

10 THINGS YOU CAN DO TODAY THAT WILL

# Make Living With A Chronic Illness Easier



# Welcome!

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Hi! I'm Haley James & I am so glad to have you here!

If you are reading this, I assume you've downloaded this because you are dealing with a chronic illness yourself and are looking for some support and community! If so, you've come to the right place!

In most cases when you get diagnosed with a chronic disease, you're maybe given a pamphlet and thrown a plan of how your doctor wants to move forward. Then, you're sent on your way confused about what you have, what is happening, and what happens next.

As someone who has had this happen with multiple doctors and illnesses, I can tell you I have seriously been there and it is not a fun place to be. It's really overwhelming and I am so sorry that you are in or have ever had to be in that space.

I created this mini guide with the hope that it will help walk you through the next steps you can take that can help you feel better prepared to take on your condition and thrive! I truly hope it helps you on your journey.

I love you, I mean it.

xx, Haley James

TIP #1

# Grieve

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One of the first things I recommend to anyone who is in the process of getting diagnosed with something or has just been diagnosed, is to grieve.

Be sad. Be angry. Feel all the feels as they say.

It's okay and in fact, it's actually a healthy thing to do in this moment. It is completely valid for a diagnosis to elicit these types of feelings. As someone who has been there, I am so sorry you are having to go down this path. It's not fair. It does stink. It is hard. Period.

While those are true, it is also true that you are absolutely not in this alone. Now I don't say this in a fake, let's be cheery way. No, I really mean this. You have friends, family, other patients and me who are all truly in it with you.

As you move forward, I promise you will see these people come around and love you in a way you could've never imagined and will highlight how much support you have. This support and love will get you through.

TIP #2

# Learn About Your Diagnosis

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Most doctors, upon diagnosing, give the patient a pamphlet on their disease, tell them their next steps, and send the patient on their way.

If you are anything like me, whenever diagnosed with something I knew nothing about my response was, "Uhhh what just happened." It felt like my life drastically changed, receiving only a piece of paper and a plan I didn't agree to. I'm sure by the time you are finding this, you've already googled your diagnosis 100x. You know the basics and what the management going forward might look like.

This is so important! If you haven't done this yet, you need to. It is essential to research and learn about your diagnosis so that you understand it and what it means for you. Being able to articulate and comprehend what is happening with your body empowers you to own it and take action how you feel appropriate. This process can be overwhelming though, so make sure you are in a good place mentally and with the proper support.

TIP #3

# Get A Therapist

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Friends, I cannot say this enough.

Get a therapist.

If you have never been to therapy, or it's been a long time since you have, I highly recommend you go get one.

This might vary from diagnosis to diagnosis, but for many, adjusting to any type of chronic illness is really overwhelming physically, mentally, and emotionally.

Having a professional that can help you sort through this will be so incredibly valuable as you move forward.

I can honestly say I would not be where I am today without my therapist's support, listening ear, and perspective.

A general therapist will absolutely work, but I would recommend looking for one that specializes in the type of support you are looking for, namely one that is trained in trauma and has experience with patients with chronic illness.

TIP #4

# Assess Your Care Team

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Friends, I cannot say this enough.

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If you have never been to therapy or if you have, but haven't been in a while, I highly recommend you go get one.

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Having a professional that can help you sort through this will be so incredibly valuable as you move forward.

I can honestly say I would not be where I am today without her support, listening ear and perspective.

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TIP #5

# Talk To Your Friends & Family

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I'm sure you have already texted your friends and family to let them know what happened. They know and have stated their support. Great! So important!

Something I have found really helpful is having another conversation with these important people in my life and letting them know that I have learned what this disease actually is, how it works, what the management will be AND how they can best support me.

This empowering process has not only equipped me with a wealth of knowledge but has also enabled me to effectively share my thoughts and needs to them, allowing for open and honest communication.

Overall, this will give your support system a space to really understand what you are going through, a space for them to ask questions, and also gives them tangible ways that they can begin to support you.

This benefits all involved and is something I highly recommend considering doing!

TIP #6

# Find A Facebook Support Group

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Facebook groups are absolute gold when it comes to navigating chronic illness! There is a Facebook group for almost everything these days, including your diagnosis!

You can go onto Facebook and type:

"(your diagnosis) support group"

This will show you the various support groups available to you that you can follow, join and participate in.



TIP #7

# Find & Follow People On Insta

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While facebook groups are so great for advice and resources, they are not great for cultivating friendships. I have personally found Instagram to be the best place to find others with diagnoses like mine and a place where friendships have been able to form.

You can start by searching for your diagnosis and seeing what accounts come up, what hashtags and photos are associated with your diagnosis etc. From those, you can see what accounts follow that account and who they follow as well. This will quickly and easily connect you with this community.

Filling your feed with others going through what you are will make you feel less alone and, in most cases, will benefit your mental health. I do want to note though, that you should only follow these accounts if they help you. In some instances, it can be hard to see others with a more progressive or severe case of the same disease. With this in mind, following may not be beneficial.

After following certain accounts, I highly recommend reaching out to some of these people and creating friendships with them. These are people who truly understand what you are going through in a way that not many other people in your life may be able to. Their support, experience, advice, and friendship have been absolutely invaluable to me and I know they will be for you too.

TIP #8

# Join A Support Group

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I know the last few tips have all been about seeking out support, but I cannot stress how important it is to have these support systems and communities in place.

Another way to find community and support is by joining an in-person support group near where you live!

Now, there may not be a support group specific to your illness nearby and that's okay! You can start one or you can join a general chronic illness support group where you can meet with others navigating chronic illness.

Though your diagnoses may be different, what you are going through is similar and the support from local in-person friends that just get it, is so important.

TIP #9

# Find Your Disease Organization

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Every disease or disease type almost always has some type of awareness and advocacy organization.

These organizations help to raise awareness, funds for research and usually offer different types of support and education.

You can usually find your specific organization through a simple Google search.

Dysautonomia International is an example of one of the organizations for some of the conditions I have.

By finding and connecting with this organization, I have been able to gain access to the latest research, find and form support groups where there were none, gain access to congress members to help advocate for policy change, and have been able to make friends I know I will have for life.

TIP #10

# Advanced: Become An Advocate

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If you have been in this chronic illness world for a bit or completed steps 1-9 and are wondering what to do now?

Become an advocate!

You can do this in so many ways like teaching others about your diagnosis, working for policy change, sharing your story publicly, or even just sharing your story privately with just one person. That too is being an advocate. A great place to start is connecting with your disease organization and seeing what they need and where you can help.

By being an advocate you get to take something negative and turn it into a positive to help everyone that comes after you.

# Checklist

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- Grieve
- Learn about your diagnosis
- Get a therapist
- Assess your care team
- Talk to friends and family
- Find a Facebook support group
- Find and follow people on Insta with the same diagnosis
- Join an in person or smaller support group
- Find your disease organization
- Advanced: Become an advocate

HERE'S SOME

# Support

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I want to make sure you have all the tools and resources you need to navigate life with chronic illness. Whether you're looking for guidance, inspiration, or just a place to connect with others, I've got you covered with so many different ways to tap into support!

Here's just a peek at what you can explore:

- Podcasts & Interviews – Hear stories from people just like you, gain new insights, and find strength in community conversations.
- YouTube Channel – Deep dives into living with chronic illness, practical tips, advocacy and more!!
- Advocacy & Awareness – Stay up-to-date with advocacy efforts and learn how to get involved in making real change.
- Instagram – Join our community for chronic illness real talk, resources and a space where you can feel seen and supported.
- The Chronic Collective – Shop empowering apparel and know that every purchase supports chronic illness research & advocacy!

And that's just the beginning! There are so many more resources, stories, and tools waiting for you here. To make it super easy to get access, simply click the button to be taken to the resource page on my site!

GET THE RESOURCES

# Thank You

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Thanks so much for taking the time to check out my site, my content and supporting all that I do. It really truly means so much.

As someone with a bunch of chronic conditions, being able to create businesses that I can manage while sick, are in areas that I am passionate about AND help people - is such a blessing and I couldn't do it without the love and support I get from you, so thank you.

I am incredibly grateful to be able to live out my dreams and purpose in this way and want to be able to continually thank you by creating content that actually helps you!

So with all that being said, I would love to hear any suggestions of things you are looking for or needing on your journey so that I can figure out the best way to continue to make content that supports you!

You can get in touch with me through my contact page, or find me on Instagram @itshaleyjames\_ and send me a message there.

Thanks again for your love & support. I couldn't do this without you.

As always - I love you, I mean it ♡

*Haley James*