

Spoons & Your Energy Envelope

A gentle companion for pacing — for nervous systems and bodies whose energy doesn't behave the way the world assumes it should.

Your energy is real, finite, and worth spending on purpose.

If your energy is limited in a way other people's doesn't seem to be — through ME/CFS, long COVID, hypermobility or POTS, fibromyalgia, chronic pain, autistic or ADHD burnout, or the long tail of recovering from collapse — you already know that **"just push through"** is advice from a different body. These two borrowed ideas won't give you more energy. What they give you is a language for the energy you have, and a way to stop spending it as though there were more.

one

Spoons

The metaphor comes from Christine Miserandino, who in 2003 explained life with lupus to a friend by handing her a fistful of spoons. Each spoon is a unit of energy. You begin the day with a limited number — and everything takes one, sometimes several: showering, a phone call, a hard email, masking in a meeting, being in a bright room.

Most people never count. We have to. When the spoons are gone, they're gone — and the precision was never the point. The point is having a way to say, out loud, *"I don't have the spoons for that today,"* and be understood.

Christine Miserandino, "The Spoon Theory" (2003)

two

The Energy Envelope

Where spoons give you a single day, the energy envelope — developed within the ME community and researched by Leonard Jason — gives you the shape of the longer pattern. Your envelope is the band of activity you can sustain *without paying for it later*.

Stay roughly inside it and the system holds. Spend past its edge — even when adrenaline makes that feel possible, even when you seem to get away with it at the time — and the bill arrives afterwards: the crash, the flare, the post-exertional wave that can cost far more than the thing was worth. The work isn't to push the edge. It's to find where it is.

Energy envelope theory; research by Leonard A. Jason

How they fit together

Spoons are the felt daily budget, and the words to share it. The envelope is the boundary you're spending inside. Used together: spoons help you decide what *today* can hold; the envelope helps you not borrow so heavily against tomorrow that you lose the whole week.

The boom-and-bust trap

Most of us learn pacing the hard way. A good day arrives, we spend everything it offers and some of what it doesn't — and we pay in days of collapse. The cruelty is that the better you feel, the more the edge hides. So the radical move is the counter-intuitive one: *rest before you're empty, not after*. Rest isn't the reward for staying inside the envelope. It's the thing that lets the envelope hold — and, sometimes, slowly widen.

None of this is laziness, and none of it needs earning. Pacing isn't giving up; it's the most informed possible use of a real and limited resource. And if you overspend anyway — you will, because life and love and emergencies don't consult your envelope — that's information, not failure. Begin again from wherever you are. — Dr Jay x

Where am I today?

You don't have to fill all of this in. One box is enough. Leave the rest blank with a clear conscience — that restraint is the practice.

1 My spoons today

Circle a rough number — not a measurement, just a reading.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

a low-spoon day middling a fuller day

2 Today's non-negotiables — and roughly what each costs

The few things that genuinely must happen. Be honest about the price.

_____	SPOONS
_____	SPOONS
_____	SPOONS

3 What can be deferred, dropped, or done differently

Tomorrow is allowed to carry some of this. So is "good enough."

4 My edge-warning signs

The body's tells before the crash.

words get harder · limbs heavier · sound too loud · irritable

5 What actually refills me

Deposits — not just things that numb.

rest · warmth · water · quiet · a familiar episode · lying flat

6 If I borrow from tomorrow — what's the repayment?

Borrowing is sometimes right. Naming the cost in advance is how it stays a choice.

7 One kindness for the version of me who overspends anyway