

Crash Management

What is the *Energy Envelope*?

It is the balance between your available energy (the energy that your body produces) and your expended energy (the energy it takes to do both mental and physical activities). Most people have more to do on their “to-do list” than what they have available in stored energy. If you expend more energy that you have available, you will intensify your CFS/FM symptoms.

What is a *CRASH*?

A crash, or a flare up, happens when you exceed your energy envelope. There are varying degrees of crash intensities ranging from a few hours, to a few days, to months.

- **Large crashes** can be sudden (or progressively accrue if you ignore your symptom signals), and can last anywhere from a few weeks to months. In a large crash, your baseline energy envelope is cut in half of what is normal for you. This is very distressing, you might have had an energy envelope of 20% (of your previous energy) and in a crash this is reduced to half of that (10%). You might be housebound or bedbound and need to wait for your body to show signs of recuperation.
- At this time, you need to apply **aggressive rest therapy**. This means applying the most rest you can manage in order to allow your energy centers in your cells (mitochondria) to regenerate as fast as they are able to regenerate. Minimal activity means maximal recovery. By resting as much as you can, you will come out of the crash as soon as your body is able to regenerate its energy. Typically, people are only able to take care of their personal care needs and basic meal preparation.

What *TRIGGERS* a crash?

- Financial stress (i.e. applying or appealing disability claims)
- Moving to a new home or community
- Emotional distress, such as the loss of a loved one, a partnership ending, or interacting with family members
- Multiple illnesses that do not resolve completely along with continually “pushing” to function beyond your baseline energy envelope
- Travelling by air or by car
- Other stressor(s) you might be experiencing

How can you *RECUPERATE* from a crash?

The 3 D's:

- What tasks can you **DELEGATE** to others?
- What tasks can you **DELAY** until you are out of the crash?
- What tasks can you **DON'T DO**?

1. **Aggressive Rest Therapy:** Minimal activity means maximal mitochondrial recovery

2. Food Strategies:

- Can someone help you with food prep?
- Is there a meal delivery service that you can use?

- Does your grocery store deliver grocery orders?
- Is there a take-out restaurant that is an option for you?
- Do you have easy “grab-and-go” food store (or could someone make a grocery trip for you)?

3. *Personal Care:*

- Reduce your frequency of bathing or showering by half to conserve energy
- Would obtaining a shower chair or stool help preserve energy?
- Try doing a sponge bath or using wipes

4. *Nervous System Maintenance:*

- Check in with your nervous system throughout the day. Is it calm or activated?
- Assess activities that help you to feel calm, or neutral; and eliminate activities that trigger your fight-or-flight response (as much as possible)

5. *Sleep Strategies:*

- Try to maintain a regular sleep routine, and regular bedtime, to settle your nervous system before bed
- If naps are needed throughout the day, do they impact your night time sleep routine? Short more frequent naps might be needed. Ex-have two shorter naps spaced out during the day instead of one longer nap; and experiment with the right duration that helps alleviate your crash symptoms yet does not impact nighttime sleep.
- Ensure you are taking time to “rest your body” and lie in a flat position; this allows for the spine to be reset in a neutral position and gravity pressure is taken off the nervous system.

6. *Social Connection:*

- Does it help to connect with others, or is this activity too stimulating at this time?
- Consider a short telephone call with a trusted person (perhaps 5 mins to do a check-in)
- Is it helpful to connect with ME/FM online resources?

When to connect with medical care?

- If you are concerned about your immediate safety; and feel you are a harm to yourself please connect with a crisis line (1-800-784-2433) or your local emergency department (911)
- Any symptoms that are not part of your symptom profile and are very distressing (i.e. chest pain that is new)
- When pain is 10 out of 10 on the pain scale.
- GP visits should be scheduled on a regular basis to monitor the chronic nature of your condition; and after a crash in order to document your crash symptoms. During a crash, your best course of action to engage in aggressive rest therapy (unless the above factors apply). During a crash your GP may not have any medications that can help you at that time; and aggressive rest is the quickest road to recovery.