Accomplishing Back-to-School Tasks With Lupus

by BARBARA LEECH

Back-to-School Tasks With Lupus

It's August and whether I like it or not, back-to-school tasks with lupus are filling up my to-do list. I have been really struggling lately with lupus brain fog, where I cannot remember anything important and I have been feeling so exhausted that I am ready for bed about the same time I am tucking my kids in for the night. Their energy level is astounding and this summer has been difficult for me to keep up.

There is so much to do before I drop them off at school on that first big day. I have an idea where to start, but I honestly lack the motivation to do so.

I have noticed this lupus brain fog has taken a turn for the worse lately, and I am hoping it will improve soon because it is frightening.

I can't remember doctor appointments, or which of my children's clothing items still fit, or exactly what things I need to buy before the start of school. I feel muddled and lost, only I can't be, because I am a lupus mom, chief organizer of the entire family.

So how does one get everything done when just getting through a normal day tests your strength and endurance? How will you shop for all the new clothes, just the right shoes, backpacks and check off everything on a mile-long school supply list when you are finding it challenging enough just to get groceries each week?

I have a few strategies I am going to rely on, but this year I think I may need some help in getting it all done.

That is devastating to me. I am not used to asking for help, but I am doubtful I can do it all this back-to-school season without some backup.

The key to asking for help, of course, is organization and lists of what must be done. It makes it easier to delegate tasks and makes certain nothing important gets forgotten in my lupus fog.

So, here is my plan. My back-to-school with lupus checklist is vital and includes:

Making My Lists and Checking Them Twice (Because I Probably Forgot Something)

Beyond the school supply list mailed to parents prior to the start of school, which typically asks for paper, pencils and something weird like a white t-shirt with no explanation of why it is needed, I must make a list of everything I need to buy, organize or find from last year.

I usually try to organize my lists into small doable tasks for one day at a time and I tackle them one-by-one on days I am physically able to do so. These smaller lists also allow me to delegate some tasks to someone else if I need to.

Nothing is worse than having someone offer to help and your mind goes completely blank. “I need a lot of help, I just can’t remember what I need done!”

Become a Cool Shopper

The weather plays a huge role in when I go out and tackle my to-do lists. The sun and heat add to my brain fog, pain and low energy.

I try and choose days that the temperature outside is not going to make my feel worse. I wear sunblock and a hat and pretend it all feels glamorous.

Shopping Days May Mean No Cooking

On days where I check off a bunch of items from my to-do list, I usually end up planning to have dinner out. I simply do not have the energy to cook a big dinner after a day of errands.

On busy, task-filled days, it is better you eat a nutritious meal prepared by someone else if you feel too exhausted to cook. It is not a failure on your part. It is prioritizing your tasks to take care of health.

Keep Lists Handy and Check Off Items When Completed

Lupus has completely stolen my memory, and at times I have done a task and had no memory of doing it. I have even bought identical shirts, on two different days, forgetting the first purchase ever occurred.

Apparently my taste in clothing does not waver, because it was not until I got home and took inventory I realized I had purchased duplicate items. Without checking off my lists, I would buy the same item over and over and never know it until I get home and found that my kids have 30 pairs of underwear and no socks in their drawers.

I suggest you make your lists to include quantities and check them off as you buy them.

If All Else Fails Get Into Survival Mode

If you have most of your “to-do” and “must-buy” lists checked off and your children can navigate through the first week with the required clothing and supplies you have already bought, cut yourself some slack.

There is no deadline by which you need to get the rest of their school clothes. Winter jackets can wait a few weeks, along with new sweaters.

Nobody will be judging you if you do not have their entire school year’s worth of clothing and supplies purchased and ready by that first day of the school. You can tackle the remaining items on the weekends that follow — they are going to need more items you did not know or think about anyway.

Take Time for You Without Guilt

I know I say this and rarely do it — but this year I am doing it. Once I get some things accomplished, I will allow myself a little downtime.

I will read for 30 minutes or take a day to just rest from all the activity. I will do what I need to do for me to feel a little bit better. If it means putting off errands until the next day, then that is what I will do.

Arming myself with an arsenal of lists, an action plan, and a commitment to taking care of myself while dealing with lupus, makes back-to-school tasks easier. With this disease comes hidden challenges, like thinking your way through brain fog, and days when the pain is high and your energy is low.

Make a commitment to yourself to honor your challenges as well as your strategies for coping with them. You can get through it all, but it just may require more planning than for someone without lupus.