



# Hydrotherapy Back Education Class

## Understanding your pain

Following experience has shown that people with persistent pain find it helpful to have an understanding of pain. Healthcare professionals split pain into two different categories; acute pain and persistent or chronic pain.

Acute Pain	Chronic Pain
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Short term pain</li><li>• Associated with damage</li><li>• Healing takes &lt; 3 months, even for severe injuries</li><li>• Pain will settle as body heals</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Last longer than acute pain</li><li>• Does not indicate ongoing damage, even though it may feel like it</li><li>• It is unlikely ongoing pain is secondary to an unhealed injury</li></ul>

## Why do I still have pain?

- Pain is less related to injury and more to do with central nervous system.
- The central nervous system becomes more sensitive which in turn increases pain in back – this sensitivity can be reduced.

## What happens when you injur yourself?

- Receptors in the skin measure pressure, temperature and chemical change
- Receptors send information up the nerves to the spinal cord, then up to the brain
- The brain is told “something has happened”
- The brain combines this information and interprets it
- All pain no matter where or how it is felt is produced by the brain
- When the brain receives information from the nerves it combines this with previously stored information...previous experience, beliefs, what you have been told by others, what you have read

- After sorting through this information your brain will decide whether it is in pain.
- Persistent pain remaining after 3 months has more to do with changes in the nervous system than on going damage.

Personal beliefs and environmental factors can make a big difference to how we experience pain and how likely it is that pain will persist

## What can increase my pain?

- Run down immune system
- De-conditioned muscles
- Poor sleep
- Scared of pain
- Fear of moving
- Anxiety and worry

## The key principles to recovery:

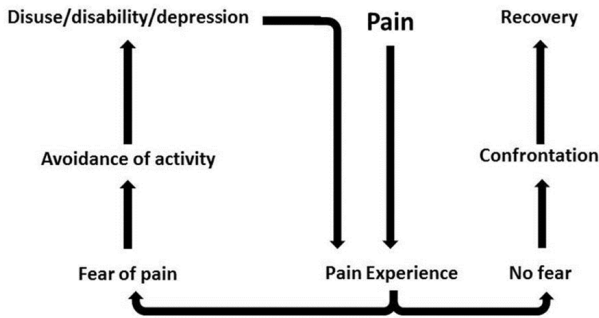
- Acknowledge that aspects of your daily life can be leading to increasing the sensitivity of your nervous system (releasing cortisol) e.g. stress, worry, poor sleep anxiety
- Exercise can help to release endorphins and help relax/release tension from muscles
- Goal setting can help you to remain focused on what you wish to achieve, this will also help to increase your activity
- Understanding that sometimes you can have an increase in pain or a flare up – changing the way you view them can help you to recover quicker

## Fear avoidance

Unnecessary concern about what pain means leads to people stopping doing their normal activities and fear of pain may limit people significantly. This makes us less confident and more sensitive to many activities. The less activity we do, the less we find ourselves able to do. This is one of the main reasons why pain is often maintained long after healing has

## Hydrotherapy Back Education Class

occurred.



### Goal Setting - What do you want to achieve

Everyone has things they want to achieve in life however persistent pain can often let the things we used to enjoy fall by the wayside. Sometimes seeing a way forward is very difficult to see however setting goals is a useful method to move forward.

#### How can goal setting help me?

- Good way to try and move from where we are to where we want to be/achieve.
- Goals help to recognise your own success and progress
- Goals allow you to reward yourself when each new goal is achieved.
- Being active and working towards goals help to speed up your recovery.

#### SMART goal setting

**S** – Specific exactly what you want to achieve & how you're going to manage it

**M** – Measurable how will you know when you have achieved your goal?

**A** – Achievable is the goal you've set within a reasonable reach

**R** – Rewarding if your goal is not enjoyable/rewarding then you will not enjoy working towards it

**T** – Time need to decide upon a time frame to achieve goal.

You need to ensure the goal will fit into your lifestyle, the best type of goals are ones you are already doing. AND reward yourself when you succeed

Example: to be able to walk to the shops and back in 4 weeks' time. Setting your own goals – please practice setting up your own goals

What would I like to achieve...?

When would I like to achieve this by...?

How am I going to achieve this...?

#### Boom and bust – graded pacing activity

This is a common cycle for patient with pain this involves:

- Push yourself until the pain tells you to stop
- This then causes a period of increase pain
- Rest and do less activity
- Pain has then settled a bit therefore you can get going and overdo it once more...

#### What does boom and bust mean?

- Taking frequent rests and doing less when you have overdone things leads to your body becoming gradually de-conditioned.
- Joints become stiffer and muscles weaker
- Your body becomes less able to cope with activity
- Your pain comes on sooner/increases sooner when you try to do anything
- This can make you feels worse medically however in fact you are just getting worse physically.
- Every time you overdo it you are more likely to start avoiding these activities in the future.

HOWEVER: it's not that you can't or shouldn't do these activities, it's just that you are trying to do too much of them too soon.

## Hydrotherapy Back Education Class



### How do you break the cycle?

Graded activity!

- This enables you to gradually increase your ability to do a particular activities
- Work out your starting point: how much activity can you do now without overdoing it
- Write a realistic plan for the week ahead with small steps
- Stick to the plan on both a good day and bad
- If you struggle for a few days in a row – this suggests you have been too ambitious and need to slow the rate of progression.

### Managing Set Backs

What are set backs?

- Sudden sustained increase in symptoms
- It is very common to experience setbacks especially with persistent pain
- There is often a trigger to the set back
- There may also be a situation that makes setbacks more likely
- Try and identify your triggers to reduce the likelihood of a set back
- Less triggers = less set backs

### What are examples of triggers?

- Sitting for too long
- Excessively busy day at work

- Receiving some bad news
- Forgetting to take medication
- Some triggers are manageable – for example sitting for prolonged periods, you can take regular breaks throughout day

### Techniques to reduce the chances of setbacks

- Regular exercises
- Going for a walk
- Swapping to another activity
- Relaxation exercises

### What do I do when I have a set back?

- Do not dwell on your set back or panic this can get in the way of recovering
- View setbacks as normal
- Be reassured that it is safe to get moving
- Try to assess whether it is a new pain or a familiar one
- Try to relax and do some breathing exercises AND some gentle movement exercises
- Take it slow for a few hours
- Keep active, however don't overdo it
- Start to pace your activities up gradually
- Take some of usual medication if necessary
- Don't panic and seek referral to "specialist"
- Try and work out trigger for set back
- Congratulate yourself for managing your setback.

### Self-reflection

This about what you do on a daily basis and how you manage your pain...

What are you going to do differently?

How are you going to achieve your goals?