



Your Social Security Disability Hearing: Answering Questions about Your Everyday Routine

At your hearing, the Administrative Law Judge will ask what you do every day. The judge is trying to determine if your daily routine truly reflects the symptoms and conditions you have described. Obviously, if you say the pain in your legs is so bad that you can hardly walk, but you also say you play tennis every day, the judge is not going to believe you about those symptoms.

Your best approach is to take the judge through your whole day, hour by hour, describing how your symptoms and condition have changed the way you do things. This will illustrate to the judge the full impact of your disability. Your disability lawyer should help you develop a complete and persuasive account of how your disability has altered your daily life. What activities take longer to do and how much longer? Do you need to take longer breaks after routine activities? Do you need to spend more time every day sitting or lying down? Why? Do you need other people to help you do things you used to be able to do yourself, and, if so, who provides this assistance? Describe how long you do an activity and how long you rest afterwards. Tell where you rest, whether it's sitting or lying down, whether it's on the couch or the bed or a recliner chair. Tell how long it takes you to do a project now compared to how long it used to take you, and why it takes longer.

Effective testimony about your daily routine, prepared in advance in consultation with your disability lawyer, is a perfect chance for you to support your disability case with specific details. If the judge asks you what you typically do every day, don't say, "Nothing." Tell the judge what you do, no matter how boring or obvious it may seem to you.

Don't be vague or overly general along the lines of, "Oh, I do some basic chores, work around the house, go shopping,". Tell the judge if such chores and housework are difficult for you, if you have to stop and start as you do them, or if you can't do them as efficiently or completely as you could before. Include any time you have to spend recovering from excess fatigue, discomfort or other symptoms after these activities. Your description of your everyday routine should fully and accurately convey any obstacles or difficulties you encounter or overcome on a regular basis.