

Goal Setting for Arthritis Pain Relief

Hosts: Rebecca Gillett, MS OTR/L, and Julie Eller

Guest: Dawn Eckhoff, PhD, APRN, CPNP-PC

Managing arthritis and its symptoms often involves a balancing act of healthy lifestyle measures, like getting regular exercise, maintaining a healthy diet and weight, getting plenty of rest and taking medications as prescribed. But creating new, healthful habits can be difficult to form and have less to do with “willpower” and more to do with setting realistic, obtainable goals.

In this episode, you'll learn the true concept goal setting and how to implement it in your life to better manage your arthritis, including how to come up with practical goals, overcome barriers and work with your healthcare provider, family and friends for accountability and success. You'll also learn ways the Arthritis Foundation's goal-setting app, [Vim](#), can help you in your arthritis management journey.

Our guest, Dr. Dawn Eckhoff, is a nationally certified telehealth provider and educator by the Center for Telehealth Innovation, Education & Research (C-TIER) at Old Dominion University. Her research focus is on goal setting, telehealth, including simulation, and she oversees telehealth technology in the college's accredited simulation lab, the STIM Center. She also teaches Advanced Health Assessment and Pediatrics in the Family Nurse Practitioner Doctor of Nursing program at the University of Central Florida. In 2020, she was named as one of the college's 40 Noble Knight Nurse alumni honorees for her work as an educator.

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[Making a Pain Management Plan](#)

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TRANSCRIPT FOR PODCAST #36
Goal Setting for Arthritis Pain Relief
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PODCAST OPEN

Welcome to Live Yes! With Arthritis, from the Arthritis Foundation. You may have arthritis, but it doesn't have you. Here, you'll learn things that can help you improve your life and turn No into Yes. This podcast is for the growing community of people like you who really care about conquering arthritis once and for all. Take a moment to subscribe to, rate and comment on Live Yes! With Arthritis wherever you get your podcasts ... and never miss an episode. Our hosts are arthritis patients Rebecca and Julie, and they are asking the questions you want answers to. Listen in.

Rebecca Gillett:

Welcome to the Live Yes! With Arthritis podcast. I'm Rebecca, an occupational therapist living with rheumatoid arthritis and osteoarthritis.

Julie Eller:

And I'm Julie, a JA patient who's passionate about making sure all patients have a voice.

MUSIC BRIDGE

Rebecca:

Thanks for joining us on this episode of the Live Yes With Arthritis Podcast. Today, we are talking about goal setting for arthritis pain relief. We all know that managing arthritis and its symptoms often involves adapting a healthy lifestyle. And that is a lot easier said than done.

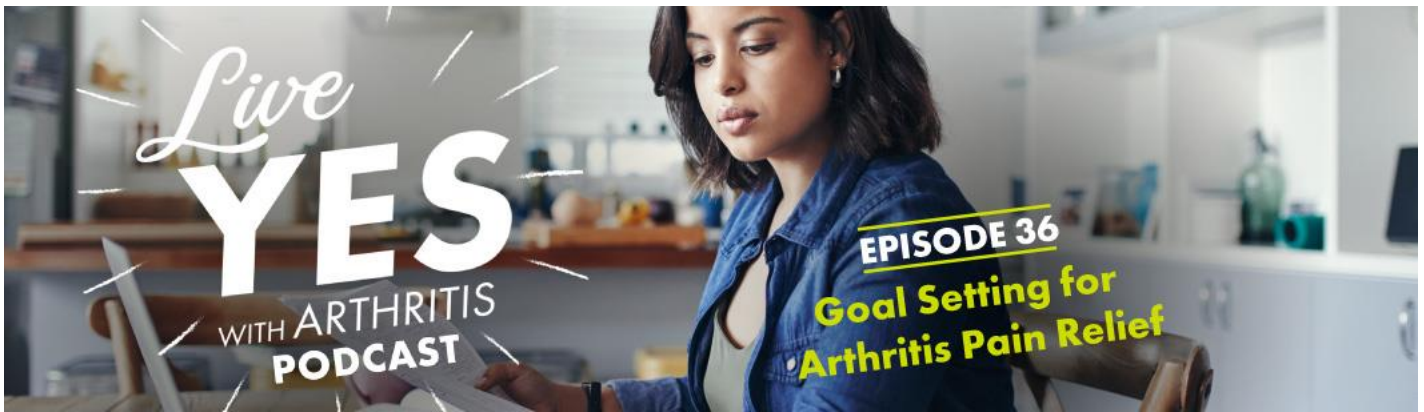
Julie:

You can say that again. And it doesn't get easier as we navigate the different chapters of life. Goal setting is something that's important, not only in one chapter of your arthritis journey, but in all experiences of it.

Rebecca:

Yeah. But forming new habits can be really difficult to do. And so we're really excited to have our guest expert today who will teach us how to implement the concept of goal setting to better manage our arthritis, including how to come up with goals and overcome those barriers and work with our health care providers for accountability and success.

Julie:



And not only that, we're excited that the Arthritis Foundation is launching a new goal setting and pain management app called Vim to help you along the way.

Rebecca:

So, let's introduce our guest speaker today. Dr. Dawn Eckhoff is nationally certified as a telehealth provider and educator by The Center for Telehealth Innovation, Education and Research at Old Dominion University. Her research focuses on goal setting, and she oversees telehealth technology in the college's accredited simulation lab.

She has received grants from the American Association of Nurse Practitioners and the American Nurse Association for Nursing Research pertaining to goal setting with mothers of preschoolers, telehealth, as well as a grant with the University of Central Florida, College of Engineering, from the National Science Foundation. She also teaches advanced health assessment at the University of Central Florida.

In 2020, she was named as one of the college's 40 Nobel Knight Nurse alumni honorees for her work as an educator. Dr. Eckhoff, thanks so much for joining us and welcome to the show.

Dr. Dawn Eckhoff:

Thank you so much for having me today.

Julie:

We're excited to talk with you about goal setting. Let's start off by just defining what goal setting looks like in terms of your care experience.

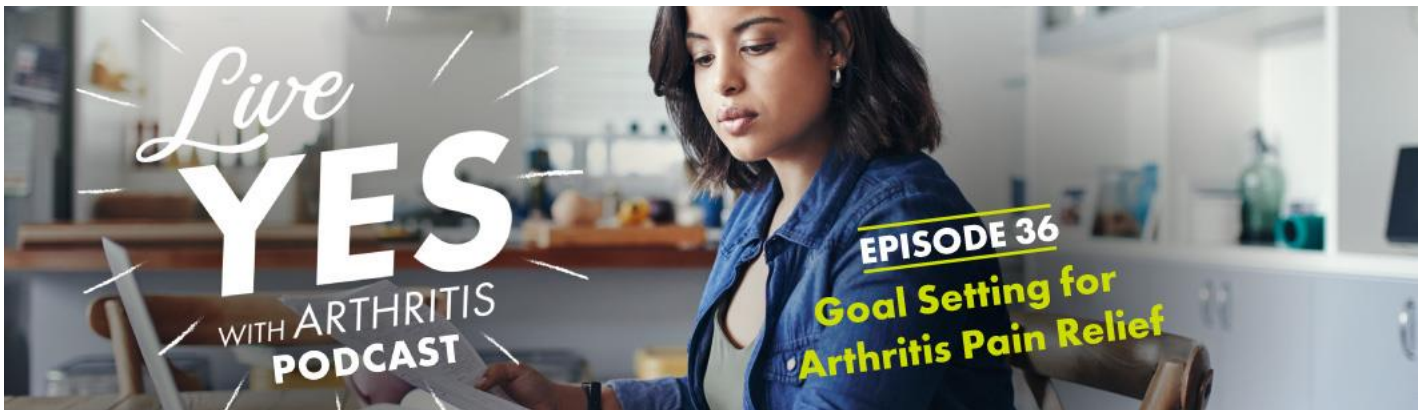
Dr. Eckhoff:

Goal setting is the action of a person who has the confidence, commitment and motivation, as well as the knowledge that is necessary to attain a goal that is specific, challenging, measurable and relevant within a specified amount of time. So basically, you're looking at a person who wants to achieve a goal, who thinks they can achieve a goal, who's motivated to achieve a goal. And with attaining that goal, there's certain things that you have to do.

Rebecca:

I think when you live with a chronic illness, it is hard to think about goal setting sometimes. And there's a lot of barriers. What are the important things to consider when you are goal setting?

Dr. Eckhoff:



Different people have different barriers, and those barriers are based on your specific lifestyle and what goal you're trying to reach. However, when I interviewed moms on how they set goals for their children, they all had similar barriers. And the one that received the most attention was creating a goal that the child could actually achieve in a reasonable amount of time. So, even as an adult, I want to achieve a goal, but I want to achieve it right now, right?

Rebecca:

Right.

Dr. Eckhoff:

I don't want to wait a month, two months or three months. And children, they want to achieve it that day. That barrier of that being a reasonable amount of time, and it being actually achievable, became very important in my research. And then the other barrier that I found was confidence. Having a person that's confident and committed to that goal is important and vital, and then being able to actually achieve it.

Julie:

I have all these aspirational thoughts in my head that don't really feel specific or something that I want to accomplish in a certain timeframe, but just like, oh, I want to do that someday. Maybe I'd like to do that, or I need to lose 10 pounds today, right now. How do I accomplish that in one week's time or something like that?

Rebecca:

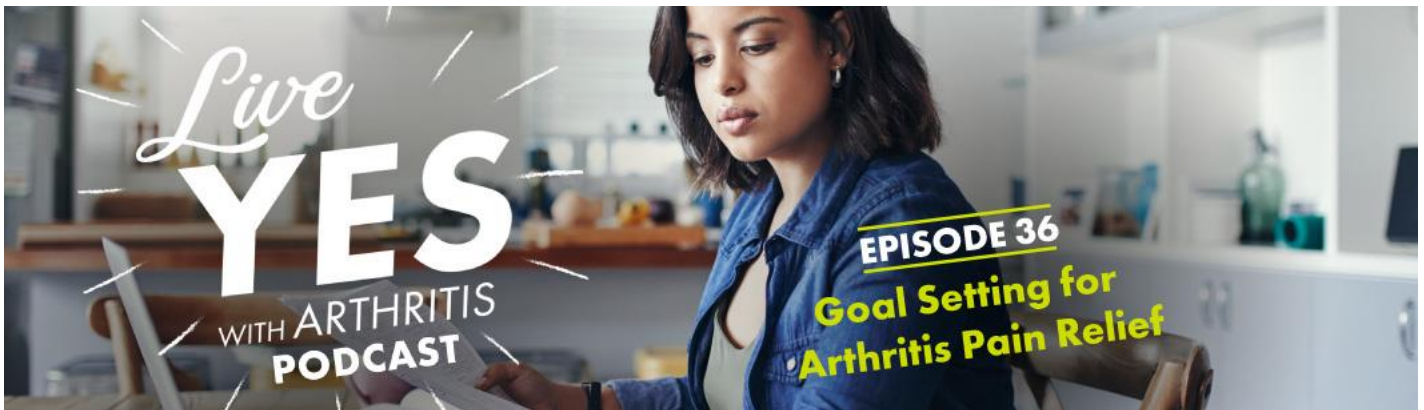
Let me know when you figure that out. I like that one.

Julie:

(laughs) Right. How much would you say that confidence overlaps with willpower? And how do those two things really help or play into achieving those goals, changing them from the aspiration to that meaningful, tangible, accomplishable thing?

Dr. Eckhoff:

One thing that I found was that willpower is not really the issue, which sounds really weird, right? Because we all say, "I'm going to have the willpower to not eat 10 cookies." Double Stuf Oreos are my archnemesis, by the way. (laughter) But I'm going to have the willpower to not eat them. So, it's



really the discipline. It's the discipline of walking by the cookies knowing that I shouldn't eat that; it's not healthy for me to eat that. The mind is weak. Willpower is a weakness. But when you're disciplined and you can follow through, that's the goal. The issue is making a proper goal so that you can be disciplined and see it through, and being disciplined also leads to healthier habits, I've learned.

Rebecca:

Yeah. I think for me, part of the discipline is to not have those cookies in the house. (laughs)

Dr. Eckhoff:

We call that the pantry cleanout after Christmas.

Rebecca:

(laughter) How do you foster that discipline though?

Dr. Eckhoff:

It's an everyday act. It's that confidence that you have, and every day doing it over and over, even when the world starts to slide. Some people will put a note on the refrigerator, reminding them: "Don't forget about your goal. Your goal is to lose 10 pounds in 10 weeks, so pass by the cookies." Sometimes the discipline is physically cleaning out that pantry and saying, "I'm not going to buy it again." And you're disciplined, and you stick with that grocery list. You don't go off and buy something that you know is going to lead to your downfall or maybe test your will, because sometimes testing your will leads to the downfall of that goal.

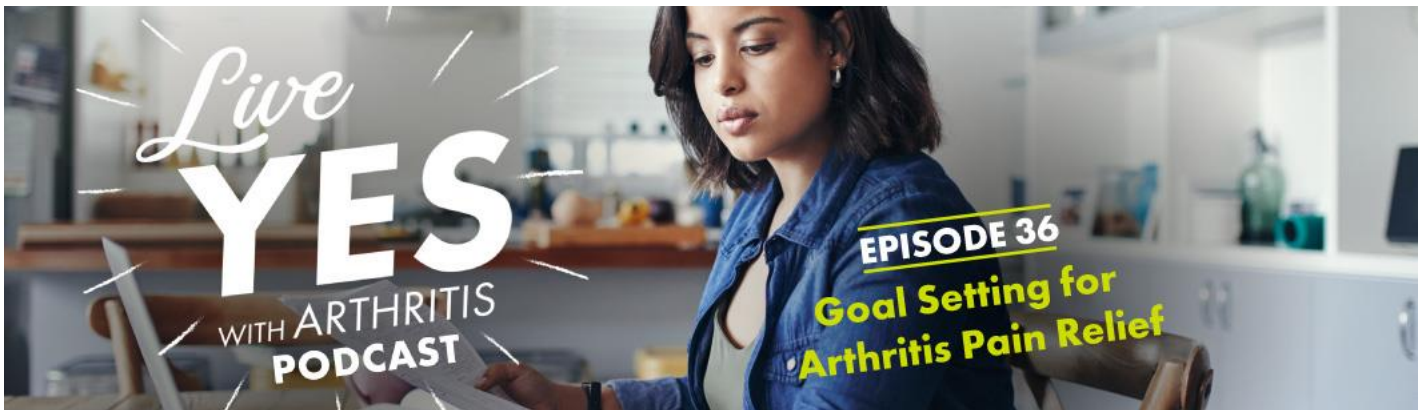
Sometimes it's exercise. Here in Florida, we have thunderstorms in the afternoon. So, if I put my exercise off running in the morning, sometimes I do it because I know it's gonna rain in the afternoon. (laughs) It rains. So how could I possibly do it? It's the discipline of getting up in the morning at 5:00 and getting that run in before my brain can kick in and say, hmm, how do I get out of this?

Rebecca:

Yeah. I think it's easier to be disciplined if you actually create habits and routines around things, and then that makes it a little easier to stick to it. It's a process. It's not something that's fixed overnight. I have to get into that practice of it, like you said.

Julie:

Living with a chronic condition or chronic pain like arthritis definitely can have an impact. It definitely has an impact on my willpower and therefore, maybe on the flip side of that, my discipline. Do you find that there's a difference in establishing those routines, and getting those good, healthy goal-



setting habits going, for any clients or patients that you might see who are living with something like arthritis or chronic pain?

Dr. Eckhoff:

Yes. A lot of times people try to jump to the big goal. When I did preschool moms, they taught me that it was so much better to look at the big goal, but back up and do baby step goals leading to that main goal. And so that first baby step becomes a habit. And so does the second, and so does the third. And by the time you're at the fifth or sixth baby step, you've reached your main goal. It takes sometimes children for us to remember to back up and take those little baby steps and reach those goals.

Rebecca:

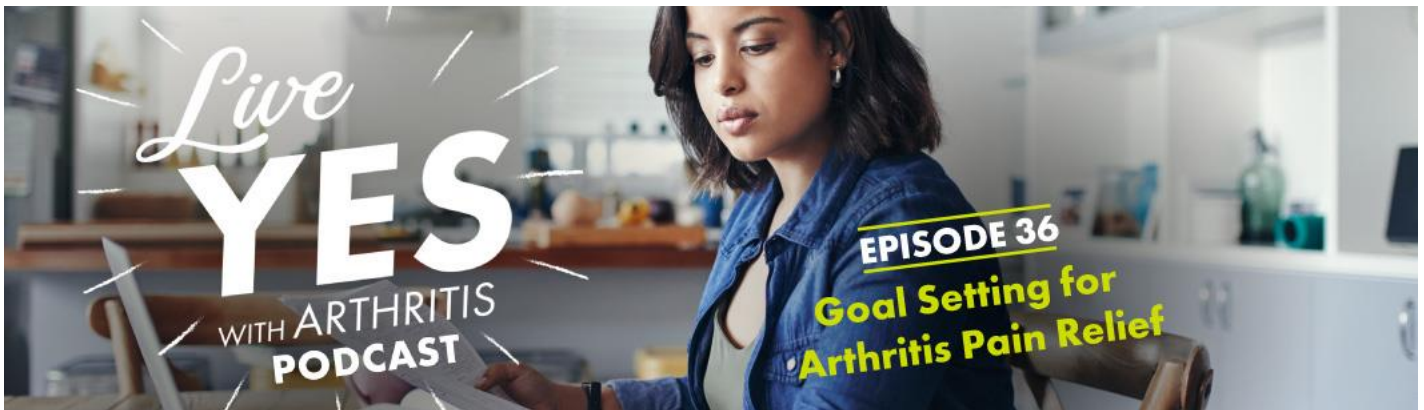
Yeah. And I think that one of the things that I try to impart on my colleagues in the therapy world is that we are always setting goals when we're working with people. And we forget that it isn't that big end goal. Yes, that's what we're trying to achieve, but we should be more process-oriented through the journey of working with somebody when we're goal setting to get to that big goal, celebrating those small wins. You know, it doesn't have to be if my goal is: I want to be able to get back to walking a mile in 15 minutes, because that's what I used to be able to do... I'm going to walk a quarter of a mile, do that for a few days until I can do it comfortably. And then you add in more distance.

It's the process of getting there and celebrating the small wins, but also giving yourself that permission to not go on that walk that day because you don't feel well. I think when that happens in the process of somebody working toward a goal, that can feel like such a huge setback. But I think when you go into goal setting, knowing that you're not going to have perfect days every day.... You've made it to this point, you'll get back there. You'll just have to build back up to it again. I think that's the important part, to not make you feel like you haven't achieved a goal, just knowing that it is a process to get to that big goal.

But it can be hard, especially depending on where you are and the type of support and the environment that you live in. What kind of impact does everybody else and everything around you have on your personal goal setting?

Dr. Eckhoff:

One of the discoveries I made when doing my dissertation and talking to moms is that they felt like they were more competent and they had more self-efficacy, like they felt they could set goals with your preschoolers, when they had a strong support system. They had that feeling that they weren't alone, which is super important: to feel like you're not alone.



Studies have actually shown that when you have an accountability partner or partners, not only are you more likely to set more goals, but you're more likely to achieve them. And those accountability partners and your support system is vital to not only creating and setting your goals, but also celebrating: celebrating those goals that you've achieved, right? Celebration is so big because it gets you to the next goal.

Julie:

I think that's one of my favorite things about this new app that the Arthritis Foundation is launching: Vim. It connects you with a community of support of other folks who are also trying to set and accomplish goals around their arthritis experiences. You can cheer on your friends, you can meet new people who have a similar goal to you. You can kind of have that level of accountability within a goal that just feels personal and like you're understood.

I know if I have a goal related to my health care, and I share it with Rebecca, she's going to get it (laughs) in a way that maybe some of my friends or my pals who don't live with arthritis just wouldn't have that same level of empathy for. And so, I'm excited to get connected with folks in the app and see all of those things come together. Because celebrating your wins with someone who gets it, come on, that's the best thing.

Dr. Eckhoff:

That's incredible. I'm so excited for you guys. Having that backup support system that's there for you when you feel like you can't make it. And they're like, "You can do it." That cheerleader. Having someone that understands what you're going through is super important. Very exciting.

Julie:

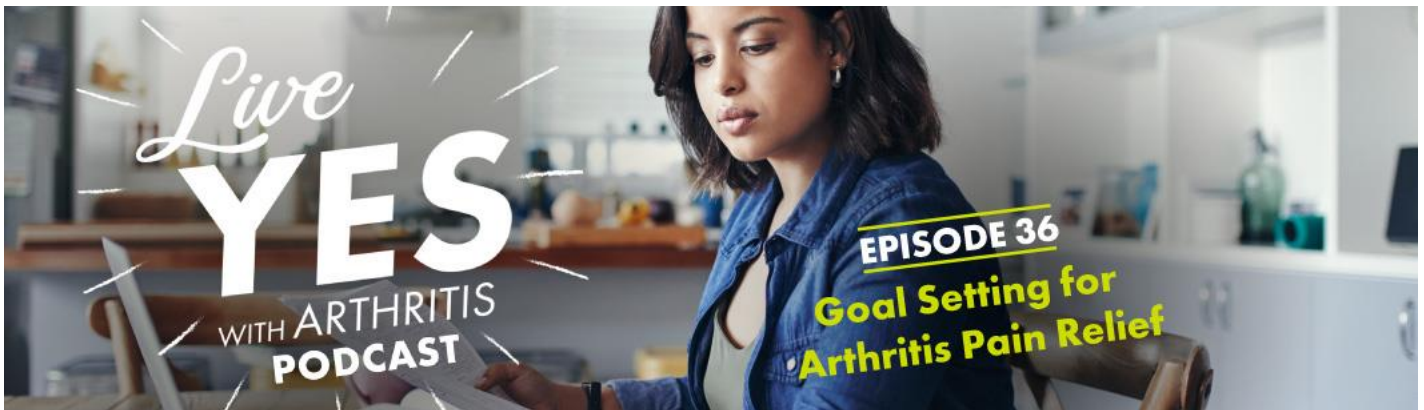
Absolutely.

Rebecca:

That's probably... I always say that's the best thing that I've gained from getting involved in the Arthritis Foundation when I was a patient, volunteer: that support in that community. Walking into a room of people who get it and know what my day might be like and the kind of pain I might be in, and I don't even have to speak a word. And so, just like you're saying, Julie, that people are here to cheer you on in the app, which I think is actually really cool as well.

But it's also a time to say, "Gosh, I didn't get to do my walk today." And have that same person say, "It's OK, you can rest because your body's telling you to rest," because they understand. Setting up that community is really, I think, a great way to help get to your goals.

PROMO:



The Arthritis Foundation is always looking for new ways to inform you about the things you want to know more about. Check out our webinars — in real time or on demand. Visit <https://www.arthritis.org/events/webinars> to learn more.

Rebecca:

One of the things that I wonder, Dawn, is if there are ways that someone, before they go ahead and set that goal, what things can they do to set themselves up to be successful before they actually create that goal?

Dr. Eckhoff:

Look at your big picture. What's your end goal? What resources do you need? What knowledge base do you need? And then once you have a few ideas or a few goals you might want to reach, then I always tell people, again, to back up, make sure that those goals are small and attainable, and it leads you to your goal.

Just break down the goal. But if you can also — and I think your app's gonna really help with this — create that mindset that you want to be successful but understand that you may have some setbacks. And I think when your mindset is positive, although you may have setbacks, that positivity leads you down the path of attaining the goal.

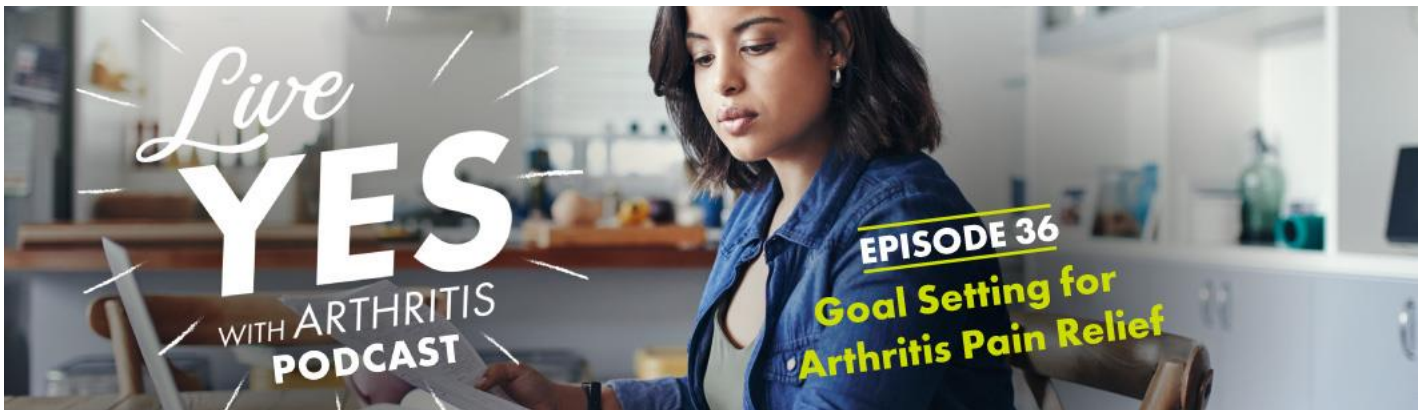
And then, do you have the knowledge base for it? And if you don't, go look it up. Sometimes I tell my patients, "Don't Google." But a lot of times when it comes to knowledge like this, I will say, "OK, remember when I said, 'don't Google,' I lied. I want you to go Google."

Julie:

In the app, we really focus on what we call SMART goals. Can you talk a little bit about what maybe a SMART goal is, or what goes into a good health goal, versus maybe one that's more nebulous in nature?

Dr. Eckhoff:

When thinking about SMART goals, we always start with specific, right? So, instead of saying, "I'm going to work to be pain-free," That's not a real specific goal because how are you going to do it? You might come up with something better like, "I'm going to walk for 15 minutes two days a week for two weeks." You're giving yourself something that's challenging because you haven't done it. You're



giving you something that's measurable. That's your 15 minutes, two days and two weeks. And that two weeks is timely. I like to use "R" also as reevaluate.

It's super important to reevaluate your goal. You might need to tweak it. If the goal was too easy, then you step it up. If the goal was a little too much, it's not a failure. You step back because you're still going to reach that goal; you just need one more step back. Maybe you back down, to one day a week for 10 minutes, and you can be consistent for those two weeks, and then you increase it.

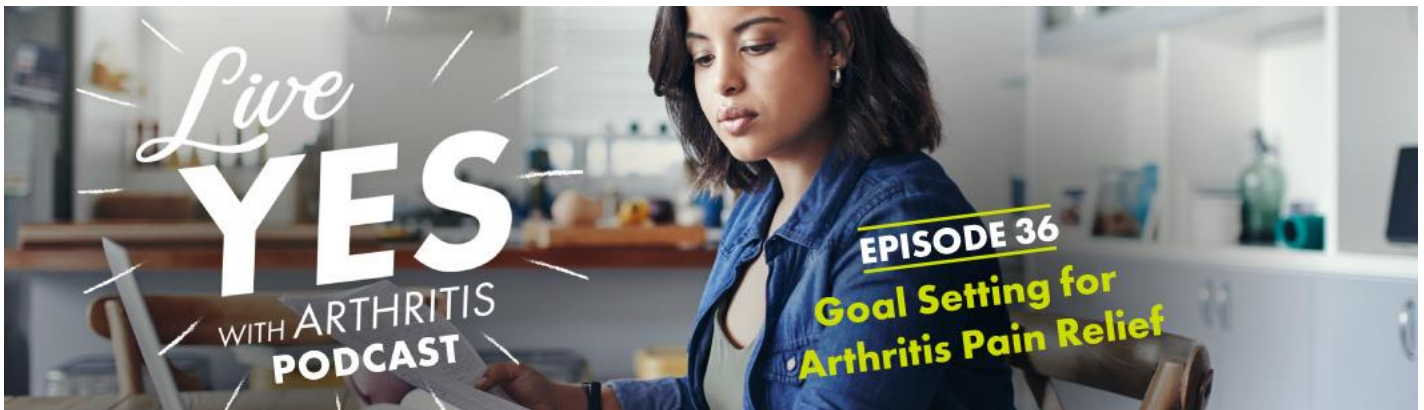
So, let's talk about a goal that's not really well planned, but we're going to fine tune it. We're going to use somebody named Bobbie. So, Bobbie has been diagnosed with arthritis and maybe she decides, in order to help her with her pain, she's going to exercise more. She makes an appointment to speak with one of her friends, who's a personal trainer. So, she's getting the knowledge that she needs. They agree that number one, she's going to attend water aerobics classes for the next two months, she's going to stretch more for the next two months and she's going to walk some in the morning for the next two months.

She set some relevant goals. They're challenging and they're achievable. But what does attending water aerobics class look like? She might instead say, "I'm going to attend two twice a week, a beginner water aerobics class for the next two months." Now she's very specific about what type of class she's going to do, how much she's going to do it and how long she's going to do it for. So now we're really specific and measurable, right? Relevant and attainable.

For her stretching, she might say, "I'm going to stretch 10 minutes. For 10 minutes, I'm going to stretch after water aerobics class and after my walks for the next two months." So now we've got her stretching for 10 minutes. She might say, "I'm going to stretch before bedtime" if that helps her, or "I'm gonna stretch in the morning." So you want to do something that's more specific. "I'm going to walk for 30 minutes twice a week in the morning." We don't want to say, "I'm going to do it sometime during the day," because we all know what that means. That means we're not doing it. (laughs)

So, she set all of her three very specific goals. And it's OK to do goals in tandem if they're helping you reach your main goal, if you can do them. If it gets to be too much, I mean... She may in a week go, "You know what, I can't do all three of these. I'm going to back down, I'm going to go walk in the morning." When she does that and she backs up, it's not a failure. It just means she's done the other "R" that I like, right? The reevaluate. "Let's reevaluate and see how we do."

Rebecca:



Right. And I think that that level of specificity isn't something that maybe some of us do when we actually write out our goals. If we're writing them, it could just be... and that's another piece, right? It probably is important to write that down.

Dr. Eckhoff:

Yes. Writing down a goal, or having somewhere that you put your goal, whether it's on the refrigerator... It's actually a really good idea to write down your goal because if you don't write it down, who's going to remember it? You're supposed to be the one to remember it. So, sometimes you have to write it down and you have to remind yourself daily. Maybe it's writing it down in your daily planner or it's a notification that pops up on your phone every day that's a reminder for you.

Goal setting with little kids is great because I love sticker charts, they're the best thing ever. And they're easy to please. Go to the dollar store and get a bunch of little toys that they love that might drive you crazy, but they might love. We use sticker systems. We use all kinds of things with kids.

Rebecca:

I want stickers.

Dr. Eckhoff:

I do, too. I don't reward with food even when you're an adult, because it can lead you down a slippery slope.

Rebecca:

OK.

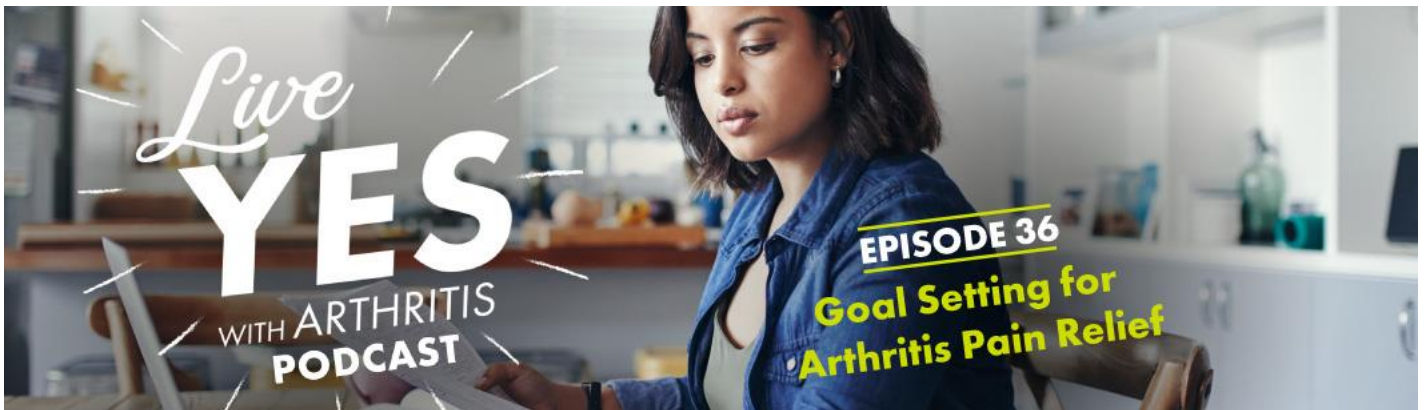
Dr. Eckhoff:

I always say reward yourself with something that helps. Does a massage help your arthritis? Does having a pedicure help your arthritis? Does going out with a group of friends help your arthritis? Something that you reward that is very personalized. Your reward should be personal. It should reward not people around you; it should reward you, not somebody else.

Rebecca:

I love that.

Julie:



In 2019, I decided to ride this crazy bike ride for the Arthritis Foundation, 525 miles down the California coast over eight days. There's camping involved. There's all of this craziness, but the only problem was, I didn't own a bike. (laughs) I didn't know how to ride my bike on a street. I have arthritis in my back and my hips and my knees and my ankles, and I have to figure out how to ride my bike and add this exercise into my world.

And I realized then that there was this cascading impact of this big, crazy, aspirational, "Why'd you sign up for that goal?" In terms of, you know, financial planning so that I could support myself in going to this ride. Fundraising planning so that I could have people come and donate to the Arthritis Foundation. Figuring out how to get a tent and a camp, because I'm not very outdoorsy. And also figure out how to prepare my body to do a bike ride that was that long and that length in that crazy way.

When I started, I was like, "Oh, this will be so fun. I'll go ride 20 miles today." And three miles later, I was like, "Going home, this is too much. Can't do more than this." (laughter) And so I just, you know... You recalibrate that goal based on your reality. And I was so proud that at the end of it... I didn't ride all 525 miles, but after a good number of months' training and preparing and getting ready, I was able to do that trip. I was able to do that ride. I was able to participate and be a part of this really special thing.

But I didn't write down, "Ride your bike three miles today and fundraise \$200." I wrote down, "Ride the California Coast Classic. You are going to go see that beautiful coastline, go do that." And it was a very good piece of motivation. Do you find that that's the case for a lot of people, that they write down the aspirational thing, and that's the motivating, meaty thing?

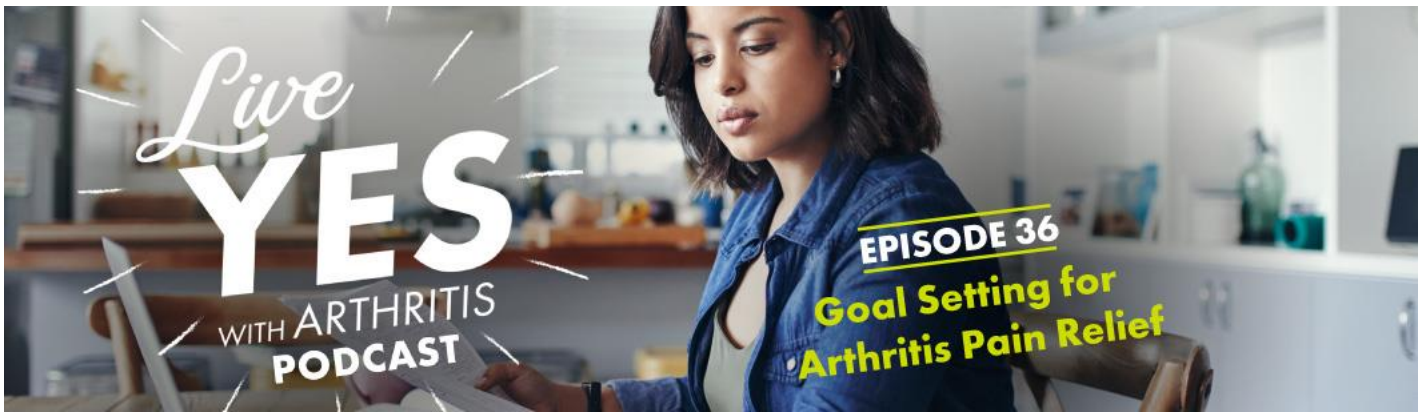
Dr. Eckhoff:

I find that not just with my patients, but with my students. I love that word recalibrate, Julie. So, you recalibrate, right? You decide, OK, so in order to get here, I have to start here. But you do have an aspiration. So, you take that aspiration and then you back up and you make goals to reach the aspiration. A lot of that is talking to people around you and your community and saying, "I'm going to go do this bike ride," and you talk to people who've already done it. "What did you do to get there?" And that's how you start to set your goals. So, Julie's going to call Rebecca next time she decides to do that. (laughter) And write down her aspiration so we can back her up a little bit. Right, Rebecca?

Rebecca:

Get a bike first, that's a good place to start. (laughs)

Dr. Eckhoff:



Know how to ride said bike.

Julie Eller ([31:13](#)):

That's right. Buy a helmet. (laughter)

Rebecca:

And make sure that your body can handle that, you know? So, I think it's an important thing to... Help us understand though, Dawn, like how does implementing goal setting actually really... How can it affect our quality of life, especially for patients with a chronic disease?

Dr. Eckhoff:

I'm a big believer that positive attitude and positive thinking very positively affect outcomes with people with chronic conditions. You achieve one goal, your self-esteem goes up, your confidence level goes up. You're like, "OK, I can do this, let's do another one." It's not just with goal setting, but with life in general. It gives you that, "See what I can do? I did that." You turn around like, I mean... Julie turned around and said, "I did that. I rode that, I can do the next thing." So that sense of accomplishment. Research shows that positive thinking is helpful in battling chronic diseases. And in order to achieve more, you just need more positive outcomes.

It's like climbing that mountain. You're not Superman. You're not going to jump to the top of the summit, right? It's like, "Get to the next level. Stop, pant, breathe." (laughter) "OK, how much further up do I have to go?" And you take those steps to get to that summit. Julie, that's really impressive, especially with arthritis.

Julie:

Thank you.

Dr. Eckhoff:

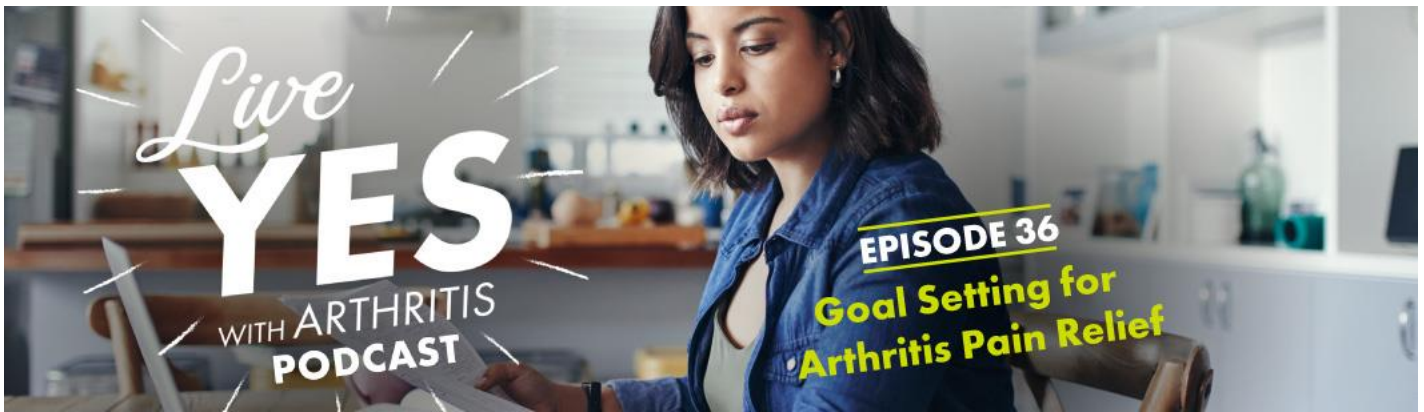
And I'm sure that increased your self-esteem and your confidence.

Julie:

Oh my goodness.

Dr. Eckhoff:

You can just ride your bike around town now. (laughs)



Julie:

Yes, absolutely. And I realized in doing so that there's, you know, there are the physical goals that you set, and those have an incredibly high reward. I felt so much better being more active and moving. My arthritis was in a better spot. But there are also some mental goals that you can set. I think for a lot of our listeners, their goals may not immediately be physical. Can you talk about some of the goals that people might set that improve their health that may not look like getting exercising or lifting weights in a gym or riding a 525 mile-bike ride? Something like that?

Dr. Eckhoff:

Absolutely. A few of the things that people can do is eating healthier. And by that I don't mean you have to go in and throw out everything that's in your pantry that's not healthy for you. But even saying that goal of "I'm going to eat one extra fruit or vegetable today, just one. I'm going to get one extra fruit or vegetable twice a week, or once a week or every day." I do that with children. We let them go to the grocery store. We say, "OK, you pick what the family is going to eat just one day. It has to be a healthy fruit or vegetable." That's something that encourages you, right? Something healthy that you can do for your body.

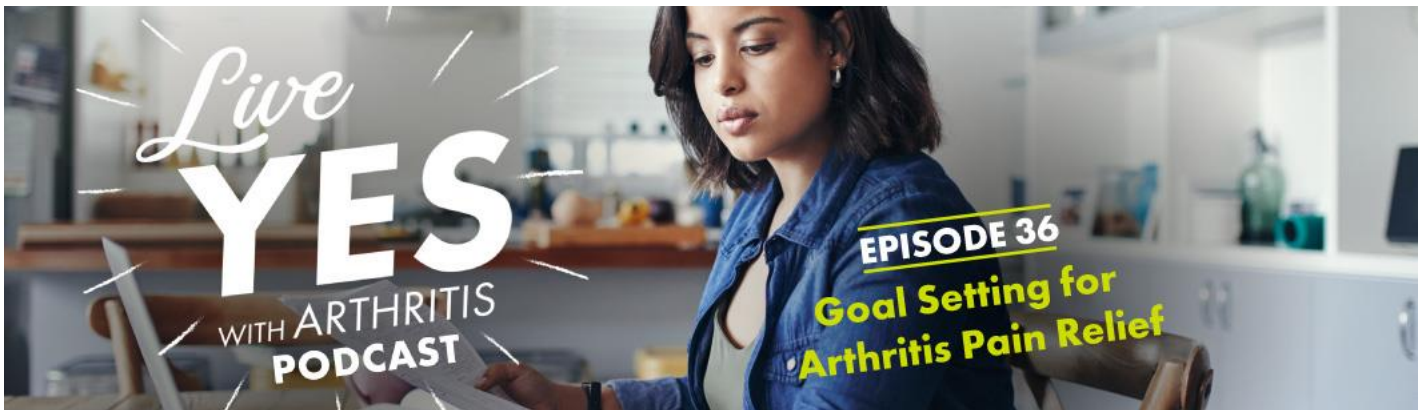
Sometimes it's sleep. Sometimes it's, "I'm going to go to bed 30 minutes early. I'm just going to. I know that the laundry needs to be done, I know that there are dishes in the sink, but I'm going to get 30 more minutes of sleep for at least three nights this week." Sometimes for me, it's affirmations. I'm going to start my morning with one positive affirmation every day. I write it down every single day, and now it's become a habit because I've been doing it through COVID. I've taken that time in the morning to get up and do that. Sometimes it's positive affirmations that make your health better. Positive brain waves, those positive thoughts.

Another thing that I like is to drink more water. That's a very simple thing that people can do. And you don't realize how dehydrated you are until you start saying, "I'm going to drink eight ounces of water with breakfast, eight ounces of water with lunch and eight ounces of water with dinner." And then at the end of the day, you're like, "Oh wow, I feel so much better." It's because you actually had water to drink today. Rebecca:

One of the important things that patients should understand is how working with their health care team to set goals that are achievable is really important. And sharing that and communicating that with their team is really an important part of the process. Can you speak a little bit more to that and why that's important, having that feedback?

Dr. Eckhoff:

Yes. That's actually really important to me. You have to tell your provider. I love it when a patient says, "Can you help me?" Because, as a nurse practitioner, that's a big thing for me. I want to care for my



patients. I want my patients to be willing to talk to me. Please tell them that you need help. One of the most important things to remember is communication. They don't know that you're struggling if you don't tell them. They don't know that you need help to create a better plan for your life if you don't tell them, "Hey, I need some help with this."

I implore anybody that's listening to tell your provider, ask your provider for help and really get that provider involved. Sometimes we just don't know that you need the help, and we don't understand. And that's so important for you as patients to tell us: Stop, don't put your hand on the doorknob. "I need to ask you a question," or "I need your help."

Julie:

Right. Absolutely. I often feel like the onus can be entirely on the patient to navigate those conversations and figure out how to tell your story to a provider to make them listen. And it takes a years and years of living with a chronic condition to really start to master the language that you have to use, or know the approach, or have your questions written down.

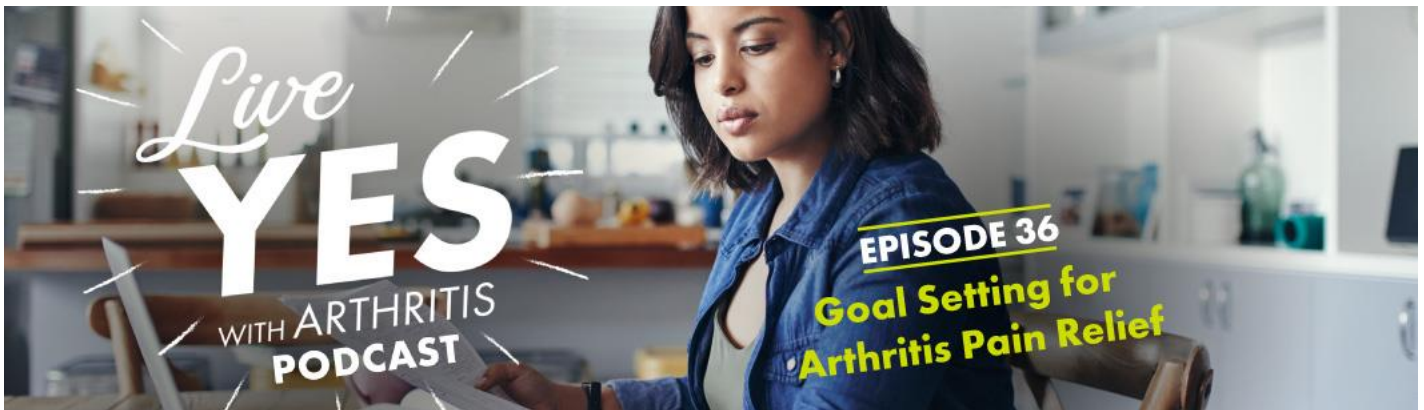
One of the things that I really like about Vim, this new app, is that it includes a series of tools for health tracking and goal tracking. Over time you can see what your pain level is as it correlates to your ability to complete a particular goal or something like that. Whenever I go to the doctor and I have my handy little patient notebook that has my notes, that's very qualitative and it's helpful to discuss with my doctor. It's helpful to talk through.

Data, like what could be generated in the app, where I can show them a chart that says, "Here's my pain over the last month, it has consistently been above a five. Help me solve this problem with a new treatment regimen, a new prescription for a physical therapy appointment or occupational therapy appointment..." or so on and so on. I'll feel more armed with that data. I think I'll feel more ready to have those conversations. I hope so at least.

Dr. Eckhoff:

You're one of my favorite types of patients. I love when people come with list. That provider is like, "Julie, that's what I need." I need you to have that tangible thing for me to look at. It's that quantitative piece that shows me what you're going through. And then, "OK, now that I see it, let's figure this out together." Rebecca:

I think having the data gives you that open door to open the conversation with your doctor. Having the data, any kind of data, can help start the conversation with your doctor, but the important part is to have that conversation. Like Julie was saying, the cool thing about this new Vim app is that you'll



have the data and, you'll have a way to start that conversation and share that with your health care team.

PROMO:

The Arthritis Foundation tests and certifies products that make life easier for people with arthritis and other physical limitations. Ease of Use-certified products are easy to use by everyone. Learn more at <https://www.arthritis.org/partnership/ease-of-use>.

Rebecca:

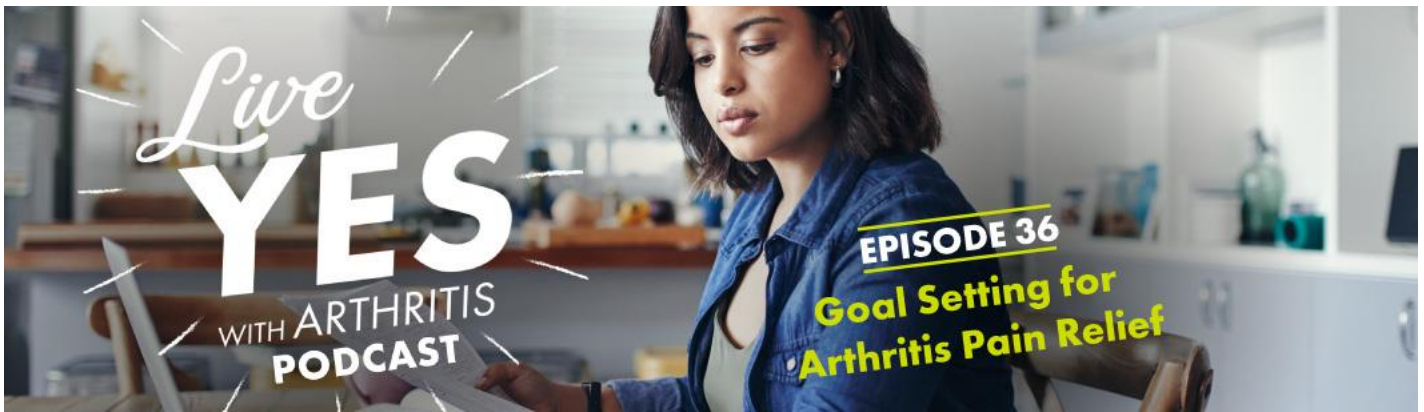
A lot of times when you have a chronic disease, the hard part is having relationships, whether it's with friends or family, that can be a little bit negative, and how that can affect your ability to achieve your goals. So, if you're the only person trying to be healthy or trying to be active, or the flip side, if you know everybody is concerned around you, that something might happen to you, or maybe you shouldn't do that... and it makes you feel like you shouldn't go take that long bike ride down the coast... How do you deal with that support that might not be so positive around you?

Dr. Eckhoff:

We call that where the rubber meets the road and what we do. Patients can be faced with negativity, not just from family and friends, but also from outsiders looking in that really have no idea what you're going through. And it makes it hard to stick to your goal. I do have patients that succeed even in negative environments. And a lot of times they tell me, "I just tell my friends, well, you can eat whatever you want, but I'm sticking to my goal of whatever it is today."

Sometimes what they do, though, when they can't do that, is they avoid that person. They take that negativity out of their life if they can. I tell people, too, find that one person or that one friend or family member that's supportive, somebody that you can chat with about the negativity, because you need to get that negativity out of your system. You've got to get rid of it.

You need to find your positive support person that you can call when you're tempted to not reach your goal, that you're tempted to not exercise, or you don't feel well, that keeps you grounded. That person that keeps you grounded. You need that one person in your life that's not necessarily your accountability person, but that person understands you. It might be another person with arthritis because they understand how that feels to be knocked down. Have that person that keeps you grounded and keeps you going towards that goal, allowing you to have that little pity party, that tiny little pity party and then you can go.



Julie:

Your positivity partner who can kind of relish in those moments with you, reinforce that your goal is appropriate and that you should keep striving. And then, I don't know, be empathetic and feel the things with you, then get you to that positive spot.

Well, I think that's a really awesome note to kind of end on and just think about how many positivity partners you can have when you meet people who are like you and who understand your arthritis experience in a very intimate way. Maybe they have it themselves, or maybe they love someone who does. So, Dawn, can you give us three of your favorite, most salient points from this conversation today that you want all of our listeners to go home with?

Dr. Eckhoff:

Look at your big goal, but work your way backwards, break it up, be specific and measurable, get something that's quickly achievable, stay on track. And the second one is, find a method to track your progress so that you can reward yourself. And the third one is, find your accountability partner, your cheerleader, that person that's going to push you forward and keep you going. And if I can give you just one more, which is I know four, and I know you said three, but I'm always breaking the rules a little bit.

Julie:

(laughs) We love it.

Dr. Eckhoff:

Just remember that if you don't reach your goal, you're going to reevaluate, or as Julie likes to say, recalibrate it, and see if you can achieve a smaller one first. Failure is only failure if you stop. If you keep going, it's not a failure. You learn from it and then move forward.

Julie:

It's beautiful.

Dr. Eckhoff:

It's only a failure if you stopped.

Rebecca:



I love that.

Dr. Eckhoff:

I'm going to use recalibrate, Julie.

Julie:

Oh good, I'm glad you like it. Perfect. It's been an absolute joy to hear about goal setting, and I'm motivated to get started. Thank you so much.

Dr. Dawn Eckhoff ([54:32](#)):

Thank you, guys, so much for having me. I had a great time.

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