

Positive intrapersonal communication and emotional resilience – The coping strategies and support mechanisms employed by mothers with rheumatoid arthritis (RA)

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Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is a chronic disease marked by painful and debilitating inflammation of the joints.

It can impact the whole body, including organs leading to problems with the heart, respiratory and nervous systems.

Based on self-reported data from the most recent Australian Bureau of Statistics National Health Survey (2011–12), about 445,000 Australians (2%) report having RA.

Rheumatoid arthritis occurs **three times more frequently in women than men.**

Recent figures reveal that **over half the people diagnosed were aged between 25 to 64 years... significantly impacting women of child-bearing/rearing age.**

Mothers with RA have identified they find it difficult to cope with motherhood responsibilities alongside managing RA impacts. **Despite this, there is virtually no research examining how mothers cope with parenting while experiencing the pain and fatigue caused by RA.**

Consequently there is little to no supportive information for mothers with RA.



In response, with financial and in-kind support by USC's Office of Engagement and Arthritis and Osteoporosis Victoria (A&OV), we set out to elicit and share the practical and emotional coping strategies employed by mothers with RA on the Sunshine Coast



In particular, we recruited five local mothers with RA and invited them to share the strategies they use to help them cope as mothers with the auto-immune disease

The project is significant as it is designed to create information and support that is specifically targeted to mothers with RA.

In addition, because the women participants communicated their stories and strategies to camera, video footage is used as the main medium of the research communication which increases its accessibility and offers regional, national and international reach and benefit.

Finally, it is the first initiative to collect and disseminate the **everyday wisdom of mothers with RA as a resource to support other mothers** cope with the impacts of RA.



When given an opportunity to discuss their coping strategies the five mothers with RA shared:

Their personal stories of being diagnosed with RA

The negative emotional impact the disease has on their life

The practical strategies they use to cope as mothers

Their emotional and psychological coping strategies

Here is just a small section of one woman's
story of being diagnosed and **cop**ing with
RA

here's to Strong women
May we know them
May we be them
May we raise them.

