

LIFE-ENHANCING, ENERGY-SAVING TIPS

I have lived with chronic illness for about 20 years, from my early 20s. During this time I have had several periods of being bedridden for a couple of years and having to go back to live with my parents, to living independently and working full-time, to how I am now: living independently and working two afternoons a week.

I have not been able to marry, or to have children. It has affected my career. I live alone. I don't even remember what it feels like to feel well. I know how awful life can be. This is no "Pollyanna" list, an "if only you had a positive attitude" list. It's just that over the years, I've made choices to make my situation as easy as it can be, physically, emotionally, spiritually. These are some of them.

Of course not all of the tips will be applicable to everyone – some men may not want to experiment with make-up! And some people will have adverse reactions to perfumes etc.

Some of the ideas cost money, which is usually in short supply if you are chronically ill. I decorated my home gradually, over years. Gifts of cash are great as you can make your life-giving choices, rather than perhaps getting something you don't really want / like. Or give family and friends specific suggestions.

– Anon.

BATHROOM

1. Get a shower chair (plastic outdoor chair will do) – makes a big difference.
2. Use matching towels
3. Use lovely smelling soaps
4. Get a long handled shower brush for your back
5. Have a stool / chair to sit on while brushing teeth etc
6. Use electric toothbrush

BEDROOM

7. Have bed linen you like looking at
8. Use good quality sheets
9. Get a great pillow
10. Have a bedside table/unit which is big enough for: stereo, lamp, water bottle, pen, paper, phone, tapes/CDs

CLOTHES

11. Wear self respecting* clothes (*even if you don't see anyone for days, wear clothes which look nice, not clothes you wouldn't want other people to see you in – YOU see you.)
12. Clean shoes, brush lint off dark colours.
13. Wear self respecting sleepwear
14. Learn what colours suit you (see books like "Colour Me Beautiful", "Change your image, change your life", "What not to wear")
15. Wear colours that suit you
16. Wear jewellery
17. Change your jewellery
18. Discover a local dressmaker for repairs / alterations

ENTERTAINMENT

19. Listen to music you like
20. Listen to audio books, podcasts
21. Subscribe to interesting / entertaining magazines (home-delivered)
22. Watch comedies
23. Listen to Radio for the Print Handicapped, ABC, Radio National, BBC Overnight World Service – anything that will give you things to think about
24. Build a collection of favourite DVDs

FINANCE

25. Get family and friends to give you cash for presents – then you can buy something you can't ordinarily afford.
26. Set up bills as direct debits.
27. Buy from op shops

FRIENDSHIP

28. Send cards
29. Keep in touch via the telephone, texting, or email
30. When visitors come, eat outside on a picnic rug (no need to go anywhere)
31. When in the street, look people in the eye and smile
32. Thank people who serve you at home and in shops
33. Get to know local shopkeepers – it builds a sense of community if you live on your own
34. Practise random acts of kindness – it gives you a feeling of making a contribution.

HOME DÉCOR

35. Create a lovely home environment
36. Hang pictures you like looking at
37. Consciously think about the things in your space: do you use it, do you like it, is it a pleasing colour, shape
38. Cull your stuff and give it to the Op Shop
39. Keep things tidy, so you don't waste energy having to "look for things"
40. Display items you like looking at
41. Make a changing display by opening books at different pages
42. Have flowers (even single blooms) or indoor plants
43. Get as much fresh air into your house as possible
44. Don't have visible calendars or clocks unless you use them
45. Burn nice smelling / therapeutic oils
46. Let as much light into your house and bedroom as possible
47. Get an 'ikebana' type arrangement which is long-lasting
48. Apply to local council for home help
49. Keep warm
50. Keep your home at an even temperature where possible.

KIDS

51. Keep children's artwork in manilla folders for them to look through when they visit
52. Get children you know to decorate your Christmas tree
53. Create a toy box for young kids who visit
54. Each year give a Christmas tree ornament as Christmas presents
55. Have a lolly tin

KITCHEN

56. Keep menus for local restaurants that deliver
57. Use crockery which is pleasing to the eye
58. Drink different flavoured teas, coffees
59. Useful items: frozen veges in individual serves, individual serve tins of tinned tuna / salmon, meat cut into strips by butcher, "George Foreman" grill, cut up a lot of salad & store in big plastic box in the fridge – salad on hand for several days.
60. Keep a running shopping list in your Filofax/organiser: add to it whenever something's running low. You then have the list with you if you're out shopping. Also keep a spare of everything, so you never run out.
61. Keep a couple of long life milks in the pantry.
62. Keep a plastic watering can in the kitchen, and use when filling up the sink, waiting for the water to heat – then use on garden (saves water, saves you having to get out the hose)
63. Put dirty dishes straight into the dishwasher
64. If you don't have a dishwasher, rinse crockery after you've used it to remove worst. Fill the sink with hot water, and soak crockery for a bit before washing. Use a drainer rather than teatowel.
65. Keep items closest to where used: mugs near kettle, saucepans near stove etc
66. Store least used items high and low and most used items in the most accessible shelves

LAUNDRY

67. Have dirty clothes hamper to separate whites from colours – put either colours or whites directly into the washing machine ready for the next load (saves a separate sorting)
68. Dry clothes inside on a wire clothes dryer (saves you having to go outside and hang out washing), then finish it off in the clothes dryer if necessary
69. Fold washing in the rooms it's stored and put straight away

ORGANISATION

70. Use a Filofax or Electronic Organiser
71. Learn to organise your home (see books such as "Organizing from the inside out", "The Messies manual", "The 15 minute organizer")
72. Keep cleaning products in the rooms in which they're used
73. Store bedlinen in the rooms in which they're used
74. Recycle
75. Give unwanted, no longer used items to the Op Shop
76. Keep a Christmas Box with all your ornaments, spare Christmas cards, etc
77. Have address labels printed (saves writing your name/address on the backs of envelopes)
78. Keep a list in your filofax of the people you buy birthday / Christmas presents – when shopping, if you see something appropriate on sale, buy it, and keep it in on a "present shelf". The list helps you remember who you've already bought for.
79. Put things away as soon as you've finished using them

OUTSIDE

80. Get a reel for the hose
81. Put in an automatic watering system
82. Have plants which require little maintenance
83. Have an outdoor chair

PERSONAL GROOMING

84. Be self-respecting even if no-one sees you. Again YOU see you, so brush hair, keep teeth and nails clean.
85. Maintain personal cleanliness - if you can't shower, at least wash every day (shower chair, bathroom chair incredibly helpful)
86. If you can't floss everyday, do the top teeth one day, the bottom set the next
87. Have a massage
88. Give yourself a manicure
89. Buff your nails
90. Rub cream into your feet and give yourself a foot-massage
91. Use perfume
92. Find a mobile hairdresser who will come to you
93. Get your lashes tinted
94. Use a variety of lipsticks

SPIRITUALITY

95. Watch "Songs of Praise"
96. Listen to Crossway Baptist Church service or "The Hour of Power" or other radio services on Sunday mornings
97. Invite your local minister to visit and give you communion

TECHNOLOGY

98. Get a phone plan which caps daytime long-distance calls
99. Email people
100. Shop over the internet and have your groceries home delivered
101. Have a cordless telephone you can use from the bed / couch
102. Get a laptop computer which can be used from bed
103. Use internet banking
104. Get an internet plan which gives you plenty of browsing time

WARDROBE

105. Keep shoes in shoe boxes: in big letters write a description on a sticky label (eg runners, black heels, tan slides) so you can see at a glance
106. Replace wire coat hangers with plastic or wooden ones (get the same colour)
107. Cull clothing

ALSO

108. Give thanks every day for all the good things in your life: once I couldn't even think of one thing for which I was grateful, so much seemed awful and painful in my life. But with some thought, I now have a list which seems never-ending. e.g. comfortable bed, clean sheets, hot and cold running water, readily available food, huge variety of food, living in a peaceful country, all the energy saving amenities we have: washing machine, dryer, etc etc.
109. Finally, be kind to yourself. Learn to listen to the way you think about yourself and talk to yourself. Where that self-talk is harsh and critical, learn to encourage and be gentle to yourself instead.