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Energy Saving Tips for YPWC Students

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You can be successful in school with a little bit of planning and some minor accommodations. Understanding what type of learner you are and the types of energy that you use can help you to use your energy wisely so that you can make it through the day.

Types of Energy

There are many different types of energy. Learning to identify what type of energy is used during your day can help you choose what activities will be the least draining.

- **Physical energy:** Physical energy includes sitting up in a classroom standing for extended periods of time, walking, driving or just moving your body.
- **Mental energy:** Mental energy involves thinking, listening and processing thoughts and ideas. Reading this article requires you to read (and hopefully comprehend) what I am writing. This makes it primarily a cognitive or mental activity. Homework and listening to professors/teachers also falls into this category.
- **Social energy:** Social settings require yet another type of energy. This is the energy used when "hanging out" with friends, talking to people at school and going to a football or volleyball game.
- **Emotional/Spiritual energy:** The last type of energy I have grouped together as emotional/spiritual. Attending church or a youth group uses spiritual energy, while family relationships, friendships and dealing with CFIDS on a day-to-day basis use emotional energy.

Depending on your class schedule, you can classify the energy you use during your school activities as physical, mental, social or emotional/spiritual. Doing this can help you to make good energy choices. Each type of energy can be exhausting on its own, but when they are combined they become more tiring.

Use Your Energy Wisely

A. Plan rest breaks. If you have to stay at school or be in class for more than an hour, talk to the teacher about taking rest breaks. Try to lie down for these rest periods. You may be able to rest in the school nurse's office. Try to rest whether you feel like it or not.

B. Talk to your teachers about your limitations. Use a tape recorder to tape classes. Find another student who is willing to share notes and help you with homework.

C. Plan your classes to correspond with your best time of day. If you feel better in the afternoons, schedule afternoon classes. If your best time is morning, schedule morning classes. (Either way, make sure to take breaks!)

D. Use energy-saving strategies. If you are in college, try to plan your classes in the same location or building on campus. Get a handicapped parking placard and park close to the classroom.

Avoid three-hour classes if at all possible. Do not take classes for three or four consecutive hours. Schedule a one-hour class and make sure you have time to rest before your next class. If you don't live close to the campus, resting in the car is an option. The college may even be able to provide you a spare dorm room or couch for you to rest on before your next class. If you don't ask you will never know.

E. Take healthy snacks with you. Fruit, yogurt, bagels, skim/1% milk, juice and dried fruit make excellent snacks. Small frequent snacks help to maintain an energy balance. If you start to feel tired have a healthy snack.

F. Plan study time and pace yourself. Find a quiet place where you can study while reclining or lying down using a lap pillow/desk. For every 20 minutes that you study, take at least a 10-minute rest break. Plan to study when you are most alert. When reading, use a plain index card under the line of text you are reading. This will help you focus on what you are reading.

If you are overwhelmed by multiple subjects, do them one at a time. For example, do your math homework by breaking your study time into little pieces and pacing yourself. Spend 20 minutes on the math assignment and then put it away to take a rest break and have a snack. Finish the math and move on to another subject. You will see yourself succeeding a little bit at a time, but if you make studying this way a habit, you will find that you can get more accomplished throughout the day and week.

G. Know your limitations and respect them. If you are invited to a party, know that you will be using physical, social and emotional energy. This is a "triple energy threat" situation. If there is a large group of people, you may have to use mental energy to focus on one conversation while a number of other conversations are going on around you. This makes going to the party the ultimate "quadruple energy threat." Plan to rest before and after the party. Know that this situation will wear you out and plan for it. If you don't feel up to using all this energy, consider saying "no thanks" to the invitation.

Alcohol, smoking and/or recreational drug use may be tempting, but can have serious side effects when combined with medications you may be taking. Alcohol is a depressant and will make you feel even more sleepy than you already are. Smoking will substantially reduce your body's ability to transport oxygen, which means that you are likely to have less energy because oxygen is an energy source.

The bottom line is that using drugs will certainly not make you feel better and, at worst, may cause serious medical complications. Take care of your body. It is the only one you have.

Learning Styles

There are three different learning styles: visual, auditory and kinesthetic. Visual learners learn best by seeing, auditory by hearing, and kinesthetic by doing. Most people fit best into one category, but you will learn more quickly if you combine all three styles.

If you are an auditory learner, ask if you can get your textbooks on tape. You may also consider pairing up with a blind student and trading services. You can read the book out loud and the other student can dictate a paper that you can type.

When I set up an exercise program for persons with CFIDS (PWCs), I incorporate all three learning methods to help them remember. I *tell* my client what they need to do to exercise successfully (auditory). I also have pictures and exercise guidelines written out so that they can take them home and see the program even if they cannot remember everything I said (visual). I also demonstrate an exercise (visual) and have the PWC *model* what I have just shown them (kinesthetic). It is not difficult to involve all three learning styles, but it may take a little creativity.

In Conclusion

For many PWCs, going to school poses numerous challenges. Most of these difficulties can be overcome by using good study skills and making some modifications to your daily routine. Learning to balance and maintain your energy level can help you to make it through your school day with enough energy left over for you to do some of the things that you want to do.

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