

LIVING AROUND PAIN

You don't have to live in the dark and lonely places pain can take you.

Practical strategies to help you spend less time there.



Pain can take you to dark and lonely places you never intended to go. This factsheet suggests some ways not to spend too much time in those places.

START HERE

PAIN GIVES YOU TWO LIVES

Pain forces you to live in two different worlds, often within the same day.

The 'pain-full' life

When you may feel totally incapacitated by your pain.

The 'pain-less' life

When you either pretend not to have pain, or if you're lucky, have pain-free times.

CHECK IN

BE A PAIN DETECTIVE

Our body is an information system, and pain is a signal that we need to heal and change something. Most signals fluctuate and have ebbs and flows — and this pattern is different for every person. Learning it takes some sleuthing.

Create a pain journal

Rate your pain daily, usually out of ten. Try to identify what made it worse, and what improved it. Look for factors like:

Diet

Sleep the night before

Stress levels

Loneliness or connection

Amount or type of physical activity

Sense of involvement with people

TAKE ACTION

BUILD YOUR SUPPORT AROUND YOU

Develop a treatment team

Helpful professionals can include GPs, pain specialists, clinical psychologists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, acupuncturists and nurses. But the most important member of your treatment team is always going to be yourself — you need to become an expert in managing your own pain well.

Decide who should know about your pain

Not everyone is equally capable of dealing with your pain. Some people are helpful; some are not. Decide carefully who to share information with. Be selective — you have a right to your dignity and your privacy. You need helpful support, and not everyone is able to give you this.

You are more than this

Pain can be so domineering it can take over your identity — you can almost forget who you are when you don't have pain. Try to keep some cherished activities that remind you there's more to you than the pain you're currently experiencing. This might mean setting small goals or milestones to look forward to, or setting aside specific times of the week to do activities regardless of pain.

MAKE IT YOURS

DEVELOP A PAIN MANAGEMENT PLAN

Pain can rob you of parts of your life — happiness, a social life, a sense of being worthwhile, strong or attractive. Think about what pain has already taken from you, and work with a health professional to start reclaiming your life. You may not be able to do this all the time, but you do need to plan to create a life around your pain.

Watch the trap

The things we do to lessen pain can sometimes make it worse, kicking off a pattern of 'do less, move less, hurt less, sleep less, feel worse.' Planning helps you avoid falling into this trap.

For severely painful times

You may begin with medications, but also consider hot or cold packs, baths, naps, self-hypnosis, stretching or biofeedback. Reducing stress with a mental stillness app can help too.

For making pain less present, day to day

Pace yourself, but look for activities that decrease the frequency or intensity of pain episodes. What works varies from person to person, but options include:

- Therapeutic massage
- Anti-inflammatory diets
- Counselling
- Tai chi, yoga or hypnosis
- Strength-building
- Mud and mineral baths
- Support groups
- Stretching or gentle dancing

You need to find what works for you — and do it.

**Your aim is your optimal level of functioning —
not being free of what allows you to reach it.**

One of the frustrations for practitioners in this area is patients often say, “I tried X and I felt better, so I stopped X, and now I feel worse.” It’s time to reclaim as much wellness and fun as you can. You deserve to enjoy the best life you can.

WATCH

MORE ON MANAGING PAIN

In addition to this factsheet, here's a video on additional options for managing pain, from the Drug Education Network.



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