Three Tips to Help Improve Your Quality of Life With COPD

by RUSSELL WINWOOD

The Importance of Support for Improving Your Quality of Life With COPD

I cannot put enough emphasis on the importance of having a strong support network with for a person with COPD. So, how good is yours?

How Does COPD Affect a Person's Life?

How you wake up in the morning can have a big influence on how your day will go – are you making the most of the day or are you fearful of what it will hold? These are questions you need to ask yourself. If you're fearful of the day then maybe your COPD support network, or lack thereof, is part of the reason.

Many people I've been in contact with who live alone find it quite difficult, as they have nobody to share the load with, nobody to remind them if they've taken their medication or help with the many requirements they have.

If this is sounding like you, maybe it's time to put steps in place to get some quality back in your day-to-day life. Consider these strategies to help improve your quality of life with COPD.

Have Someone to Rely On

Having a companion who you can rely on, whether it's a family member or a friend, is an important strategy. They don't have to be someone who's by your side every moment of the day, but ideally it will be someone who is only a phone call away. I think it's important to maintain as much independence as possible to keep the mind positive, however, we all need a hand.

My travels are a great example. I've traveled from Australia to Los Angeles on to Florida and I'm now sitting on a deck of a cruise ship sailing through the Caribbean. None of this could be done without my support network, primarily my wife. However, my doctors, travel agent, online forum friends, airline and cruise-line staff have all played a part in this holiday.

With my oxygen requirements, and the fact I tripped on day one of the cruise, strained my Achilles and ended up on crutches, highlights the importance of having a support network. This is the first time I've had to use crutches since being diagnosed and it's a challenge – I look it as my temporary exercise plan.

Get Organized

Having your home and work environments set up in a way that makes day-to-day life easier is also important. Having your medication, oxygen, telephone, and other essential items in easy to get to places means that if you have an episode you can access what you need quickly and not become anxious.

My local pharmacy has all my medication scripts on file so I can easily email or send them a text message to have

particular scripts filled. Some pharmacies offer a delivery service. This might be something to look at for those days you can't get out.

Next page: More tips on how to improve your quality of life with COPD, including learning about your COPD and connecting with others.

Learn and Connect

Given the availability of information online today you would think COPD patients would have the knowledge they need to control their disease, but this isn't always the case. I have come across many patients who have been living with COPD for many years and know nothing about pulmonary rehabilitation programs or even the latest medications available to them.

This is usually for one of two reasons: either they were diagnosed many years ago and told, "Go home and take it easy, you're only going to get worse," or they have no computer available to them to enable them to research their COPD treatment options.

Having a computer to access online information can open so many doors. I'm traveling as I write this article, and part of the trip involves catching up with a fellow COPD patient in Florida who I have been chatting to online in a COPD patients forum. We exchange ideas about medications, exercise plans, and our own COPD experiences.

There are many great credible resources online, such as this site, where people from patients to carers and medical professionals share their own COPD experiences. You are able to communicate on these sites so you can get advice from people who may share your situation.

If you have no family or friends close by, this is especially important. In some areas, there are pulmonary rehab programs and local support groups you can go to, where there may be people in similar situations who you can talk to. You can help each other build support networks.

However, if you're in an area without many resources then going online can help. *NewLifeOutlook* has a great online community where people share their stories and advice, and there are many other sites with differing formats that allow you to look for people in your area to connect with.

Another avenue to connect with people is through your hobbies. Joining a hobby group opens up another world of people to help form your support network. Forming friendships through these groups is not only a good opportunity to find support but it helps keep you in a positive frame of mind.

I tend to lean towards people with a positive outlook, as it will rub off on you and they're more likely to help out.

Conclusion

The outcome of anything we do in life largely comes down to how much effort we're willing to put in. I have lived by that theory since I was diagnosed.

We can take the easy option and use the excuse that it's too hard, but at the end of the day, that road is a destructive one. In the three and a half years since I've been diagnosed, my support network has stretched across the globe and yours can too.

Ask yourself this question: do I want the best quality of life with COPD I can have?

If the answer is yes – and it should be – then you need to put in the effort. Eat healthy foods, take your medications as prescribed, exercise regularly and importantly build that support network that will allow you to live the best quality of life with COPD!

Having these strategies in place makes my life much easier and it's simply a matter of communicating with people what you need and when you need it.