How Taking Steps to Relieve Stress Can Help Reduce Pain

by NEWLIFEOUTLOOK TEAM

Lead a More Peaceful Life

There seems to be a definite connection between psychological stress and physical pain, whether that relationship rests on a chemical reaction in the body or simply a change in perception. Daily stress can keep you from participating in healthy activities that help relieve your symptoms, which will set you back.

Some studies have even suggested that job strain can increase the risk of developing rheumatoid arthritis in the first place. Regardless of specific circumstances, every RA sufferer can lead a more comfortable and productive life if they learn to diminish their stress.

How Rest and Activity Affect Stress

The problem with stress and pain is that they feed each other, which can make it particularly challenging to live a stress-free life with the daily pain of rheumatoid arthritis. The combination of rheumatoid arthritis and stress can create even more pain, which in turn makes you more stressed.

Tackle the pain and stress simultaneously with regular exercise, which will clear the mind as it improves circulation and muscle flexibility.

If you can, get outside for your workouts whenever you can – fresh air and natural light have a powerful effect on mood and perspective, which can stick with you throughout the day.

Sleep is important for muscle and joint recovery, but it’s also important for a clear and energetic demeanor. For those who suffer from rheumatoid arthritis, rest will not only recharge your battery, it will give your joints and muscles a chance to prepare for another day of activity.

Experts say you should aim for between 7 and 9 hours each night. If you have trouble falling and staying asleep, take time to physically relax your muscles with gentle stretching or massage before you go to bed.

The Power of Psychology

Although medication and physical activity keep stress at bay, your mind is a powerful tool in your treatment plan. There are several small ways to improve your outlook every day, and in turn, reduce your stress:

- **Stay positive**. It can be difficult to smile when you’re up against a painful set of symptoms, but studies show that optimism can physically overcome pain and discomfort. When you’re happy and positive, your brain releases endorphins, which fight pain. And when you keep an open mind, you are more likely to work toward a perfectly tailored treatment plan that delivers good results.

- **Find someone to lean on**. Sharing your feelings is really important, especially when your symptoms

spike and your mood dips. Whether a professional therapist appeals to you or you prefer to call on friends and family, don't hold it in – discuss the problems you're having and how your condition makes your life difficult. And when people offer their help, take it.

- **Learn to mentally relax**. This can be as simple as deep breathing to clam down, or as involved as guided meditation. Biofeedback is another promising approach for RA sufferers, since it teaches you to control certain involuntary bodily processes in order to lower blood pressure and physically relax your muscles.

Since stress can come in different forms, your plan of attack should involve a few different approaches. Work with your doctor to determine all the options available to you, and don't be afraid to ask for more help when you need it. If you take some time to think about the stress triggers in your life and the resources you have to overcome them, the task will be much more manageable.