***Focus on…….***

**Prioritising**

**Why do we need to look at Prioritising?**

Medical conditions and treatments can affect our ability to complete the activities that we want to and need to do. We all have different ideas about what are important to us and sometimes this is difficult to explain to the people around us. In this information we will cover different ways of identifying what activities are important for us to do. Prioritising can be considered the most important strategy to manage fatigue.

**Why is it important?**

The activities we value and take part in affect how we view ourselves. Through life we make choices about the work we do, the leisure activities we join and the way in which we manage our home lives. Throughout most of our lives we realise that we cannot do everything and call on help from others or make choices about what we can and cannot do. When our abilities are affected by changes in our health, such choices can be very difficult to make and we can feel frustration and resentment making them. Having a healthier approach to these decisions can lessen the impact on our mental health and can lessen the impact of the symptom, such as fatigue, breathlessness or pain. Feeling clear about our priorities helps communication with others.

**Hints, tips and useful information**

* Does everything need to be done today?
* Is it something I need to do?
* Who else do I have that can help me?
* Is it something I want to do and is it important to me?
* How well does it need to be done?
* Set realistic and achievable goals

**Get practical…**

There are some worksheets to try which help focus on answering some of these questions

1. Priorities
2. Activities in my week
3. Roles that are important to me
4. Set some achievable goals – use the ‘focus on …goal setting’ worksheets

**Remember…**

Our priorities are individual and it is important to understand these so that we can communicate to other people who may not share those priorities!

* I couldn’t possibly go out without all the ironed finished -but I’ll have a ready meal later as I won’t have enough energy left after doing it
* Ironing! I can’t stand it! Who cares! I plan my day around preparing and cooking my evening meal it’s that important.

Evaluating Priorities

**Priority** is the importance placed on an activity.

* It determines which activities are chosen.
* It determines the activities on which you want to spend your energy.

Questions to ask yourself:

* What needs to be done (necessary to lifestyle)?
* What do I like to do? Which activities bring enjoyment (hobby, leisure)?
* What do others expect me to do?
* How much energy do these different activities use up?
* What can I eliminate (stop/ remove)?
* What can I delegate (ask someone else to do or help with)?

# Thinking about Standards

**Standards** are the expectations you place on yourself for the performance of an activity. They include:

* How often does the task need doing (cook a meal, wash the dishes, dust)?
* How well does it need to be done (e.g. double up cooking amounts and freeze some- next time just defrost and heat, does it really need hoovering under the chairs)?

They affect the amount of energy spent on each activity.

Standards are difficult to change and it is important to remember that the higher the priority, the harder standards will be to change. If it is that important to you it might be worth using more energy on it – this might be your personal priority.

Questions to ask yourself:

* How do my standards affect my activities and choices?
* Are they forcing me to use up too much of my energy?
* Can some of my standards be changed?

# Make active decisions to control change

* Fatigue, breathlessness or pain decreases the number of activities that can be done.
* Giving up activities can happen slowly over a long period of time, limiting the number of things you may do.
* Carefully check as it is often the ‘fun’ or leisure activities that are abandoned.
* To regain control and balance of your lifestyle, you must make active decisions.
* Active decisions need you to think about your standards and priorities.
* Decide where you want to spend your energy (priority).
* Decide how much energy you want to spend (standard).
* Look at options and select the ones you want.
* Respect your priorities! They are important to you!
* Active decision-making allows you to take control of your time.
* Do what must be done *and* what you want to do.

Now think about and write down…..

* What activities give me pleasure?
* What are the most rewarding activities for me?
* Are there activities I have given up that I would like to start again?

Thinking about these will help when we come to planning how you use your energy across different activities through a day or week.

Priorities and Standards

# Activities in my week

Think back to the past week.

Think of the activities you did and the activities you wanted to do.

List both types of activities on the ‘Activities in my week’ sheet under the appropriate category.

Once the list is completed, select the number on the priority scale that reflects the priority level for each activity.

1 = high priority

4 = low priority

# Standards

Select three activities with a lower priority (it will be easier to change standards for low-priority activities)

Describe your current standards for the performance of the activity on the ‘Standards’ handout.

Standards can include:

* Number of times per day or week the activity is performed
* Quality level to which the activity must be performed
* Who is allowed to perform the activity.

List possible changes to your standards for the activities listed. The changes should reduce the amount of energy needed for the task.

**References:**

Exploring strategies used following a group-based fatigue management programme for people with multiple sclerosis (FACETS) via the Fatigue Management Strategies Questionnaire (FMSQ)’ (2015). Thomas S et al. BMJ Open.

**ACTIVITIES IN MY WEEK**

**Priority scale**

**Low High**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Self-care – washing self, dressing, cooking, sleep** | |
|  | 1 2 3 4 |
|  | 1 2 3 4 |
|  | 1 2 3 4 |
|  | 1 2 3 4 |
|  | 1 2 3 4 |
|  | 1 2 3 4 |
| **Productivity – paid work, volunteering, child care, studying** | |
|  | 1 2 3 4 |
|  | 1 2 3 4 |
|  | 1 2 3 4 |
|  | 1 2 3 4 |
|  | 1 2 3 4 |
|  | 1 2 3 4 |
| **Leisure – exercise, reading, groups/clubs, hobbies** | |
|  | 1 2 3 4 |
|  | 1 2 3 4 |
|  | 1 2 3 4 |
|  | 1 2 3 4 |
|  | 1 2 3 4 |
|  | 1 2 3 4 |

**STANDARDS**

**Activity 1:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Current standards | Different standards |
|  |  |

**Activity 2:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Current standards | Different standards |
|  |  |

**Activity 3:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Current standards | Different standards |
|  |  |

**Roles that are Important to me**

**Consider these examples of roles**

Which of these you currently do, which you would like to do and how important this is to you?

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Role | I Do Now? | Would be something I would like to do? | How important to me now?  1=not important  5=extremely important |
| Parent |  |  |  |
| Spouse or Partner |  |  |  |
| Friend |  |  |  |
| Brother or sister |  |  |  |
| Neighbour |  |  |  |
| Grandparent |  |  |  |
| Carer |  |  |  |
| Hobbyist (reading, running…) |  |  |  |
| Student |  |  |  |
| Follower of Faith |  |  |  |
| Group/ club member |  |  |  |
| other |  |  |  |

Considering our lives in terms of roles rather than activities can help see what we value. We can then think about how we can carry these out within our abilities. If this is something you find difficult you may want to talk to someone about it.