# Getting Through an Osteoarthritis Flare Up

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## What to Do When Experiencing an Osteoarthritis Flare-Up

Most people who have osteoarthritis (OA) know what it's like to experience the dreaded osteoarthritis flare-up. Flare-ups are the temporary exacerbation of the normal pain and discomfort arthritis sufferers experience.

Whether it is caused by a rainy day outside, some activity that irritated your joints, or anything else, flare-ups are terrible. In my experience, I can always feel the pain of an osteoarthritis flare-up brewing a day or two in advance.

So what's a person to do? I have developed a coping regimen for when these flare-ups occur. The aspects of this coping regimen involve knowing what will soothe the pain, trying to keep a positive mindset, distracting yourself, having an emotional outlet, and knowing when to seek medical help.

### Knowing How to Soothe the Pain

The reality of an ensuing osteoarthritis flare-up always fills me with anxiety and dread, but it also makes me get everything that provides me pain relief in order to make sure I have them on-hand. Whether this is medication, a stretching plan or specific osteoarthritis exercise, heat pads, or any other item, do not endure a flare up without them!

My choice of pain relievers helps to keep me functioning during my worst flare-ups. You need to be able to identify what provides you the best pain relief and use them. On the other hand, be mindful of not overusing any of these pain relievers and make sure your doctor is aware you use them.

### Distracting Yourself

I always have the desire to isolate myself during a flare-up because who wants to be around people when they are not feeling well? However, the way I see it is I am going to be in pain during a flare-up regardless of where I am and what I am doing.

So why not try to do something productive or activities you enjoy during that time? Our consciousness can amplify the severity of pain, and the less my conscious mind is able to focus on the pain the better I feel.

One of the better strategies I have learned to distract my conscious mind from the pain is to meditate. Meditation and relaxation therapies can be a great way of breaking the cycle of focusing on your pain.

Meditation can also help you control your emotional reaction to pain. I don't want you to think that when I suggest ways to "distract yourself" I mean you should run away from your problems as a solution to the difficulties in life. I see it more as a way to weaken the strong signals of pain that a flare-up sends to one's consciousness.

### Try to Keep a Positive Mindset

Keeping a positive mindset can have a drastic impact on the quality of your life during flare-ups. In order to overcome the negative thoughts and emotional sensitivity that can come with flare-ups, you have to embrace the philosophy of looking at the glass as half-full.

You need to make a conscious effort to focus more on the activities you can still do rather than the activities you are not able to do because of your condition. Pain is a terrible sensation, but meditation helps to reassert the notion that pain does not deserve such a strong emotional reaction and helps gain some control over it.

You can't always control your physical condition, but you can have control over your mindset. It is also very important to surround yourself with positive people, who can reinforce the idea of thinking positively.

They will also be able to help bring you up emotionally when you're having trouble being positive on a particular day. When you are with someone who is supportive, they understand your struggle and will participate in activities you can also participate in despite having pain.

**Having an Emotional Outlet**

No matter what coping mechanism I suggest or how I spin it, flare-ups are tough. They are excruciatingly painful, draining and frustrating. I talk about support a lot in my previous articles and it is more important than ever during flare-ups.

Support can help you get through the constant physical and emotional obstacles of an osteoarthritis flare-up. Support can come in a variety of forms; it could be someone who helps with tasks you are physically unable to do, someone you talk to about your struggles, or someone who is going through the same ordeal.

For me, my wife is my outlet when I need to talk and let go of some of the emotions the flare-up has raised within me. She is my rock and has always been there for me whenever I needed to vent or display my frustration about having a flare-up.

Make sure to identify who your support is when it comes to dealing with pain so you know who to turn to when you're having a rough time. Talking among others about your struggle with osteoarthritis will allow you to better cope with the condition and manage your emotions better when dealing with a flare up.

**Knowing When to Seek Medical Help**

Sometimes you just have to know when enough is enough and to seek medical help for an OA flare-up. Although chronic pain and osteoarthritis can be difficult to properly treat, there is a diverse array of modalities a trained physician can use to help relieve your flare up.

This might sound like wishful thinking, but I am a testament to medicine helping to relieve my osteoarthritis flare-ups. Before I was treated with radiofrequency ablation in my spine, I would get flare ups about once a month that lasted about three to seven days.

I had simply accepted it as a reality of life that I would experience for the foreseeable future. However, after a devastating flare-up, I went to a physician in desperation and the rest is history.

I still get flare-ups now but they are few and far between. While I can't promise everyone will get adequate pain relief after seeing a physician, but it is definitely an option worth pursuing.

I have struggled with the flare-ups of OA for about five years now. Although it is not a perfect system, these methods have helped me cope with the pain and continue to function as normal as possible.