Parenting With Chronic Pain

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Managing Chronic Pain and Parenting

Talking with your child about special topics (like your condition) is important. You can't hide them from your problems, and avoiding the subject would make him wonder and suspect the wrong things - like blaming himself for your symptoms, or thinking of the worst case scenario.

Starting the conversation

1. It will likely take more than one discussion, and you will have to adapt the conversation to his level of understanding. If your child is young you may just say that you feel tired and your body is achy. As the child grows, he can be told the name of your condition (i.e. fibromyalgia, arthritis) and explain that you feel pain at times, and you need more rest and quiet time.
2. As a general rule, keep the conversation simple and honest. In the same time, stay positive and re-assure him you see your doctor, and you use certain pills or therapies to get the symptoms managed. Also make sure he understands your condition is not contagious, so your child will not worry he may develop similar symptoms (as he knows it happens with colds and flu)
3. Listen to your child. Ask him if he is upset, or has any concerns about you having pain. Ask him for help. Offer alternative options- for example, let him help you prepare the lunch bag in the morning, or ask a family friend to take him to the baseball or help with homework. Show him you find solutions.

Other considerations

1. **Plan and organize**. Pain may come and go without warnings. Always have a plan B, and make your schedule in advance as much as possible. If your child has a birthday party, shop in advance and have plenty of rest the days before the event,
2. **Pre-medicate if necessary**. Ask your doctor if you can use some extra painkillers before an event. If you use multivitamins regularly, you may need some extra,too. Stress depletes your body from some nutrients (i.e. B, C vitamins), and you may require more while under stress. Correcting vitamin D deficiency can improve pain as well, according to studies
3. **Keep a diary**. What makes your pain worse and what makes it better? Find the connection between pains and your day to day activities, emotions, weather changes, etc. Avoid the triggers and focus on those activities that decrease your pain levels
4. **Adopt a healthy life style**. You may feel a bit sore after a workout, but exercising regularly has true pain killer qualities- it improves the blood flow to the muscles and your body, gives you more energy, you'll sleep better at night and will boost your mood . If you have severe pain, you may need to focus more on rest, however, try slowly to add some stretching exercises, yoga or tai chi, as you feel better. Progressively, you can add some walking, swimming and jogging.
5. **"Can you please?... Thank you"**. Don't be afraid to ask for help. You hear often this advice, but do you actually use it? Whether is your spouse, a family friend or another parent, do ask for help and show them you appreciate their help. They will love to do it again and again.