

A photograph of a smiling man with a white beard and a dark wetsuit, holding a surfboard under his arm. The background is a bright, sunny outdoor setting, possibly a beach or a boat deck.

36 TIPS TO *Build Resilience &* THRIVE

FROM THE EXPERTS AT THE ARTHRITIS FOUNDATION

You've Got This

STRENGTHEN YOUR RESILIENCE TO POWER THROUGH ADVERSITY.

People who live with arthritis have long known what the COVID-19 pandemic is teaching the rest of the world: You need to be resilient to not just survive but thrive in the face of adversity.

Resilience is the ability to learn from change and adversity, and to recover or adjust. People can even come back stronger than they started out. When you're resilient, you're able to keep going mentally and physically in spite of the pain, grief and anger that may come with adversity. You can look beyond the problem and draw on constructive coping mechanisms like optimism, acceptance and confidence in your ability to adapt. These will help you get past setbacks without giving into hopelessness and frustration.

Resilience is especially important for those with arthritis; pain and limitations take a toll physically, mentally and emotionally. With resilience, you can take care of yourself and cope with your arthritis – and the pandemic – without allowing either to take over your life.

CONTENTS

- 1 Introduction
- 2 Benefits of Resilience
- 3 Focus on the Upside
- 4 Learn From Experience
- 5 Build Your Knowledge
- 6 Find Your Bliss
- 7 Get Moving
- 8 Seek Support
- 9 Count Your Blessings



Benefits of Resilience



Resilient people tend to recover faster, manage pain better, have less chronic depression and anxiety, and have **better overall health** than those who are less resilient.

LESS PAIN. In a study of 300 women with rheumatoid arthritis (RA), those who scored high on resilience questionnaires reported less RA-related pain than those with lower scores.

LESS STRESS. Studies also have shown a correlation between higher levels of resilience and lower levels of pain and stress (which is known to exacerbate arthritis pain).

MORE CONTROL. A study that looked at 275 patients with knee osteoarthritis (OA) found that those

who exhibited the most resilience-related characteristics were also the most likely to show self-efficacy – for example, taking the initiative to see a physician or to exercise regularly. They reported less pain and more ability to do everyday activities than did less resilient study participants.

BETTER COPING. A report found those who were more resilient to pain also used more coping strategies, such as seeking social support and positive interactions, consistent exercise, less substance use and more use of health care services.

Focus on the Upside



Optimism is a big factor in resilience; the more hopeful you feel, the more resilient you'll be.

- 1** Reframe your perspective to focus on the positive, even while you're aware of the negative.
- 2** Ask yourself: Does the situation present new opportunities? What positives can come out of it?
- 3** Pause several times a day to enjoy a nice view, savor a meal, celebrate accomplishments and appreciate small kindnesses.
- 4** Instead of ruminating about the problems in front of you, visualize a better future, and put it into words: "In the future I will...."
- 5** Each night before bed, write down a few things that you are looking forward to the next day.
- 6** Schedule something you'll enjoy, whether it's calling a long-time friend or indulging in a favorite hobby.
- 7** Shift your perspective from negative thoughts to encouraging possibilities. If you have to rest due to fatigue or a flare, think of it as an opportunity to catch up on your reading or watch a favorite movie. Feeling stiff? That's another good reason to take a walk and enjoy the outdoors.

Learn From Experience



Living with arthritis has probably given you an edge on developing resilience, even if you don't know it.

8 Think about the times you've overcome challenges before. That's proof that you can do it again.

9 Remember what you did to prevail against challenges in the past. What was helpful and what was not?

10 Think about the mental and emotional lessons and skills you have developed that helped you cope in the past.


11 Recall specific strategies that worked before, and use them again. For example, schedule

an appointment with your doctor to ward off further pain; start a new activity, like yoga; or take up a new hobby, like gardening or playing an instrument.

12 Think about unexpected complications that have come up before – like a flare – and plan for them. Planning can help you better overcome obstacles.

13 Have confidence: You have the ability to successfully solve problems you encounter.

Build Your Knowledge



The more
you know, the more
control and confidence
you'll have in facing
adversity.

14 Ask your doctor plenty of questions about your condition and how you can make decisions together to continue living the life you want.

15 Talk to others who are in similar circumstances. For example, you can find other people with arthritis facing some of the same kinds of challenges from COVID-19 in online forums and support groups at [arthritis.org/liveeyes](https://www.arthritis.org/liveeyes).

16 Stay up-to-date on information about your condition, [COVID-19](https://www.arthritis.org/covid-19) or other source of adversity from credible, vetted resources. Avoid

incorrect or misleading information on social media and online sources that lack evidence and legitimacy.

17 Find tools and resources for living well with arthritis from the Arthritis Foundation – [from tips and modifications](https://www.arthritis.org/tips-and-modifications) for activities to informative articles and [podcasts](https://www.arthritis.org/podcasts) – at [arthritis.org](https://www.arthritis.org).

18 Get answers to your questions about arthritis, insurance, COVID-19 and much more from the licensed, clinical social workers on the Arthritis Foundation Helpline, 800-283-7800, or email helpline@arthritis.org.

Find Your Bliss



Emotions like joy, satisfaction and interest provide perspective and a “psychological time-out” in the face of stress.

19 Set aside some time every day to do something you love, whether it’s reading a book, taking a walk with a loved one or bingeing your favorite Netflix show.

20 Laugh. Whether it’s a funny friend, a favorite movie or silly videos, make time for a regular belly laugh.

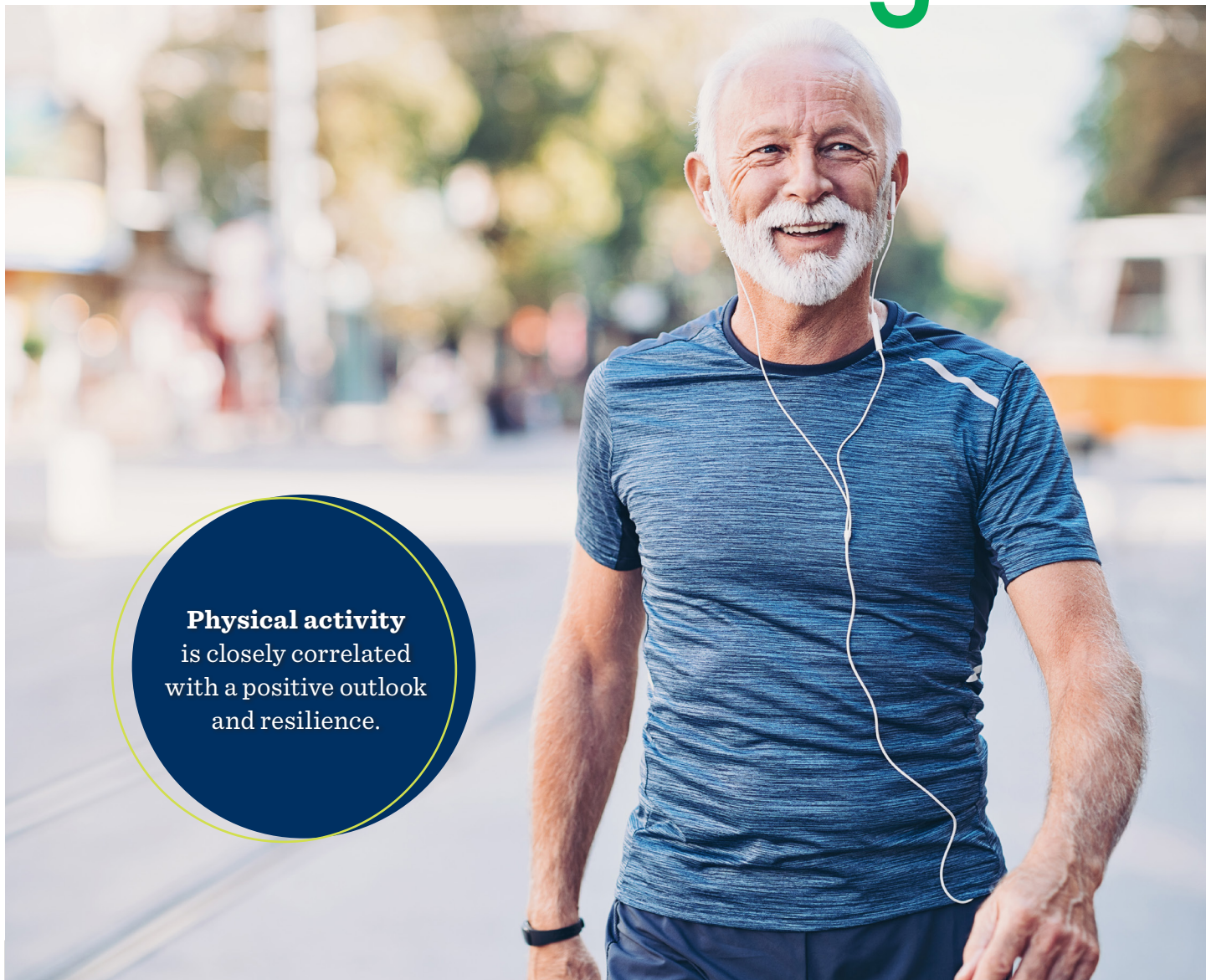
21 Engage in regular acts of kindness for others – and yourself. Do something kind for a stranger, friend or family member and yourself every

day. The act could be very small, such as holding a door open or giving someone a compliment, and treating yourself to a long bath or something sweet.

22 Savor experiences. Each day, savor at least two experiences, like your morning coffee, a bird singing in a nearby tree, a smile from a neighbor. Be present, be mindful and engage in the experience with all your senses.

23 Think of 10 wonderful memories, write them down and refer to them when times get tough.

Get Moving



Physical activity is closely correlated with a positive outlook and resilience.

24 Exercise reduces anxiety and depression, improves sleep and increases mood-boosting chemicals, including brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF), a protein that improves brain health.


25 Studies have shown that physically fit people experience smaller spikes in blood pressure and stress hormones like cortisol in stressful situations.

26 Staying active is especially important during distressing events, like the COVID-19

pandemic. According to one study, moderate exercise helped ease feelings of sadness after a distressing event; physical activity may help people bounce back more easily from stressful situations.

27 Exercise can help make you more physically resilient, too. The right workout will increase your strength, endurance and range of motion, all of which can help you better cope with the physical challenges of arthritis.

Seek Support



It's much easier to **push forward** when the going gets tough if you don't feel alone.

28 Realize that getting help is not a sign of weakness. Chances are, your loved ones want to help and are simply waiting for you to ask. Reach out to them for support when you need it.

29 Stay connected. Set aside a time each day or each week to call or text a friend or loved one.

30 Join a support group, such as the Arthritis Foundation's [Live Yes! Connect Group](#), and

join a discussion with others facing similar circumstances in the Foundation's [Online Community](#).

31 Seek professional help if needed. Mental health professionals are available via telehealth during the current pandemic.

32 In addition to your friends and family, be sure you have a health care team you can rely on. And diversify your network: Join a book club, sports team or church group.

Count Your Blessings



Counting your blessings will make bad days more tolerable and good days even sweeter.

33 Show gratitude. One review of 225 studies found that individuals who expressed gratitude or wrote in a gratitude journal at least several times a week felt more connected, autonomous, optimistic and happy – traits that contribute to resilience.

34 Write down your top seven personal strengths, and each day use one in a way you never have before. For example, if one of your strengths is knitting, consider knitting for charity instead of just your loved ones. Each night, jot down how you used your strength; how you felt before,

during and after; and how you plan to use it again in the future.

35 Focus on what you can do, not what you can't. If you get hung up on something you can't do, recognize it but don't dwell on it. Focus on how you can adapt and pat yourself on the back for your ability to adjust and recover.

36 Take stock of all that you have to be grateful for. Contemplate each, one at a time, for several minutes.

Live Yes! ONLINE COMMUNITY



Chat with others who get it.

Join the Live Yes! Online Community.

Chat about what matters to you – medical issues, frustrations, tips and life hacks – whatever is on your mind.

- Connect with new friends.
- Join disease-specific discussion forums.
- Find a special place for parents.
- Get the latest medical and research news.

PLUS! A special forum where doctors and other professionals answer questions from the community.