Coping With Emotions, Relationships and Rheumatoid Arthritis

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Navigating Rheumatoid Arthritis and Relationships

When living with rheumatoid arthritis (RA), having a positive relationship with yourself is crucial. It can be easy to fall into the trap of self-doubt, negativity and criticism when your world seems to be crashing down after a diagnosis. In this article, we will take a look at rheumatoid arthritis and relationships and how this condition can affect connections with yourself, as well as friends and family.

The most important relationship you will ever have is with yourself. Before you can give 100% to any relationship, it is important to notice where you fall on that meter.

Are you showing up for yourself one-hundred percent? Are you treating yourself with respect? Are you taking care of your physical, mental, emotional and spiritual needs?

Rheumatoid arthritis can shape how we view every relationship in our lives. It creates an awareness within to see what is and not serving us anymore.

Any drama, arguments and negative behavior we may have put up with in the past, becomes an eye-opener to start shaping our relationships towards positivity, understanding and love.

Illness whether we like to admit it or not, changes our overall outlook on life but only if we let it. We become more grateful and appreciative of those around us.

Self-Love Leads to Self-Care

Self-love is a popular subject lately. What is it exactly? How can self-love benefit someone living with rheumatoid arthritis?

The concept of self-love is not something that can be easily explained because it is something you feel within. People have various definitions but rarely is there any discussions around chronic illness and self-love.

Rheumatoid arthritis can create low self-esteem, especially when physical changes start to occur.

Two parts of self-love are respect and acceptance. Loving and respecting yourself are the same thing. If you do not respect your health journey, you will put up with people who treat it the same way.

Rheumatoid arthritis requires the people in our lives to respect our limits, boundaries and needs. When we voice what we are going through, it creates understanding and respect.

Once you get past this, acceptance is key. Illness can be unpredictable, and we need to learn to love ourselves through all the good, the bad and the ugly phases.

Learning to let go, surrender and know that we are trying our best is all we can do. Being hard on ourselves will only lead to unwanted stress and disappointment. That's why taking it one step at a time to bring in self-care practices in our daily routine can help release any tension, worry, sadness, grief, loneliness, depression, unworthiness and lack of self-love we may have during moments of difficulty.

Here are a few ideas to start a daily practice of self-care:

- Spending time with family or loved ones.
- Catching up with a good friend.
- Meditation.
- Deep breathing.
- Mindfulness.
- Journaling.
- Going for a walk.
- Physical exercise.
- Drinking plenty of water.
- Sleeping well.
- Eating healthy.
- Cutting out bad habits.
- Enjoying a hobby or pastime.
- Reading a good book.
- Watching your favorite TV show, movie or seeing a new one.
- Trying something new.

Dating, Rheumatoid Arthritis and Relationships

When you start to love, accept and care for yourself more, it will be easier to do the same for others that enter your life, in not only a platonic but romantic way too. Dating and relationships always take work no matter if you are living with an illness or not.

Trust, loyalty, support, good communication and listening are what help build a strong foundation. It's important when dating to be with someone who is loving and caring. A person who is interested in getting to know the authentic you with no other ulterior motives.

What happens when the person you are dating cannot really see that you are sick though? Rheumatoid arthritis can be an invisible illness and visible illness at the same time, or they can occur separately.

You may be thinking when a good time to open up to a potential love interest is. The best answer is: Whenever you feel ready to.

While you should never keep something that is a huge part of your life a secret from someone new you are dating, you only know when the best time to disclose that information is.

If you do not feel comfortable to let it all out there on the first date, do not. If a second or third date is on the cards, share it then and do not be scared. The longer you put it off, the worse it will be, and no one wants to feel lied to. Also, if the first date with someone went well and you feel comfortable to share then do so.

It all comes down to the level of experience you have when dating with rheumatoid arthritis. If you are newly diagnosed and dating with a chronic illness is a whole new terrain, it is understandable why you would be more guarded.

Those living with RA for years tend to not care about what others think and will share right away. Some of these people may have visible signs, and it is not something that can be avoided from the start.

Whether you decide to open up on the first, second or third date, just do it. The right person will accept you for

you and whoever does not just is not for you anyways.

It takes a mature individual to realize how special and strong a person is who lives with this illness. The right one will admire, adore and respect you all at once.

Getting Creative

Rheumatoid arthritis does not have to get in the way of a relationship. Though rough patches can occur. When this happens, it is time to get creative.

Depending on where you live, the winter months can be a time when an increase in disease activity occurs.

When a flare-up hits, inviting close loved ones over for a relaxing night in can lift your spirits. Hosting a movie night, playing board games, cuddling, making dinner, watching a funny show, are all great ideas.

Laughter is the best medicine, so do something to take your mind off of everything with those you love and who love you.