

# COPING & COMFORT

ADVICE FROM THE ARTHRITIS COMMUNITY



# ADVICE FOR LIVING WELL

**THERE'S NO BETTER INSTRUCTOR THAN EXPERIENCE.  
HERE'S SOME SOUND COUNSEL FROM PEOPLE WHO  
LIVE WITH ARTHRITIS.**

No one understands the challenges from arthritis and chronic pain better than those who live with them, and with the COVID-19 pandemic, there are many. These words of wisdom from people who have arthritis can help you live your best life despite obstacles – whether it's a pandemic or the daily challenges people with chronic pain face. Find [information and tips](#), and read on for words of encouragement and guidance.

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# How do you **de-stress** during difficult times?

» I make a concerted effort to stay in the present. Don't feel sad for the past, don't be afraid about the future. I tell myself: right here, right now, I'm fine.

— MAGGIE FRISCH

» Every night before bed, I write down three things I am looking forward to in the next day. This helps me stay positive.

— PATTY NEWMAN

» I use essential oils. I can't imagine my life without them now.

— EMILY JACOBSON JOHNSON

» I've been meditating every morning and evening with the Headspace app. One of my best ways to de-stress is through my art. When I am in the midst of creating, I can just lose myself in the process and let go of my worries.

— MAURA HIBBITTS

» I learn to take life easy when I have those bad days.

—SAMPADA WAGLE

» I try to get outside. Any time in nature helps reduce stress and anxiety and increases happiness and clarity.

— CHERIE GOSWICK

» Exercise. It's tough but I feel so proud of myself after a workout, and the release of endorphins definitely helps with stress and pain elimination!

— SIMONA MURPHY

» I just began adult coloring! This has been relaxing, fun and takes the stress away.

— DONNA OLIVER

» Crafting, when the hands permit! And while doing that, music! It puts me smack in my happy place!

— JEANE SMITH

» I choose my battles. Those things I can do nothing about, I don't stress over.

I say a prayer. — ANITA HOPKINS

» My pugs help me keep the stress down.

— KATHLYN MACFARLANE

» I love to sew and quilt. I can pick up something mindless if I'm feeling particularly stressed, or work on something more challenging when I want to refocus.

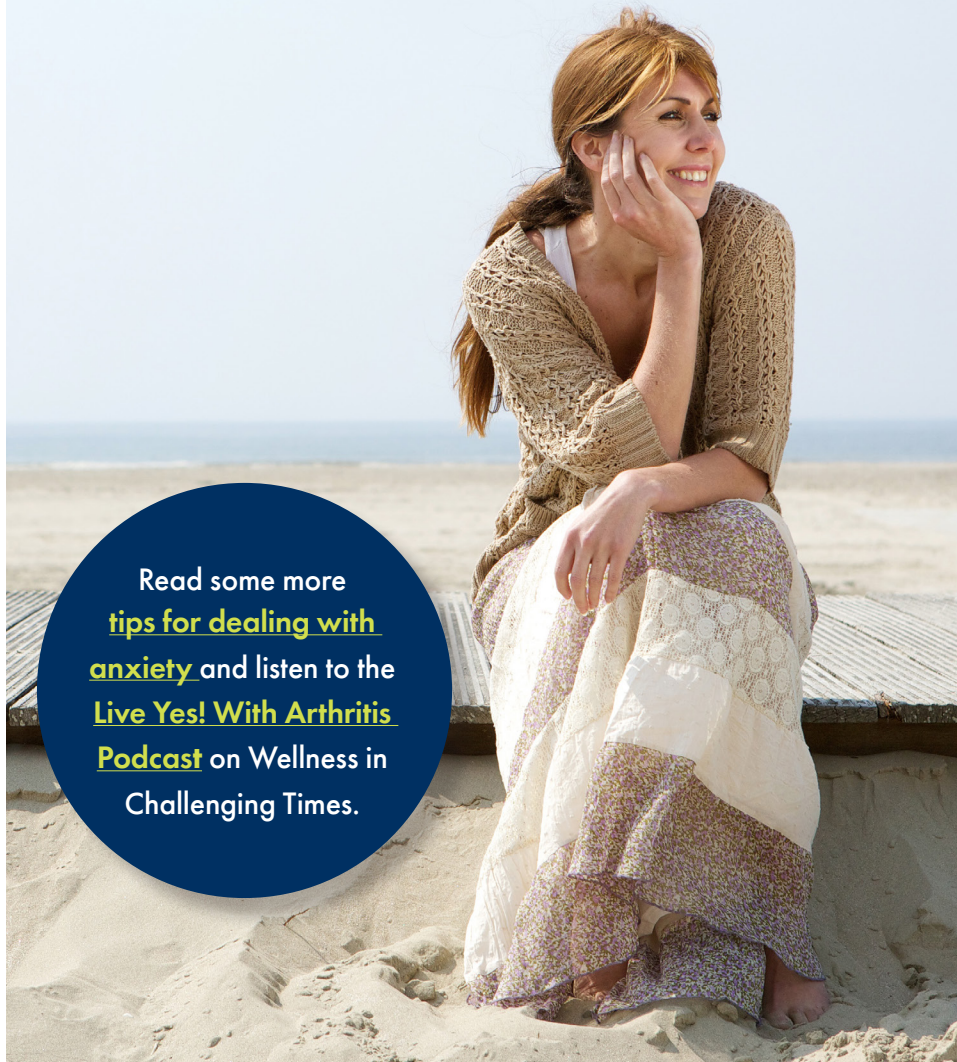
— SYDNIE MCCONNELL

» Physical activity. It doesn't have to be anything strenuous, but getting up and going on a walk or stretching on the rug helps my stress level.

— MARY PARSONS



# How have you **adjusted your outlook** during the pandemic?



Read some more [tips for dealing with anxiety](#) and listen to the [Live Yes! With Arthritis Podcast](#) on Wellness in Challenging Times.

» I have maintained a positive attitude because I know the lockdowns are important to keep the public safe, whether or not you have a compromised immune system. I am truly OK with staying home until it is safe again. — PATRICE JOHNSON

» I am finding that I really miss the contact I usually have with family and friends, so I find myself using texts, Zoom, FaceTime and such to keep connected. I've also been sending out handmade cards with encouraging thoughts to people. My day gets a bit brighter when I can do something nice for another person. — MAURA HIBBITTS

» I do miss going out with friends, volunteering, attending events. But I remind myself that all these things will come back in my lifetime, and when they do, I will really appreciate them a lot more! — MAGGIE FRISCH

» I'm a natural planner and these days do NOT lend themselves to planning ahead. So I've focused more on one-day-at-a-time and especially on not being too hard on myself – either for not getting something done or for sometimes feeling down. Letting myself feel sad or fearful and allowing myself to work through these feelings rather than trying to shut them out helps me. — SUZY SZASZ PALMER

» I have learned that I can only change how I react to the people around me, I can't change them. Once I got my mind wrapped around this idea, I felt more accepting of the different ways people around me were reacting. I know I felt very angry and frustrated at the beginning of this with the behaviors of others, but I have learned along the way that everyone reacts to crises in different ways. — MAURA HIBBITTS

# When it comes to **family and friends**, what suggestions do you have?

» Zoom. We've used it for work happy hours, my niece's 18th birthday, yoga and dance classes, and it's been a good way to connect when we can't connect in person. — SYDNE MCCONNELL

» Friends, neighbors, family have been overly kind and cautious. I feel lucky to have so many people in my life that know I struggle daily and that this is probably extra stressful for me. I'm not sure that others living without a chronic disorder are receiving the same thoughtfulness and care. — MARY PARSONS

» The best advice my mother-in-law gave me: You have arthritis. Don't let it have you. — THERESA DOUGHERTY MCNALLY

» Don't be afraid to say no. Avoiding other people's disappointment isn't worth a flare. Trust me! — KRISTIN JOY

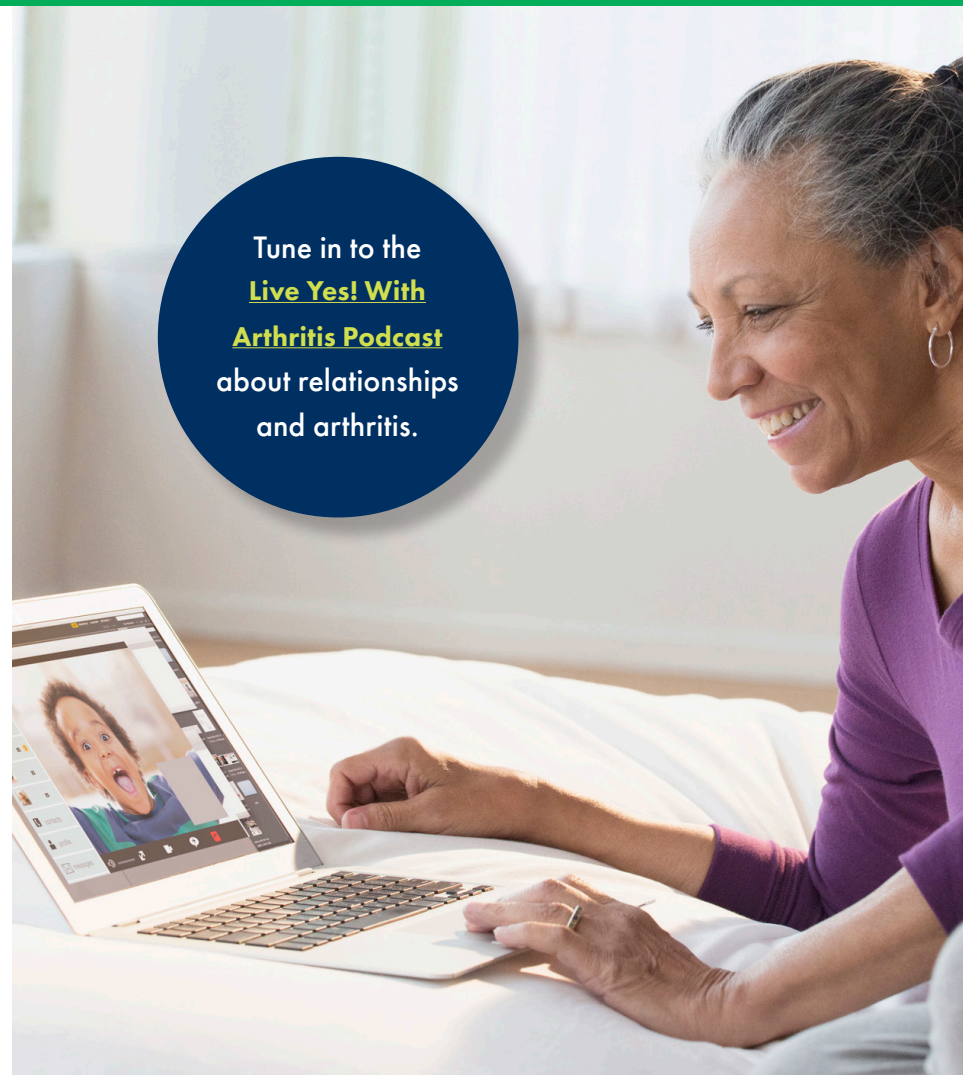
» I keep my friends at a short distance — they know I love them, but they also know that a lot of the time I need to recover alone. I've learned that those who don't respect my boundaries aren't real friends, and that's reduced a lot of stress. — KATIE LOUIS-TWITCH

» Don't be afraid to ask friends and family for help. Push yourself a little but learn when to say no. Be patient. You can do this. — JENNIFER MANVILLE RAMONELL

» A friend or family member may ask how they can help. Think of a list in advance so you're ready with concrete ideas. They really want to help, so give them something to do. — JULIANNE BERRY

» There's a world of friends online. Just look on Twitter for #spoonies, #arthritis, #chroniclife, #rheum. — JULIANNE BERRY

Tune in to the  
**Live Yes! With  
Arthritis Podcast**  
about relationships  
and arthritis.



# How do you cope emotionally?



» Stay busy. Don't sit and ruminate. Don't wish things were like they used to be. Don't catastrophize about what could happen in the future. Get up, get dressed, make a list of things to do, even if it's just going for a walk or a bike ride. Look forward to making a good dinner or watching a good movie. Realize how fortunate you are compared to a lot of people going through this. — MAGGIE FRISCH

» It's going to be OK. Not every day will be great, but also not every day will be terrible. And keep your doctors in the loop. — SINISTER BASSOON

» Get plugged into a **support group** and understand that everyone experiences their disease differently. — LAURA GENOVES

» Be gentle with yourself. Talk about your feelings with folks who will not judge. Life doesn't have to come to a screeching halt. It will just change. — CASS

» Seek out mental health support. Even years into dealing with arthritis, you'll face new transitions [and challenges] and can benefit from the support and an impartial ear. — JULIANNE BERRY

» Lists, lists, and more lists. Sometimes it's in a journal and sometimes it's just on a scrap of paper. Whether it is a to-do list, a list of worries or goals, or just a food log, these lists give me a tangible way to measure my mood, my physical response to stress, and help me form thoughts so that I can talk to others in a meaningful way. — MARY PARSONS

» Understand that sometimes people won't understand what's going on and that's OK. But take time for yourself. — ANNAH PYRA

» Persevere, but not to a fault. Really learn to manage the disease, laugh and have fun when you can and build your support system. — ANNIE LARSON

# What do you do to **feel better** when arthritis gets you down?

» I go for a drive with my dog. — JASON COCHRAN

» I divorce my thinking from self-pity, then I try to do something for someone else. This works most of the time, but I am not above a waffle with ice cream and maple syrup or a chocolate bar either. — ROGER HARTJE LORD

» I give myself a 15-minute pity party, then I get back on meditation and expressing gratitude for what I do have. — ANNIE LARS

» I try to go for a bike ride every day. If I get enough exercise I can sleep better. Then I feel better and then I lose weight. Win, win! — JUDY SCOTT

» I have collected photos of things I love – my family, pets or events – in a scrapbook I call my Happy Scrappy. I take it out and look at it whenever I need a boost. — PATTY NEWMAN

» If I can, I sit outside and watch the birds and wildlife. — JO STARCHER

» I dance with my husband. I forget all about arthritis when I'm tripping the light fantastic! — KATHY GELLER

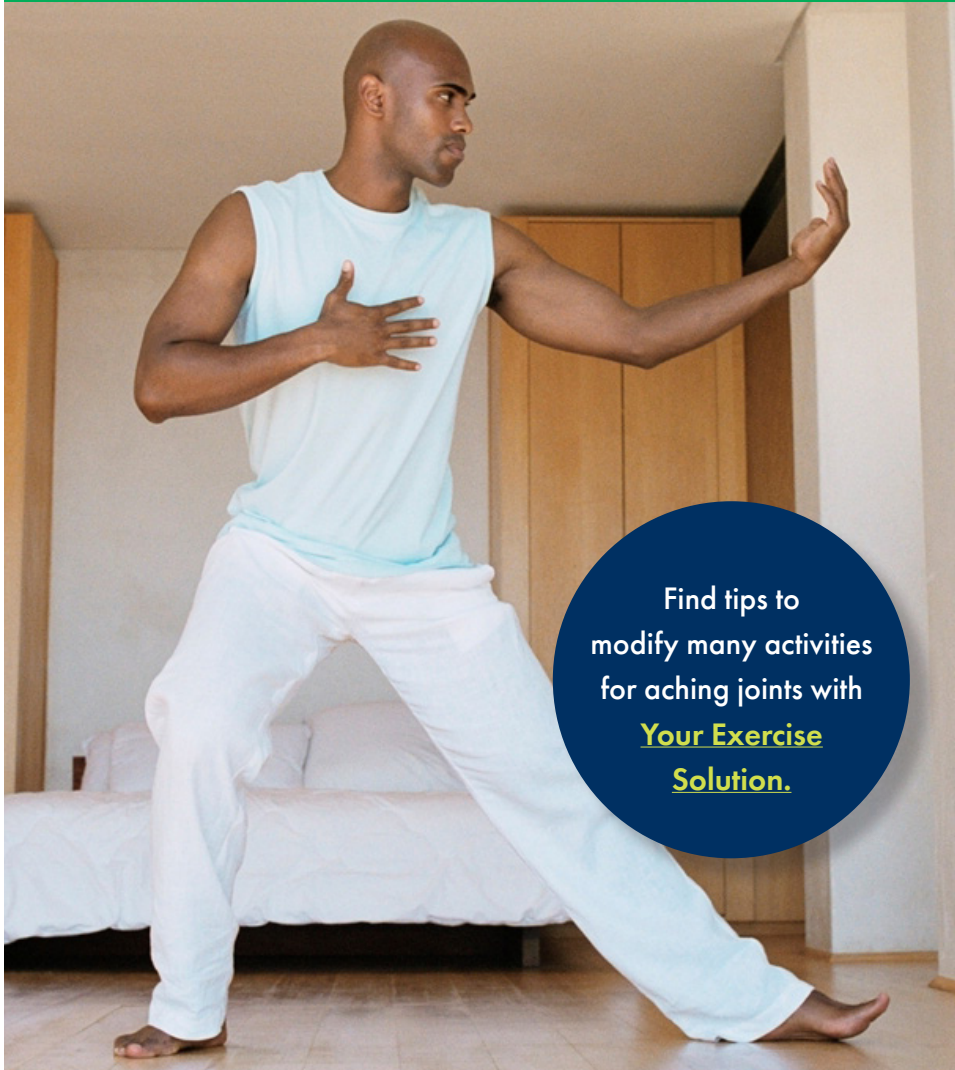
» Pray, get plenty of rest, be kind to people who will have to help you from time to time, enjoy the "I can" moments, and let go of the guilt and sorrow for the "I can't" moments. — ANONYMOUS

» Talking out my feelings with my husband helps, and I'm grateful he's willing to listen. He's a lot more "zen" than I am and doesn't need to think out loud the way that I do. — SUZY SZASZ PALMER



**Making a difference for others can help ease your arthritis symptoms and improve your outlook, studies have shown. Take part in research by taking the [Live Yes! INSIGHTS assessment](#).**

# What advice would you give about staying active?



Find tips to modify many activities for aching joints with [Your Exercise Solution.](#)

- » Stay physically strong! Keeping my weight down and working out daily with weights has been my saving grace. — KATERI MANNING HARKOWA
- » Take up tai chi. — LAURA CULP ELLIOTT
- » My morning walk is a must for me to clear my mind. — PATRICE JOHNSON
- » Keep active. Inactivity increases the pain. — ALICE BEEMAN
- » “Motion is the lotion” – from a wonderful physical therapist. — MINDY GOVAN
- » I feel better when I get going, but making myself go for a walk is hard! — PAULINE TURNER
- » [Walk](#) and get more exercise. Don’t sit around and feel sorry for yourself. — TOM CYCHOSZ
- » Try water aerobics and water PT. — LOIS CORRIGAN
- » Exercise – specifically, I do [yoga](#). — MARY PALMER
- » Exercise every day and stretch. — MARGE DANSER
- » I do lots of weights. Stronger muscles defeated the pain of osteoarthritis in my right knee. Still weak and recovering but did my second half marathon. — MARK VAN SCHEPDAEL
- » Stretch and do physical therapy. — LORI JONES
- » Keep exercising despite discomfort, as strong muscles support joints. Water exercise is gentle on joints. And never let anyone limit your view of your own potential. — ERIN REEVES MCMILLAN



# What **lifestyle** and attitude changes do you suggest for the **long term**?

» Choose healthy food to eat, exercise daily, get enough sleep, reduce stress, be grateful for all that you have. Smile and enjoy life. — CHRISTINA DEWEY

» Know your limits and what your body can handle. It will be hard, but it will be better for you. — LEXI ELKS

» See something good in every day, and after a while you learn to live with the pain. Regarding the fatigue, listen to your body – don't do two hectic things two days running. Learn to plan well. — NINA NANNY CHARBECK

» Be kind to your body and listen to it. Take time to deal with it and keep a positive attitude. Educate yourself so you know what you're dealing with. — SHILPI TALWAR

» Get plenty of rest. Talk to someone who will understand. Surround yourself with people who will help, not hurt you. Join support groups; it helps, they have great advice. — JEAN

» Don't make excuses for the pain you're in. There are good days and not-so-good days, and you owe it to yourself to take care of yourself. — CHERLYN

» It is important to listen to your body and rest when necessary. Maintain good nutrition, add some exercise and keep a positive attitude! — DONNA

» I do everything myself as long as I can. It's very hard for me, but I do ask for help if needed. — MARY CATHY LEONARD THOMER

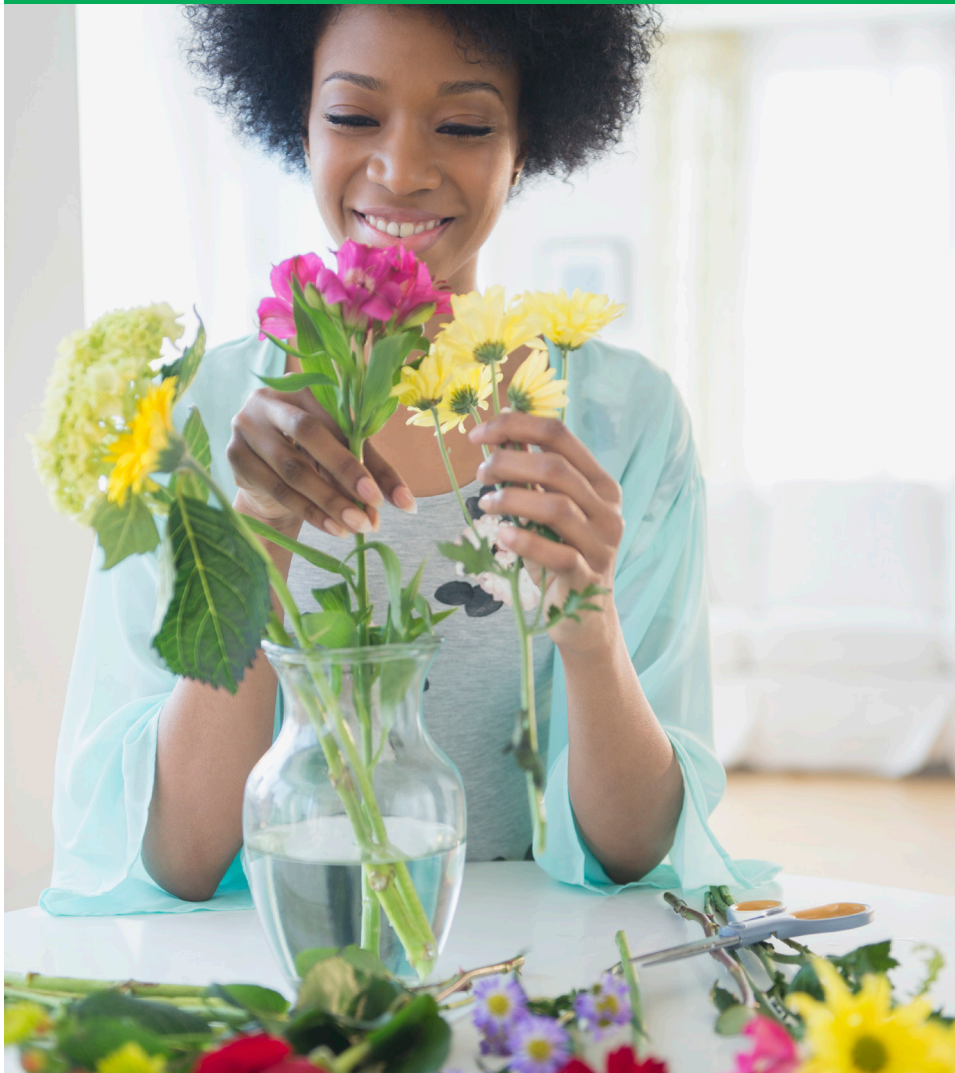
» Eat more healthy foods. I've lost so much already that it feels really important that I don't lose my choice of what I eat. — ERIN REEVES MCMILLAN

» Not eating sugar of any kind. — CARYL SHADE

» Perhaps the most important thing for me is not to focus on the things I cannot do but to focus on what I CAN do. — SUZY SZASZ PALMER



# Have you found any **silver linings** to living with arthritis?



» It has made me more compassionate and caring to others. — ANITA KATZ

» I appreciate the good days so much more. After a particularly bad flare day or week, I embrace the pain-free days. — KAT STUBBS

» Learning there's more than one way to do almost anything. — ANONYMOUS

» I'm working from home full-time because of the pandemic. I can take my time waking up and getting moving without the rush of getting ready for work. Working from home also gives me a lot of extra time with my dogs. Also, since I don't have a commute now, I'm always able to make it on time to my in-home yoga classes, which are really helpful for keeping me feeling human. — SYDNIE MCCONNELL

» I have become better at letting things go and realized that not everything has to be perfect. — JEAN ROSE

» I was always on the go, rushing from place to place. Now I embrace nature and find myself enjoying a much simpler life. — SHARI MEDECK

» I have learned to take better care of myself. — ANDREA YOUNG

» If there is a silver lining, it would be that I have learned to like myself for who I am, not for what I can do. — MAGGIE FRISCH

» I can't believe how kind and thoughtful others are. I never expected that — like the many people who ask me if I need help when I'm struggling to get my key into my building's door. — MS. FRED A

» Living with arthritis has shown me how strong I am. — RENA MEYERCHICK

» Patience and naps, things I never had for myself. — PAULO BERNARDINO

» That even on my worst days someone else still has it worse. — SCOTT BAILEY



**Live Yes!**  
**INSIGHTS**<sup>SM</sup>

## Give 10 Minutes. Change the Future of Arthritis.

By taking part in the **Live Yes! INSIGHTS<sup>SM</sup>** assessment, you'll be among those changing lives today and changing the future of arthritis, for yourself and for 54 million others. And all it takes is just 10 minutes.

By sharing your experience, you're showing decision-makers the realities of living with arthritis, paving the way for change. You're helping break down barriers to care, accelerate research and create resources that make a difference in people's lives, including your own.

**NOW IS THE TIME** to make your voice count, for yourself and the whole arthritis community.

**Don't miss out. Go to [arthritis.org/INSIGHTS](https://arthritis.org/INSIGHTS)**



### **Continue the Conversation!**

Go to our Live Yes! **ONLINE COMMUNITY** and discuss how your participation is changing the future of arthritis.

**[LiveYes.arthritis.org](https://LiveYes.arthritis.org)**

