

Your **Fibromyalgia** Workbook

Session Tasks

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Below is a list of common findings fibromyalgia patients report. Mark which ones apply to you and your fibromyalgia.

- ☐ You're middle-aged.
- ☐ You have pain in many different areas.
- ☐ You've had pain for several years or months.
- ☐ You've been given several diagnoses.
- ☐ You've seen numerous healthcare providers.
- ☐ You get help from each treatment for a while, but it stops working.
- ☐ You've been tested and scanned, but nothing is found.
- ☐ Your tests may show some degeneration or arthritis.
- ☐ You were able to do a lot of activity before fibromyalgia.
- ☐ Your fibromyalgia has limited your ability to do activities.
- ☐ Your fibromyalgia has impacted your job and income.
- ☐ You've been diagnosed with depression.
- ☐ Your pain is steadily getting worse instead of better.
- ☐ You can't sleep.
- ☐ You're constantly tired.
- ☐ You've tried to lose weight, but you can't. In fact, you're gaining weight.
- ☐ You experience pain when you exercise.
- ☐ Your family doesn't understand your pain.

You've been dealing with fibromyalgia for a while. With all your interaction with healthcare providers, you've undoubtedly gotten a lot of advice and information. Some of it might be good, and some of it might be bad. Below is a list patients have provided regarding how they're feeling. Check off the familiar ones, and then use this page to write down what you know about fibromyalgia:

- ☐ I don't want it.
- ☐ It's no fun.
- ☐ Nothing helps.
- ☐ No one believes me.
- ☐ The future is bleak.
- ☐ It's not getting better.
- ☐ I guess I'll have to live with it.

My list of things I know about fibromyalgia:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Since developing fibromyalgia, you've undoubtedly seen many different healthcare providers. In many cases, you've seen providers with the same profession several times. Below is a list of professionals commonly consulted for fibromyalgia. Check off the ones you've seen. Write how many of each one you've seen.

Yes/No	Profession	How Many?
	Family Doctor	
	Physical Therapist	
	Occupational Therapist	
	Pain Management Specialist	
	Neurologist	
	Chiropractor	
	Massage Therapist	
	Orthopedic Surgeon	
	Dietician	
	Rheumatologist	
	Psychologist	
	Psychiatrist	
	Other:	
	Other:	

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Write your questions here.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Below is the visual illusion with the lines. Look at it again and see how easy the brain can be “tricked.” Show it to someone else, and discuss it with them.



In this session, you've learned how people can have injury and little or no pain. Surely you have experienced, seen or heard of this happening.

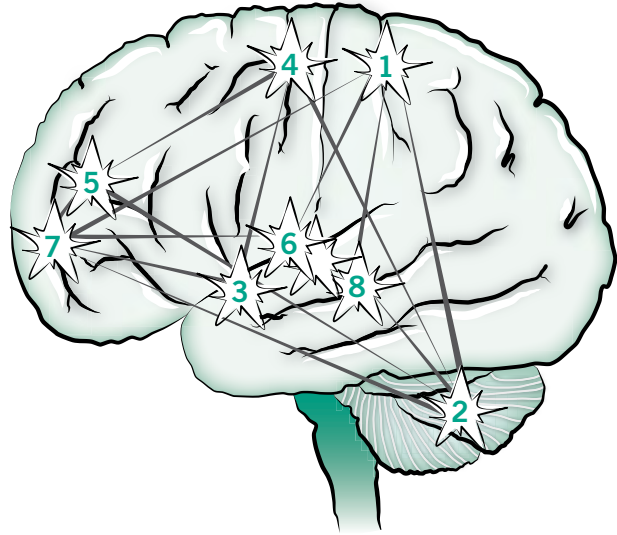
Use this page to write down some examples. Think about athletes performing with injury. Think about athletes competing in the Olympics. Think about examples that happened to you, your friends and family.

Write your examples here.

1. _____

2. _____

In Session 2, you learned how various brain areas are active in processing your pain associated with fibromyalgia. On the right is a brain. Below is a list. If you have any of these issues, check the area, find the appropriate brain flash and color it in. For example, if you've had trouble doing exercises such as core strengthening, you may want to check off the area associated with movement. Once done, step back and see how your whole brain is busy processing the threat called fibromyalgia!



Number	Area	How Many?	Yes
1	Sensory	Feeling pain in many areas; spreading pain; pain everywhere	
2	Cerebellum	Difficulty with small, coordinated movements and balance	
3	Amygdala	Anxiousness and fear; feeling more emotional	
4	Motor	Difficulty with movement; exercises are hard to perform; abdominals don't work well; poor posture; weakness	
5	Anterior Cingulate	Trouble focusing; trouble with concentration; feeling like you're in a fog	
6	Hypothalamus	Sensitive tissues; nervousness; difficulty with sleep; lack of motivation	
7	Prefrontal	Problems solving issues; short-term memory issues	
8	Hippocampus	Problems with memory and directions	

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1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

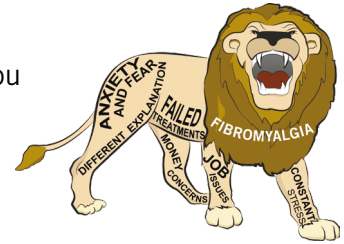
4. _____

Many systems are involved in pain. A roaring African lion enters your room. Remember that the lion is a metaphor for all the issues that you deal with on a daily basis associated with fibromyalgia. Write down all the things you will do. If needed, use the cheat sheet below. When you're finished, explain this to someone.

- Is your heart rate up or down? Why?
- Is it time for a nap? Why or why not?
- Is your posture important right now?
- Are you feeling vigilant? Are your eyes open or not? Why?
- Which are the important muscles to use?
- If you have food in your belly, do you want to spend time digesting it?
- Are you interested in sex at this time?
- Are you interested in spending energy and time on healing your sore throat or fighting infections?
- Are you interested in spending energy healing tissues?
- Are you wanting to store energy for winter?



Remember, the African lion is a metaphor for all the issues and threats you deal with on a daily basis associated with fibromyalgia. Below is a list of identified factors. Check off the factors that you think apply to you, and then write them into your own fibromyalgia lion similar to this one.



- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> No one knows what it is | <input type="checkbox"/> Exercise and movement hurt | <input type="checkbox"/> Constant pain |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fear | <input type="checkbox"/> Fatigue | <input type="checkbox"/> Family issues |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stress | <input type="checkbox"/> Nothing helps | <input type="checkbox"/> Failed treatment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> No one wants to help | <input type="checkbox"/> Anxiety | <input type="checkbox"/> Fear it will get worse |
| <input type="checkbox"/> There is no hope | <input type="checkbox"/> Pain | <input type="checkbox"/> Concerns for the future |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Job issues | <input type="checkbox"/> Life is miserable | <input type="checkbox"/> No hope |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Money issues | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Different explanations for pain | | |

FILL IN YOUR LION...



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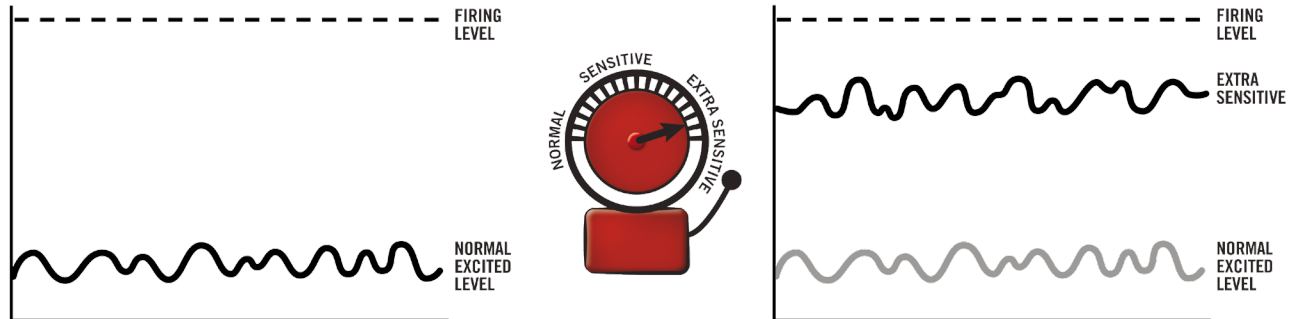
1. _____

2. _____

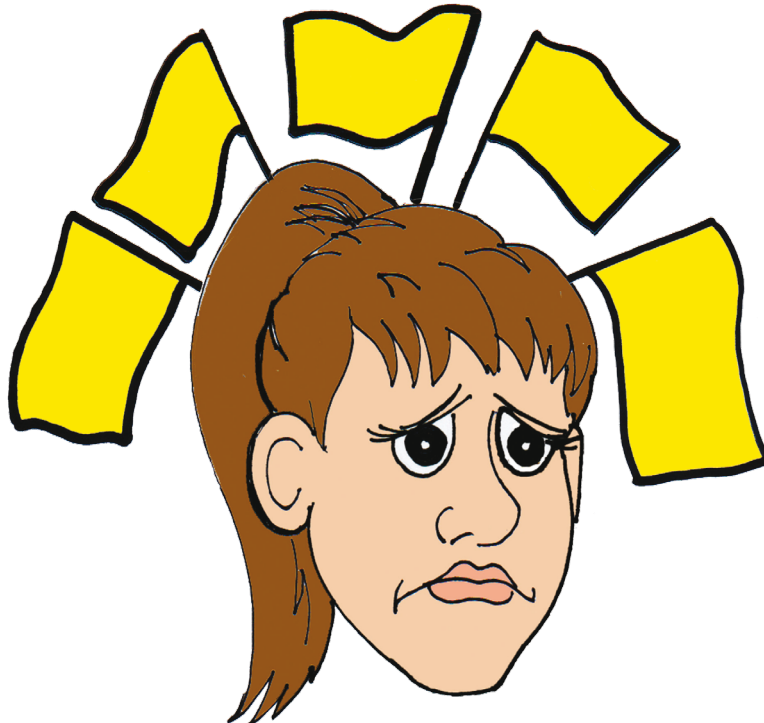
3. _____

4. _____

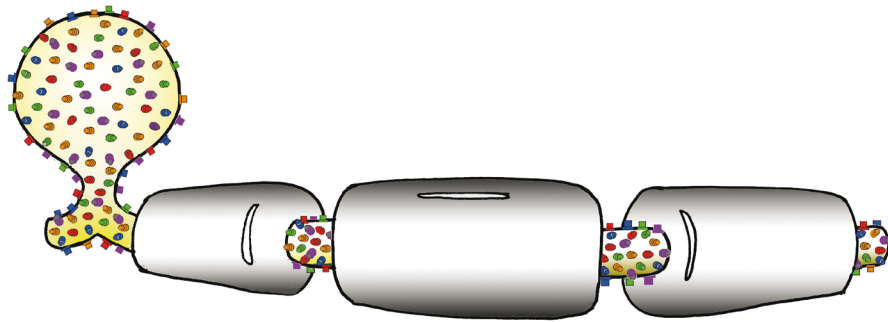
In your last session, the main point was that nerves have electricity in them at all times. With fibromyalgia, the alarm system is extra sensitive. It doesn't take much activity to cause the alarm system to fire off danger messages.



Can you identify a few things in your life that have caused your alarm system to remain extra sensitive? Fill them into the picture below.



In your last session, nerve sensors were discussed. There are many kinds of nerve sensors in the body. Can you identify the sensors in your body that have caused some sensitivity? Mark the appropriate answers below.



TEMPERATURE



STRESS



MOVEMENT



IMMUNITY

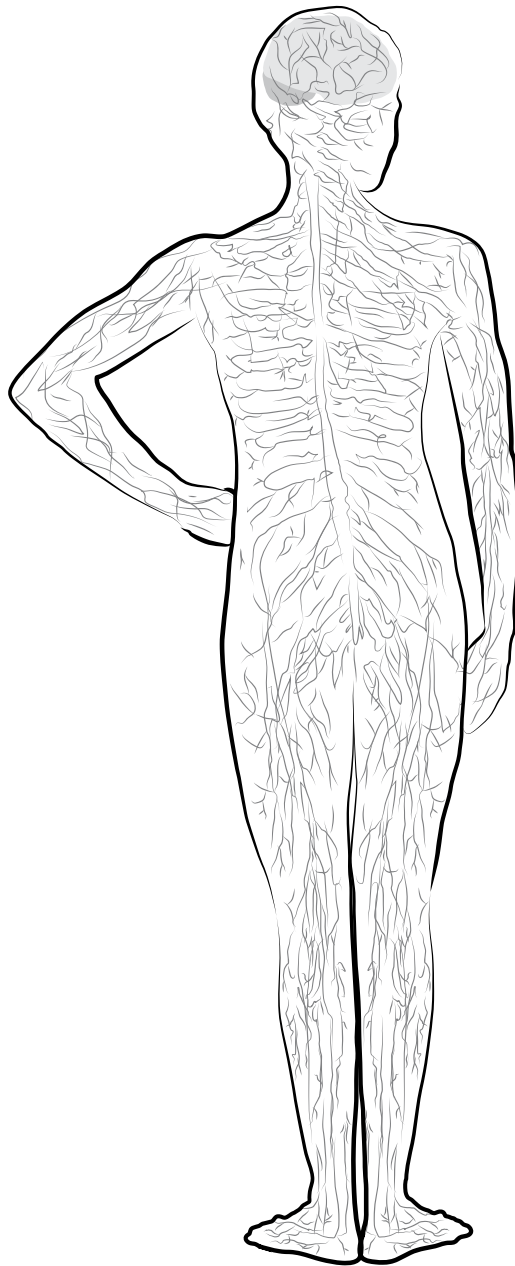


BLOOD FLOW

Since developing fibromyalgia, I have noticed sensitivity and pain with:

- ☐ **Changes in temperature**
- ☐ **Stress and anxiety**
- ☐ **Movement and exercise**
- ☐ **Illness, such as a cold or the flu**
- ☐ **Pressure on my skin**
- ☐ **Staying in one position too long**

In your last session, nosy neighbors were discussed. Below are the nerves in your body. Mark the area where you started originally experiencing pain. Once you have identified this area, draw arrows in the direction of the neighbors who have since become irritated.



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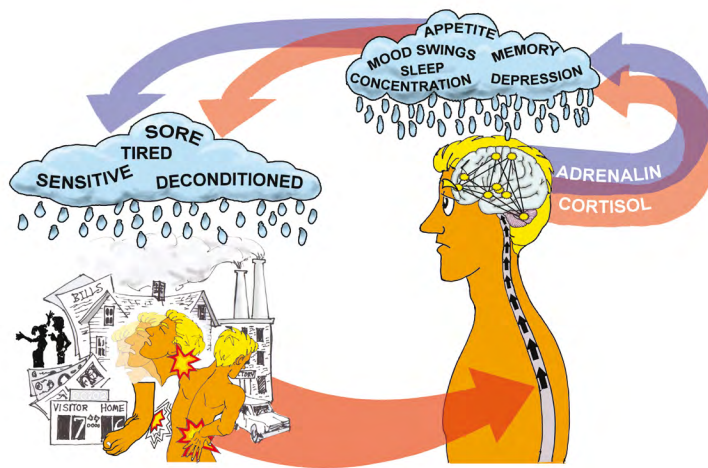
1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

When faced with a threat such as living with pain every day, various systems in your body will protect you. The systems are activated by stress chemicals. Over time, these chemicals will have a significant effect on you. Look at the image below. Check off on the list that follows all the symptoms you experience. This will help you to gain a greater understanding of why you are constantly fatigued.



- ☐ **Depression** – Feeling down
- ☐ **Mood swings** – Going from high to low
- ☐ **Appetite changes** – Food tastes different
- ☐ **Memory changes** – Problems remembering things
- ☐ **Weight gain** – Difficulty losing weight
- ☐ **Focus problems** – Problems concentrating on tasks
- ☐ **Sleep issues** – Difficulty getting to sleep and getting a deep, refreshing sleep
- ☐ **Soreness**
- ☐ **Tiredness**
- ☐ **Sluggishness**
- ☐ **Fatigue**
- ☐ **Sensitivity**
- ☐ **Deconditioned or out of shape**

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4. _____

This whole program and the latest research in treating fibromyalgia are based on you knowing more about your pain.

It's important for you to develop an explanation statement regarding your fibromyalgia. Based on your newfound knowledge, you should see fibromyalgia differently. You need to know your explanation statement. Rehearse it. Then memorize it. The more the brain sees it, hears it and says it, the more the brain and nervous system will calm down.

The explanation statement written below is not specific to you. It's an example. Below it, write your own version and rehearse it. Have it ready when someone asks you about fibromyalgia.

Example:

Fibromyalgia is the process where the body's nervous system, which works like an alarm system, becomes extra-sensitive. This leads to persistent pain—usually in different areas of the body. Stressful events in life or an injury wakes up the alarm system. With all the issues surrounding fibromyalgia, such as pain, treatments, different explanations for pain and the stresses of life, the alarm system remains turned up. Living with this increased sensitivity leads to fatigue, limited exercise and tasks, and less sleep. The treatment for fibromyalgia focuses on strategies to turn the alarm system down.

Write your fibromyalgia explanation statement here:

Aerobic exercise is important. Use this sheet to develop a plan. Most research shows that 90 percent of exercise is setting a plan in place. Many fibromyalgia patients are already working out. In session 7, you'll see that many people overdo exercise. Start fresh and follow the guide.

- **MEASURE YOUR CURRENT RESTING HEART RATE.** Find your pulse on your wrist or neck, and count the beats for 10 seconds. Multiply by six. Your resting heart rate is: _____
Remember that you only need to get your heart rate up to 100-105 beats/minute, so it won't take much to get it there.
- **CHOOSE YOUR EXERCISE.** Make it something easily accessible, such as walking. If walking is not an option, substitute with biking or swimming.
☐ Walking ☐ Biking ☐ Swimming ☐ Other _____
- **CHOOSE THE DAYS OF THE WEEK YOU'LL BE DOING THE EXERCISE.** We suggest five days a week, with two days off. Best to schedule a few days of exercise, a rest day, a few more days of exercise and then a day off. Schedule around your work, daily and family tasks to avoid undue stress.
☐ Monday ☐ Tuesday ☐ Wednesday ☐ Thursday
☐ Friday ☐ Saturday ☐ Sunday
- **PICK A TIME OF DAY YOU'LL DO THE EXERCISE.** The time can be different on different days. Write next to the days the time you will exercise.
- **LET PEOPLE KNOW YOUR PLAN.** You can share this with a spouse, a friend, a work colleague or a family member. Better yet, ask them to join you.
- **START SMALL.** If you have not done much exercise lately, do as little as three to five minutes to get started. Remember, you are very sore and sensitive. Take it slow, but get going. Every two to three days, add a minute. The goal is to reach 20-30 minutes of exercise, five days a week.
- **LOG YOUR PROGRESS.** Write down the day, date, time, duration and something positive that happened in your day. Log your sleep hours as well.

Sleep is important. There are many strategies to follow. Below is a list. Start by choosing three items from the list. Every other day add another one. This will take a little time for your body to get used to, but in the long run it's well worth it.

- ☐ **Set a time to go to bed.**
- ☐ **Quiet the house by turning off the computer and the TV.**
- ☐ **Reduce fluid intake in the evening.**
- ☐ **Reduce alcoholic beverages in the late evening.**
- ☐ **Darken and cool the bedroom.**
- ☐ **Remove kids and pets from your bed.** No bed buddies.
- ☐ **Park your ideas.** Place a notepad and pen next to your bed.
- ☐ **Relax, meditate or read a book before bed.**
- ☐ **Avoid checking e-mails or messages before bed.**
- ☐ **Stay in bed.** If you cannot sleep, close your eyes and relax.
- ☐ **Set a wake time, and stay in bed until then.**
- ☐ **Eliminate naps.** If naps are needed, limit them to power naps of fewer than 20 minutes.
- ☐ **Avoid caffeine in the late afternoons or evenings.**
- ☐ **Exercise during the day.**

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1. _____

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3. _____

4. _____

Pain is complex and will not just shut down. The alarm system, your nerves, will steadily decrease its sensitivity. During this period, you will experience discomfort while performing exercise and day-to-day tasks. This is expected and again, part of being extra sensitive. Movement is essential to your recovery. Develop some phrases or sayings you can have ready when you encounter some soreness. Remember, you are going to “tease” the pain barrier. Below are a few examples. Memorize them and perhaps think of some for yourself.

- Sore but safe.
- Hurt does not equal harm.
- The soreness is from my sensitive nerves.
- Just because I hurt, it doesn't mean something is broken.
- I'm just sensitive, sore and out of shape.

Having no goals is not uncommon in people struggling with constant pain. Having no goals, however, is like a boat without a rudder. Sure, old elaborate goals need to make way for smaller ones, but you need to start somewhere. Below are some categories and examples. Develop a goal in each category. Be specific.

- **EXERCISE:** This could include a percentage of scheduled workouts from your exercise plan that you completed, a certain distance or time, completing a charity walk by a certain date, or losing X number of pounds.
- **SOCIAL:** Think of social activities you haven't done for a while and would love to get back into. This could include going to the mall; family gatherings; having the family, neighbors or friends over for dinner; date night; going to movies; going out to dinner; or meeting someone for coffee.
- **TASKS:** Think of tasks that would add to your quality of life if you could do them regularly. Certainly, no one likes doing laundry, but the satisfaction of being productive and helping the family is meaningful. This can include doing laundry, cleaning floors, vacuuming, cutting the grass, taking care of the flower beds, organizing closets or a garage. Remember, it doesn't have to be done all at once.
- **FUN:** Think of the things you'd really like to do, such as dance again, take a trip, complete a degree or start a business.

In Task 2, you were asked to compile some goals. Write them down below and then create at least four smaller steps below it. For example, a goal might be inviting family over for dinner. The smaller tasks may include the following:

- ☐ **Pick a date and mark it.**
- ☐ **Make a list of people you will invite.**
- ☐ **How will you invite them? Will you make a phone call or send a written invitation?**
- ☐ **Plan the menu.**
- ☐ **Plan the ingredients needed.**
- ☐ **Plan the shopping trip.**
- ☐ **What preparation can be done in advance?** This may include a schedule where ingredients are prepared a day or two in advance. Can the table be set in advance? Prepare one ingredient every two hours so you aren't doing too much and causing yourself to crash later.

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Write your questions here.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Question

	True or false?
1 When part of your body is injured, special pain receptors convey the pain message to your brain.	
2 Pain only occurs when you are injured.	
3 The intensity of pain matches the severity of the injury.	
4 Nerves have to connect a body part to the brain in order for that part to be in pain.	
5 In chronic pain, the central nervous system becomes more sensitive to danger messages from tissues.	
6 The body tells the brain when it is in pain.	
7 The brain can send messages down your spinal cord that can increase the danger messages going up the spinal cord.	
8 Nerves can adapt by increasing their resting level of excitement.	
9 Chronic pain means an injury hasn't healed properly.	
10 The brain decides when you will experience pain.	
11 The pain you feel is the same pain everyone else feels.	
12 Substantial injuries always result in the worst kind of pain.	
13 When you are injured, the environment that you are in will not have an effect on the amount of pain that you experience.	
14 It's possible to have pain and not know about it.	
15 Stress can make a nerve fire and send danger messages.	
16 Your internal pain control system is more powerful than any drug taken by mouth or injection.	
17 The immune system has nothing to do with a pain experience.	
18 Pinched nerves always hurt.	