Keeping an Osteoarthritis Journal

by YVONNE BANKS

Why Journal Writing Is Good for Your OA

When you think of journaling, you may think of the journals we had to write in school, but it is actually much more than that. Keeping a journal can be an opportunity for self-exploration, as well as a great tool for keeping track of your health condition.

The great thing about journaling is that your journal is yours to write any way you want. It can be as informal as you want, written in a notebook by hand, or in a Word document with charts and graphs. It is yours to personalize, and it can take as little as 5 to 10 minutes a day.

A journal can help keep you accountable in your journey with OA, and many say it's a useful tool for healing, helping to improve health and happiness.

Tracking your symptoms of your OA will help you find patterns in activity and food intake that may be affecting your pain and inflammation in either negative or positive ways. Journaling can also result in a reduction of stress, and less stress in one’s life is directly correlated with a reduction in pain.

How to Approach Journaling

- **Decide on the components of your journal.** Do you want to track your exercise and activity? You may want to have a section accompanying this part of the journal where you can write how your OA responded to these activities. This will help you weed out the activities that aggravate your OA and which ones help. You can then fine-tune your workouts for your benefit.

- **Devote a time in the day to journal.** With our busy lives, it is easy to put journaling off to the side. You may want to set aside time to journal first thing in the morning. You can also place a notebook on your nightstand so you can write before you retire for the evening.
- **Decide how you want to journal.** You may write in a notebook or use your computer to type in your thoughts and information. If you have trouble with writing because of your OA, you can purchase special pens that are made for people with arthritis.

You can write about whatever you want, however, it's helpful to include any challenges you are experiencing, how you feel about them and how you are working to overcome them.

Other Benefits of Journaling:

- Documentation for your physician. Take your journal with you to doctor appointments. Your doctor will find useful information in it to better treat your OA.
- Your journal can be key to helping you get disability benefits. It can show how your daily life struggles keep you from working and performing daily living skills.

Start keeping an osteoarthritis journal today!