Writing With Ease Despite Rheumatoid Arthritis

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Writing with Rheumatoid Arthritis

I have been writing since I was old enough to create stories, and now 30 plus years later, I am still using written words to express myself despite rheumatoid arthritis (RA).

While RA affects all my joints, my hands and fingers have suffered the most, but fortunately, they don't show any visible joint damage. I am lucky in this regard, but my hands, fingers, and wrists often hurt as I struggle to grip and perform the many repetitive motions needed for handwriting and typing.

In addition to joint pain, RA causes fatigue that can sometimes prevent me from being as productive as I'd like to be. And RA flare-ups can sometimes require extensions on writing projects, and brain fog that makes it harder to find the words.

While there are some things I can't control with RA, I can still find creative ways to work and to keep writing despite the challenges this difficult disease often poses.

Writing with Arthritic Hands: How to Write Comfortably With RA

One of my first fears, when I was first diagnosed with RA, is how it would affect my hands and if it would take away my ability to continue to write and type. But it hasn't, and I continue to write while proactively protecting my hands.

If you are finding it hard to write because of pain, stiffness and limited movement in your wrists, hands, and fingers, you may benefit from the assistive devices designed to make writing more comfortable and less painful. Using assistive devices also protects joints from further damage.

Can Arthritis Gloves Help?

My favorite assistive device for writing with RA is my arthritis gloves. I wear them when writing and typing, as the compression offers me joint support and minimizes my pain.

RA has also made my hands shaky, and wearing arthritis gloves improve my grip, especially when using pens and pencils, and makes typing less difficult and less painful.

Wearing gloves when I type and write did take some getting used to, but it does help to minimize pain, especially because I write and type up to eight hours on most days. And those inexpensive gloves are protecting my hands, wrists, and fingers from the damage that RA inflammation is known for causing.

If your hands are especially painful or showing signs of joint damage, you may want to see a hand therapist to determine what kind of splinting can preserve the joints in your hands, wrists and fingers, and keep you writing for

as long as possible.

Pencil and Pen Grips

Grips for pens and pencils are simple solutions for people with arthritic hand pain. Cushioned grips you slip on a pencil or pen offer better comfort and control when writing,

Other grips are designed to set your thumb a natural way to reduce wrist stress. These are used with most pens and pencils for both left and right-handed users.

Special Pens

Soft pens with ergonomic designs can adapt to your hand’s curve and use the natural weight of your hand to write. This means you do not have grip or press like you would with ordinary pens.

Typing Instead of Handwriting

I am a typist and not so much a hand writer. There was a time when I relied a lot on handwriting, even when I typed later on, but RA changed that.

Handwriting hurts my hands, even with writing tools and even with my arthritis gloves. The gripping for extended periods is just too painful.

These days, I attempt to do my research with paper and pen, but eventually and quickly, I make my way to my laptop and start typing up my outline and notes. If handwriting is painful for you, typing might be less painful, and using splits or arthritis gloves might offer you more support.

Angular Surfaces

Adjustable and angular desk surfaces can provide wrist and forearm support when writing to minimize pressure on joints. These also offer neck and head support for better positioning of your upper cervical spine.

Book and Document Holders

Book and document holders can hold research materials, so you are not putting pressure on joints tendons, and muscles. Holders come in angular designs, promoting neck and head posture. They also offer better visual access to whatever you are reviewing.

Ergonomic Workstations

Repetitive computer tasks and sitting for long periods can take a toll on joints. Ergonomic keyboards and mice, mouse and keyboard trays, supportive office chairs, and footrests all help to relieve joint pain and take pressure off already inflamed joints, making sitting for long periods and working at your workstation easier.

Use Voice Recognition Software

Voice recognition software can help if typing and writing have become harder for you. Using your voice, you speak into a microphone, and your words are typed to the screen.

To make the best use of voice recognition software, make sure you receive training to help with punctuation and minimizing background noise. These programs can make it easier to write without putting repetitive stress on your joints.

Therapeutic Benefits of Writing With RA

Even if writing has never been your thing, you should know that expressive writing has been linked to easing emotional pain, stress, and worry. And research shows it helps relieve physical pain and promote healing.

According to one report in the journal, *Advances in Psychiatric Treatment*, the benefits of expressive writing are not just short term. This is because expressive writing is linked to better moods and overall well-being, lowered blood pressure and much more.

Another study out of the University of Auckland, New Zealand, finds expressing your emotions in writing helps you to heal quicker physically.

The study's researchers asked half of their study participants to write for 20 minutes a day over a period of two weeks about their most challenging experiences and to be as open as possible, including their specific feelings. The other half was to write about their plans for the next day without expressing any emotion in their writing.

After two weeks, the researchers took skin biopsies from all the study participants. After 11 days, 76 percent of those who had written about their traumatic experience was completely healed, this compared to 46 percent from the group who had not written about next day plans.

If the idea of writing seems overwhelming or isn't your thing, you can start by jotting your feelings down in a notebook. Don't worry about whether you write well, and no one has read your writing.

Anything that helps you to express your emotions, feelings, and frustrations, move on, and decrease emotional stress and physical pain are worth trying.

Keep on Writing

I love to write, and I have taken advantage of the many tools available to make my passion possible. I am thankful for all the tools available that continue to make my dream possible.

If RA has limited your ability to write without pain, using assistive devices can help you to keep doing what you love, and enjoy all the therapeutic benefits - emotional and physical – that writing has to offer. And even if writing isn't for you, journaling is a great way to get your emotions out.