Keeping Positive Despite Osteoarthritis Pain

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Fight Back Against Negativity

Pain is a frustrating and exhausting sensation that can understandably lead to many negative emotions, including feeling sad, frustrated, angry, moody, hopeless and generally negative. All of these feelings are normal in moderation; however, they can become detrimental to one's wellbeing if experienced frequently.

Research has shown that the chronic pain from arthritis can not only lead to negative emotions, but negative emotions can also exacerbate one's feeling of pain. It is thought this is because pain can change the physiology and certain mechanisms of various parts of the brain.

Researchers have also found that anxiety disorders and pain go hand in hand, and the emotional toll associated with living with pain may exacerbate conditions such as anxiety and depression.
Fortunately, there are ways one can overcome the negativity that pain can cause.

Try to Keep a Positive Mindset

You can't always control your physical condition but you can control your mindset. 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 to focus more on the activities that you can still do rather than the activities you are not able to do because of your condition.

Part of this strategy involves avoiding negative influences that remind you of the pain and how it has limited your life. It helps sometimes to maintain the perspective that there are others out there suffering equally or worse than you currently are, and that there are still many blessings in your life to be thankful for.

Meditation and relaxation therapies can also be a great way of breaking the cycle of feeling negative. Meditation helps to increase the activity in the pain and emotion regulating areas of the brain; in turn, it can also help one to control their emotional reaction to pain. 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.

Find Support

Pain sufferers deal with negative thoughts throughout the day with constant reminders of what they are incapable of doing, which can lead to a constant bad mood and bad attitude. However, support can help you through the constant physical and emotional obstacles.

Surround yourself with positive people who can reinforce the idea of thinking positively. They will be able to help bring you up emotionally when you're having trouble on a particular day.

Support can come in a variety of forms; it could be someone who helps with tasks you are physically unable to do, someone you can talk to about your struggles, or someone who is going through the same ordeal.

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. Potential support could be a trained therapist, significant other, close friend or family member.

Even if you can't identify a person, joining a support group or online forum for chronic pain can also be just as effective. Support groups can be very helpful in breaking a person out of a negative 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 manage your emotions associated with the pain better.

Live a Healthy Lifestyle

Even though it can be difficult, making a conscious effort to live a healthy lifestyle can help combat negative emotions, improve your chances of staying optimistic and help your self-esteem. Living a healthy lifestyle includes a nutritious diet, maintaining a consistent exercise program, and getting sufficient sleep.

Eating well and keeping up with a regular exercise program can help to increase your energy and mood when dealing with osteoarthritis and fatigue. Sugar, simple carbohydrates and fried food are prone to making you feel lethargic and low on energy, whereas raw fruits, vegetables, yogurt, complex carbohydrates, nuts and lean meats are known to give an energy boost. Although there is no single food out there that will magically improve your mood, eating these foods have a cumulative positive impact on your general disposition.

Your ability to exercise with osteoarthritis may be limited — something that can be hard to come to terms with — but any form of exercise is beneficial to your general health. Exercise is also a great way to improve your mood and sense of wellbeing.

There are a number of reasons for this. Most of us are familiar with the idea of "happy hormones" known as endorphins, but exercise can also help you gain confidence, take your mind off worries, calm your nerves and have pleasant social interactions. Although it is probably difficult to exercise with painful osteoarthritis, you can still try a stationary bike, short walks outside, stretches, light weights or water aerobic exercises.

Lastly, like most aspects of a healthy lifestyle, sleep can become difficult when you experience chronic pain from osteoarthritis. After a sleepless night, you may be more irritable, short-tempered and vulnerable to stress. When you sleep well, your mood often returns to normal.

Having a regular time to wake up each morning and go to bed each night can help with sleep, overall energy levels and therefore improve your mood. You'll also want to be careful with the length and frequency of naps. A regular sleep schedule can also help strengthen circadian rhythms and leads to regular times of sleep onset.

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Conclusion

It can be very difficult to stay positive and optimistic when you are in constant pain due to arthritis, and negative thoughts and emotions can easily become more and more frequent, impacting your physical and mental health. Combat the lack of optimism pain causes by making a conscious effort to keep a positive mindset, having a support system you can rely on, and living a healthy lifestyle.
Rather than letting the pain suck you into a hole of darkness, take advantage of opportunities that will keep you busy and focused on the good that life does still have to offer. You may not ever be able to diminish the pain from osteoarthritis, but you can learn to control how it affects you.