

KEEPING A DAILY LOG

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Keeping a daily log is tedious work. I understand. It is hard to remember another item on the To Do List. And even more difficult to jot down notes every single day. I am horribly unreliable at keeping a journal, but love making lists (or even better, checking items off the list). But data does not lie. It has brought to light many correlations in my symptoms. Especially if the symptoms are not immediate and take 4-8 weeks to take effect.

I try to keep my daily log simple from the perspective of filling out. Therefore, there are lots of columns and less super descriptive note taking. If I make this daily task simple, I am more likely to accomplish it.

I started out with the basics: Date, Medications, Sleep, Peripheral Neuropathy Symptoms and Additional Notes. This quickly grew into too many boxes that I needed to fill out in more than a few words. Subsequently, the log was edited to include subcategories and more metrics to document. The following list includes the column headings with subcategories that I am currently using in my daily log.

- DATE
- MEDICATION
Subcategories: each medication's dosage and if there is a change in supplements.
- SLEEP
Subcategories: Time Asleep, Number of instances I Woke Up and time I got Out of Bed.
The time I go to bed is different than when I actually fall asleep. Plus, the time I wake up may be different than when I physically get out of bed. I used to have insomnia, so this distinction was important as well as how many times I was waking up during the night.
- ACTIVITIES
Subcategories: Physical Therapy and Other Activities.
I include how long and what area I focused on for the physical therapy column. For the other activities I record walking our dog, cleaning house, yardwork and activities that require physical exertion.
- FOOD
Subcategories: Ultra-Processed Food, Gluten and Unhealthy Sugars/Fats.
This helps keep me making healthy nutrition decisions. Every now and then I will have food that falls into one of these categories; however, it holds me accountable if I see that there are several entries within a short time period.
- ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION
Similar to food, helps keep me accountable and decreases the likelihood of making poor choices on a regular basis.
- PERIPHERAL NEUROPATHY SYMPTOMS
Subcategories: Numbness, Tingling, Pain, Dizziness and Other.
- SOCIALIZATION
This may seem like an odd category, but I have been in lockdown for about 4 years due to various ongoing medical issues. As a result, I started to get panic attacks even driving to the grocery store. I added this metric to motivate me to move in small steps toward being able to handle being in public again. I can see how much progress I have made.
- MOOD/EMOTIONAL STATE
It is important to record how I feel overall each day. I use a scale of -5 to +5 and a very brief description of why I chose that number. This helps me on a cognitive level see if I am falling back in the pit of depression, climbing out of the pit or just having a bad day.

- WEIGHT
- ADDITIONAL NOTES

Anything that does not fall into one of the other columns is entered in this box. If I see a trend of the same symptom, I then make that item into its own category/subcategory. For instance, I used to have crying spells in some deep depression episodes. My doctor told me how my mood has changed in the positive direction. I did not see it until I started documenting how many times a day I cried. Data does not lie. The trend was the daily crying spells were lessening.

To visualize the categories and subcategories, here is a snippet:

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
1	Medication						Sleep		
2	Date	Amitriptyline	Duloxetine DR	Lorazepam	Ibuprofen	Change in Supplements?	Fell Asleep	# Woke Up During Night	Out of Bed

About every six months I will insert a row that includes the average current state of each category. I find it useful to summarize my health and wellbeing a couple of times a year.

The following are two examples of how useful this daily log was in finding a correlation between medication and symptoms.

Last year I was able to pinpoint a probable cause of gaining seventeen pounds in six weeks. There were no changes in diet or exercise, so I assumed hormones given that I am a 50+ woman. After researching my medications, I learned that one of the prescriptions can cause sudden weight gain after six months of continuous usage. The weight increase occurred around that six-month period.

A more recent observation is my decrease in grip strength and increase in numbness and pain in fingertips. For one of my medications, I had reduced the dosage amount. This medication usually needs between four and eight weeks to see effects. Analyzing my log, I could see that six weeks prior I had lowered the dosage. The only other variable was the drop in temperature. Hence, two weeks ago I increased back to the amount where I was successful and entered in the Additional Notes box the correlation. I am hoping that in a couple of weeks I will be back to being able to write and type with more intention and less fumbling around the keyboard.

Trying to remember when a symptom started, medication dosage changed, and other important information is difficult. Although tedious, keeping a daily log is an essential tool in managing my health and wellbeing.