3 Strategies for Managing Headache

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Living with Chronic Migraine

- Frustration of delayed or mis-diagnosis
- Dysfunction
- Isolation
Anxiety

• One of the most common headache triggers

• Headache patients are more anxious than those without pain.
Depression

- 40-50% of pain patients are depressed
- Pain is depressing!
- Depression makes pain worse!
Strategies to address:

- Emotional suffering
- Physical suffering
3 Strategies for Managing Headache

Befriend your Body

Take Charge, then Give up Control

Transform your Relationship to Others and Yourself
1. Befriend your Body

- Animosity, estrangement from your somatic self—disembodiment
- Ignore/distraction: prevents hearing what the body needs—what you need—to feel better
- Neck tension (ignore) -> neck soreness (ignore) -> migraine triggered
Examples of abuses of the body

• poor ergonomics, posture,
• inactivity,
• over-/under-exercising,
• eye strain (too much screen time),
• muscle weakness,
• dysregulated sleep, eating, hydration
Stress-Migraine Connection

- Migraine is triggered, exacerbated, and maintained by poorly managed stress.

- Stress leads to...
  - Muscle tension
  - Sustained neuromuscular tension
  - Trigger point development and activation
How to Befriend the Body

**Check-in, Listen, and Respond**

- Yoga
- Mindfulness Meditation
- Body Scan
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation
- Activity Pacing
- Breathing Awareness
2. Take Charge, Then... Give up Control
Best prognosis: don’t expect providers to “fix” you, without your active collaboration.
Your job: seek treatment from those who can help you identify what you need to change.

Then you take it from there.
Resignation vs Acceptance

Giving up trying to help yourself

Mindset: I’m going to do all that’s in my power to influence my migraine condition. Then I will give up my resistance to the fact of my pain.
Pain in life is inevitable.
Suffering is optional.
3. Transform your Relationship with Others and Yourself

The *psychological* roles you play in relationships can contribute to stress, anxiety, or depression, and worsen your headaches.
Some of us experience others as a threat

- Unconscious
- Bracing for a blow
- Muscle tension in face, neck and/or shoulders
Case: The People Pleaser

60-year-old lady, jaw pain, headaches

Resented household dynamics

Passive, didn’t want to make waves

“I have to grit my teeth to get through the day.”
The Rescuer:

Your sense of self-worth comes from fixing others’ problems

Common in the helping professions

May feel pressure/frustration/anger interacting with those whose problems are more difficult or impossible for you to solve
Ultra-Independent, self-reliant:

Learn to be OK with needing help
Rigid perfectionism:
understand your worth outside of accomplishments & productivity
Notice how you feel...
Choose to commit to relating differently
Practice reassuring self-talk

You are enough
Bringing the subconscious relationship dynamics to light

then consciously choosing to relate differently,

allows the mind/body to relax and function optimally.
In summary:

The mind and body are inextricably linked.

Capitalizing on this interconnection will empower you to reduce the emotional and physical suffering of migraine.
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