OA and Depression

by ERIC PATTERSON

Conquering Depression With Osteoarthritis

Osteoarthritis equals stiffness, weakness and pain. Pain equals problems sleeping, eating and engaging in activities you used to enjoy. This equals depression. Depression lowers your mood and increases your irritability. Depression makes you feel helpless and osteoarthritis makes you feel hopeless. It is scary to think how much these conditions can adversely impact your life and overall well-being.

You find that osteoarthritis and depression limit your energy, motivation and even your interest in doing things that you used to enjoy. Left untreated, these symptoms only compound and grow out of control. This situation necessitates movement on your part. Setting goals and taking action are ways to restore the motivation and interest in things that depression and osteoarthritis have taken.

WDEP Model

A very useful goal setting method called WDEP comes from a branch of psychotherapy called Reality Therapy. Reality therapy emphasizes the “here and now” and works to make changes for a more desirable future. The WDEP model is best done on a sheet of paper. Here’s how it works:

- **Want** – The model begins by asking you what it is you are looking for or wanting to accomplish. Make sure that your want is specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and timely. If your want fits these criteria, move on. If not, consider making revisions to your want. There is nothing worse than establishing a want that is impossible to accomplish to your desired level.
- **Doing** – What are you doing to accomplish this want? List the behaviors or thoughts you have been engaging in to accomplish your goal. How do you feel when you are doing these things? List as many as you can while remembering that sometimes you may be doing things that are actually counterproductive. Identifying them will help you reduce their frequency.

- **Evaluate** – This is the part of the model where you ask yourself: “Is this working?” Chances are good that the answer will be “no.” During this stage you can assess your true desire to accomplish this want based on how much work it will take. Moving away from wants that are taking too many of your resources is a smart choice as long as you replace it with another want that gets you closer to your long-term goals.
- **Plan** – You have identified your want. You have listed your current thoughts and behaviors. You have evaluated your progress. The last step of the model is to arrive at a new plan. What are you going to modify to achieve your goal? Who are you going to involve? What behaviors are you going to engage in? How will you know when you are done? The plan should concretely and clearly answer these questions. A simple, step-by-step course of action will ensure better results since ambiguity leads to lack of change.

Bonus Tips

- Involve your family, friends and other supports as much as you can in the WDEP process. They can

provide valuable feedback and inspire consistency along the way.
- Continually revise your WDEP. With luck and determination, your goals will be accomplished quickly. Evaluate and re-evaluate to boost goal attainment.
- Once you become more comfortable with the process, you can use multiple WDEPs simultaneously. Why focus on just one change when you can have several?

Conclusion

Osteoarthritis and depression are a dangerous combination and one to avoid. Maintaining motivation through goal setting is a fine way to prevent depression and repair the damage that it has caused over time. Keep your eyes forward and find ways to make your life a little better.