

# Aimee's Cord of Three

by Aimee Shannon



Support group leader Aimee Shannon of Ohio offers up three ways for groupies to engage, socialize and support each other, sharing how this cord of three is less likely to be broken!

**W**hen asked to describe how they feel about having a local fibromyalgia support group, members shared words like hope, help, current information, supportive, comfort, relieved, acceptance, understanding, lifesaving, grateful and thankful. Those words truly sum up all that a local support group can offer those of us managing a disorder like fibromyalgia.

I'm a licensed social worker who spent 14 years working as a child abuse forensic investigator. I adored my job and while I tried to push my health on the back burner, I eventually wasn't able to continue to work a full time job. After leaving work and applying for disability, I realized that the social worker heart that was a part of me still needed a mission. I also realized that trying to manage my fibromyalgia and other health conditions was becoming a challenge and I needed support. I looked in my area for a support group and found none. I decided that was what my mission needed to be.

I founded my first in person support group in August of 2008. I founded a second in person support group in May 2009, about 30 miles away from the first group. This led to my starting a Facebook support page called Fibromyalgia Support Groups by Aimee. I had intended on it just being a place to check in between meetings but it's grown to having over 2000 members. And all of this led to Roxanne Black of Friends' Health Connection contacting me to help with a Virtual Support Group for people with fibromyalgia and chronic pain. This format is exciting and gives an opportunity for people unable to get out often to still have a live connection with others.

Starting and running these groups has given me a mission and a purpose. I spend time researching on the internet and put together information to share with the groups. I've learned so much about my own illnesses and love having an opportunity to pass that knowledge on. My groups work to obtain proclamations from our local towns recognizing May 12th Fibromyalgia Awareness Day. We have developed and printed kits for all new members of the groups and we raise awareness in our communities in several other ways, too.

Being a part of a supportive group, either in person or virtually is critical to the wellness of those of us with a chronic illness. Fibromyalgia is especially difficult to manage alone as symptoms and problems change often. Having others who truly understand provides a soothing balm like nothing else.

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*Aimee Shannon is a licensed social worker who founded Fibromyalgia Support Groups by Aimee in 2008 in Troy, OH. The program has two in person meetings plus a virtual meeting each month, as well as an active Facebook support page. You can reach her Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/FibromyalgiaSupportGroupsbyAimee](http://www.facebook.com/FibromyalgiaSupportGroupsbyAimee); and join the Friends' Health Connection at [www.friendshealthconnection.org](http://www.friendshealthconnection.org).*

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