

ME/CFS Diary 2 — Energy Savings Passbook

This diary is designed to help you break the sorts of lifestyle habits that you may unconsciously practice when you are well, but that could worsen your myalgic encephalomyelitis/chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS) symptoms or delay your recovery during a flare-up. The adoption of new, healthier behaviors that promote your recovery from ME/CFS and its symptoms can be life altering.

In order to change unconscious habits that do not serve you well, it is important to (1) become mindful of healthy habits, and (2) make a conscious effort to continue to practice them until more appropriate behaviors become second nature to you.

To form better habits that replace less healthy ones, please practice the following:

1. Eat your meals slowly and savor them.
2. When you go for a walk, stroll at a comfortable pace and relax your mind.
3. During activity, take a break before, not after, you begin to feel tired. If you are constantly tired, rest before your fatigue worsens or your concentration is impaired.
4. When laying down or resting, if your mind is “idling”, that is, you are ruminating on anxious thoughts and are struggling to manage them, recognize it and slow down your thinking.
5. Calm your mind so that you can objectively assess feelings rather than react to them.
6. Breathe gently and regularly.

Practice the above behaviors morning, noon, and night.

- Award yourself one point each time you have successfully chosen to repeat the new healthier habit.
- If you do an activity satisfactorily but then experience a crash or post-exertional malaise (PEM), give yourself -5 points, record it, and try not to repeat it.

The practice of savoring food helps improve parasympathetic nervous system function and increases interoceptive awareness—your voice from within—that lets you know *"I'm tired, I need to rest, I've overdone it."* The practice of managing feelings and regulating breathing helps reduce pent-up emotions and idling—ruminations of negative thoughts—that can accompany various physical symptoms; it also helps lessen cognitive and emotional fatigue. Habitually slowing down to relax our minds and bodies is key to minimizing physical, cognitive and emotional fatigue, and may enable the cause of PEM to be identified. Always take effective breaks during your activities and routinely aim to live life at a pace that does not cause a physical or mental crash or PEM.

In the ‘Energy Savings Passbook,’ keep your focus on writing down what you have noticed, discovered, and/or changed through practicing healthier habits, rather than dwelling on details of the symptoms that trouble you.

M=Morning · N=Noon · E=Evening Month: Day:		Below: write what you noticed, what you tried to do, and what you found difficult.	
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Today's energy savings (Points)			
Month: Day:			
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Today's energy savings (2 Points)			

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Month: Day:	
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<p>Today's energy savings (Points)</p>	

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Examples of Impressions and Realizations:

I noticed that some of the things I thought were okay cause crashes and post-exertional malaise.

I found it much easier to rest before getting tired. I now know when to rest.

I am now able to prioritize what needs to be done on a daily basis.

I can now eat and think more slowly, which I could not do at first. Then, my mind was no longer naturally occupied with anxious thoughts, and I did not think about them as much.

Even when I feel anxious, I am able to think in an organized manner. I don't feel dizzy anymore. My brain fog has cleared up.

Words started to come to my mind.

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<p>Today's energy savings (Points)</p>	

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<p>Today's energy savings (Points)</p>	

Examples of Impressions and Realizations:

Have you made room in your mind to relax and be peaceful? Why have you not been able to do this before? Please discuss this with your doctor.

If you are worried that painful memories may come to mind, please work with your doctor to resolve them.

For those who have made reasonably good improvements, this might be a time when you let your guard down and inadvertently overdo it, thinking "*this much will be fine,*" which could lead to an incident.

Be on your guard, don't let your guard down! Again, make sure you are in tune with your body.

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Today's energy savings (Points)	
Month: Day:	
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Today's energy savings (Points)	

Month: Day:	
<p>(1) Savor the meal M () · N () · E ()</p> <p>(2) Take a slow, leisurely walk M () · N () · E ()</p> <p>(3) Take a break before getting tired M () · N () · E ()</p> <p>(4) Reduce idling M () · N () · E ()</p> <p>(5) Regulate mood M () · N () · E ()</p> <p>(6) Regulate breathing M () · N () · E ()</p> <p>(7) I crashed after the activity, even though I thought I was fine.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Yes () · No ()</p> <p>Write the details in the box on the right.</p>	
Today's energy savings (Points)	

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Today's energy savings (Points)	

Examples of Impressions and Realizations:

When I finish one thing, I take a breath. This became second nature to me.

M=Morning · N=Noon · E=Evening

Month: Day:

Below: write what you noticed, what you tried to do, and what you found difficult.

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- (6) Regulate breathing M () · N () · E ()
- (7) I crashed after the activity, even though I thought I was fine.
Yes () · No ()

Week 4-2

Write the details in the box on the right.

Today's energy savings (Points)

Month: Day:

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- (6) Regulate breathing M () · N () · E ()
- (7) I crashed after the activity, even though I thought I was fine.
Yes () · No ()

Write the details in the box on the right.

Today's energy savings (Points)

Month: Day:

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Yes () · No ()

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Today's energy savings (Points)

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Yes () · No ()

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Today's energy savings (Points)

Reflection Sheet

Describe if there is anything that you have changed, started, or stopped doing since you began practicing healthier habits in terms of how you cope or think when you are tired.

(1) Describe what you did, the results, and your thoughts at that time.

Former mindset	Changes and planned approaches that have been successful
<p>Example 1:</p> <p>What I did: <i>When my fatigue level was a 7, on a scale of 1 to 10, I talked with a friend for 2 hours.</i></p> <p>What happened: <i>The next day, I couldn't get out of bed.</i></p> <p>My thoughts at the time: <i>I did it unknowingly.</i></p>	<p>Example 1:</p> <p><i>I did housework for 30 minutes when my fatigue level was a 7 on a scale of 1 to 10.</i></p> <p><i>I managed to do my housework for 30 min.</i></p> <p><i>From now on, I thought I could do my housework within 30 minutes.</i></p>
<p>Example 2:</p> <p>What I did: <i>When my fatigue level was a 3 on a scale of 1 to 10, I did the laundry.</i></p> <p>What happened: <i>Afterwards I felt sick.</i></p> <p>My thoughts at the time: <i>Since I was the only one at home, I had to do it when I was feeling relatively well.</i></p>	<p>Example 2:</p> <p><i>When my fatigue was at level 3 on a scale of 1 to 10, I noticed I was fine if I took a break before I got tired.</i></p>

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(2) How were you able to make such a change?

(3) Describe how you felt after working on the tasks, such as eating slowly while savoring your meals, walking slowly while enjoying the scenery, thinking slowly and speaking slowly.

Example: *Before working on the tasks, I was..... and after working on them, I.....*

(4) Are you now able to recognize the signs of brain fatigue?

(5) Have you become better at controlling your idling? If so, what did you do to improve it?

(6) Have you been successful at regulating your mood? What was most helpful for you?

(7) Describe what you still find difficult to do.