

Spoon-Saving Strategies

By Sara Naveed

Raise your hand if getting out of bed feels like an accomplishment to you, if you have ever felt the need to nap after taking a shower or if being tired feels like it's a part of your personality now! How about constantly finding yourself in a push/crash cycle—pushing way past your limit one day and then paying the price for it in the form of heightened symptoms and having to rest several days in order to recover? Don't worry—you're not the only one!

We currently live in an era where we are constantly fed the narrative that our self-worth is based on our productivity. So it's only natural to want to push ourselves when our bodies are being nice to us on the "good days." The temptation to cross off all the items on that to-do list is REAL! However, it's important to remember and accept that with fatigue being such a prevalent symptom, especially following dialysis, you can't do everything you want. The question then is how do we get things done with the limited number of *spoons* we have, without pushing ourselves? Confused about why I used the word spoons there? Don't worry—let me explain!

Chronic illness warriors use the word spoons to describe the idea of limited energy. The premise of The Spoon Theory

is that we have a "spoonful" of energy available for each task, each day. With every activity, we remove one or more spoons. In comparison to healthy people who have an unlimited supply of spoons, we start each day with fewer spoons and use more spoons for each task. Because we have a limited number of spoons, we need to be more cautious of when and where we use them. This can be accomplished through the art of pacing and adapting various spoon-saving strategies.

Here are some spoon saving strategies I use daily that you should give a try:

Plan Your Day

Use a planner or smart phone to have your days planned in advance and lower the amount of stress in meeting your personal, as well as professional deadlines. An ideal first step is separating your needs from your wants in order to help prioritize and focus your energy on the right things. Spread activities throughout the day and schedule hard tasks during the time of the day when you have the most energy. Remember not to multitask. Switching back and forth between various tasks requires a lot of refocusing, thereby, exhausting you even more! In addition,



make sure not to schedule multiple energy-consuming events close together.

Stay Organized

Keep common household items on every floor and possibly in every room of your house in order to prevent unnecessary trips between different floors and/or rooms. Arrange your work environment for easy access to commonly used equipment and supplies.

Reduce Unnecessary Energy Use

Take a seat during the simplest of tasks like taking a shower, grooming, dressing, folding laundry and ironing. Better yet, buy clothes that don't require ironing. Use electric or automatic appliances such as a dishwasher, electric mixer and robotic vacuum to simplify everyday tasks. Use a disability parking tag to park closer to entrances, and shop at less busy times in order to decrease the amount of walking required and time spent waiting in lines. If possible, shop online.

Do things slowly and avoid rushing so you don't end up using all your energy at once. Just like your car uses more gas to get to your destination faster, we expend more energy when we are rushing. On the other hand, if you are more laid back, you'll find that you have more energy to accomplish your tasks and goals because you are no longer expending any energy on the panic and stress that comes with rushing. And most importantly, don't give yourself permission to do a lot!

Rest

Rest is very important in the successful management of any illness; however, many people tend to push themselves beyond their limit most days. While remaining active is important, pacing yourself by scheduling frequent breaks throughout the day between various tasks is even more crucial for us since resting allows our muscles to refuel for more activity. Become attuned to your body. Give your body rest *before* it gets to a point where you've done too much and will need to "pay for it"

later. Listen to it at the first sign it gives you to stop the task at hand. And make sure to keep your naps short (less than 30 minutes) in order to avoid messing up your nighttime routine.

Sleep

A good night's sleep maximizes energy levels, so good sleep hygiene can get your day started with more spoons. Aim to get at least seven to eight hours of sleep. Follow a bedtime ritual that signals to your body that it's time to go to sleep. Go to bed and get up at about the same time every day. And as hard as it can be, try staying away from your phone, laptop and TV. These simple tips can maximize the number of spoons you wake up with each day.

Delegate

Know your body's limits, and don't be afraid to ask for help from your loved ones. Certain tasks that are difficult for you might be super easy for them.



If there is anything my health journey has taught me so far, it's that we need to love our bodies and treat them right. Not only do we need to honor our limits, but we also must make sure we live within those limits. Adapting these simple spoon-saving strategies will not only help you live within those limits, but also control your symptoms, bring more stability into your life and improve your overall quality of life. This is because each saved spoon is a gift of healing you're giving yourself and your body.

Most importantly, I've come to realize that my worth is not based on my productivity. My worth just is! It's inherent...and yours is too!

Check out Sara's website at: <https://fabulousandfatigued.com>