, but where does it come from and what can you do about it?

What is Fatigue?

Fatigue is different from 'tiredness', it is an exhaustion of body, mind, and spirit which is not eased by the normal methods such as having an early night. As another 'invisible' symptom it can be hard for others to understand or appreciate how it feels to get through a day with physical, mental and emotional fatigue. It can even cause a person to doubt their own experience and question if it is real. This may lead to a self-critical inner voice forcing you to 'push through', further increasing the stress levels your body is under. Without an accurate appraisal of your energy levels, you cannot make sensible choices on how best to respond to your body's message.

What the Fatigue of Fibromyalgia Feels Like



Where does it come from?

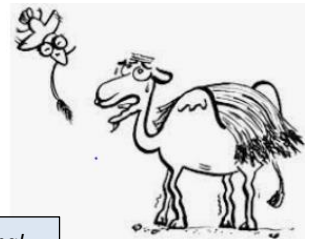
By revisiting our understanding of FM we can start to understand many of the possible triggers for fatigue, by considering the biology, and the behaviours that drive/maintain the changes.

- Fatigue can be the result of your body trying to deal with the pain, multiple biological changes are being triggered whilst you experience pain, all of which are designed to get you away from threat, but all of which tax your already stressed biological ecosystem. **'Robbing Peter to pay Paul'**
- Fatigue (shown in experimental studies in the 1970's) can be the result of a period of **unrefreshing sleep**, which may itself be the result of many things including pain in the body, and stress.
- Fatigue can be worsened by **other complications** associated with FM; sleep apnoea, restless legs, headache, lack of physical fitness, stress, being overweight, IBS etc.

“FMS acts as a "circuit breaker," with the hypothalamus decreasing its function to protect the individual in the face of what is perceived to be an overwhelming stress (just like blowing a fuse/circuit breaker in a house). This centre controls sleep, hormones, temperature, and blood flow/blood pressure/sweating/gut function.” Dr J Tietelbaum

When this crucial area in the brain (hypothalamus) adapts it's function to move into 'survive, not thrive', or uses the '**STOP program**' to keep you safe; fatigue is a useful message for the body to experience, it forces you to lay low and conserve precious energy for a time when the threat is no longer there.

This system works superbly well when the threat is short term such as an infection, or a temporary period of stress, but once this situation becomes long standing it can self-perpetuate; pain leads to fatigue, fatigue leads to pain and so on. An energy crisis is when the body has reached a tipping point, the manufacture of energy within the body necessary to keep the biological ecosystem going is no longer enough, this heightens the already high threat level. This energy crisis can be triggered by something seemingly small.



The final straw

“Restoring energy production so that your hypothalamic "circuit breaker" turns back on, and eliminating what blew your fuse in the first place, gives us many ways to effectively treat you!” Dr J Teitlebaum

Task 1.

Where does *your* fatigue come from?

Use the following template to complete a fatigue diary for one week to identify any patterns related to your fatigue levels. This will identify any triggers for your fatigue which may need addressing.

Date/Time	Activity (this includes washing, dressing, reading, eating {specify what you have eaten}, watching TV, chores, using a computer, speaking on the telephone, socialising, gardening etc.)	Your perception of intensity of activity; H= High, M= medium L= low demand	Fatigue level 0-10
1.6.21 9am	walk dog for 30 mins	H	8
1.6.21 10am	Spoke to family member by phone for 10 mins	L	9
1.6.21 12.30	Lunch; crisps , snack bar and can coke	L	6. (5 mins later = 10)

What is body budgeting?

Imagine your body as a large corporation, with many departments responsible for different tasks. There would need to be an overall manager (brain/ANS) who had responsibility for the smooth running of the organisation, one of the responsibilities would be to ensure the finance (energy levels) of the organisation remained in credit. One strategy could be to keep an amount of money saved as a contingency for a rainy day (central governor theory). The brain is aware of all the 'expenses' and 'income' being traded each day to fund the body, and aims to balance (medically termed *homeostasis*) things out to avoid going into the red (medically termed *stress*).

So where does the spending occur?





There are 3 main areas in which our body spends its energy

- Mental activity: Brain - thinking, planning, worrying, ruminating. Whilst only representing 2% of body weight, the brain uses 20-30% of our energy!
- Physical activity: Biology - all the major systems immune, digestive, muscular, hormonal
- Emotional activity: Whole person

Task 2.

Can you identify your energy cops, and energy robbers?

Are there common areas of your life where you see the opportunity to build energy, and areas where you are losing energy. Consider the 3 main areas; mental activity, physical activity, emotional activity, and use your table from Task 1 to help.

 Energy cops	 Energy robbers
E.g: Sleep, exercise, healthy food, meditation, watching film with loved ones, taking breaks	E.g: Over-doing, form filling, worrying, muscle tension, over eating, staying up late, doom scrolling

Investing in the body and repairing energy levels ~ Sleep

Task 3.

Sleep is a superb way to befriend your body and help move its energy stores into the black. Having sufficient quality and quantity of restorative sleep is essential for maintaining a healthy body and mind. Sleep is known to be compromised for most people with Fibromyalgia and therefore it deserves special attention.

Consider prioritising your sleep this week, what are your potential sleep barriers, and how will you tackle them? What could you imagine might work for you as an effective sleep aid?

Use <https://thesleepcharity.org.uk/> for information on sleep barriers and aids, and a printable sleep diary (<https://thesleepcharity.org.uk/information-support/adults/sleep-diary/>) to track your daytime & night-time patterns, identify barriers, and find new ways of improving your sleep hygiene.

Investing in the body and repairing energy levels ~ Exercise

Although it seems counter-intuitive exercise can actually grow our energy reserves. Carried out in the correct manner cardiovascular exercise in particular has been shown to increase the health and numbers of our mitochondria, which are the body's energy manufacturers. Gentle stretches can release tension held in the muscular system which can release pockets of energy. Gentle stretches also relieve painful spasms, this can help the body to relax thereby conserving energy which would otherwise go into the fight or flight state. Strength type activities will build muscle, as muscle builds, we have the opportunity to increase our numbers of mitochondria which are found mostly in muscle. This leads to greater opportunities for the manufacture of energy.

Investing in the body and repairing energy levels ~ Diet

Whilst the evidence on diet is still incomplete, there are some basic sensible strategies in terms of increasing your body's budget through healthy nutrition.

Water; being dehydrated can lead to fatigue along with putting other stresses on the body, make sure you drink sufficiently throughout the day.

Sugar: we are all aware that sugar is not too good for us, but it does give us a temporary energy fix (and tastes yummy!). However, managing spikes of blood sugar puts physical stress onto our already taxed body, and putting on weight promotes inflammation which is harmful to our mitochondria.

Our mitochondria can use either fatty acids or carbohydrates to create the ATP needed to produce energy, using good fat is more efficient and creates fewer free radical by-products i.e. it is better for our health. Keeping your carb intake lower so your mitochondria will burn fat for energy, will help manage your weight and benefits the workings of your mitochondria.

Fatigue can lead to loss of appetite, alongside this we can be too fatigued to plan and prepare the meals that we might consider healthy. However there are some useful resources for how to prepare healthy food with less effort; <https://tinyurl.com/5v7b54wh>

<https://foodandfatigue.wordpress.com/>

- Make sure you make use of gadgets which can make food prep easier
- Eat little and often rather than having to prepare big meals
- Prepare food at the times of day when you feel more refreshed
- Steam food and use microwave rather than using heavy pans
- Use frozen veg are healthier than fresh, and are much easier to prepare
- Batch cooking meals means you can have some in the freezer for the days when you need it.
- Cold meals can be quick to prepare and just as, or even more nutritious
- Delegate and ask for help with food prep
- Consider a meals service

Task 4.

Remember to check in with your overall state, each day. Use your tools to usher in a healthier state, to increase your wellbeing. Maybe try a sleep meditation, try the free 'insight timer' app on your smart phone.

Try the RAIN meditation;

1. *Recognize what is going on*
2. *Allow the experience to be there, just as it is*
3. *Investigate with kindness*
4. *Natural awareness, which comes from not identifying with the experience.*

Task 5.

Try experimenting with short periods of cardiovascular, stretch, and strength activities to 'invest in your body bank'.

Task 6.

Preparing for next week which will be our final program session (we will still have our follow up) we would encourage you to remind yourself of how to complete your questionnaires. These questionnaires are vital in reflecting your progress, and the data helps us to continually develop our service. Please take a look at the following tutorial video as a reminder of how to complete your system online questionnaires;

<https://tinyurl.com/2f3x3mmc>