

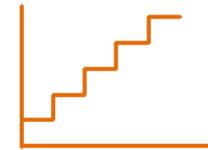
Graded Activities

Graded activity: How to break Boom / Bust or fear avoidance and increase activity

The good news is that there is an alternative to the over-under activity cycle and it's called graded activity. Graded activity enables you to gradually increase your ability to do a particular activity or position in a stepwise manner. e.g. sitting, lifting, driving.

Sportsmen and women instinctively understand these principles.

Following an injury, they rest for a short while. But they are then quick to get back in action and gradually build-up their activities – despite the pain. Of course most athletes are also very positive mentally about their ability to recover from injury. This may not be an easy thing to do when you have had pain for such a long time, but it is the best way to recover. We can now look at how you can increase your activity.



Graded activity = small steps

Principles of graded activity

1. Work out your starting point — That is how much of the activity you can do now, without overdoing it. This is the amount you can do on a good day and on a bad day. E.g. if you can manage to walk for 10 minutes but it's a real struggle, maybe your starting point is 8 minutes. Baselines can be in any unit of measurement (time, distance, number of lengths, number of shirts ironed, no of lampposts walked past etc)
2. Write up a realistic plan for the week ahead (using the pacing up chart)
3. Make sure the plan progresses in small equal steps. Progress every day, every second day or every third day- keep increases small but consistent.
4. Stick to the plan on good or bad days. It is tempting on your good days to do a lot more, then do less on the bad days. Make sure therefore on the good days that you pace your self and don't overdo it. On the bad days stretch yourself a little.
5. Review the plan at the end of the week and make any necessary changes. If you have had one bad day- progress the plan at the same rate. If you have struggled a few days in a row – this would suggest you have been too ambitious and need to slow the rate of progression down in next week's plan. If you feel you could progress quicker, speed the rate of progression up.
6. Expect some increased symptoms as you increase your activity, this is normal, to be expected and will settle. Your plan should be realistic and will therefore keep any increased symptoms to a minimum. Remind yourself that you are not harming yourself, your body is already sore and is bound to complain as you ask it to do more. If your activity levels are significantly increasing your symptoms and putting you off being active then you may be overdoing it. In this case, you should start from a lower level of activity or slow down your rate of progression. Bear in mind that if you overdo things it may not be until later that you feel it. If you have any new symptoms and are worried then ask about them. (You can use the activity diary to make a note of how you have managed with each day).

Graded Activities

You can apply these principles to almost anything, although some things are harder to grade up and require a bit of imagination.

Case study

Jane finds that on some days she can do plenty of activity, but she then pays for it later. The following day she finds she can't do much because of her pain. When she's doing a job, she always wants to complete it, irrespective of how her pain is. This is how she always worked before her pain problem came on. However, Jane wants to return to work and is concerned that whilst she can manage working on some days, she can't on others.

Since attending a program similar to this one, Jane has learnt to pace herself through each day. On days when her pain isn't too bad, she makes sure she doesn't overdo things. This ensures that the following day she is still able to do the things she wants to. By setting herself achievable targets each day, she is able to maintain a good level of function by pacing herself.

Use this diagram to think about your own situation.





Graded Activities

Pacing Up Chart

Pacing up	sitting						
Time from previous week	10 min						
Monday	11 min						
Tuesday	12 min						
Wednesday	13 min						
Thursday	14 min						
Friday	15 min						
Saturday	16 min						
Sunday	17 min						