**Potsdam Fibromyalgia Support Group**

**Newsletter**

## January, 2014

# Setting and Meeting Goals

The new year is often a time when we take stock of our lives and set goals. While we often don’t keep New Years resolutions, it is possible to pick and meet goals if you take a thoughtful and methodical approach. While achieving your goal might or might not actually decrease your pain, your quality of life should improve from having achieved a well-selected goal. Plus, the sense of confidence you gain from succeeding in working towards your goal will help decrease stress and improve emotional well-being. People who set and achieve goals experience less distress as a result of their pain; decreased distress often decreases pain.

***The challenges and rewards of***

***being a supporter***

***for someone with fibro* –**

February 24th (6:30 pm) meeting topic.

**Bring your supporter(s)!**

First you have to pick an appropriate goal. It should be something important to *you* and not selected by someone else. It should be something that, if achieved, you will feel good about. Will cleaning the house really make *you* feel better? If so, that could be your goal; however, don’t pick it because someone else wants you to clean the house. Your goal can be about something fun – it doesn’t have to be something you consider ‘work’. For example, you could decide you want to get out of the house and have lunch with a friend once a week, or paint for 3 hours a week.

It should be a goal looking into the future, not the past; don’t say “I want things to be like they used to be” because that might not be possible. In general, it is better to pick behavioral goals – i.e., activities or behaviors. These are easier to modify than thoughts or feelings. If you want to be less stressed, pick an activity that will help you get less stressed, such as meditation or deep breathing. The same is true of pain; rather than setting a goal of “less pain,” set a goal of exercising 20 minutes/day, because research shows that generally decreases pain.

The **SMARTER** acronym is a good way to set goals. Goals should be:

* **Specific**: well defined rather than vague. If you want to exercise more, say what type of exercise (e.g., walking) and how much.
* **Measurable**: how will you measure your goal to know whether you are making progress and have, eventually achieved it? “I want to be less stressed” is too vague, but “I will do deep breathing for relaxation 10 minutes/day” is good.
* **Achievable**: It needs to be something that you really could accomplish in a reasonable amount of time. And it needs to be something within your own control.
* **Relevant**: The goal needs to be meaningful to you, something you care about.
* **Time-limited**: You need to identify a time-frame for your goal. You may also want to create landmarks for working towards your goal. For example, if you want to be walking 20 minutes/day in 1 month, you might aim for 5 minutes after 1 week, 10 minutes at week 2, etc..
* **Evaluated**: You need to regularly reflect on your progress (or lack of progress). If you are progressing as planned reward yourself; if you are not progressing as planned, identify obstacles that prevent you from meeting your goal.
* **Rewarded**: Reward yourself with something meaningful when you meet your goal. For example, once you are walking 20 minutes/day, treat yourself to a professional massage or go out to dinner. You are more likely to meet goals (hence to set more) if you reward yourself for achieving them.

Once you have identified an appropriate goal, you need to make detailed plans. You might need to break down the goal into component parts. For example, if you want to go to lunch with a friend once a week, you might first list what is involved in meeting that goal:

* I’ll have to drive at least 10 minutes. I can work towards that by just getting in and out of the car, then driving around the block, then driving further until I can drive 10 minutes without getting sore.
* C:\Users\Leslie Russek\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary Internet Files\Content.IE5\2YO4VPA8\MC900056143[1].wmfI have to be able to sit in the restaurant. I could bring my back pillow so I am more comfortable sitting.
* Overcome the inertia to call Joan and ask her to lunch. She will understand if I don’t feel well and we have to reschedule.
* I’ll schedule 30 minutes to rest and relax in the morning before our lunch, so I have enough energy to enjoy it.

The Arthritis Self-Management web site has a particularly good module on goal setting for people with chronic pain. The following steps and example are adapted from their web site: <http://www.arthritisselfmanagement.com/condition/osteoarthritis/setting-goals-for-pain-management>.

**Identify your goal**: “By the end of 3 months, I will be walking 20 minutes, 4 days a week.”

**Activities for meeting the goal:** Walking, preferably outside.

**Resources needed for meeting the goal:**

* Walking shoes that provide good support
* Loose, comfortable clothing
* Calendar for keeping progress notes
* A watch for keeping time
* A “coach” who will help to keep me accountable (or a friend to walk with)
* An iPod so I can listen to music or a book on tape

**Possible barriers or obstacles to meeting the goal:**

* Bad weather may prevent me from walking outside.
* Fatigue might make it hard to get started.
* Pain may make me not want to walk.
* I may get bored.

**Ways to overcome the obstacles:**

* When the weather is not good for walking, I will walk at the shopping mall or the local college track.
* If I feel tired, I will do some warm-up exercises, like swinging my arms or pumping my ankles. Or I will play energizing music on my iPod.
* If I hurt, I will do some stretches first, so tight muscles don’t cause me pain.
* To keep myself from getting bored, I will listen to a book on tape or walk with a friend I can talk with.

**Track your progress, what you accomplished, how you felt, any barriers:** (You may want to rate progress toward daily target:0 for meeting your daily target, +2 for significantly exceeding your target, -2 for not at all achieving your target.)

* I walked 6 minutes around the block. Met target: 0
* I was tired at the beginning, but felt better by the end.
* The sidewalk was slippery and I was afraid of falling; I should get some of those YakTrax to put on my boots so I don’t slip.
* I wasn’t sore later in the day, like I was last week. That’s an improvement!
* My book on tape is really good – the time just flew by. I walked 18 minutes before I even looked at the time! Exceeded target: +1!
* Walked 4 minutes and right hip hurt too much to continue. Stopped and did my stretches. -1.

Following these guidelines make it more likely you will set appropriate goals and reach those goals. The satisfaction and confidence gained from setting and achieving goals can significantly improve your quality of life, which can decrease your pain or make your pain less distressing to you. Good luck!

# January Support Group Meeting:

The next meeting will be **5 pm, Monday, 1/27/14**. **This will be an open discussion: “How to set and meet goals.”**

Remember: the February topic will be **“The challenges and rewards of supporting someone with fibromyalgia.”** *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).