

What has Dr. Shook Been Reading?

*Fibromyalgia: Simple Relief through Movement.*

By Stacie L. Bigelow, M.A.

Wiley publishers (2000)

You are told you have fibromyalgia, a condition of muscle and connective tissue pain. Fibromyalgia's meaning, in Latin, is literally "a condition of muscle and connective tissue pain." It is a diagnosis of exclusion, meaning that no physical or chemical reason can be found for feeling as if a truck has hit you. It can be painful as well as exhausting, time consuming and expensive.

As with other painful musculoskeletal conditions, exercise is a standard recommendation; yet, exercise can lead to nasty fibromyalgia flare-ups, which can in turn lead one to consider minimizing activity. Trouble is, a sedentary life tends to increase muscle pain and leads to a plethora of other health problems (heart disease, diabetes, obesity ... ) none of which are easy on the muscles and connective tissue of the body.

How perplexing

*Fibromyalgia: Simple Relief through Movement* is by no means a comprehensive guide for living with fibromyalgia. However it is a guide for incorporating movement into a body that is resistant to movement, and it's written specifically for people living with fibromyalgia.

Drawing upon experience with her own fibromyalgia as well as her work in health education, research and counseling, Stacie Bigelow encourages the reader to interpret pain less as an alarm and more as the body's request for a change: A change of position, a change of stress level, a change of toxins or a change of mattress. She explains how a person with fibromyalgia apparently has a post-exercise muscle recovery time different from that of a physically fit and non-fibromyalgic individual. As a result, most standard health club classes and exercise videos are an inappropriate place for the majority of fibromyalgia sufferers to begin. The reader is instead asked to develop his or her own unique fitness plan.

First and most important to this plan is restorative sleep. Next is movement within day-to-day life.

After proper sleep and sufficient daily movement are established the next step is to begin incorporating modest amounts of low impact aerobic exercise and stretching. At all times the reader is reminded of the importance of listening to their body's signals, the consequences of inactivity, and the importance of finding balance between activity and rest.

Also covered in the book are strategies for handling the inevitable flare up, suggestions for reducing stress, a brief discussion of alternative medicinal therapies and, for people wanting guidance on incorporating change in their lives, Stacie briefly discusses the Transtheoretical Model of Behavior Change.

Stacie Bigelow expresses a bit of tough love when she states flatly that if, while knowing the consequences and having the ability to make change, a person continues live a sedentary life then they must understand that they have made a choice. That, yes indeed, it is possible to let your body fall into such a state of unhealthy immobility that there is little left to do but live with the consequences.

*Fibromyalgia: Simple Relief through Movement*, is an excellent guide to incorporating movement and physical activity into an otherwise sedentary life.

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