

## **Today is a good day!**

By: Samantha Holmes

Today is a good day. I wake up ready—not too tired, not too sore yet. I've been slacking lately, so I start strong: laundry, dishes, vacuuming. It's only noon. Still plenty of time. I decide to pick up groceries for dinner. My partner has been cooking a lot lately; it's my turn. At the store, my feet start hurting. What else did I need? Never mind, I have to hurry. It's nearly 2 pm, and I still need to run a few more errands. A mild headache creeps in. Just keep going, I tell myself.

I get home; the headache is worse. I should exercise tonight, I won't feel like it tomorrow after work. After exercising, I feel accomplished, but now my headache's pounding. Washing my hair hurts my arms, and I realize I'm exhausted. Dinner suddenly feels overwhelming. I settle for a sandwich, apologizing to my understanding partner.

I should walk the dogs tonight; it's been days. But now my head is throbbing and neck aching. Just a quick walk, I tell myself. Back home by 8 pm. My partner suggests watching a show. "Just one," I say. It ends, and now it's 10 pm. I'm too comfy to move. After doom-scrolling until 12:30 am, I drag myself to bed. Lying down with ice packs and a heating pad offers some relief. My neck aches, and meds aren't helping. By 2 am, I refresh my now-warmed ice packs and stretch. Sleep finally comes around 3 am. The 8 am alarm rings. I regret yesterday's enthusiasm. Coffee will fix this, right? At work, I assure coworkers it's just another headache and push through, shifting my focus away from pain. By day's end, my neck feels unbearable. I tell my partner I'll rest for just an hour, but hours slip by, and I accomplish nothing. Eventually, I care for myself briefly, then back to bed, at least at a reasonable hour tonight. Still, sleep eludes me as I scroll my phone and manage pain.

The next day feels better. I go to work, walk the dogs, make a simple dinner, and plan to use my upcoming day off well. But when it arrives, I'm too exhausted. Despite sleeping 10 hours, I stay in bed until afternoon, then migrate to the couch, guilt rising as I "waste" another day. Tomorrow, I'll do better.

And the cycle repeats.

Living with chronic illness and pain is challenging. I understand "pacing" and preach it to others: "Don't overdo it on good days." But it's easier said than done. I'm lucky my partner is supportive, but I know it's tough for him. Pain often leaves me irritable. Friends empathize, but unless you live it, it's hard to fully understand. I'm young, seemingly healthy. I push myself, avoid complaining, and even feel embarrassed using my accessibility permit, fearing confrontation. Most days, I just "trudge through."

Yet, it's not all bad. On good days, gratitude fills me. I recognize others struggle even more, and it motivates me. Finding balance is a constant battle, sometimes I succeed, sometimes I don't—but I keep trying.

If you're reading this, maybe you relate. You're not alone, and I'm proud of you for trying. I hope sharing my story helps validate some of your experiences. I'd love to hear your thoughts or what you'd like discussed next.

— Samantha

**Bio:** Samantha Holmes is a Registered Nurse, Researcher, and person living with Fibromyalgia. She hopes sharing her experiences offers solace to others. Samantha is 30 and lives in Winnipeg, Manitoba.