



Pacing

by Mary Beth Lewis

Pacing involves learning how many tasks or activities you can do without causing a flare-up. This is learned by observation and practice. It's a good way to manage chronic pain.

- If done well, you are able to see your limits clearly and avoid pain spikes and flares.
- Pacing means taking a break before you absolutely need it, which helps regulate activity levels.

Spoon Theory (a pacing tool)

Adapted from Wikipedia

*The **spoon theory** is used to explain the reduced amount of energy available for activities and tasks due to chronic pain or illness. Christine Miserandino created it when a friend asked her to describe having Lupus.*

"**Spoons**" are energy units, and represent how much energy a person has in a given day. Each activity requires a given number of spoons, and when you use up all of your spoons for the day, you can't do anything else. *If you do more work after your spoons run out, you may get a flare-up.* This would also decrease your spoons for the next day. --Generally when you run out of spoons, you have no choice but to rest until your spoons are (hopefully) replenished the next day.

For example, if I have 12 spoons for the day, it takes me:

2 spoons to make breakfast, 3 spoons to work on laundry, 4 spoons to pick up my prescription, then I have 3 spoons left in my day to ration. Making dinner will take all 3 remaining spoons.

- The theory is used to explain chronic illness' effects to healthy people.
- The term *spoonie* is sometimes used to refer to a person with a chronic illness.

Note-- Rewards can be used to motivate us to use pacing tools.

TIPS

- Work out your time limits on activities like standing, walking or sitting. Assess how long you can do the activity on a good day and how long you could do it on a bad day. --- **Then limit yourself to what you could do on a bad day. You won't overdo it and you'll have a few 'reserve' spoons available.**
- Avoid the 'boom and bust' cycle of overdoing it, causing a flare-up, resting, then feeling better and overdoing it again. By planning our work and rest times we can avoid/minimize flares.