

Mentally Coping with a Fibromyalgia Diagnosis

by Darrell Franklin, M.S., Associate Therapist



Fibromyalgia. You may have never heard about it, but it is likely that there is someone in your circle who will get this syndrome during your lifetime. Fibromyalgia is a nerve based disorder that causes constant pain, consistent fatigue, hormone and gastrointestinal issues, depression, anxiety, dizziness, sleep, memory and cognitive difficulties.

About 10 million people are currently diagnosed with this disorder. Although 9 out of 10 people diagnosed with fibromyalgia are women, men also get this disorder.

Scientists have been unable to find the cause of fibromyalgia and there is no cure. The current medications only treat symptoms, and they do so pretty ineffectively. Medications that reduce nerve activity seem to help, as well as drugs that target changes that the brain undergoes in response to constant pain and distress. Massage, acupuncture, and

biofeedback have been shown in research to provide mild symptom relief for short periods of time.

Fibromyalgia improves over time for some, but most cases tend to stabilize and last for a lifetime. No one knows why some get better and most do not. For those who continue to have fibromyalgia, the symptoms tend to be present every moment of every day.

It's essential that a person with fibromyalgia make the mental transition from having a healthy and active life to looking healthy but living with debilitating symptoms. This transition allows the individual and their family to understand that life changes significantly and permanently.

The first key to coping is understanding that life must be arranged around fibromyalgia instead of the other way around. Fibromyalgia is a disorder that is made worse every time a part of one's nervous system, called the sympathetic nervous system, has to adjust to stress or environmental changes. When forced to respond to changes, the sympathetic system tends to overreact causing bodily systems to swing out of balance. Reducing the amount of change

that this system must respond to often helps.

The second key to coping with fibromyalgia is to understand that the system that is most affected is the muscular system. The muscles think that they are being hurt because the nerves seem to be sending false information to the brain. The muscles cramp and spasm in response. Mild stretching and movement are the keys to minimizing these symptoms. Balance activity and rest.

The third coping key is to recognize that fibromyalgia changes relationships. The pain and fatigue gets so intense that it becomes more than individuals can process. People tend to withdraw from a painful world as much as is mentally possible. This usually means that they withdraw from people as well because they are part of reality. Reality hurts. They have to disconnect to mentally survive. This is not a rejection of family or friends. It is a temporary escape. When the symptoms subside, they are able to reconnect.

It is essential that family and friends understand the needs of someone with fibromyalgia. It is also essential that partners and children do not think that they have done something wrong. In any

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Tips on Coping with Fibromyalgia

- Accept that life must be arranged around the syndrome and not vice versa.
- Mild stretching and movement are keys to minimizing muscle cramps and spasm.
- Balance activity and rest.
- Recognize that relationships will change for both the person with fibromyalgia and their spouse and children.
- Educate family and friends about the syndrome and encourage them to be understanding.
- Therapy with a mental health professional can help sufferers make the mental transition and life adjustments to improve their circumstances.
- Join a support group. **Fibromites Unite** meets the fourth Saturday of every month at St. Margaret Mercy Hospital in Dyer. For more information about their organization visit www.fibromites.org.

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Our Mission
New Leaf Resources promotes healthy relationships and personal growth through counseling, education, and consultation from a Christian perspective.

Celebrating New Growth at Annual Banquet

Friends and supporters of New Leaf gathered again at the **Center for Visual & Performing Arts** to celebrate how the ministry continues to grow and to raise funds for the Marty Doot Client Assistance Fund.

After a delicious meal by **Trama Catering**, artist, entertainer and speaker **Ben Glenn** gave a very motivational and educational talk about his life with ADHD. Then he amazed the crowd with his artistic talents by creating a chalk drawing in under 20 minutes.

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Speaker and artist Ben Glenn demonstrates his amazing talent of speed scaping at the Banquet.

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Thank you to all who attended and supported New Leaf’s mission. We’re ex-

cited to report that the event raised close to \$24,000. Tax-deductible donations are still being accepted securely on-line at www.newleafresources.org or by mailing your check to:

New Leaf Resources
2325-177th St.
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Illiana Has Fundraiser for New Leaf



(From left) Illiana Christian High School students Brittany Boss, Maggie Durham, Natalie VanderWoude, Kristine Cooper and Kat Witting model the t-shirts created to raise awareness for depression as well as money for the Marty Doot Client Assistance Fund.

Special Gifts

Contributions to New Leaf Resources can be made in memory or in honor of a loved one or friend. Thank you to the following donors:

**In Memory of
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Client Feeling Hopeful After Returning for Therapy

A client recently shared how her experience at New Leaf Resources has given her hope, help and healing. She was a returning client who also sought help for her daughter.

"I returned to New Leaf because I felt I was at the end of my rope emotionally. I was struggling with the side effects of long-term depression and my daughter with

emotional and social difficulties.

Counseling has helped me learn the tools I need to effectively manage the stressors in my life. It has helped to normalize certain life situations, as well as work through the not so normal ones.

I have learned the coping skills for dealing with stress and negative emotions. I've

learned that although I may not be where I want to be, I'm definitely moving forward. Everything is a process and it's not always smooth.

The counselors (at New Leaf) truly care. I always feel "evened-out" and more level-headed after my sessions. I feel hopeful."

**- Melissa, age 34
in therapy for family
dynamics, depression**



"I always feel
"evened-out
and more level
headed after
my sessions. I
feel hopeful."
**Melissa,
a client**

Students Volunteer During Christian Service Day



Jim Kampuis' homeroom class (left) recently volunteered at New Leaf's Lansing office as part of Illiana Christian High School's Christian Service Day.

An Art Teacher at the school, Kampuis designed a colorful and fun mural which the students painted in the Play Therapy Room (below). When asked what they

thought of the newly designed room, some of the young clients reported "it is really cool" and "the best playroom ever."

The high school students also helped with Banquet preparations, stamped and labeled envelopes, cleaned and sanitized the toys for the play therapy room, dusted offices and weeded the landscaping. Check out all the pictures on New Leaf's Facebook page.



Fibromyalgia

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event, relational stress with fibromyalgia increases dramatically. Knowledge and understanding helps families to cope with it all.

Therapy is often helpful for families dealing with fibromyalgia because it is such a big mental adjustment for everyone involved. While there are multiple research studies looking for treatments and cures, the primary thing that helps fibromyalgia sufferers at the current time is to make the mental transition that allows them to make the life adjustments to moderate the symptoms as much as possible. With support and help, an individual may not get well, but life can get better.

Save a tree

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What's "New" at New Leaf Resources

Congratulations to Marriage & Family Therapist and Clinical Supervisor **Norm LeClercq** on his 25 years of serving at New Leaf. Norm helps families cope with addictions, mental illness, and severe family problems, in addition to other relational issues.

New Leaf recently moved into the much larger office space in **Crown Point** to meet the growing demand in Northwest Indiana. Still in the On Broadway Complex, New Leaf's address is now 11035 Broadway, Suite D. Also, therapists are now seeing clients in **Wheatfield**, 165 Robbins Street, inside the Krol Family Medicine practice.

Welcome aboard Family Therapist **Donna Southard**. With a background in individual, family and marital counseling in both community and faith-

based settings, Donna will be working in the Crown Point and Wheatfield offices, as well as with DeMotte Christian School this fall. She also has experience working within the legal system providing therapy to youth and families affected by foster care, adoption and probation. Together with her husband Christopher, she owns Metamorfik Designs in DeMotte. Donna has four children and a new grandchild and enjoys spending time with her family.

Also, welcome to administrative support staffer **Cathy Diaz**. Cathy lives on the East Side with her husband Roberto and their three teenage daughters. Fluent in Spanish, Cathy enjoys spending time with her extended family and is fanatical about recycling. She is returning to school this fall to work on her degree in Early Childhood Development.

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New Leaf Resources is...

A **professional mental health agency** which provides counseling services to individuals, families, couples, children, churches, schools and businesses.

A **ministry** which brings the best possible care to those we serve, striving to reflect God's grace and love to all who seek help.

A **community resource** offering educational services, prevention programs, training, support and coaching.