



Speaking from Experience Young Adults with Arthritis

Transcript for chapter 7 of 9: Study & employment

Sharryn (developed juvenile arthritis at 16 months): The only real memory I have of school and of how I had to deal with arthritis as a seven or eight year old was having to sit differently. I couldn't sit crossed leg on the floor. I had to sit with my legs straight out. And all the kids wanted to know why they couldn't do it. I was an outcast I guess, right from then. Not being able to do all the sports that you do in the Physical Education session in primary school - I just had to sit on the side and watch them do it.

Andrew (diagnosed with psoriatic arthritis when at 14 years): I was pretty sick at the end of year ten and eleven. I missed a fair bit of school, and that affected my year twelve results in the end.

Kim (developed lupus at 23 years): The main issues that I've had to face were handing in my assignments on time. I tend to find that when you're stressed, you start having a few symptoms like sore knees and sore joints and things like that, or you get extremely fatigued. So it's really hard to get things in on time.

Andrew: I just go to uni and do my thing. Hopefully I'll finish my course and go and do what I want to do. Hopefully it won't disrupt me that much because I'm studying to be a trumpet teacher. So hopefully these three fingers don't get too bad.

Sue (developed rheumatoid arthritis at 12 years): I didn't tell people when I was going to college and that was a bad decision as it turned out, because I just couldn't manage the workload. It was a very practical-oriented course and so the practical element of it was really difficult. I really should've told people about it, about my arthritis, and how that was going to be difficult for me.

Sharryn: My arthritis didn't have any effect on the career choice I decided to make. I'm on my legs every single day and I still pay the price at the end of the day. I need that time to relax and be by myself - whether it is to have a bath or read a book. My work situation does still place pain on my joints but more than anything it was what I wanted to do.

Sue: My arthritis has had quite a large impact on my working life. Mainly that has been because of the surgeries. But I've also chosen to work in positions where I can get a break every now and then. I've worked in school environments and you get those enforced term breaks. So that's been something that I've really sought - positions where I can break my work time up like that so that I get a chance to recuperate.

Kim: I think that maybe I would be able to work part time or maybe somewhere in between part time and full time. Although I'm not sure, it would have to be a trial and error sort of thing. I think I'd have to try it out. I always want to try things out before I knock them off.

Heidi (diagnosed with fibromyalgia (FMS) at 22 years): I think that it's realistic for me to think that it's going to be difficult to ever work full time. I might be fine in a couple of years, but at the moment I plan to work from home.



Andrew: My boss picks it. For all his uncaring ways, he picks it. I don't know how he does it, he picks it and he knows. He says are you a bit sore, is your arthritis playing up or something? Do you want to go home? I've actually used it as an excuse to get away from things a couple of times, but I try not to do that. That's just not right.

Peter (diagnosed with ankylosing spondylitis at 30 years): One of the things that bothers me about arthritis and employment would be perceived performance; the fact the employer may no longer consider me a reliable worker.

Sharryn: Because I choose not to tell the people I work with, it's often hard to... I feel guilty that I've gone to work the next day and can't tell them why I've taken the occasional day off. But you do need those occasional days off to get back on track, to get your mind re-focussed, because at times the arthritis can be quite draining.

Sue: I'll apply for positions where I know I can do a job really well. The arthritis won't be a factor in it, in doing the actual position. It might be a factor in the way that I do it, but it's not going to impact on my ability to do it.