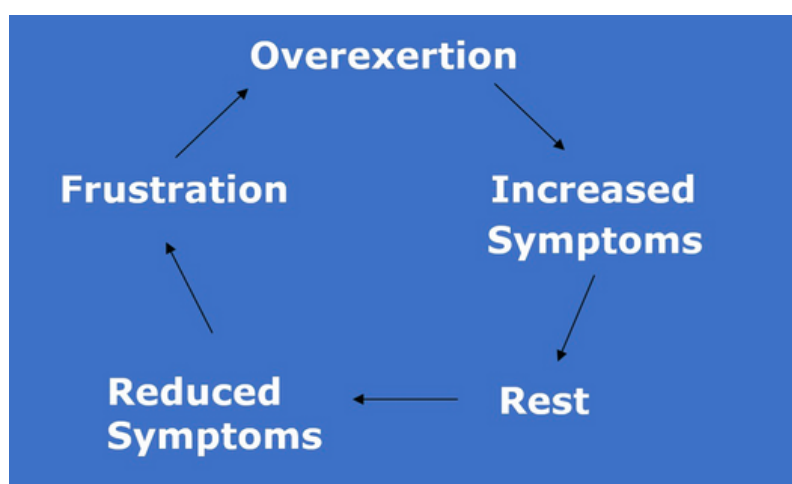


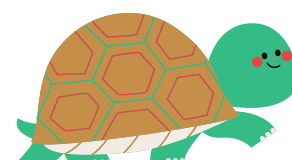
The Push/Crash Cycle

Self-management through lifestyle change is a key treatment for ME/CFS, fibromyalgia, Long COVID and people who have significant pain and fatigue. But many people with these conditions can feel caught in repeated cycles of push and crash. They swing between active times followed by times of intense symptoms when they need to rest. This is called **the Push/Crash Cycle**.



1. **Overexertion:** When symptoms are reduced, people push to get as much done as they can, which leads to overexertion.
2. **Increased symptoms:** The overexertion gives you a “payback”, where you might day hours, days or weeks of increased symptoms and lower energy.
3. **Rest:** Rest helps recovery from the overexertion.
4. **Reduced symptoms:** People then experience those “payback” symptoms reducing and start to feel better again.
5. **Frustration:** Increased frustration from having spent so much time resting and recovering and then push to complete activities at a higher level again, resulting in overexertion and increased symptoms.

Repeated cycles of push and crash often leave people caught on a demoralising roller coaster with their lives feeling out of control. In some conditions like ME/CFS and Long COVID, which might feature a symptom called Post-Exertional Malaise, where the increased symptoms are out of proportion to the level of overexertion, repeated push/crash cycles can actually lead to a permanent reduction in baseline capacity.



The Push/Crash Cycle

An indication that you're in a push/crash cycle can be if your symptoms and energy vary wildly from day to day. Our baseline capacity only changes very slowly, so if you're noticing one day you have a lot of energy and the next day you're completely bedridden, it's likely that you're exceeding your baseline capacity and overdoing it and that is causing a crash and then recovery. The tricky thing with push/crash cycles is sometimes they are not based on activity done on one day but instead a sum of the amount of activity you've done in the last few days or weeks.

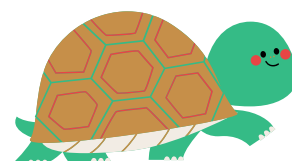
But there is hope!

Pacing offers the chance to regain control and the possibility of a more stable and predictable life, with lower symptoms. Using pacing, you can live your life according to a plan, rather than in response to symptoms, giving you a sense of managing your illness, rather than the illness controlling you. The benefits of pacing include:

- Lower symptoms
- More predictability
- Empowerment
- Less time resting
- More productive use of time
- Chance of improvement

Emerge ACT have a number of services tailored to helping you learn self-management and pacing strategies to help you feel more in control of your health. Contact us to find out more.

Information in this factsheet is adapted from "Managing Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and Fibromyalgia" by Bruce Campbell. This factsheet is part of our Club Tortoise program for pacing with energy-limiting conditions.



For more information or help managing your condition:

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