



Whoa Mumma

Top ten tips for coping when chronic illness or pain overwhelms you

1. *Take time for self-care*, whether that is a quiet walk on your own, a relaxing bath or taking yourself out for a coffee it's important to have down time for yourself and a chance to re-charge your batteries. Don't be afraid to have alone time away from the kids, especially if you find yourself getting irritable and with low patience.
2. *Talk to someone*, that doesn't necessarily mean it needs to be a trained professional as not everyone has the time or money to see a psychologist or counsellor. Talk to a friend, your partner, your family, even connect online to someone with a similar condition who may understand what you are going through.
3. *Join a support group* either an in-person or online support group for your condition/illness. Connecting with support groups of like-minded people can be a great way to talk to someone who understands what you are going. Be careful though, some groups may have some negative individuals who can bring the tone and purpose of the group down and leave you feeling worse than before. The upside of the online groups however is anonymity and the ability to disconnect if you don't feel this is helpful.
4. *Ask for help!* Yes, that's right, don't be stoic or brave, tell someone you need help and tell them in what form. Do you need a hand with the kids? Do you need help with cleaning or cooking dinner? Can another school mum or dad bring your child home? Ask for help, and if you absolutely have no one you can ask then look into whether you can get some assistance by hiring a baby sitter or cleaner for a couple of hours.
5. *Meditation*, yes meditation. Now not everyone is into meditation or sitting crossed legged on the floor but there are some great free meditations and podcasts out there that you can listen to just to zone out and calm yourself. Find one that suits, there are plenty that are great for managing pain and anxiety that focus on breathing and staying calm.
6. *Adult colouring*, this can be a great way to distract the mind and body and focus your energy into something specific, it's also something you can do with the kids if you want an activity that is inclusive of them.
7. *Dance!* Light some candles, put on your favourite music and dance it out. It's a great release of energy and frustration and can lift your mood. It's also another fun activity to do with the kids, have a dance off, laugh and let go. If you're not able to stand and dance due your physical limitations, then sit in a chair and get creative with arm dancing!
8. *Gardening* can be very therapeutic, get your hands dirty, plant some flowers or herbs, get the kids involved and nurture a small garden. It'll give you something to focus on each day and at the same time teach your kids about nature.
9. *Read a good book* or trashy magazine and zone out for a while, sometimes just escaping into another story and world is the mini break you need.
10. *Plan a mini escape or take a day trip*. If you can't get away for a big holiday to recharge the batteries or spend time away from daily stresses with your family then why not get away for a weekend, go camping, hire a cabin somewhere and unplug. It doesn't have to cost much to be quality family time. If you can't get away then take a day trip, pack a picnic lunch and find somewhere beautiful to spend the day.