

Discovering Self-Confidence

BY JENNIFER RUGULA
SAN RAMON, CALIF.

"In high school, fibromyalgia wasn't in my vocabulary until my family doctor told me I had it. The anger, frustration and embarrassment of not being like my peers caused me to withdraw from socializing with other teenagers, and I delved further into my studies. Reading and writing took me to safe places where I was healthy and did not have to interact.

"My parents couldn't stand to watch me isolate myself any longer. During my sophomore year, they encouraged me to find a job to build my confidence and interact with adults. My maturity and reliability landed me a position in a family-owned package shipping business. At first, I worked a couple of hours per week and only moved lightweight packages. Over time I took on more hours and responsibilities, and I noticed I could shuffle heavier packages as my body became accustomed to bending and lifting.

"Parents have a way of knowing what is right for their children. Working gave me a sense of pride in myself that academics could not. At my job, I met adults and some teenagers who got to know me as a willing, competent worker. I became the self-assured, capable person my parents always knew I had the potential to be.

"Now I am a full-time college student at a university away from home. When I return home for breaks, I go back to work, earning extra money for school expenses. Academics will always be an important part of my life, but it is the familiar faces of the customers I've met over the years that remind me how far I've come in my struggle with fibromyalgia."

TRIED AND TRUE

Easy Earrings

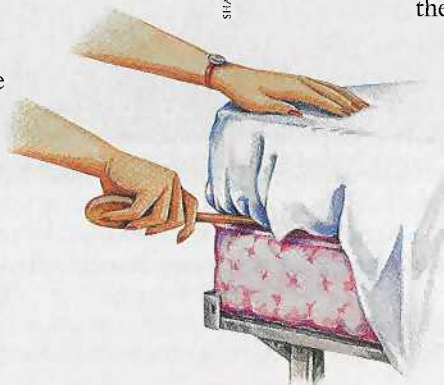
If you like wearing pierced earrings but have a tough time with the tiny earring backs, consider buying french hook earrings. They're a popular style that slides on easily and stays in place without using earring backs. Look for them at local stores the next time you're buying earrings.

SUBMITTED BY FREDERICKA SIMS
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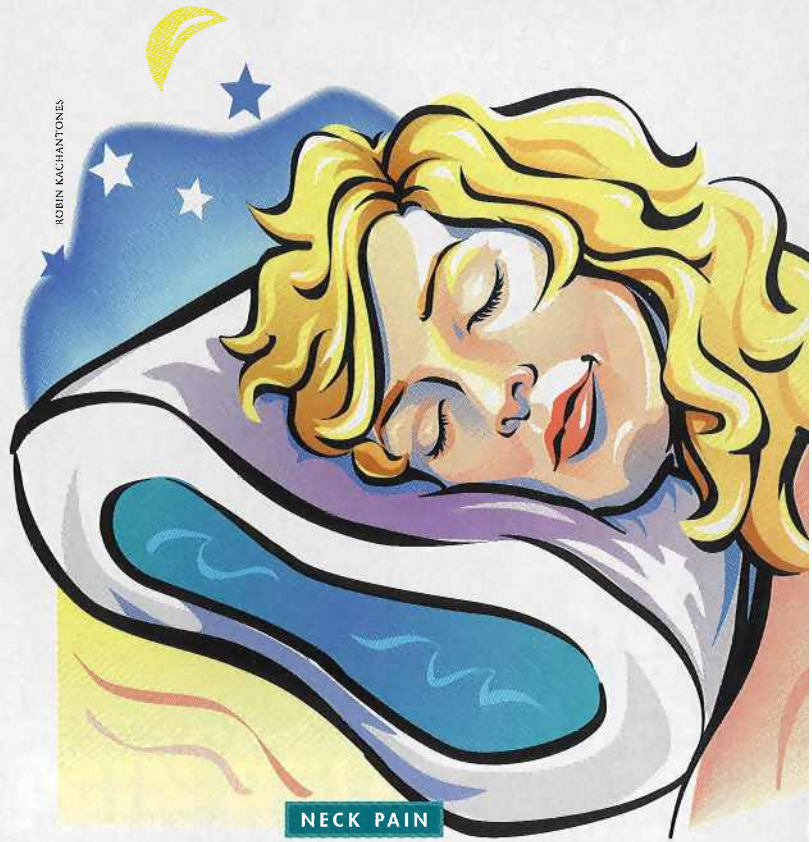
A Tucking Trick

Painful hands and fingers can make putting sheets on your bed a troublesome task. To help make tucking in sheets easier, try holding a wooden spoon by the bowl end and using the long handle to push the sheets under the mattress.

SUBMITTED BY NORINE DENNIS
PUNTA GORDA, FLA.



SHAWN CARSON



ROBIN KACHANTONES

NECK PAIN

WAKE UP ON WATER

Are your mornings a literal pain in the neck? The solution may be as simple as adding water. A recent Johns Hopkins University study shows that a water-based pillow may help people with chronic neck pain sleep better.

During the five-week study, 41 people with neck pain used a standard (down or foam) pillow for one week and then tried two options: a roll pillow and a water-based pillow for two weeks each. The water-based pillow they used is made of soft polyester fiber with a pouch of water, adjustable for firmness, and a thermal reflector.

After using the water-based pillow, the study participants reported "reduced morning pain intensity, increased pain relief and improved quality of sleep," says study co-author Marco Pappagallo, MD. Dr. Pappagallo believes the water-based pillow improves sleep because it allows the neck to make a natural adjustment. "It also appears that this pillow's thermal reflector lining may reflect heat generated by the neck and head. That, in turn, works like a hot pack through the night to help with pain relief," he adds.

The water pillow used in the study, the *Mediflow Waterbase* pillow, retails for \$49.95 at medical supply and home health-care stores.

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LAURA DAILY

QuickTakes edited by Shelly Morrow