



**Healthy Lifestyle Changes, Inc. presents
Arthritis "Up Close and Personal" Workshop review
at World Congress on Disability Expo
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By Herb Drill

Count me among those with arthritis, which the Arthritis Foundation says covers 100-plus medical conditions affecting nearly 46 million U.S. adults and 300,000 children, and can begin in infancy. Some forms affect young adults; still others emerge in the peak career and child-rearing years. The common thread is they all affect the musculoskeletal system and the joints specifically.

Meanwhile, the National Institutes of Health estimate arthritis is one of the most common U.S. diseases, with 50% of adults 65 and older troubled by it. Older people most often have osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, or gout.

I have arthritis in my neck, left shoulder, and lower back; it exacerbates congenital Muscular Dystrophy (MD). That's why I began to follow advice from Steven C. McCartney.

Minimize its impact

His Arthritis Intensive Self-Care Workshop is designed to provide strategies individuals and health professionals can use to reduce pain, possibly slow disease progression, and overcome obstacles that pain may present. "You can't choose whether you'll get arthritis, but you can take steps to minimize its impact on your life. Causes of pain include physical problems from disease, weak or tense muscles, stress, depression and fatigue, and exercise is one effective way to break this cycle at various points," he observes.

McCartney delves into, among other topics, an overview of arthritis and fibromyalgia self-management, pain and cognitive symptom management, distraction techniques, and action planning. He goes over dealing with problems, exercise for fun/fitness, identifying exercise barriers, and difficult emotions. Also covered are healthy eating, preventing and slowing osteoporosis, energy conservation, relaxation through guided imagery, medication usage, and dealing with depression.

For his health documentary efforts, New York Film and Video Festival officials awarded McCartney a best health documentary prize for Arthritis: Up Close and Personal.

McCartney explains many arthritis forms are classified as systemic. They can affect the whole body and damage virtually any organ or system: heart, lungs, kidneys, blood vessels, and skin. Together, arthritis and related conditions cost the U.S. more than \$124 billion per year in medical care and indirect expenses such as lost wages and productivity and cost millions of people their health, physical abilities and, in many cases, independence.

Progressive

He says rheumatoid arthritis is an immune system disease; "my mother is among the sufferers." In a healthy person, the immune system keeps out or destroys "invaders" such as bacteria or viruses. For people with auto-immune diseases like RA, the immune system mistakes the body's cells as an invader and attacks. The object of the attack is the lining of the joints. This type is progressive, he said, and can continue to damage joints more over time. The damage done can become very severe.

The National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion within the Atlanta-based U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates arthritis is the leading cause of disability in the U.S., limiting the activities of more than 17 million adults. CDC

instituted Buenos Días, Artritis to be a Spanish health communications campaign for general use by state health departments and their partners. CDC stated research shows “although the prevalence of arthritis in the Hispanic population is less than that shown by Caucasians, higher proportions of Hispanics report work limitations due to arthritis and severe joint pain.”

Reuters Health has reported that smokers with knee arthritis suffer quicker joint loss than non-smokers with the condition. Researchers found among men with knee arthritis, smokers had more pain and were more than twice as likely to show significant cartilage loss in the joint. The findings are “provocative” and should spur further research, wrote study authors led by Dr. Shreyasee Amin of the Mayo Clinic College of Medicine in Rochester, Minn.

For pain management, McCartney advises sufferers to “identify the warning signs: swelling in one or more joints; early morning stiffness; recurring pain and/or tenderness in one or more joints; inability to move a joint normally; redness, warmth in a joint; unexplained weight loss, fever, weakness, combined with joint pain, and symptoms that last more than two weeks.” Your problem-solving steps “should include a list of ideas on what to do and an assessment of probable results. Utilize all resources, and accept that the problem may not be resolved now.”

Difficult emotions

He envisions an action plan with “something reasonable you want to do; specific behavior, such as exercise for fun/fitness, and a high confidence that you will complete the entire action plan.”

Food, medication, and rest all play major roles. McCartney advises eating a variety of foods on a regular schedule, with a balanced breakfast; eating the same amount at each meal, and drinking six to eight glasses of water. “You should inform your doctor of all medications and dosage and determine the need for each one, using each as prescribed and reporting the effects.” Also, go to bed at the same time every night and get up at the same time every day, even on weekends. “Avoid caffeine, including chocolate, for four hours before bedtime and avoid alcohol near bed time. Most of all, if you have a sleep disorder, like sleep apnea, treatment can make a real impact on your pain.”

As for any difficult emotion such as depression, McCartney suggests that you “write down self-defeating thoughts and try to make them rational and helpful. Practice them and be patient with yourself.” Understanding the tie between pain and mood will help with difficult emotions, he said, adding, “Keep active when you have pain; this will take your mind off pain and help you feel better. Don’t be a martyr; tell friends and family you’re in pain. A request for help isn’t being dependent; it’s a direct, honest, and often necessary communication allowing help. Remember, pain is related closely to stress and depression. Reducing them will ease pain.”

To “stay rejuvenated from arthritis pain,” McCartney has created a Top 10 List. While it’s not as funny as David Letterman’s, it’s a lot more helpful:

1. Rehydrate—learn how fluids are absorbed.
2. Eat healthy foods and follow a balanced diet plan.
3. Exercise environmental control; make your home user-friendly.
4. Exercise to improve flexibility and strength.
5. Rest and sleep well.
6. Form a support team.
7. Communicate any changes.
8. Don’t ignore pain; listen to your body.
9. Be patient.
10. Revisit your action plan and problem-solving techniques often.

In his wheelchair, Jacksonville, FL resident Herb Drill heads Able Me & Associates. Join Healthy Lifestyle Changes, Inc. today as [Ambassadors in Partnership](#)