



ONWARD

THE BALANCING ACT: WORKING WITH gMG

**TIPS AND TECHNIQUES FOR MANAGING
GENERALIZED MYASTHENIA GRAVIS (gMG)
IN THE WORKPLACE**



gMG ON THE JOB

Generalized myasthenia gravis (gMG) is sometimes described as an “invisible condition.” Its unpredictable symptoms may create additional challenges when you’re at work.

Working with gMG is challenging for many reasons, but finding a balance is possible. There are no quick fixes, but with the right support and determination, many find ways to enjoy and succeed in their jobs.



WORKPLACE CHALLENGES: AN INVISIBLE CONDITION

Your coworkers or managers might not know you have gMG. So, you may worry that they don’t understand your symptoms or take your needs seriously. Still, there are ways to be seen and heard.

Feeling Included

Because gMG is an invisible condition, your coworkers might not realize how it affects you. This can sometimes make you feel left out or misunderstood. Sharing your experiences can help them understand and support you better, creating a more positive work environment.

Clear Communication

Interacting with others at work can sometimes be challenging because the intent behind words or actions isn’t always clear. By openly communicating about gMG, you can help your coworkers understand your needs.

WORKING WITH gMG: STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

When managing life with gMG at work, you can use different strategies to help manage your stress, your expectations, and your outlook.

There are two types of strategies you can use, one focusing on your actions and one focusing on your feelings.

1. Action-focused strategies

This approach tries to change the situation. This can help you feel more empowered to ask for accommodations, making your work environment more supportive and understanding.

Examples of action-focused coping strategies include:

- Brainstorming solutions to address the problem
- Making changes one step at a time
- Getting advice from a social support network
- Asking for help and communicating about your condition
- Learning new skills or exploring an alternate career path if your current work is too physically demanding
- Exploring how anti-discrimination laws may support you
 - o Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA): www.ada.gov
 - o Department of Labor: www.dol.gov/general/topic/disability/ada

2. Emotion-focused strategies

This approach tries to change how you feel about a situation. Practicing relaxation techniques, staying positive, and seeking support from colleagues or loved ones can help you manage the emotional aspects of working with gMG. Embracing these opportunities not only helps you better manage gMG but can also open doors to a fulfilling and sustainable career.

Examples of emotion-focused coping strategies include:

- Connecting with a social support network for emotional support
- Using humor to lighten the mood
- Keeping an optimistic, positive, or hopeful mindset
- Focusing on what is good in your life and all of the things you can do

**gMG BRINGS QUESTIONS.
MAKE A PLAN.**

COMMUNICATING ABOUT gMG: YOU HAVE OPTIONS

Some people tell their coworkers or managers about their gMG. This can help with requesting and receiving accommodations. Sharing your condition with colleagues can help them understand what you are going through and clarify your needs. But remember: You can always decide how much to share.

By talking openly, you not only help yourself but also make the workplace more understanding and supportive.



What, how, when, and to whom?



Everyone's situation is unique. When deciding what to disclose about your condition, ask yourself the following questions:

- Does your condition impact your ability to complete tasks?
- How would sharing details about your condition make you feel?
- Do you feel like you'll gain or lose control by disclosing? (What we tell others is part of our work identity, and we may want to control what we disclose and who gets to know.)
- Would disclosing your condition help you gain the accommodations you need?

What are your reasons?

Here are some reasons for sharing about gMG:



- To help others see you as a person managing a condition, not the other way around
- To receive adaptations or adjustments available from the government, your workplace, or coworkers
- To experience relief from the pressure of hiding your gMG symptoms from others
- To be consistent with your own values (some people value transparency or feel educating others is important)

Plan, identify, practice

This approach might be useful when talking about gMG or asking for accommodations:

1

Plan to share the reason you're disclosing. Be specific about what you want to get out of disclosure (e.g., accommodations or understanding).

2

Identify how much information you will share. You do not have to share everything. You can have a brief, "need to know" conversation.

3

Practice what you are going to say and get feedback from a trusted source. You can talk with someone from an advocacy group or a friend. If possible, ask for advice from others living with gMG.

TALKING ABOUT GENERALIZED MYASTHENIA GRAVIS (gMG) AT WORK



When discussing gMG with your employer or coworkers, consider following these steps:

1. **Begin With a Thank You:** Start by thanking your manager or coworker for taking the time to meet with you.
2. **Explain Your Condition:** Briefly explain that you have generalized myasthenia gravis (gMG), a rare condition. Mention that while there is no cure, it can be managed.
3. **Describe Your Symptoms:** Share the specific symptoms that most impact your work. This helps others understand your needs better.
4. **Discuss Strategies and Accommodations:** Outline the strategies and accommodations that will help you remain productive and continue to grow in your career. Be specific about what you need to manage your symptoms effectively.
5. **Offer to Answer Questions:** Let them know you are open to discussing gMG further and answering any questions they might have.
6. **Request Confidentiality:** If confidentiality is important to you, politely ask them to keep the information private and not to share it with others in the company without your permission.

On the next page, you'll find a worksheet that provides a clear, structured way to share important gMG information with your employer or coworkers, ensuring they understand your needs and how to support you effectively.



INFORMATION I'D LIKE TO SHARE ABOUT GENERALIZED MYASTHENIA GRAVIS (gMG)

I have gMG

Myasthenia gravis (MG) is a chronic, rare, autoimmune, neuromuscular disease. Generalized myasthenia gravis (gMG) is a form of MG that causes severe muscle weakness throughout the body.

How gMG impacts my work

Generalized myasthenia gravis (gMG) can cause unpredictable symptoms that affect my work. Here are some examples:

- Muscle weakness and fatigue: May interfere with traveling to work, completing tasks, and standing for long periods.
- Blurred or double vision: Can make computer work difficult.
- Slurred speech: Can make communication challenging.

MY gMG INFORMATION

My most frequent symptoms:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Requested accommodations:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Emergency contact:

Name: _____

Relationship: _____

Phone: _____





TREAT YOURSELF KINDLY: LEARNING SELF-COMPASSION

Experiencing challenges or stress at work can affect your well-being.

One way to enhance your well-being is to practice self-compassion. Treat yourself with kindness and understanding.

Self-compassion means you will:

- **Treat** yourself kindly—the way you would treat someone you care about
- **Think** about your emotions in a nonjudgmental, objective way—not avoiding—or dwelling on—negative emotions
- **Remember** that negative experiences are part of being human. Everyone struggles with self-compassion, probably including some of your coworkers

The benefits of a little compassion

People who practice self-compassion have greater well-being, less depression and anxiety, and more resilience when dealing with stress.

In the workplace, self-compassion may reduce stress levels. During a job search, people who practice self-compassion also experience less emotional exhaustion overall.



SELF-COMPASSION ACTIVITY:

Treat yourself like you would treat a friend.
When a friend struggles, how do you respond?

What do you do?

What do you say?

What's the tone of the conversation?

Now, let's apply this same approach to yourself.

If you act toward yourself in the same way you act toward a friend, you may notice a change in your outlook. When you're having a tough moment, try treating yourself with kindness.



3 KEYS TO MANAGING gMG AT WORK

Dealing with gMG at work can be challenging, but using these three key strategies can help.



1

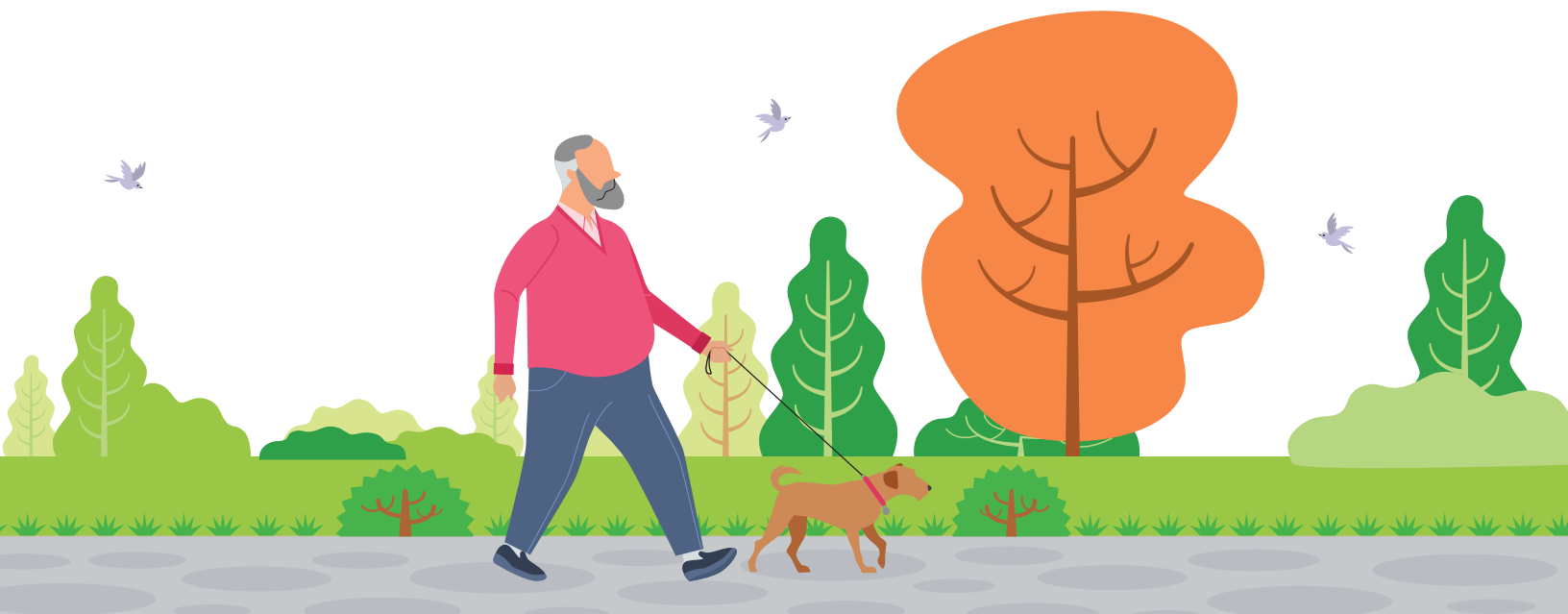
Focus on what you can control. You can change how you approach the problem and/or change how you feel about it.

2

Communicate your needs to others. When you need help, ask. There are people ready to listen.

3

Challenge your thinking. Thoughts are powerful. When we adjust our thinking, it can make a difference.





ONWARD

**PERSONALIZED RARE DISEASE SUPPORT
DESIGNED TO MOVE YOU FORWARD**

1- 844-ONWARD-1

For more tips on communicating about gMG with managers, coworkers, family, and friends, reach out to your ONWARD® Care Coordinator.



For more information on how ONWARD® can help you, please scan the code or visit ucbONWARD.com.

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US-RZ-2400645