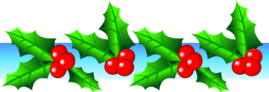
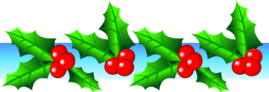
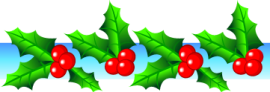
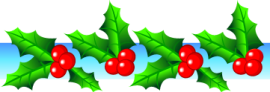
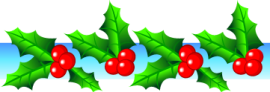
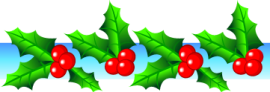
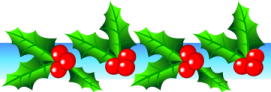
**Potsdam Fibromyalgia Support Group**

**Newsletter**

## November-December, 2013

# Hobbies to Manage Pain

Hobbies provide us with many benefits (see box). People with chronic pain sometimes stop pursuing hobbies for a number of reasons. You might not be physically able to downhill ski, garden or cook like you used to. Or, you might have the physical ability, but no longer have the motivation. Sometimes it takes so much energy to do what you *have* to do that you don’t have energy to do things you *want* to do. And some people, consciously or subconsciously, feel like they don’t deserve to enjoy themselves once they have chronic pain.

But hobbies can be an important part of your pain management program. In fact, people with hobbies take fewer pain medications. Consider doing your hobby just as important as taking a pain pill.

What did you used to enjoy doing? If you no longer participate in that hobby, ask yourself why and think about whether you can return to some of your hobbies and recreations, perhaps slowly or in a modified fashion. Or, perhaps it is time to take up some new hobbies. What is your excuse?

* **Your past hobby is too physically demanding for you now.** Perhaps you used to ride horses, fix cars, take zumba classes, downhill ski. If you are not able to return at the level you used to be, be willing to start out slow. If you are truly unable to do the activity, even in a modified form, maybe you can do something similar: instead of zumba, take a tai chi class that is physical but not so vigorous. Plant raised beds if you cannot weed a regular garden. Figure out what you liked about that activity, and see if you can satisfy that craving in another way. If you used to fix cars, you could build remote control cars – satisfy your mechanical urges without heavy lifting. If you liked the adrenaline surge of downhill skiing, try remote control helicopters.
* **You are not able to stay in one position for long enough**. Perhaps you used to sew or draw or do other crafts. Can you make your work space more comfortable? Maybe lift or tip your sewing machine so you don’t have to bend over it? Would a drafting table allow you to paint but stay in good posture? Could you do it in 15 minute stages? Could you take up a slightly different hobby that is easier – for example, knitting rather than sewing?

***Benefits of a hobby:***

* *Distraction,*
* *Pleasure, fun,*
* *Purpose,*
* *A sense of creativity & accomplishment,*
* *Social contact,*
* *Relaxation, meditation*
* *Exercise,*
* *Mental stimulation*
* *Satisfaction making or doing things for others*
* **You don’t have the hand strength or coordination.** If tools such as scissors or knitting needles makes your hands cramp, try using larger needles or getting electric scissors. If you used to play a musical instrument, see whether there is an adapted version that is less stressful on your hands and arms.
* **You don’t have the mental energy to figures out what to do.** Get a kit! Kits come with all the supplies you need and detailed instructions. Or arrange to have a friend teach you her favorite hobby in exchange for you teaching her yours. Or pick something easy: setting up a fish tank doesn’t require much energy.
* **You can’t afford a hobby.** Perhaps you cannot afford some of your past hobbies, but there are many inexpensive options. Towel-folding (like they do on cruise ships) lets you re-use the same towel over and over. Origami uses scrap paper. Singing is free. Invite friends over for a game of cards. Reading to people in nursing homes requires only time.
* **For whatever reason, your previous hobbies are not practical, now**. Then find new hobbies! Take an art class. Get a book of puzzles – crosswords or Sudoku. Invite friends over and make beaded necklaces, decorate cupcakes, or learn how to fold fancy napkins. If you don’t know how to do what you want: look on the internet; get a book with instructions; ask someone who knows how.
* **You can’t think of something you would like to do**. Check the list, below, for ideas (list adapted from Turk & Winter, *The Pain Survival Guide*). Something must appeal to you!
* **Hobbies**: artwork \* knitting or needlework \* sewing \* photography \* cooking \* woodwork or carpentry \* building models \* repairing motors or clocks \* writing poetry, plays or short stories \* singing or playing a musical instrument \* collecting (e.g., stamps, coins, etc) \* gardening or houseplants \* beading or making jewelry.
* **Social activities**: spend time with children or grandchildren \* write a letter, phone someone, or email someone who needs companionship \* join a club \* go dancing \* play cards with friends \* play board games with your family \* volunteer at a senior center or church \* join a book club.
* **Educational activities**: take a class (online or in person) \* go to a movie or play \* go to a museum, aquarium, art gallery \* go to a sporting event \* learn a foreign language \* read or look up information about a topic that interests you \* read \* teach something to someone else \* tutor a child struggling at school \* do word or number puzzles.
* **Other activities**: go for a drive \* go for a walk \* teach your pet a trick or skill \* go bird-watching \* look for animal tracks in the snow.

Has chronic pain has led you to give up hobbies and recreational activities that were important to you? If so, consider ways to get those or other activities into your life. Hobbies can be an important part of your pain management program.

Helpful websites:

* General tips about hobbies for people with chronic pain - <http://www.healthcentral.com/chronic-pain/c/27148/147689/accessible/>

Lists of hobby ideas:

* <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_hobbies>
* <http://www.notsoboringlife.com/>

# Surviving the Holidays

The holidays can be very difficult for people with chronic pain, for many reasons. Here are some suggestions from [Adrienne Dellwo](http://chronicfatigue.about.com/bio/Adrienne-Dellwo-30128.htm) (available at: <http://chronicfatigue.about.com/od/copingwithfmscfs/ss/holidaysurvival.htm>).

Plan: make a list of everything you would like to do for the holiday if you were superhuman and had a year to prepare.

Prioritize: What is most important to you? Which people are most important to please? You may focus on your children, your spouse, your parents, etc.. But remember that you cannot please everyone – so don’t try to! Think about yourself, as well. If there are certain things about the holidays that make you happy, be sure to include them. For example, if you like to wrap presents with fancy paper and bows, make time for that.

Pacing: Cut down the list. Figure out what you don’t have time or energy to do. Depending on how detailed your initial wish list was, this may be half your list. Just forget about these items – don’t feel guilty about not doing them because you decided (in the prioritize stage) that other things were more important and you couldn’t do everything.

Pacing: Simplify. Figure out if there are easier ways to do things. Buy gifts on-line. Let the store wrap gifts for you. Buy the pies pre-made.

Pacing: Delegate. Let other people help you with? Let dinner be pot-luck. Invite family or friends over to help decorate.

Pacing: Spread things out. Don’t try to do as much as possible until you collapse. Instead, do maybe 2 hours of holiday preparations, then relax. Alternate cooking with writing holiday cards.

Be kind to yourself. Holidays are supposed to be about family and friends; it shouldn’t be a contest to see how much you can get done.

# November/December Potsdam Support Group Meeting:

We will have only one Nov/Dec Potsdam Fibromyalgia Support Group meeting to avoid the holiday rush. The next meeting will be **5 pm, Monday, 12/9/13**. **The topic will be a hobby exchange: bring your favorite hobby or craft to share with others, or join in beading a necklace (beading supplies and guidance will be provided). Or, just come hang out and chat with people who understand!**

The February topic will be “The challenges and rewards of supporting someone with chronic pain.” *We hope to have many spouse, family or friends who are supporters come to this session. Invite your supporter(s) now!* Monday, February 24th.

This newsletter is a joint effort of Clarkson University and Canton-Potsdam Hospital. If you would prefer to receive these newsletters electronically, please send your email address to [lnrussek@clarkson.edu](mailto:lnrussek@clarkson.edu). You can access current and previous Potsdam Fibromyalgia Support Group Newsletters on our web site: [www.people.clarkson.edu/~lnrussek/FMSG](http://www.clarkson.edu/~lnrussek/FMSG).