

CHRONIC PAIN · LIMITATIONS · UNCATEGORIZED

## *The danger (and necessity) of saying, "I'm fine."*

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Every single person on the planet knows that when someone asks you how you're doing you're supposed to say "oh, I'm fine." We are taught that when someone asks that question it's simply a nicety. They really don't want to know the truth, and quite frankly, they don't even care. They have their own problems to deal with, why would they need yours?

Especially when you're living with a chronic illness, it becomes easy to feel like a burden. We always have a problem: this hurts, that hurts, you have this medical test, and that medical test. I often find myself asking, "geez Madi, can't you ever just be fine?" But no, I can't just be fine because having a chronic illness is a full time job. And guess what: I can't quit.

No matter how much pain they may in, many people with pain still smile and continue to insist that they're fine. Which don't get me wrong definitely has its advantages. I mean who wants to explain to every person that asks every detail of your pain that day? Sometimes there is simply too much pain and it is better to smile, wave, and then go back home and lay down. Using a smile as self-preservation on days when you're not even sure you can make it through can be the most important skill a spoonie can possess.

But there is a danger to saying "I'm fine." When you tell people you are doing okay, they will likely expect more from you. And that is trouble when you don't have the energy to meet their expectations. Leading to three possibilities:

1. You push yourself past your limit to please others, leading to days of misery afterwards as your body recovers.
2. You push yourself past your limit because you don't want to miss out on the fun and again end up out of commission and in bed for days after trying to recoup.
3. You end up disappointing others and yourself when you physically cannot push yourself any further and have to back out of whatever you were supposed to be doing. Which every spoonie knows is both humiliating and infuriating.

So how do you know when to tell the truth and when to smile and say that you're fine? That's an extremely tricky question to answer because there isn't one blanket answer. It is a case-by-case basis. But in every case, my advice is to listen to your body and follow your gut. Don't ignore it. Don't put it off. Listen to what your body is telling you and you will be able to properly protect yourself against overexertion and furthermore, will be able to do more things instead of one big thing and 4 days of bed rest. So trust yourself, you know your body better than anyone else ever will, use that. It is your most valuable asset.

Good luck out there!

-MF