11 Things People With RA Are Sick of Hearing

by ANNA SCANLON

What Not to Say to Someone with Rheumatoid Arthritis

While most people don't mean to be offensive when they talk to us about our condition, many of them are all the same. How many of these 11 things are you sick of hearing?

1. We All Have Aches and Pains

Well, certainly, we all have aches and pains. That is associated with exercise, aging and general running around. However, people with RA have aches and pains that are much worse than general aches and pains. Pains associated with RA can be not only debilitating, but can also cause disability and disfigurement.

Although people often get pain from general aging, and sometimes painful osteoarthritis, it is definitely not the same thing.

2. We're All Tired

People who have 9-5 jobs, children and everything else likely are tired from running around and the general hustle and bustle of life. However, when someone has RA, this means their immune system is overactive, causing their body to attack itself and excessive inflammation. This can result in not just tiredness, but outright fatigue.

Fatigue is much different than tiredness from running around. It can mean that some days, taking a shower is even out of the question because it is just too difficult –very different from being tired from after a day's work.

3. You Need to Learn to Push Yourself

This is perhaps one of the worst and I have gotten it quite often. People with RA usually know their bodies well and are generally not using their illness as an excuse to not do things. Far too often, people get very offended by RA patients' lack of ability to do something, taking it extremely personally. This isn't something they are making up, nor is it something they are doing simply to spite you.

Remember, living with this pain is much worse for the person who is suffering from it. It is a bummer when they have to miss things you were looking forward to, but you have to remember that they were likely looking forward to it as well.

4. Have You Tried Going Vegan/Paleo/Gluten Free?

There are numerous people out there who claim diets can cure autoimmune disorders, with very little (to no) evidence of it actually working. Eating a healthy balanced diet and getting as much exercise as possible is a great way to help tame RA, but it certainly isn't going to cure it. Additionally, there isn't a magic diet that one can eat

that will “repair” the body.

5. Why Do You Want to Load Your Body With Medication? Don't You Know There Are Terrible Side Effects?

This goes along the same lines as trying a miracle diet. Many people falsely believe that the health industry is somehow keeping people sick by prescribing them medication with really harsh side effects and that they can cure their diseases with a special diet or detox. This information is often found in alternative health journals or other such websites that claim food is to blame for ailments such as RA and a detox and diet change will enable the person to go off their meds.

This is entirely untrue as many people with RA need their medication to stop or slow the progression of their disease or help their serious pain. Unfortunately, a lot of the medication RA patients take does cause some pretty bad side effects, but patients often have to put up with this in order to feel better in the long run.

6. You Looked Fine Yesterday

Such is the nature of a chronic, autoimmune illness like RA. Patients may look fine one day, even one minute, and feel sick the next. Autoimmune diseases are completely unpredictable and therefore someone can seem perfectly normal, and then be very sick the next hour, day or week.

7. You’re Still Sick?

Unfortunately diseases like RA are chronic, meaning that you will suffer from them for your entire life. RA isn’t the flu – it isn’t something that magically goes away after a week or two in bed. It is lifelong and will last forever.

8. Why Would You Miss My Event When You Were at Christy's Last Week?

As I mentioned before, most people with RA will never purposefully miss something just to spite you, or use it as an excuse. Missing events and other big things in their own lives and the lives of friends and family is hard enough on the person with RA, and there is no need to make it worse by making them feel guilty on top of it.

Remember, they probably feel terrible already for missing your event as they were likely also looking forward to it. Additionally, RA can be fickle, so that means that sometimes people do feel well enough to attend one person’s event one week (or even one day) and have to miss another event at another time.

9. If Only You Lost a Little Weight…

While this may be a valid concern in some respects, many people with RA are on steroids that make them retain water like crazy or cause severe bloating. They can also pack on the pounds relatively easily with steroids, giving the appearance of or actually becoming overweight.

Unless you know exactly what medication someone is taking and are able to see their daily food intake, you should not make comments about their weight or dietary habits.

10. I Know Someone With RA and They Are Able to Work, Go to School and Raise Three Kids. Why Are You so Ill?

Everyone has varying degrees of RA. Some people with RA are able to carry on lives that are very similar to their lives before with only intermittent pain or flares that will temporarily make them ill. Some people are totally and permanently disabled and may even not be able to walk. It fully depends on the person and their individual journey with RA. No two people with RA are going to be exactly the same.

11. You're Too Young to Have All of These Health Issues/Arthritis!

Unfortunately, there is no lower age limit on RA or arthritis and people can get it at any age.

Remember, when speaking to someone about having RA, stop and consider whether what is about to come out of your mouth is helpful and supportive, or not.