Setting Osteoarthritis Resolutions

by ALI ESFAHANI

New Year's Resolutions to Follow This Year

New Year’s usually marks the unfortunate truth that the holiday season has come to an end and tax season has begun. It also brings the phenomenon of resolutions and the need to change from the previous year.

Although I have never been one to join a gimmicky gym or commit to getting in shape just because a new year has turned the corner, I do believe the New Year can be a great time re-establish our goals from the previous year or create new one for the year to come.

The obvious wish for those of us suffering from osteoarthritis (OA) is a cure to our constant stiffness and pain we feel. Until that happens, the following are a few potential New Year’s resolutions we can commit to.

Start or Continue a Consistent Exercise Program

Those of you reading this will think, “How can the guy who won’t join a gym after New Year’s tell me to exercise more?” Before you decide to curse my name and stop reading this article, let me explain.

I myself have limitations due to arthritis and understand it can be difficult to even move with the amount of joint pain we deal with on a daily basis. So instead of jumping to a gym membership, you need to be honest with yourself and see what amount of exercise you can tolerate.

Some people with OA are able to go to the gym and engage in the activities they offer, and others see walking around the block once as a source of exercise. Either of those sides of the spectrum are great, as long as you known deep down you are doing your best to stay active and moving despite how hard that may be with OA.

It is encouraged that people who suffer from arthritis do low-impact exercises such as biking, swimming or walking to avoid the potential for further joint damage. Also, simple stretching in the morning or at night can help immensely to loosen up sore joints.

It is especially important to stay active because becoming overweight can increase arthritic pain and increase the complications associated with arthritis. Inactivity of the joints can also lead to atrophy of the surrounding muscles and a perpetuation of the pain one experiences.

If you are unsure of what form of exercise is healthy or suitable for you, I would suggest consulting your physician.

Commit to Eating Healthier

To go along with the previous resolution of exercise, the proper nutrition program can go a long way for helping with pain associated with arthritis. I don’t believe a single magical herb or food can cure someone of their pain, but the proper diet can definitely help.

There are foods out there known to help suppress inflammatory diseases and ease the pain many of us suffer from. The foods that help with decreasing pain are thought to do so by providing antioxidants and suppressing inflammation, which are factors thought to perpetuate the pain cycle.

Next page: maintaining a positive attitude and more resolutions to set this year.

Commit to Eating Healthier

Some of these foods include fish, lettuce, spinach, nuts, low-fat dairy, tomatoes, turmeric and many more. On the other hand, foods that can exacerbate arthritic pain include foods filled with sugar and are fried.

Maintain a More Positive Attitude

This is one I need to work on because it can be so easy to get down and frustrated due to the pain and discomfort caused by OA. That being said, keeping a positive mindset can have a drastic impact on the quality of your daily life.

In order to overcome the negative thoughts and pessimism that can come with pain, we have to embrace the philosophy of looking at the glass as half full. You need to make a conscious effort every day to focus more on the activities you can still do rather than the activities you are not able to do because of your condition.

It helps sometimes to maintain perspective that there are others out there suffering equally or worse than you currently are, and there are still many blessings in your life to be thankful for.

I frequently mention meditation and other relaxation therapies as a great way of breaking the cycle of negativity and pessimism. Whatever you choose, make sure you find your “happy place.” The happy place pursuit could also come in the form of spending time with a pet, finding a great support system, pursuing your passions, or anything else that will help you stay positive!

Spend More Time With Family and Friends

In this day and age where everyone is so busy with work, school, running errands, or anything else, it is still very important to make the effort to maintain connections with one another. Socialization is a crucial part of our wellbeing and it can be easy to neglect it for other things that seem more important.

Change up the Routine

I almost always suggest establishing a routine and being consistent, however that can become monotonous over time. Change it up once in a while!

This is all within reason of course; for example instead of going to the movies every Friday, you could join a ceramics class, go to a local sporting event, or hang out at a comedy club. You don’t have to sky dive or jump off a cliff to feel alive in this world!

Part of what we struggle with is we feel like we are missing out on certain activities, which can hamper our ability to be spontaneous. Even though it can be more difficult, you can still try to avoid making your life feel mundane.

These are my top five potential New Year’s resolutions for someone who suffers from OA, but don’t feel limited to them! There are so many different ways we could enhance their life and change it for the better.

Even if you look back on the next year and realize you didn’t achieve your resolutions, don’t think the year was a failure. As long as you made the concerted effort to improve yourself and the quality of life you live then that’s all you can ask of yourself.