



# Tips for Managing and Coping With Osteoarthritis Pain

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## Finding Osteoarthritis Pain Relief

Among the many challenges of living with the chronic pain of osteoarthritis (OA) is learning how to effectively manage the pain and negative effects that it can pose to your quality of life.

When I developed OA in my spine, I soon realized that managing my pain did not simply involve figuring which pain-relieving medication to take. Instead, managing my pain meant minimizing any negative potential effects it could have on my daily life.

Although I have yet to master this skill, I have learned a few strategies over the years that have helped me manage living with osteoarthritis pain.

### **Be One Step Ahead**

Being prepared in a variety of ways can prove helpful when coping with and managing chronic pain. One of the best ways to be ahead of the game is to identify the remedies that are effective for an osteoarthritis flare up and daily maintenance of the pain.

The identification of these remedies is through trial and error; you need to adjust pain-relieving therapies according to what you tried in the past that was and was not successful, and then use that information to set a plan of action for when you have an acute onset of pain.

Another way to stay ahead is to identify stressors, whether they are physical or emotional, that exacerbate the pain. Physical stress may include any labor or activity that exceeds your physical capabilities and emotional stress is anything that could be emotionally taxing to your wellbeing.

By identifying any potential patterns of these exacerbating factors, you can learn how to either avoid them altogether or be prepared for when they may bring the onset of pain.

### **Gain Control Over the Emotional Aspect of Chronic Pain**

Many people, including healthcare professionals, can agree that chronic pain is an extremely complex — and at times, not well-understood — phenomenon.

Not only do you live with the incredibly unpleasant sensation that is chronic pain, but a person with chronic pain must combat their own negative feelings that can be caused by the pain.

One of the most effective ways to combat chronic pain's effect on your quality of life is indirectly, through relaxation, mindful thinking, and meditation.

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If you think sitting cross-legged in the corner of the room and humming sounds like a far-fetched way of dealing with your chronic pain, you're not alone! I went quite a few years before I was even open to the idea of relaxation therapy and meditation for my own pain.

However, meditation and relaxation therapies can be a great way of breaking the cycle of focusing on your pain. Recent studies on meditation explain that by consciously activating and reinforcing a few areas of the brain used in pain processing, meditation can reduce pain intensity in patients.

Studies conducted within the past 10 years have shown that meditation may be able to change the parts of the brain involved in pain processing or emotional and behavioral regulation.

I have slowly learned to incorporate breathing exercises and short periods of meditation in my life. You won't see me teaching any meditation classes anytime soon, but it has helped me to better cope with my chronic pain!

Meditation and other relaxation therapies help to fortify the thinking that although pain is an incredibly undesirable sensation, it does not deserve such a strong emotional reaction and this can help us gain some control over it.

### **Find Support for Your Osteoarthritis Pain**

Support, support, support! Those of you who may have read my articles might be rolling your eyes because I mention support in almost all of them.

This is because support is crucial for anyone hoping to manage their chronic pain well! I like to think that I am an independent and resilient individual, but I also accepted a long time ago that I need support to help me combat the effects of chronic pain.

My wife helps me immensely to overcome both the physical limitations and emotional burden that osteoarthritis in my spine has created.

For those of you who don't have partners to help you, there's still hope! Support can come in many forms; it could be anyone who helps with tasks you are physically unable to do, a person with a sympathetic ear, a reliable pet, or a fellow chronic pain sufferer.

What's important is for you to identify who or what your support is so you know who to turn to when you're having a rough time with the pain. Even if you can't identify a person, there are a variety of online forums for people with chronic pain and other diseases to join together and support each other.

Joining a support group or online forum for chronic pain can be just as effective as any other form of support. Similarly, support groups can also be helpful in breaking a person out of a mental state brought on by pain.

Talking amongst others about your struggle with chronic pain will allow you to better cope with the condition and emotions associated with the pain.

### **Optimize Relationships With Healthcare Professionals**

We as chronic pain sufferers can do everything in our power to manage our osteoarthritis pain to the best of our abilities, and still feel like we're losing the metaphorical battle. If you feel this way, you're not alone! I've been there and that is part of what makes chronic pain such a complex entity.

In cases like these, it is quite alright to "phone a friend" and seek the help of a healthcare professional. Healthcare professionals are not limited to just doctors; other healthcare professionals that can be important in the treatment of chronic pain include but are not limited to nurses, pharmacists, physical therapists, and occupational therapists.

The expert advice and therapy provided by a healthcare professional can make all the difference in the

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management of your chronic pain.

It would be incredible if a single remedy existed that would help all chronic pain sufferers cope exceptionally well with their osteoarthritis pain. However, it also makes sense that a complex entity such as chronic pain requires a multi-dimensional approach to effectively manage it.