



# what is it like to live with a chronic illness?

# Spoon Theory

The Spoon Theory is a metaphor created by Christine Miserandino to help explain the experience of living with a chronic illness. It uses spoons as a unit of measurement to represent energy. In the context of living with heart disease or failure, the Spoon Theory can help convey the daily struggle of managing energy, as the heart can't pump blood efficiently, which limits the body's ability to perform even normal daily tasks.



Imagine you start your day with a set number of spoons. For someone without heart disease or heart failure, they may have an unlimited supply of spoons, or at least a healthy reserve. But for someone living with medical heart issue, their spoons are limited. Every activity, from brushing their teeth to walking across the room, requires a certain number of spoons. Overexerting could mean they run out of spoons too soon, leading to exhaustion, difficulty breathing, or even more serious health consequences.

## HOW THE SPOON THEORY APPLIES WITH HEART DISEASE OR FAILURE

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**Limited Energy Reserve:** Just like someone with heart disease or failure has a limited number of spoons, their energy is finite. Simple tasks like walking, getting dressed, or doing the dishes may take a significant number of spoons.

**Exertion = More Spoons Used:** Any activity that requires extra effort, such as going upstairs or running errands, may use up more spoons. You might feel like you've overdone it when you start to feel winded or fatigued.

**Rest and Recovery:** Resting or taking a break is important to "regenerate" spoons. However, there's often not enough time for full recovery, so by the end of the day you may find yourself running low on spoons and feeling exhausted.

**Prioritizing Tasks:** People living with heart failure often need to make difficult decisions about which tasks are "worth" spending spoons on, and sometimes things like cleaning, cooking, or socializing have to be put on hold to conserve energy for essential activities like eating or taking medications.

# SPOON CHART FOR DAILY TASKS

This chart illustrates how someone with **Heart Disease or Failure** might allocate their daily spoons for various tasks. The number of spoons used for each task may vary based on how severe their heart disease or failure is, but the point is that tasks that may seem simple to others take up a lot of energy.


Let's say your day starts with **20** spoons & by the afternoon you only have only **6** spoons left, how will you prioritize your tasks and find ways to conserve energy?



Sleep is critical for daily replenishing. If you had a poor sleep last night, minus up to 4 spoons to start the day



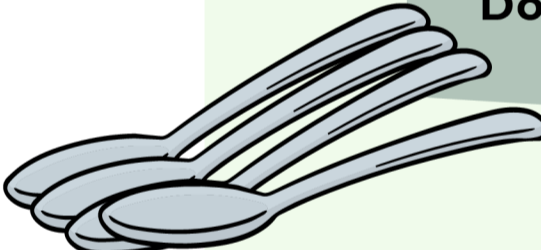
|                    |                 |                       |                         |              |                    |
|--------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|--------------|--------------------|
| Brushing Teeth     | Getting Dressed | Blow Dry Hair         | Curl or Straighten Hair | Texting      | Watching TV        |
| Taking Medications |                 | Going to the Bathroom | Cup of Tea              |              | Picking Up an Item |
| Make Up            | Shave Legs      | Listening to Music    |                         | Feed the Pet | Reading            |



|                                |                  |                          |               |                  |
|--------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|---------------|------------------|
| Waking up & Getting Out of Bed | Eating Breakfast | Socializing (small talk) | Manicure      | Crafting         |
|                                | Pay Bills        | Water Indoor Plants      |               | Emotional Stress |
| Cuddling Pet                   |                  | Walking to the Car       | Eating Dinner | Going to Bed     |



|                  |                      |                           |             |                       |
|------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| Making Breakfast | Light House Cleaning | Video Games               | Board Games | Going to the Movies   |
| Showering        |                      | Driving to an Appointment |             | Cheers Kids at Sports |






|                     |                |                  |                |
|---------------------|----------------|------------------|----------------|
| Going to the Doctor | Dinner Out     | Grocery Shopping | Baking         |
|                     | Cooking Dinner | Play with Kids   | Kids to School |



|           |            |                 |
|-----------|------------|-----------------|
| Laundry   | Work Day   | Shovelling      |
| Yard Work | Travelling | Changing Sheets |
|           |            | Exercise        |

### RECHARGING YOUR SPOONS

Remember this is theoretical and each person's recovery is different and each day can be different for those living with Heart Disease or Failure.

- Nap 1 hour + 1 - 3 spoons 
- Caffeine 1-2 cups + 1 - 2 spoons 
- Rest/Mindfulness 30 minutes + 1 Spoons 

## How This Feels on a Daily Basis:

**Making Choices:** Some days, you may have to choose between tasks. For example, you might decide to skip doing the laundry to save spoons for cooking dinner or getting enough rest.

**Overdoing It:** Sometimes, you might push yourself to do more because you feel like you "should" be able to, but this could lead to running out of spoons too soon and feeling more tired or short of breath later.

**Limited Socializing:** Social events or interactions with others may require you to use many spoons, which can make you feel isolated or guilty when you need to turn down invitations.

## Why This Matters?

The Spoon Theory is a way to help others understand the energy limitations and decision-making

process that comes with living with a chronic illness like heart disease or heart failure. By recognizing the need to prioritize and balance daily activities, those around you can be more empathetic and supportive. Every day is a series of small choices, and sometimes just getting through the day requires a lot more effort than it might seem.



These guidelines are compiled as general information. Always speak with your care team. Thank you!

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