



Stress Management Tools.

In this meeting we will practice some of the many stress management techniques to help support our minds and bodies while living with these complex chronic illness.

Stress management is a central challenge when you live with ME/CFS/FM.

Stress plays a big role in these conditions:

1. In the lead-up; Dr Vallings, says 85% PWCs have a major crisis/stressful event in the leadup to becoming ill. (Rotorua 6.5.16)
2. Stress of Illness; uncertain prognosis; fear about the future – financial worries, skepticism from others, etc.
3. The stress response becomes more easily triggered due to the illnesses (maladaptive); and this in turn exacerbates symptoms; vicious cycle, e.g. (Alex Howard (*I feel pain, what is it, could it mean this or this, am I crashing, etc new stressed thinking pattern*))

Even moderate amounts of stress can greatly exacerbate symptoms.

Today much of our stress comes from situations that are far from life-threatening, but the fight-or-flight response kicks in just the same:

- Cascade of stress hormones
- Rapid heartbeat
- Blood diverted from non-urgent places, e.g. digestion, to muscles

Fight-or-flight reaction occurs almost instantaneously – to anything that threatens our sense of wellbeing.

Finding techniques which can switch you from the fight or flight response/ stressed state/ Sympathetic Nervous System(SNS), can help to bring you back to a healing state/ Parasympathetic Nervous System(PNS) dominance which relaxes and calms the body which in turn reduces symptoms.

Management tools: Please only do what you can manage, no pushing please.

Just Breathe – Delivered by Ebony Whitaker / Elizabeth

Just follow the breathe, in and out. Breath into your belly or just bring awareness to the breath. This is a direct short circuit to the PNS, as soon as you start to breath slowly and calmly.

Here are some videos on the topic with how too and why:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F28MGLpP90>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1sgb2cUqFiY>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Ua9bOsZTYg>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hFcQpNr_KA4

Mindfulness

Jon Kabat-Zinn mindfulness teacher follow the links for more info;

What is Mindfulness: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xoLQ3qkh0w0>

Guided mindfulness: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8HYLyUJZKno>

Headspace: <https://www.youtube.com/user/Getsomeheadspace>

Focused Object: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lcY3xfE4iBM>

Guided imagery: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lqSbF_xH9LU

Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) / Tapping - Uses acupressure points on the body which are tapped gently while speaking about an issue or problem which is upsetting or causing you stress.

9 locations for tapping. Set up statement *"Even though I feel this _____ I love and accept myself"* three times on hand point, then tap the rest of the points while venting our feelings and thoughts around this issue, just let them out and do what feels right.

Link to a how to EFT/Tapping video.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pAcIBdj20ZU>

Restorative Movement

Qigong – is like Tai Chi but it is for healing the Qi or energy in the body and creating balance. When I started I did about 7 mins then rested for 10 mins then did some more, just try to do what your body can manage and no more, please pace carefully.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nmmNWj9YtAw>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LKX9oRQ17kQ>

Tai Chi – is very popular and can be done seated or standing. Here are a few short or seated video's. Again listen to your body.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cEOS2zoyQw4>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T2SscwGK4oE&t=345s>

Yoga – has been used for many years to help people move gently, increase breath, and flexibility. Again it's about not doing too much and listening to your body. Some research has shown that overstretching can cause more PEM symptoms for PW ME/CFS/FM.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fXwJziKfbC4>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kFhG-ZzLNN4>

Grounding – this is pretty simple, it is about being mentally and physically present in the space that you are in. Mindfulness, qigong, tai chi, yoga cover this as does walking in the garden, on the beach with bare feet and being in nature. So go out and get grounded, enjoy the leaves, the smells, the sounds of our lovely environment.

A few videos explaining the idea.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ao4xdDK9iE>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ns8c9bz3BAU>