

Day to Day Living With Schizophrenia

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When I was initially diagnosed with schizophrenia, on meds, and home from the hospital, I did not know what was next? One way to look at it is, there are people out there who would spend a fortune to be able to start their lives over. I was starting over. I had already overcome the first hurdles in recovery, but I needed to continue moving forward, and I needed to know I had to be patient with myself.

In the morning, for me I like to ease into my day. I breathe in and breathe out using mindfulness to be present in the morning. With mindfulness I use my senses. What do I hear? What do I feel? What do I see? I often think of things for which I am thankful. I have a gratitude journal and often write that I am thankful for a good night's sleep. I am also thankful that I am still alive, financially stable, and have a positive attitude about my diagnosis. I have been through challenging times in my life, but I am an overcomer.

Another way I ease into my day is sometimes listening to the Bible or another book on my phone. I can read, but it is hard for me to concentrate. I love listening to books where the reader often changes their voice for different characters. It reminds me of the time as a kid in elementary school, listening to my teacher read to the class. I love being read to.

During my waking up time I tend to look at my Facebook or Instagram. I have met mental health patients, advocates, and support groups on social networks. These groups help me feel less alone. When I am finally out of bed, I drink my coffee which is my favorite beverage. I usually listen to gospel or cool jazz during this point of my day. During my coffee I eat a good breakfast. Eating is important because hunger can be a trigger for my schizophrenia symptoms.

I believe in having a large breakfast which includes cereal, yogurt, a blueberry muffin, baby carrots, and celery. This is a healthy breakfast which is a part of a healthy

lifestyle which is also important in my recovery. After that I brush my teeth.

Next, another thing for my healthy lifestyle is exercising. Exercising can be free. I enjoy walking in my neighborhood and doing pushups. With my exercise I know I do not have to be a professional athlete but have my own goals just for me. I usually try to exercise at least 1 hour a day. I use my anxieties as fuel for my walking. Exercise is good for my mind, as well.

Another way I like to use my mind during my daily routine is using a language app to learn Italian and other languages. Distractions help me block out my unwanted schizophrenia symptoms. Other distractions I use are music and TV.

At this time of day, I like having my midday meal. This is also another time to be thankful, especially since I have my own kitchen. I am also thankful that I am able to buy groceries. For my midday meal I have meat, veggies, and baby spinach for a salad. For my dessert I have fruit and a protein shake. Occasionally, I do treat myself to a candy bar. Marinating a healthy eating regiment is important to me.

Obviously, during my daily routine I use self-care. After my coffee, exercising, and language lessons, I shower and sometimes shave. I put on comfortable clothing so I can start to decompress as the evening hours begin.

Since I live on my own, I enjoy watching the local news and national news. I also like watching Wheel of Fortune, and Jeopardy. I try to blurt out the answers during the game shows which is good for my brain too.

After the game shows I brush my teeth, floss, and gargle with mouthwash. As I get ready for bed I might watch a movie.

My daily routine helps me to manage my symptoms, and just because I might have days when I have little to no symptoms, does not mean I am going to go off my medication. I know I will be on my meds for the rest of my life. I have accepted this requirement.

Depending on what day it is, I usually have self-care items to do. On Tuesday, I volunteer at Goodwill, which is a block from my apartment. On Wednesday I watch a church service online, and on Thursday I clean my apartment and sometimes do my laundry. Having a washer and dryer is another thing for which I am thankful. I set up my own appointments and drive myself there. I grocery shop once a week with a list on my phone.

During earlier points of my recovery, I either took therapy one on one with a therapist or group therapy. Both were extremely helpful. I found friends in group

therapy and found a new way to manage my symptoms by checking the evidence. If I hear voices, it is okay if I open my front door and just look around to see if the voices are real. The voices are usually just in my head. Both therapies offered me great support.

Whether I go to bed or wake up I see the same post it note near my clock radio. "You are A Success." Despite what I went through in my past I am still living and breathing. I feel blessed, because being diagnosed with schizophrenia is not the end of the world or end of my life, but it can be a new, powerful beginning to life.