



## Fatigue Take Control Part 6

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>>Speaker: Making changes and choices to take control of fatigue includes using good posture and ergonomic equipment, analyzing daily tasks to minimize their impact on your fatigue level, and spending energy on what is important to you.

>>Speaker: I'm very fortunate in working for a company that's very proactive in keeping workstations ergonomic. So, currently I'm working at a workstation that has an ergonomic keyboard which will allow you to do a negative or a positive tilt. It's got the keyboarding mouse at the same level as the keyboard. I've got a headset, so I'm not scrunching on the phone. It makes it very, very easy to work. It's just a very nice situation.

>>Speaker: Holding the body up takes a significant amount of work. It also takes continued muscle contraction. So, even postural activities, things like holding your head up can be tiring and might be limiting. Learning good body mechanics and using good body mechanics really makes a difference in saving energy.

>>Speaker: When considering good posture in standing, what is most effortless is to stand with your body in alignment with gravity. So, if we start from the feet, my leg is directly over my foot. I'm not wearing a shoe that is either tipping me excessively backward or excessively forward. Then with that position my pelvis is free to move. I want to avoid a position where I have this flat back or really an excessive way that people sometimes confuse with good posture.

Once the pelvis is in a neutral position over the hip, the rib cage and shoulders and head can rest in alignment with gravity over the pelvis. Once you've achieved good standing posture, it's important to keep yourself in align with your work, so don't twist your body to get from place-to-place, but actually turn yourself to face your work.

To achieve good posture in sitting, it's important to have an ergonomic chair. But remember that an ergonomic chair is not ergonomic until it has been fit to you. The things to consider when purchasing a chair would be adjustability. This includes adjustability of a headrest, both up and down and forward and back, so it fits you. The back rest should be adjustable including tilt and height. The height of the chair should be adjustable, and find a height that works for you, that it keeps your feet on the floor, a right angle in your ankles, a right angle in your knees and hips.

Another thing that's important when considering using a chair is armrests that are adjustable, and the armrest should be adjustable to a height that your hands can be at the workspace or a 90-degree position for your elbows, and they also should be adjustable, moving in and out.

So, at a computer workstation, one key thing to consider is the height of the monitor. The top of the monitor should be at the same level as her eyes, or the middle of the monitor is six inches below her eyes. The position of the monitor should also be directly in front of you, not off to the side. This limits the need for you to have to keep your head in a turned position, which can cause problems with fatigue and pain. Also, the height of the monitor limits you from having to move your head up and down, which could also cause fatigue and pain.

>>Speaker: Another way to take control of fatigue is to eliminate or change activities that are tiring. The activity analysis process will help you to decide which changes to make.

>>Speaker: The most important thing to remember when you're trying to manage your fatigue is that almost any part of an activity can be changed. The first thing you might want to look at is does this fit in with my priorities? Is this a priority activity? Expectations are another part of any activity. How

high a quality do I have to do this activity? How vigorously do I have to do it? Could someone else be doing it? Could I delegate it to a co-worker, to a friend? Do I have to do this activity myself? You also want to look at the timing of the activity. If I'm doing something after a fatiguing activity that's really important to me, maybe I should change the time of that activity.

Another question of timing would be whether I need a rest after that activity. And, if so, I need to plan that and add that resting time so that I can be recovered from a fatiguing activity. Another factor in any activity is its location and its setup. Is there something about this location that is making me more tired? Is the setup for this activity making me tired? Is there some way I could put things together, organize it, break down that activity into every physical part of that activity that you're doing, and question whether that step is necessary. Do I need to combine it? Can I eliminate it? Is there a different time I can do one step and maybe do the other steps together? So, there are often ways to change an activity.

The pace of the activity is another important part of an activity. Are you doing that activity quickly? Could you perhaps slow it down? Could it be less stressful if you slowed it down? Could it be less fatiguing if you changed the pace? Try and think of ways that you could make that activity easier. For instance, if you used a Cuisinart for cutting, is there some piece of technology, like e-mail or voice-activated software that could make that activity easier for you to do? Think about every piece of equipment that is or could be used for an activity.

The next step, after you've analyzed the activity, is to develop the modifications. And so the modifications would depend on what the answers are to those questions that you just asked. If you can identify a piece of equipment that would help; if you can identify a posture or position that you could change; if you could identify changes in timing or combination of steps; all of those modifications taken together often mean that an activity is not nearly as fatiguing as it used to be.

Don't think that every modification you make is going to work. Try it out, see if it makes a difference. Give it a good, realistic trial. You might need to make more modifications. But once you get the hang of asking the questions and making the modifications, you'll find that there are many activities that you can change.

One example of an activity modification might, for instance, be if you're showering. Many, many people with MS report that they get up in the morning feeling rested and about a half an hour or 45 minutes later, after they've finished their showering that they're exhausted. The first thing to look at is the goal of showering. Why are you taking a shower? Generally, the answer will be to get clean.

The next thing that you'd want to look at would be is this a priority activity? Is this something I want to do, I have to do? And is it something I could delegate to somebody else? Now, in the case of a shower, obviously, it's not something you can delegate and it is a priority activity.

Another thing to look at would be the timing of the shower. Do you really need to shower in the morning or could you shower at night? And perhaps even thinking of showering every-other-day instead of showering every day. If you're walking down a long hall to get to the shower, going up or down stairs to get to a shower, is there a way to change that? Do you have everything you need right there next to possibly a chair that you could put in the shower, so that you have the shampoo there, you have the razor, if you're going to shave your legs, you have the conditioner, and you have a towel within easy reach.

So, if you sit to shower and perhaps if you're washing your hair and you put your arms on your knees, bring your head down to your knees, you don't even have to have your arms in the air and hold them in the air in order to wash your hair. If you have all your equipment together, you can do your activity sitting, taking much less energy, dry yourself off, and then go on to your next activity.

>>Speaker: One way of looking at energy is to think of it as a bank that you have, and this bank is full of energy. Some days it's higher and some days it's lower, like anybody's bank account might be. But when you start looking at your priorities, you're going to have to start withdrawing energy from that bank in order to accomplish those priorities.

>>Speaker: There are three important concepts in energy management: depositing energy, saving energy, and budgeting energy. Depositing energy means using things like exercise or napping or sitting down to put new energy in your energy bank. Saving energy is similar to saving money. Think about things that you don't want to spend your energy on and don't spend it there. Think about things that are important to you, things that you want to do, and save your energy for those activities. Budgeting energy starts with the goal and priority setting. Thinking ahead, thinking about what you have scheduled tomorrow, what you have scheduled in the afternoon, what is important, and what do you want to accomplish this day, this week, this month.

>>Speaker: I seem to have a lot of requests for my time, and I really want to do everything. I guess a lot of people want to do everything, but I can't and I don't. The last few months I've been foster caring puppies for the humane society, and I had a litter of 11 puppies. I cleared my schedule for two months. I just said these are taking all my time. So, I pretty much didn't do anything, but all my friends who I'd get together with, they knew that they could come to my house any time and play with puppies. But that was a really important project for me. So, it's just a matter of deciding what you need to do and scheduling it that way.

>>Speaker: Taking control of fatigue doesn't mean that the fatigue goes away. What it means is you are able to do your priority activities, to do the things that are important to you and maybe to your family, and not end up being so tired by doing things that you really don't care about, that you can't do the things that you really want to do.

>>Speaker: A sense of control is actually probably the most important thing that one can do to help combat fatigue, because if you feel that you're in control, then you have this sustaining sense of hope and of encouragement, and the ability to look for the things that bring you joy.

>>Speaker: If you have MS and you're affected by fatigue, you shouldn't just accept it. You shouldn't be told just to go home and live with it. There are many, many things that can be done to help improve fatigue and to help people lead fuller and more active and more energized lives.

>>Speaker: I think that this has forced us, really, to come together, to just work together on this life problem, and I think -- I just feel like we're really sort of both on the same page as we go through life now.

>>Speaker: So, it's simplified our life a lot, and that's actually not such a bad thing, so I've totally taken a different approach to my life. Where before I thought I had to be working 24 hour and making a lot of money, I've now just sort of backed off and made a list, which I review every few months. I just did it last night to see what's first?