

Fun v Chores!

If you prioritise chores over fun, it's time to think again. We take a look at why scheduling in some 'ME' time is vital to well-being!

Quality of life means different things to different people and will depend on your individual values, experiences, age, the amount and quality of social interaction you have, health and a number

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of other issues that determine how you, as a person, would ideally like to live your life.

For most of us, health, social contact, friends, work satisfaction, leisure time and family are the main issues that affect our overall enjoyment of life and well-being. Money issues and personal finance feature largely for most, too, in that life becomes easier when money issues aren't a day to day struggle to stay afloat.

Poor health and isolation can significantly decrease your quality of life. Pain and

long-term illness can affect your ability to enjoy life and this is not solely down to the sensation of pain.

You'll find yourself re-evaluating your time and available energy and re-allocating them. Unfortunately most allocate a greater priority to life's 'chores'; cleaning, ironing, vacuuming, supermarket trips, to name but a few. These more often than not take precedence over the activities that bring a greater sense of well-being, but why is that?

Are you guilty?

Guilt is often the main culprit. Guilt that you're letting the family down, that you may have become a burden, or that the house is untidy. This guilt increases if you expend some of your short supply of available energy doing something just for the sheer enjoyment of it. Spending time just for you – that well talked about 'ME' time!

As a result, life becomes a series of chores, quality of life is significantly eroded

and enjoyment ceases. This can lead to bitterness and anger against the illness and against your family and friends for being fit and healthy. All of which can result in cycles of stress, depression and increased pain, which decreases your energy levels and motivation even further. As a result the pain you experience will increase too.

Let's look at the issue from a different, more important perspective. Let's look at your well-being and ask yourself what's more important in life. 'My well-

Start by being your own best friend. Ask yourself what she would say to you? Then write yourself another list!

being or a tidy house?' or 'Would my family and friends prefer to see me happier or have perfectly ironed clothes?' Ask yourself what kind of 'to do' list would you write then? A good way

to start is to be your own best friend – what would she say to you? So let's get another list written prioritising the activities that will improve your quality of life and your relationships with family and friends.

Hobbies, friends, keeping your mind active and social contact should be high on your list. It may be that you'll

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Switch off that 'If only' little voice and make a list of alternatives for today!

need to adapt these to your current abilities. If there are activities you previously enjoyed, but are no longer able to do, don't fret over these. The only thing fretting changes is your ability to enjoy life. There's also a good chance that it will increase the pain you feel too. It will certainly do nothing to improve your ability to remaster those old activities.

So, switch off that 'If only' little voice and make a list of alternatives for today.

Life's not a chore

Make time every day to do your knitting and stitching. Schedule it in as you would an important, unmoveable date in your diary. The beauty of knitting and stitching is that a small portable project can be done by most people in most situations. They give you the opportunity of spending some relaxing 'ME' time, wherever you are.

If you're unable to get out and about, maintain your social contacts by asking friends to you. Again you may have to 'pace' this by taking things one step at a time. Explain to your friends and family how you feel and how important this is to your general well-being. It's useful to explain to them that on some days your pain may make you irritable or short tempered, but explain to them in advance that it's the

pain doing this and it's nothing personal.

As for 'chores' put them at the end of your list and find other ways of tackling them. Enlist the help of family for the vacuuming and cleaning. Hang clothes as soon as they're out of the washing machine and invest in easy care products to cut down on ironing. Doing your shopping online is a great time saver and it will save you money as you won't get tempted by things not on your list. Better still they'll carry it into the house for you!

As for cooking, double up the portion size every time you make a meal and put half in the freezer for next week. Build up a stock of meals this way. You'll find them especially useful on 'bad' days. I call them flare up freezer meals!

Time to enjoy!

Gradually you'll create more free time to enjoy and your attitude to life will be more positive as a result.

4 step action plan

- Re-evaluate your priorities. Make a list and put enjoyment at the top, with 'chores' at the bottom.
- Plan activities to keep your mind busy. Occupied people feel less pain and depression.
- Pace your activities to gradually build up stamina.
- Learn to say 'No'. Make time for your needs and desires too.