

The Arthritis Foundation presents:

Webinar Series Coping With the Emotional Toll of JA



Sponsored by
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We'll begin shortly...



About Me



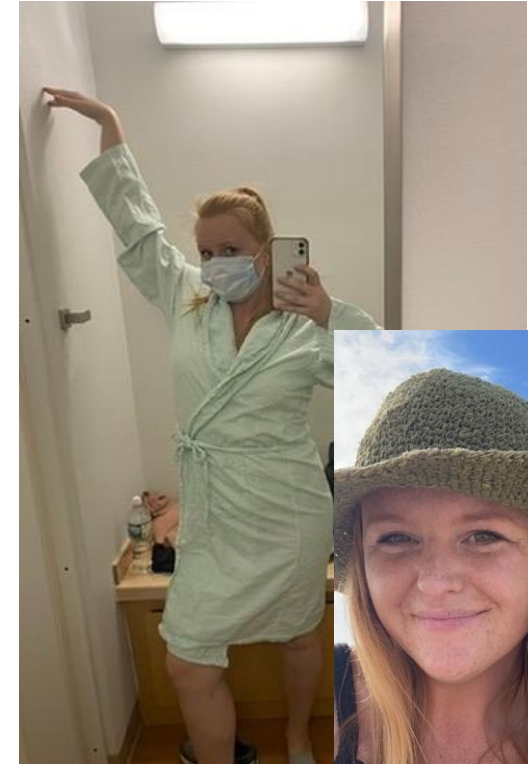
I was diagnosed with Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis at age 2, and Psoriatic Arthritis at age 26.

I started my Instagram account in 2020 to help me process my “re-diagnosis” following many years of medical gaslighting.

I share my story to help feel less alone others through shared experiences. I currently live in NY with my husband and almost 3-year-old little boy!



@ArthritisMeggie



Event Program

- ✓ You are muted
- ✓ Q&A bottom of screen
- ✓ Presentation, Panel
- ✓ Live Q&A
- ✓ Post-Event Survey
- ✓ **Recording:**
YouTube.com/ArthritisFoundation
- ✓ **PDF of PPT = Past Webinars Page**



POLL: Lately, what's been the most challenging part of managing your child's JA?

- a) Coping with the uncertainty of pain and flares.
- b) Handling doctor's visits, lab draws and shot time.
- c) Balancing family life, personal time and caregiving.
- d) Communicating with my child/children about difficult emotions.
- e) Feeling alone or like I don't have enough support.



Tonight, You'll Learn:



Tips on handling uncertainty with JA



How to help you child manage difficult emotions



Insights from parents and adults who have lived it



This Webinar Is About JA Emotional Health

For more in-depth information about pain management, school accommodations, medications, etc., go to:

- ✓ Arthritis.org/JA
- ✓ Arthritis.org/webinars
- ✓ Arthritis.org/podcast
- ✓ Arthritis.org/JAExplained



Tonight's Expert – Kara Dingess, PhD



- **Clinical Child Psychologist**
 - Tulane University School of Medicine
- ✓ 9 years of **JAFS**
- ✓ 10 years of **camp**
- ✓ 15 years **volunteering**
- ✓ 1 **Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology**



SJIA Kid of 27 Years and PsA Adult



Disclaimer:

This webinar is for educational purposes only and not intended to replace medical advice.



Talk to a licensed mental health professional for personalized advice for your child!



JA Impacts on Mental Health

Emotional Impacts of Juvenile Arthritis



Children and teens with arthritis may...

- Feel different than their peers
- Feel alone, uncertain or angry
- Face challenges such as pain, fatigue, loss of mobility, disability



Up to **15 %** children with JIA have clinical depression;

20% may have “subclinical,” or lower-grade, mood problems

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But there are many ways to help!



Possible Impacts by Age and Stage



Toddlers (1-3)

- Separation anxiety
- Difficult expressing emotion
- Difficulty talking about pain
- Tantrums, crying, aggression



Children (4-11)

- Struggles with fitting in
- Shame from “being different”
- Anger/Confusion – why me?
- Guilt - feeling a like a burden
- Sleep disturbances

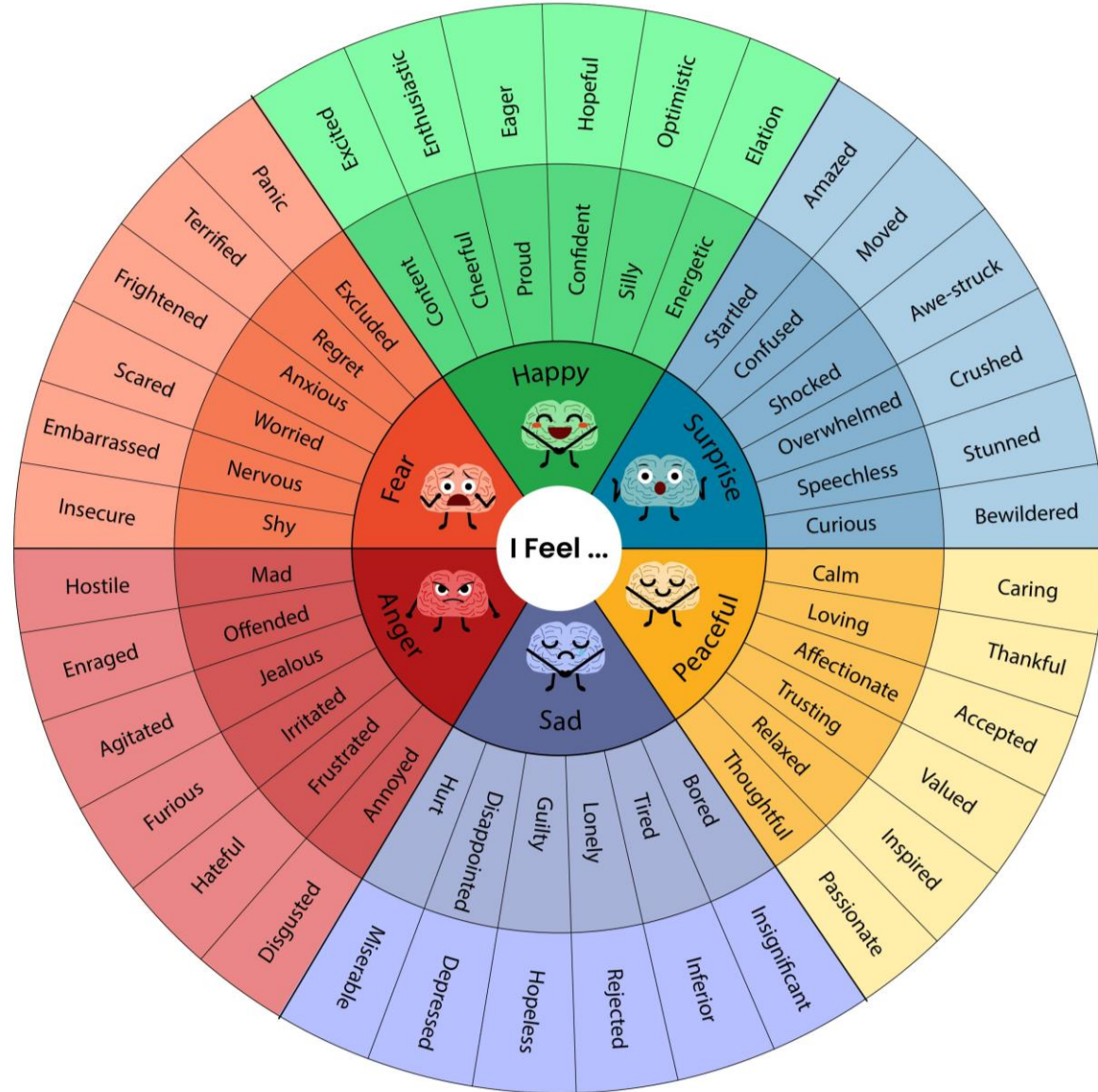


Pre-Teens/Teens (12-18)

- Rebellion
- Identity struggles
- Body image
- Depression/Anxiety



Before you
can tame it,
you ***must***
name it



3 Steps for Coping with Difficult Emotions

Validate

- Their experience is **real** to them, even if it does not seem as real, intense, logical, etc. to you or others.

Normalize

- This can take the fear out of an experience, but **don't stigmatize** ("typical moody teen," "teenage angst," etc.)

Focus on the present

- **Shift the focus - what can we do now?**
- **Where can your child have control and autonomy?**



Additional Tips

Keep a routine – Visual schedules

Build on mastery

- Remind them how much they've learned
- “Remember when you used to be scared of finger pricks? You know what to expect now”
- “This is uncomfortable, but I've handled it before.”

Consider involving child life specialists

- Typically, available at child's hospital

Encourage play

Encourage digital tracking for symptoms

- Helps build self confidence in taking care of themselves
- “Control the controllables”



And
Remember
...Your
Child Is a
Mirror



Dealing With Fear – Shot Time

Comfortable setting

Distraction techniques

- Blowing bubbles
- Sensory toys/squishy balls
- Watching TV
- Listening to music
- Deep breathing – shot on the exhale
- **Buzzy Bee Distraction Toy – Amazon**

Empower with age-appropriate information

Reward system

Offer Control!



*Biofeedback may
help extreme cases*

Dealing With Fear – At the Doctor/Hospital



Role-play doctor's appointments

- Visualization
- Books
- Shows

Be honest – avoid saying it won't hurt

Keep routines steady and positive ritual (small prizes, or outings)



Honesty Is the Best Policy!

(Age appropriate)



Secrecy can breed anxiety

JA Doesn't Just Affect One Person

Caregiver/Parent Burnout

- Sleep problems
- Chronic fatigue
- Increased anxiety
- Feelings of inadequacy
- Emotional detachment
- Increase in unhealthy coping mechanisms

Sibling Burnout

- Acting out
- Disconnecting
- Increased anxiety
- Academic changes
- Withdrawal
- Feeling like a burden



Coping Tips – For You

Listen to your emotions

Fold in self-care

Ask for help

Communicate openly

Find a support system

Schedule nights out



[Connectgroups.arthritis.org](https://connectgroups.arthritis.org)



Coping Tips – For Your Other Children

Acknowledge their role

Give them special time

Include them in care when appropriate

Validate their feelings & encourage to speak up

Highlight fairness, not equality



Coping Tips – For the Whole Family

Hold family check-ins

Create shared traditions

Model emotional openness

Practice gratitude together



When “Normal Issues” Become Serious

Look out for:

- ✓ Social withdrawal
- ✓ Changes in eating/sleeping/activity levels that aren't pain or disease related
- ✓ Sudden decline in academics
- ✓ Loss of interest in multiple activities



Seeking Out Professional Help

When to Seek Help

- Frequency
- Intensity
- Triggering event

Where to Seek Help

- PCP referral
- Go through Insurance
- APA/ACA websites
- Arthritis Foundation Helpline

How to Seek Help

- Therapy agencies
- Healthy Relationships
- Coping mechanisms
- Connect with others

Why to Seek Help

- Put your mask on before helping others
- Greater emotional and psychological well being for everyone



The Kids Are Going to Be Alright!

Yes, JA is HARD.

BUT it can build your child's resilience!

That means in the future, your child may be better equipped to:

- ✓ Bounce back from failure
- ✓ Creatively problem solve
- ✓ Experience deeper gratitude
- ✓ Advocate for themselves
- ✓ Exhibit more empathy and compassion



Progressive Muscle Relaxation – Let's Try It!

Benefits

- ✓ Learn about what areas of our body are impacted by stress and activities
- ✓ Reduce stress/anxiety
- ✓ Improve Sleep
- ✓ Decrease Pain

Adaptable

Silly and fun!

Anyone can do it!

Provides opportunities for conversation

What are you feeling in your body?

How does it feel?

Are you stressed?

What changes can we make to help you feel better?



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Panel Discussion

Tonight's Panelists



Brent Schuettpelz



D'Nise Williams, LCSW, MSW, M.Ed

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



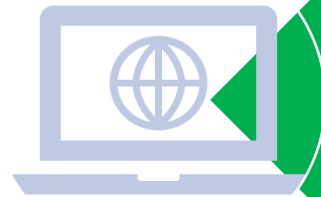
Save the Dates! JA Camp Registration



June, July, August: California, Colorado, Utah, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Minnesota, South Carolina, Missouri, and Washington



Virtual Parent Info Session – December 9
Pre-Registration – December 8
Full Registration – January 12, 2026



Register Here:
arthritis.org/JACamps or
contact **kgat@arthritis.org**



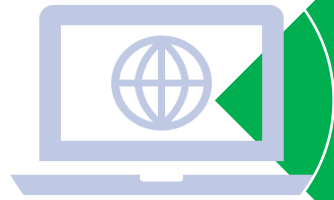
Save the Dates! JA Family Summit 2026



July 16-19 – Indianapolis

- Four-day event – focuses on health, wellness and fun for the entire family! (6mos – young adults up to 25)
- Siblings encouraged to join!
- Parents and caregivers have own track!

Travel Assistance applications – Jan-Feb 2026



Learn More:
arthritis.org/jafamilysummit



Yoga for JIA Stakeholder Input Survey



PEDIATRIC RHEUMATOLOGY PROVIDERS

Exercise is recommended for JIA management, as are stress reduction and social support. A team of researchers from Southern California University of Health Sciences, Children's National Hospital and National University of Natural Medicine are working to develop an online yoga program for kids and teens with JIA. We need your input! If you are a Pediatric rheumatologist serving JIA patients, please consider completing this anonymous online survey to make yoga for JIA safer and more appropriate. The survey will take approximately 10-15 minutes. Compensation includes a \$20 gift card or donation.

PATIENTS AND CAREGIVERS

JIA Families, we need your input! Researchers from Southern California University of Health Sciences, Children's National Hospital and National University of Natural Medicine are designing an online yoga program for kids and teens with JIA. Kids and their caregivers can complete our anonymous online survey to tell us what you want and need in a yoga class, and what you don't! The survey takes about 10-15 minutes. Each person completing it can receive a \$20 gift card or donate it.

If you wish to be part of this study, please scan the code below and answer the survey questions. Your information will remain confidential.



Upcoming Events



11/20 Aging Gracefully

12/18 Balancing Act: Caregiving
and Arthritis



Register Here:
[Arthritis.org/webinars](https://www.Arthritis.org/webinars)



JA Ambassador – Health Career Panel



10/26 – 7pm ET

Hear from a NICU Nurse, OT, Clinical Ethics Fellow, Special Education Department Chair and Health Care Lobbyist!



<https://arthritisfoundation.zoom.us/meeting/register/rqUU3BTjQVyWXjgfxRNP3w>



Upcoming Connect Group Events

Raising a Child with JA: Virtual

- *Navigating Health Insurance*
- **November 18 at 8pm ET**

Iowa JA: Local

- *October Get Together*
- **October 25 at 9am CT**

Metro DC JA: Local and Virtual

- *You Are the Difference*
- **November 12 at 7:15pm ET**

Explore the more than 50+ in-person and online support groups – includes JA Parent and two Young Adult Connect Groups!
Find groups by topic, disease type and location here:



connectgroups.arthritis.org



Thank You!

Take the survey and let us know what you think!

Join us next time – recordings:

[Arthritis.org/webinars](https://www.arthritis.org/webinars)

