

# GO TEAM!

## Surround Yourself With Support

BY JENNI PROKOPY, FOUNDER—CHRONICBABE.COM

Whether you're newly diagnosed or a seasoned arthritis "pro," there are days that feel too hard to make it through on your own. Having a chronic condition can be isolating at times, and at some point, we all wish for a bunch of people to support us and make our lives easier.

The good news is, you don't have to be a movie star to have an entourage. You just have to know how to build your own support team—in fact, you likely have most of it in place already. Having a team will help you feel supported and nurtured. And when you return the favor, you become a valuable team member as well.

### ASSEMBLING YOUR TEAM

Who's on your team? Anyone who provides you with emotional, physical or spiritual support. They are the friends, neighbors, and co-workers

### "I WOULD LOVE TO SUPPORT YOU IF I CAN. IS THERE ANYTHING I CAN HELP YOU WITH?"

who will help move your couch, or tell you that your hair looks fabulous. They are the doctors, nurses, physical therapists and other caregivers with whom you share intimate details. They are your spouse, your golf partner, your kids, your manicurist.

Not everyone on your team needs to know about your arthritis. They don't even need to know they're on your "team" (although most would probably feel happy to know how much you value them.) Assembling your team is your process—it's a shift in thinking that helps you realize how many people you can rely on.

### ASKING FOR HELP

You may feel uncomfortable asking for help, but chances are, the folks on your team want to help you. Start small, like asking a neighbor to help carry groceries from your car, or recruiting your niece to baby-sit for an hour.

If you're not used to speaking up, it may feel strange, weak, or needy to ask for help. The truth is, asking for help is none of those things. We all need help sometimes. Keep practicing, and soon you'll see that pushing yourself beyond your limits—when instead, you could ask for a little assistance—is much worse than voicing your needs.

### BE A TEAM PLAYER

Having a team is not all about "taking." You need to give back, too. At first, you may feel like you don't have much to give; maybe you have physical limitations, or you can't imagine what you have to offer.

This is easy to solve. Think of a team member who has done something nice for you. Thank them for the help they provided, and say: "I would love to support you if I can. Is there anything I can help you with?" It's that simple.

Maybe you can't help them pack for a move, but you can write out all the box labels. You can be a shoulder for them to cry on, or you can bake a yummy cake for their birthday. You never know—they might just appreciate that you asked. And then you're on their team, too!

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Freelance writer Jenni Prokopy is founder of ChronicBabe.com, an online resource for young women with chronic illness who want to live their best lives...as babes! Having lived with fibromyalgia for 10 years, she has assembled an awesome "team" that includes her husband Steve, some great friends, and tons of other people...from her healthcare providers to the guys who sort her mail at the UPS Store. Team Jenni rules!

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## An Opportunity to Use Your Skills and Meet New People

### Speak Out! Become a Member of Our Speakers' Bureau

The next Arthritis Foundation Speakers' Bureau Training will take place on Saturday, October 7 at the Holiday Inn, 1250 Roosevelt Road in Glen Ellyn from 9:00 am–12:00 pm in the Monterey Room. A breakfast buffet will be served at 8:30 am. Please call site for directions at (630) 629-6000.

To attend the training call (312) 372-2080 for an application or e-mail Marge at [mmarcus@arthritis.org](mailto:mmarcus@arthritis.org). Hope to see you there.