

My name is Antoinette. I have hand issues that impact my ADLs (Activities of Daily Life - a new term that I've learnt!). It has been like this for a couple of years now where I manage pain daily, while also balancing a young family and work. Before, I had issues but didn't realise the potential long-term impact on ADLs.

I have learnt many a great lesson and have grown as a person since having had hand issues. One lesson is how to go about asking for help. In the early stages, I used to be quite closed about it all because I wasn't sure how people would respond (or even how I would respond!). I've now learnt that people will help (and like to help) if you are confident and positive about things. I still think it's best if I stop and think about how best to communicate any issues — that is key.

Another lesson is to think differently. I can do everything if I balance things out. I have had to learn to be more organised and to pace things. I should also mention that getting to this point required significant persistence and patience.

Here are some tips that have helped me along the way (if you feel you can't do something then find a way!).

I found it worked a treat to sweep my hardwood floors with a wool glider-type thingo. I could do this — importantly, daily — without a pushing and pulling movement. To wash clothes, I used to take many small piles of clothes to my 1940s outdoor laundry rather than a full basket. I lifted what I could and no more. I also used an internal clothes hanger rather than the clothesline. These ADLs are no longer a big issue for me.

I also gradually regained some stamina for handwriting and learnt voice recognition for computer work. I discovered a great lead pencil (Staedtler Mars Lumograph Jumbo 6B) at Eckersley's which helped me write. I can now touch a keyboard for work, but mainly rely on voice.

Outside of that I persisted with exercise. Instead of my usual swimming, I walked in the pool, moved my arms in the water when I could and 'pretended' to do aqua aerobics. I say 'pretended' because I did what I could in the water and mostly pretended to do the rest until I incrementally got better. Last year I took a trip to Darwin and used a cutdown foam noodle to help me swim in the deep waterholes with my family. I now swim with a snorkel and recently stopped using a kickboard!

I also 'pretended' to do yoga. I found restorative yoga to be the best thing because it was very slow moving. The slow pace came in handy because it took me a while to find a modified position that I could vaguely do. This, I did daily (or even twice daily), and I kept doing the same exercises over and over. Dr Melissa West's restorative yoga on YouTube (it's free) was useful back then and I swear by it.

Now I sometimes do that, but tend to access a mix of YouTube follow-alongs, including Kit Laughlin who I found on YouTube independently of a recent RSI newsletter article!

For me, the key seems to be to keep moving no matter what.

Interestingly, I was introduced to this newsletter years back by a lady — not with RSI — who was in my aqua aerobics class. She mentioned that it gives great tips for how to do things when your hands don't work that well because of pain.

Thanks for reading, I hope it was helpful.