Whole-Body Healing for Arthritis

October 15, 2026

Arthritis Foundation®

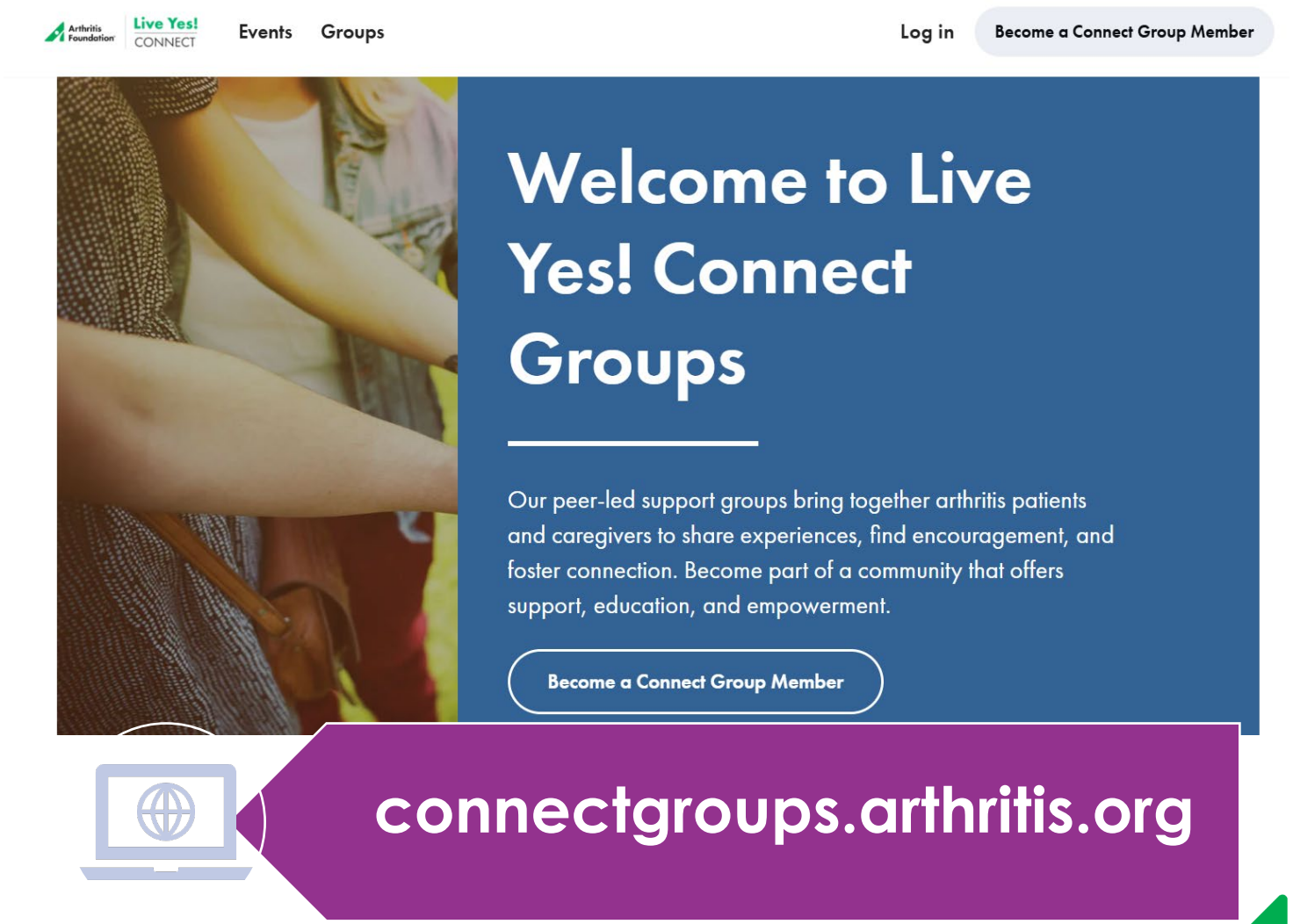
About Me

Retired technical editor

Living with RA, OA, Fibro and other chronic conditions

Facilitator – Connect Groups

- Pacific Northwest
- Newly Diagnosed
- **Join my group or find one that fits your interests!**



Poll Question:
What are you looking most to improve?

a) Mobility/movement

b) Energy levels

c) Sleep

d) Stress

e) Overall health

Event Program

- ✓You are muted
- ✓Q&A box
- ✓Presentation, Live Q&A
- ✓**Recording, PPT and E-Resource Past Webinars Page**

Arthritis.org/Webinars



Tonight, You'll Learn:



How lifestyle factors influence arthritis symptoms.



Practical strategies to support pain management and overall well-being.



Complementary approaches that may enhance treatment.



Arthritis Foundation resources for support.

Dr. Adam Kreitenberg

- **Education & Medical Training**
  - **Undergraduate:** B.S. in Physiological Sciences — UCLA
  - **Medical School:** M.D. — Technion – Israel Institute of Technology
- **Residency & Fellowship:**
  - Internal Medicine Residency & Rheumatology Fellowship — USC / LA County Medical Center
- **Clinical Focus & Expertise**
  - **Specialties:** Rheumatoid Arthritis, Osteoarthritis, Lupus, Gout, Scleroderma, Vasculitis, and Osteoporosis.



Approach: Integrates cutting-edge research with compassionate, patient-centered care.

Defining Whole-Body Healing

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Arthritis is *More* Than Joint Pain

Health is shaped by biological, psychological, and social factors together (Biopsychosocial model)

- **Biological**
- **Psychological**
- **Social**



No single cure or "quick fix" but regaining control is possible!

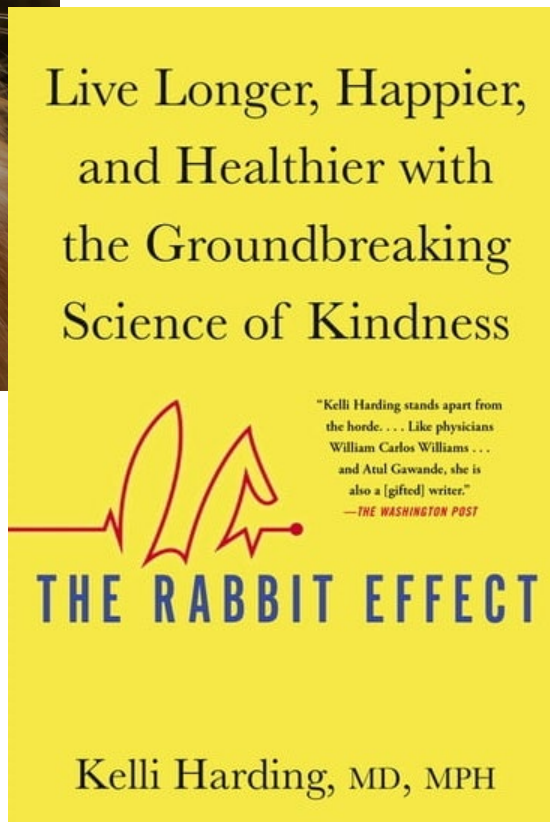
Rabbit Studies

Example:

Rabbits on identical high-cholesterol diets developed about 60% less arterial plaque when handled and petted daily.

Why do some people seem to do better with disease than others?





It's important to treat the WHOLE person, not just the condition!

Pillars of Whole-Body Care for Arthritis

Mental and Emotional Wellness	• Addressing how stress, sleep, and emotions directly change pain processing signals in the brain.
Self-Management	• Supporting joints through balanced anti-inflammatory nutrition, daily movement, and rest.
Complementary Care	• Combining medical therapy with supportive practices like heat, pacing, nature, and relaxation.

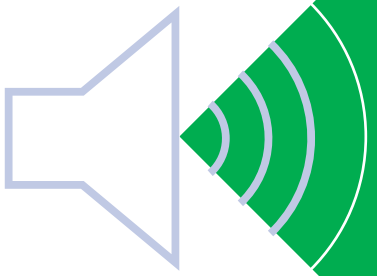
Pillar #1: Mental and Emotional Wellness

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The Brain-Pain Connection Is REAL



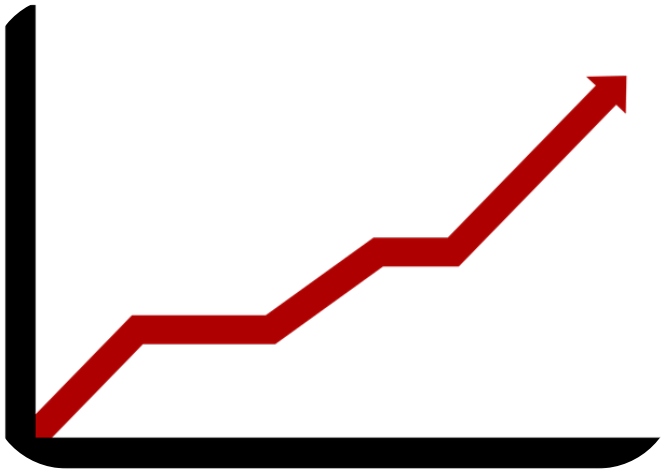
Pain is in your BRAIN, not in YOUR HEAD



Your brain sets the **volume on pain**.

When the nervous system flares, pain intensifies regardless of joint damage.

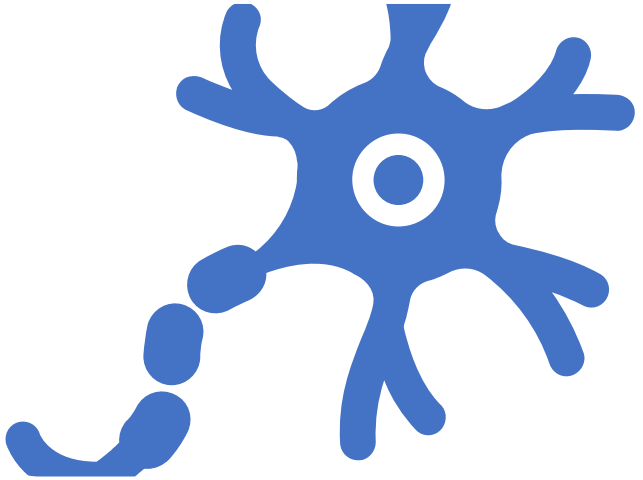
Chronic Stress Increases Pain



Raises systemic inflammation levels



Increases muscle tension around joints



Makes nerve endings more sensitive

Reduce Stress, Retrain Pain Signals



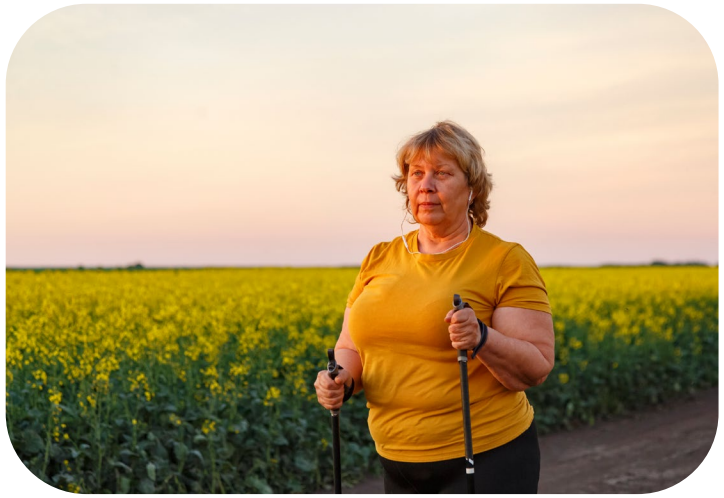
Reframe Pain

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) changes how you respond to pain



Ground in the Now

Mindfulness/Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction tension around joints



Behavioral Activation

Engaging in healthy behaviors before pain is completely gone

My Rx? Go Outside!

Improve Sleep & Mood through natural daylight exposure

Stay Active with outdoor walks, gardening, or recreation

Natural Sunlight boosts endorphins, helps regulate circadian rhythms and blood pressure



Pillar #2: Self-Management

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Eating Well for Arthritis



- No single, strict diet
- Anti-Inflammatory foods and Mediterranean approach (more on next slide)

Keep it simple: eat the rainbow!

Foods that Calm Inflammation

- Fruits and vegetables (bonus for brightly colored)
- Whole Grains (Look for 100%)
- Nuts/seeds
- Fish/Seafood
- Olive Oil
- Beans/legumes (including soybeans)
- Cocoa/Cacao
- Tea + Coffee
- Herbs and Spices


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Foods that Promote Inflammation

- Trans fats (partially hydrogenated oils)
- **High Intake of:**
- Added Sugar
- Sugar-sweetened beverages*
- Ultra-processed foods
- Processed meats* (bacon, sausage, hot dogs, deli meat, etc.)
- Alcohol*



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*Gout – especially important to avoid along with organ meats, red meat, shellfish, certain seafood (anchovies, sardines) to avoid flare

Easy Food Swaps

Fats and oils

- Margarine/Butter/vegetable shortening → Olive Oil where recipes allow

Grains and Starches

- White carbs → whole grain versions (brown rice, quinoa, oats)

Proteins

- Processed meats → fatty fish, eggs, beans, lentils, etc.

Snacks

- Nuts, dark chocolate (70% or higher), fruit, veggies, dip



Say no to sugar-sweetened beverages!

Champions of Yes

My Rx? Grab Something Gut-Healthy!



Prebiotics

- Food (fiber) for "good" bacteria
- Plentiful in an anti-inflammatory diet

Probiotics

- Foods with active live cultures (yogurt, kefir, kombucha, apple cider vinegar)
- Fermented foods (tempeh, kimchi, sauerkraut)

What about supplements?

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Movement IS Medicine



- **Reduce Pain & Stiffness** through regular movement
- **Strengthen Supporting Muscles** to protect joints
- **Aim for 150 Minutes/Week** plus 2 days of strength training
- **Work with a Physical Therapist** to build a safe, effective plan

Sleep and Rest



- **Sleep Habits**
  - Keep a sleep schedule
  - Power down electronics
  - Avoid evening caffeine
  - Cool and dark room
- **Easing Anxiety**
  - Worry journal
  - Breathing techniques
  - CBT for Insomnia
  - Cognitive Shuffling
- **Activity Pacing**

Pillar #3: Complementary Care

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How to Use Complementary Care



- To support your treatment plan, ***not replace it.***
- Check with your doctor before making changes.
- **One size does not fit all.**
  - Cost?
  - Type of arthritis?
  - Easily accessible?
  - Effectiveness?

Medical Care + Self-Management + Teamwork = Best Results

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Shop Smart

- Check ingredients
- Review dosages
- Look for Third party testing labels - **NSF, USP, Consumer labs**
- Ask for recommendations from physician or pharmacist



Supplements are NOT regulated by the FDA

Options to Consider

Most Studied

- Heat and Cold
- Acupuncture
- Physical Therapy

Mixed Evidence

- Massage Therapy
- Hypnotherapy
- Biofeedback
- TENS units







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My Rx? Targeted Supplements

Options may include:

- Omega-3 Fatty Acids – best for RA
- Turmeric/Curcumin
- Boswellia – best for OA
- Glucosamine & Chondroitin – mixed evidence
- CBD/Cannabis – more research needed
- Vitamin D3*
- Calcium*



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** For bone health and/or immune system health, not specifically arthritis*

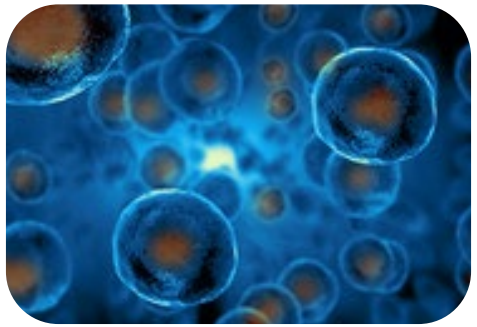
Other Options and Promising New Tech



Wearables



Platelet Rich Plasma (PRP)



Regenerative Medicine



Vagus Nerve Stimulation



Ai-Precision Medicine

Key Take-Aways

- Think beyond your joints.
- Reduce stress to tamp down pain signals.
- Make lifestyle tweaks for whole-body health.
- Integrate complementary therapies you prefer.
- Partner with your healthcare team and keep them in the loop.

Questions?



1.800.283.7800 / helpline@arthritis.org

- Better understand your disease
- Interpret your insurance coverage
- Connect with other people like you
- Get involved and Volunteer

Live Q&A

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Upcoming Webinars



October 29: OA Basics and First Steps Forward

December 16: Arthritis Care Breakthroughs

Register Here:
Arthritis.org/webinars

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Jingle Bell Run – Don't Miss the Fun!

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Jingle Bell Run®

Jingle Bell Run®

BE THERE WITH BELLS ON.



Arthritis.org/JBR

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Upcoming Virtual Connect Group Events

Chronic Pain	Newly Diagnosed	Military & Veterans	Movement Matters
Every Monday at 6pm ET	*Sharing Your Story* Nov.12th at 7:30 pm ET	*Mind & Body Therapies* Nov. 17th at 7:30 pm ET	*Strength Training 101* Nov. 21st at 12pm ET

Explore the more than 50+ in-person and online support groups.
Find groups by topic, disease type and location here:



connectgroups.arthritis.org

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Thank You!

Take the survey and let us know what you think!

Join us next time – recordings:

Arthritis.org/webinars

