Improving Family Life and Maintaining Happiness With RA

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Family With RA

Living with RA may be difficult for the entire family, especially if communication lines break down. This condition often leaves many people to suffer in silence, and so you'll need to work hard to solve these problems. With a thorough understanding of RA and thoughtful actions, you will make great strides towards improving your emotional health and quality of life for you and your family.

Understanding RA

Until you truly understand what your family member with RA is going through, your good intentions may fall short. Fortunately, there are ways to get a handle on symptoms, feelings, reactions and other effects of RA, so that you can better help your loved one overcome these challenges:

- **Ask thoughtful questions, and listen well**. Make sure you're asking questions and doing research that leads to a better understanding of how RA impacts an individual's daily life. In turn, listen attentively, and suppress the urge to counter or insist that do in fact understand how it feels.
- **Offer support, but don't be pushy**. Tag along to support groups as well as doctor's appointments, and learn to be patient, but also know your limits the partnership. Don't force your opinions on a persons' treatment, and don't assume they are incapable of everyday activities. Always give the benefit of the doubt, and be there if your family member needs a helping hand.
- **Get personal**. Have an open and honest conversation about the frustration, misunderstanding and expectations you have. Ask your family member about their specific triggers, and work towards some solutions together. Discuss instances when they feel you've acted insensitively or inappropriately, and why you might not have viewed the situation in the same way. Once you've defined expectations, it will prove much easier to meet them.

Making Life More Comfortable

Help comes in many forms, but actions typically speak louder than words. Instead of mentioning that you're there to help, take matters into your own hands with physical gestures, like:

- **Slowing down**. Simply walking at a slower pace can help take the pressure off, and if you can perform other tasks together more slowly and deliberately, you can help ease physical strain as well as mental stress.
- **Taking care of the small things**. Buttons, snaps, fitted sheets, vegetable peelers – small devices and accessories become big pains during an RA flare-up. Do your family member a favor and take care of any "fiddly" or muscle-intensive tasks without waiting to be asked.
- **Cooking healthy and often**. Preparing a healthy meal can be difficult, especially when other daily duties take up more time than usual. Healthy eating habits are an important part of any RA treatment plan, so help out by putting together a few healthy and hearty dishes each week.

- **Exercising together**. A weekly yoga class or a gentle stroll is a relaxing and strengthening activity you can practice together. Don’t force a workout during a flare-up, but do try to encourage regular exercise with enthusiasm.

It can be difficult to clear the air and restore comfort to a family member with rheumatoid arthritis. Begin with unconditional love; RA is an unpredictable condition that will bring highs and lows, so being dependable can go a long way. By expressing unwavering love and friendship, such problems can be met with creative and proactive solutions.