

Access: LARP

Playing with Chronic Fatigue

Table of Contents

Introduction and Overview.....	3
Before the event.....	3
Talking to other players.....	4
Talking to the Organisers.....	4
Event Considerations.....	4
After the game.....	5
Rounding it all up.....	6

Introduction and Overview

This guide is written from a personal perspective and in consultation with other LARPerS with CFS/ME and other illness which has a chronic fatigue aspect.

Everybody experiences their symptoms differently and may experience different difficulties at LARP or find that different things help them. However, many of these suggestions could be adapted to suit different people's needs or may give you ideas of things that would work for you and your symptoms.

Generally people are very understanding and want to help you get the most out of a game. It is also worth remembering that one of the most valuable thing you can do at a game is have fun. Taking care of ourselves and thinking about small adaptations and accommodations allows us to have that fun. If you are the sort of person who worries that you are asking too much of people or that you aren't helping enough or getting involved enough (a feeling often experienced during set up and tidy up) try keeping in mind that any small thing you can do helps and that you have a valid reason for having to say "I'm sorry I can't".

In general

- It's ok to ask for help from the organisers – they are there to facilitate the game
- You have a right to ask for accommodations
- Managing your condition before, during and after the game can make the whole thing more enjoyable.
- Good communication and honesty is key.
- Accessibility is not about making the game easier for you, it is about making it no more difficult than for any other player.

Before the event

- Prepare for the event as far ahead as possible.
- Write yourself lists of what needs to be done and break down the tasks into small chunks.
- It's ok to do your event prep a little at a time, it doesn't have to all be done in one big rush.
 - This is particularly important if you want to make costume.
- In the weeks or days leading up to the event (depending on the severity of your ME at the time) try and rest as much as you can.
- If you can take the day before an event off from work or clear you schedule as much as you can. Rest is important.
- Check your meds, make sure you have enough for the event and the days afterward. Renew any prescriptions at least a week before hand so there isn't a last minute panic.
- Give other players you are friends with a heads up of what difficulties you may face and what you need from them.

Example:

Susie starts packing her character kit a month before the game. She sets up a bag and puts things in as she finds it so there is no last minute rush. There is a check-list with the bag so she knows what is

there and what is missing. This means that on the event day she can just pick up the bag, pack her OOC things and go.

Talking to other players

It's not necessary to disclose your illness or difficulties to all or any players if you don't want to. However it can be helpful if one or two trusted people know what to expect, especially if they don't normally see you day to day.

- Let them know difficulties you anticipate e.g. I can't take part in combat; I may need to take naps OOC.
- Let them know where your meds are (i.e. which pocket of your backpack or where in your tent) in case you need them and they aren't to hand.
- Let them know how you will communicate real OOC pain/difficulty compared to IC concerns.
 - This can stop them being over concerned or you not getting the help they need.
- Let them know what help, if any they can provide or that you are comfortable with.

Example:

Charlie doesn't like to be fussed over but knows that she can get sudden onset severe fatigue that she needs help with. She tells her friends that most of the time she is OK, but if she is slurring her words or seems particularly "out of it" then they should help her sit somewhere safe, tell her to take her meds and get her a drink and snack.

Talking to the Organisers

- Talk to the event Organisers at the earliest opportunity to let them know about your difficulties.
 - Be as specific as you can though know you don't have to disclose any diagnosis you don't wish to.
- It's ok to ask questions about the plot or how it will run to help you plan.
- Let the organisers know if your needs change.
- If things come up during the event let them know. There may be some things that you and they couldn't predict.

Example:

James' CFS is pretty well managed at the time of booking and their only real concern is that they can sleep. A week before the event James has a symptom flare and was struggling more. They let the organisers know and they were able to discuss how to make the event easier.

Event Considerations

- Do you want to sleep IC or OOC.
 - For some people sleeping OOC guarantees better sleep and proper rest.

- Other people may benefit from sleeping IC so they are less detached from the game.
- Consider the distance from main play area to sleeping areas.
- Try and set up an IC rest area so that you can comfortably take breaks IC.
- Ask when meal times are and if snacks are available. Try and have food and water accessible.
 - Keeping your energy up is important for CFS management and events can sap energy.
 - Staying hydrated also helps with fatigue and pain management.
- Take your meds regularly and on time. Keep meds on you. You may need to take your higher dose to cope with the event.
- Make sure your costume is adjustable and has layers so you can keep warm or cool as needed.
 - You may want to consider extra heat packs and hand warmers for cool weather and outdoor events.
- Ask for early notice of events that may take you away from the main play area.
 - This can help you plan rest and medication.
 - It might include thing like “good times to go hunting” or that an NPC encounter will take place after dinner.
 - It's not cheating. You don't have to act IC, it's just OOC information to help you plan better.
- Take naps at the event. It doesn't make you less of a LARPer to rest.
 - Being rested helps for better safer roleplay.
- Even if you don't usually use a walking stick you may benefit from having one at the event.
 - This can be OOC or IC.
- You may want to give your character your symptoms and give them an IC reason. This can be anything from “an old injury” to “he has a strange affectation”. It can help explain needing rest or breaks IC.
 - Make sure you are comfortable with any IC implications such as IC attitudes or customs.
- It's ok to bow out of set up or clean up. People really do understand.
 - If you really want to help look for more sedate jobs like filing paperwork away or doing the dishes.

Example:

Mae finds that having to make frequent walks to the “temple” in order to check for messages from her god is difficult. She mentions this to the ref who decides to let her know the best time windows to go and check the temple. This allows Mae to continue with that part of the game.

Example:

Mario normally needs to take a mid-afternoon nap, especially if they want to continue playing in to the evening. He and his group “claim” a sofa IC and pile it with setting appropriate blankets so that Mario can rest when he needs to without having to leave the IC area.

After the game

Most of what this boils down to is rest and pacing, something that most people with CFS is familiar with.

- Plan how you are getting home in advance, ideally being driven home.

- If you are going by train pre arrange train station connections and tickets.
- If you will be driving yourself make sure you are fit to drive and plan to break up the journey.
- Make sure you have time to rest after the event.
 - Take a day or two off work if you can or try and arrange your workload to be light.
 - Don't commit to any social activity you can't get out of if you need to rest.
- Break down unpacking into small tasks.
 - Consider what needs doing immediately, later, or later still.
- Recognise that your recovery may take longer than other people's.
- Arranging to eat with other people or get take-out when you get home helps you refuel properly.
- Look at anything you need to do between games in an ongoing campaign and figure out a realistic time frame.
- Think of any changes you would have made to how you played the game and communicate that to the organisers.
 - Alternatively if the accommodations worked well let them know.

Example:

Kelly is exhausted after a very muddy field event. Zie is worried about the amount of unpacking needed. Zie makes a list and decides the only thing that has to be dealt with right now is washing muddy kit. Zie throw them in the washing machine and leave the rest for another day.

Rounding it all up

These are all just some things which could be helpful to a player with CFS/ME or other chronic illnesses with a chronic fatigue aspect. They are all tactics which have been tried by real players in real games. Not all pieces of advice will suit all people and that's ok. If something does or doesn't work for you that doesn't make your needs any less valid. This guide is simply a starting point to figure out what will work for you and what might make a game more accessible.

Always make sure to heed medical advice, especially in regard to medication.