



Fatigue Take Control Part 3

>>**Speaker:** As the fatigue progresses, my thinking slows down, my ability to process information slows down. I may be intent on doing one task and the next thing I know I'm out in the parking lot changing somebody's oil.

>>**Speaker:** I have difficulty multi-tasking and difficulty articulating. It doesn't -- I used to be much more articulate than I am now, and that's one of the most difficult things. If I am extremely tired, my symptoms are much worse. They're exacerbated, so I have to manage the fatigue because of that.

>>**Speaker:** In the process of working, of doing mental activities, concentrating, formulating ideas, there's a certain amount of cognitive and mental exertion that's going on, and what we believe happens with MS is that over a period of time the efficiency of that mental exertion decreases. And there have been a number of research studies that have actually demonstrated this loss of vigilance over time.

So, for example, if you're normally able to talk on the phone and file and even make notes at the same time, multi-tasking, that kind of activity might be much less efficient, much slower and more prone to error if it's occurring at the end of a long day or at the end of a particularly demanding period of time. And that kind of inability to maintain the same level of performance that one was able to do when fresh and early in the day or at their peak is an example of what we think cognitive fatigue is.

>>**Speaker:** Typically for me what I have found is if temps get over, I'm going to say high 80s, then it's not a pretty thing for me.

>>**Speaker:** We recommend that people with MS be proactive about heat. Plan for what you're going to be doing.

>>**Speaker:** I have air conditioning in my house, I have air conditioning in my car, and I have air conditioning in my office. I avoid the sun in the hot parts of the day, and then I also purchased a cooling vest and I use that on really hot days when I'm going to be out and about.

>>**Speaker:** One day in talking to the physical therapist at OHSU, she said, "Do you sleep with lots of blankets and all curled up?" I said, "Yeah." And she said, "You know, we call it cocooning." I said, "Yeah, I wrap up in blankets," and then she said, "And you get real warm at night." I said, "It feels really nice and toasty." "And when you get up are you tired?" I said, "Sometimes, a lot of times, yes." And said, "Don't do that, try this." I said, "But it feels good," you know, being all tight and everything in bed. And she said, "No, don't do that. Try this. Try a light sheet or light blanket and don't take hot baths and showers, and see what happens."

So, voila! I changed it. I got in the morning, I felt wonderful. I didn't need to wrap myself up in, you know, like a mummy in blankets, and I felt good.

>>**Speaker:** A person can take precautions or take care of their nutritional well being by some really easy things. First, make every meal count. I don't know about your mom, but when I grew up my mom said snacking is just going to ruin your appetite. And, really, this might be easier for someone who has fatigue to eat smaller amounts of food more frequently through the day. Whether you eat three large meals, though, or five or six smaller meals, it's your food choices that can really make the difference, and you want to make sure you're choosing things that ensure your good health. And stay away from those types of things that might contribute little more than just calories. Because over time those extra calories can add up. And then what we see is the chance for weight gain. And carrying around that extra weight can in and of itself be a contributor to fatigue.

>>**Speaker:** The things I would like to do when I cook involve a lot of cutting and dicing and peeling. If I stand and do it for that long, then it is very fatiguing. I find myself leaning on the counter as I'm trying to cut or cook.

>>**Speaker:** There are so many choices now in the marketplace of pre-cut and cleaned produce, shredded cheeses, chopped and minced garlic or ginger. These things can really cut 10 to 15 minutes out of food preparation, which translates into a real energy saving in the long run. If you are going to cook, try to gather up all your ingredients and cooking tools and equipment

first. This way you're not spending your energy running back and forth and around your kitchen.

Think ahead as to what you might want to put together for dinner and jot it down. I think it's easiest to do that when we have the energy so that at the end of the day, if you're tired and that whole process seems overwhelming, at least you have an idea of how you wanted to handle your meals. And if you are investing your time in cooking, double up. Make twice the recipe. You're already doing the work. You can portion it down into ready-to-eat, ready-to-cook servings. Put it in a covered dish that you can pop into the freezer and take out and put into the oven or the microwave. And if you just don't have the energy, that's okay. Know what your takeout options are. I encourage people to check with their local restaurants that offer takeout and collect their menus, and try to identify what items on the menus might be more healthful choices.

>>Speaker: Building a power pantry can be your secret to nutritional success, and that's having some key items onboard for when you feel like cooking, and/or grabbing a great snack. The things are there, ready for you. Having things like quick-cooking grains, they only take a few minutes and they make a great addition to a main meal. It makes the side dishes much, much easier.

Your refrigerator and freezer are just an important part of your power pantry as well. And having items that are easy to use. I encourage people to buy pre-cut and pre-shredded vegetables. It really can cut about 10 to 15 minutes off your preparation time and really save a lot of energy. And when all else fails, it's fine to have great, healthy frozen entrées available when you need to call on them. There are some great low-fat, low-sodium, calorie controlled items, and so many choices to choose from in the markets now. The key is to have options available when you need them most.

>>Speaker: Grocery shopping was really one of my dreaded things. It's time consuming. By the time you get all the groceries and get them home and have to put them away, it's a major event. So, I've started using the safeway.com, albertsons.com. I set up and order them online and have them the next day. They bring them in and put them in my kitchen. It's perfect.

>>Speaker: Setting personal goals and priorities allows you to spend your energy on what is important to you. Choosing activities that forward your

goals and learning to say no to tasks that don't help you to manage your fatigue.

>>Speaker: Goal and priority setting can help a person with MS select their activities by helping them to make decisions about what's most important to them. You may be dealing with your family, your children, your husband, your housework or your employer. So, learning to prioritize and set goals in all of those settings is going to help a person feel more in control of their life.

>>Speaker: A goal is a long-term objective, and this should be something that you can achieve, something that is realistic, and something that does not rely on somebody else doing something for you to be successful. A priority is the importance placed on an activity. So, if you have a particular activity and you feel that that is important towards reaching the goal that you want to reach, that would be a priority activity for you.

>>Speaker: I found that the more that people talk about their goals that they've set for themselves, and the more that they talk about what might be keeping them from reaching those goals, the more they're able to enlist the help of others to work on their team so that they can reach that goal.

>>Speaker: Priority setting for me is typically based on the list of what I have to do, what I'd like to do, and what would be nice to do. So, based on where things fall on that list, then I figure out, based on the day and my energy level, what gets ticked off.

>>Speaker: Going to work is a really important thing for me, and I like the interaction. I like the people, my colleagues, that I deal with them everyday, and I like just doing my job as a reporter. And people have advised me not to work quite so hard, but I just -- I very much enjoy it and I actually find it -- it's kind of like yoga on Saturday mornings. I don't want to get up and do it, but when I do, I feel better. I'd consider going part-time or even quitting, but with my job I'm able to have that pay for my insurance, and that really helps.

>>Speaker: Often people don't realize that they spend a lot of energy on activities that are really not important to them. Once they know what activities are important to them and what their goals are, what they most want to accomplish, then they can choose to spend their energy on the activities that will help them achieve their goals.

I was having difficulty doing that, because I'd always just done everything, and I thought how am I going to do this? So, what I do is I start at, "No". So, in my head when someone asks me to do something, I start at, "No," where prior to my MS diagnosis and the fatigue that I needed to manage, I always started at, "Yes." "Oh, sure, I can do that!" Now, I start in my head at, "No," to see can I do it and how many things do I have that day?

>>Speaker: When people see me that don't know me, they don't realize what's going on with me physically, and that's okay. It's none of their business, a lot of them. When they see the cane, some people just say, "Oh, did you fall?" "Yeah, I fell." So, I don't tell them. But then those people that also know me and know that I have MS, they think that I can do everything. "Well, you're so busy, you do this and you have this job, and you always go to this place and that place. Well, why can't you do that?" "Because I just can't." And I used to try to think of excuses. Now I just say, "I'm not going to do that." And I had to recognize that I had to look out for myself and only do those things that I absolutely wanted to do.

>>Speaker: Keeping an activity diary and setting goals and priorities can be very helpful in learning to take control of your fatigue. Completing an activity diary provides you with accurate information about your activities and fatigue level. It shows you the relationship between your activities and your fatigue level and your other MS symptoms. It identifies problems with particular activities and your schedule, and it provides clues for effective changes. As you examine your activity diary, you will find activities that can be eliminated because they don't help you accomplish your goals. You will find activities that are important but can be changed or rescheduled to make them less fatiguing.

It may be helpful for you to work with an occupational therapist to analyze your diary and modify your activities. When you set goals and priorities and eliminate or change the activities that contribute to your fatigue, you will find that you have energy to accomplish what you want to do. Goals and priorities help you determine what is important to you and give you parameters to help you decide how to spend your energy.