

# Love, sex, and arthritis

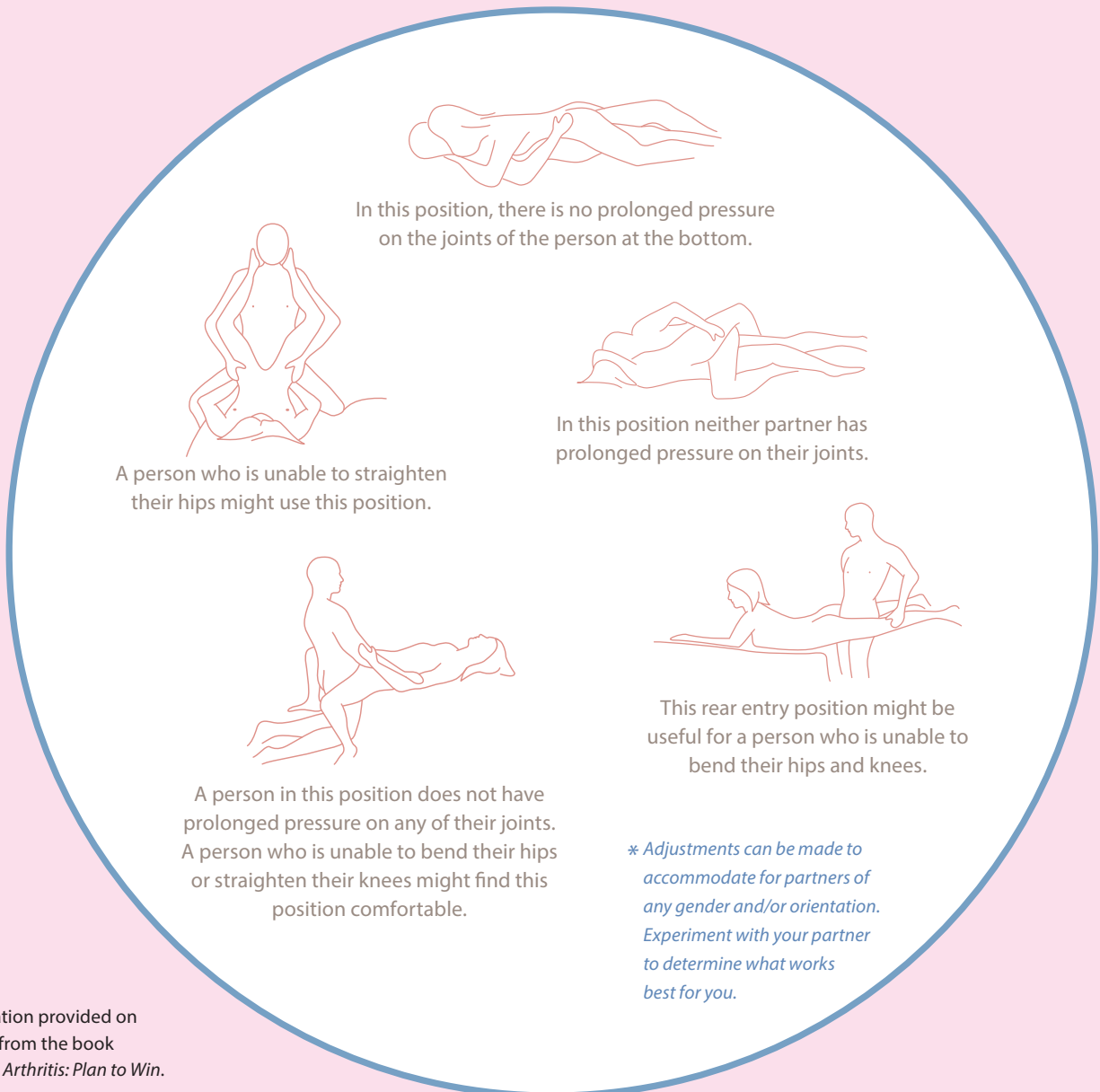
Emotional and physiological symptoms of arthritis can impact your relationships with family, friends and romantic or sexual partners.

*“From my perspective, chronic pain suffered by one partner definitely ends up impacting the lives of both partners, so sharing your feelings, concerns, and desires is a really positive first step to enjoying your sex life again.” An IA patient*

The benefits of sex and physical contact (like hugging) include improving bonds and building trust between people, helping to reduce pain, promoting sleep, reducing stress, boosting immunity, burning calories, improving self-esteem and heart health.

Below is an excerpt from *Rheumatoid Arthritis: Plan to Win* with tips to manage arthritis symptoms during sexual activity or intimacy:

- Talk to your partner about what you like and don't like, what hurts and doesn't hurt. Be open about how both of you feel and come up with solutions that work for both of you. If you are finding these conversations difficult, you may benefit from seeing a sex therapist.
- Time your medication accordingly if you think it may impact your physical ability and mental mindset to partake in sexual activities.
- Communicate your daily level of pain and fatigue by using a number scale.
- Try different sex positions. Use well-placed padding, pillows, or wedge-shaped pillows to help ease joint pain and provide more comfortable position options.



In this position, there is no prolonged pressure on the joints of the person at the bottom.

A person who is unable to straighten their hips might use this position.

In this position neither partner has prolonged pressure on their joints.

A person in this position does not have prolonged pressure on any of their joints. A person who is unable to bend their hips or straighten their knees might find this position comfortable.

This rear entry position might be useful for a person who is unable to bend their hips and knees.

*\* Adjustments can be made to accommodate for partners of any gender and/or orientation. Experiment with your partner to determine what works best for you.*

The information provided on this page is from the book *Rheumatoid Arthritis: Plan to Win*.

Koehn C, Palmer T, John E.  
*Rheumatoid Arthritis: Plan to Win*.  
Oxford University Press. 2002. P154-170.