

Your Pain Toolkit Calendar for 2012



www.paintoolkit.org

The Pain Toolkit Team wish you Seasons Greetings
and a *Happy Pain Self Management New Year!*

Which three Tools will you choose to work on each
month?

Tool 1 - Accept that you have persistent pain....and then begin to move on

Acceptance is the first and the most important tool in your pain self-management toolkit.

Acceptance is not about giving up but recognising that you need to take more control with regards to how you can better self-manage your pain.

Acceptance is also a bit like opening a door - a door that will open to allow you in to lots of self-managing opportunities. The key that you need to open this door is not as large as you think. All you have to do is to be willing to use it and try and do things differently.



January 2012

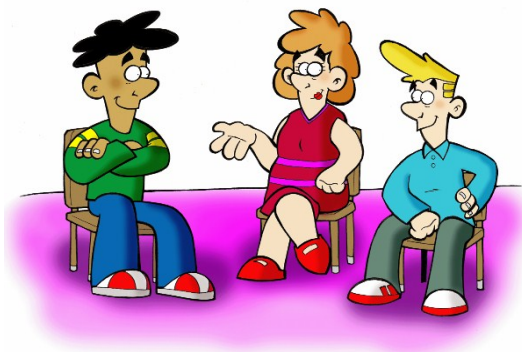
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Tool 2 - Get involved - building a support team

Being successful in pain self-management means getting both help and support from others.

Ask your health care professional, friends, family and work colleagues about working more together - becoming a team. Develop a pain self-management plan.

Find out if there are other support groups in your community you could join which could provide you with more self-help management skills.



February 2012

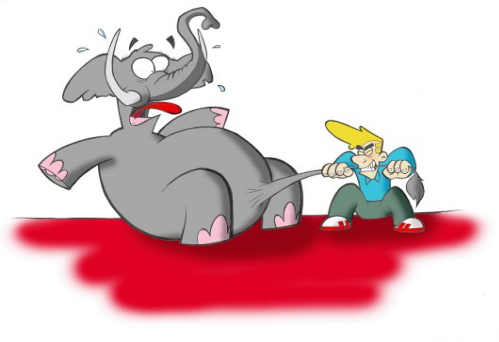
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Tool 3 - Pacing

Pacing daily activities is one of the key tools to self managing your pain. You need to begin to pace your work and also other everyday activities. Did you recognise yourself from the pain cycle? You tend to over do things, or rest too much and become inactive and lose fitness.

Pacing in short is: taking a break *before* you need it throughout the day. But how can you remember to pace yourself? Remember the old saying...*"How do you eat an elephant?"*

Answer: One bite at a time! Pacing is carrying out activities one bite at a time, and not tackling all of them at once.



March 2012

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Tool 4 - Learn to prioritise and plan out your days

Prioritising and planning your days is an essential tool. Make a list of things you would like to do but remember to be flexible. It is a great way to set yourself a starting point.

Examples:

- Monday a.m. - vacuum the living room and have a couple of breaks so that I pace myself
- Monday p.m.- prepare food for evening meal - sit down to do this
- Tuesday a.m. - go swimming - meet friend for a coffee/tea - practise some relaxation when I get home.
- Tuesday p.m. - I write an activity plan for the next day.



April 2012

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Tool 5 - Setting Goals/Action Plans

You may sometimes want to run before you can walk as that old saying goes. So to avoid this happening set yourself simple, realistic goals or action plans. Just as you need goal posts when playing football, or a finishing line when racing - you need something to aim for.

Perhaps, you could set yourself a simple, hourly, daily or weekly action plan. Always ask for help from your health care professional if you are not sure. You can also learn more about setting goals and action planning when you attend a Self-Management Programme (SMP).



May 2012

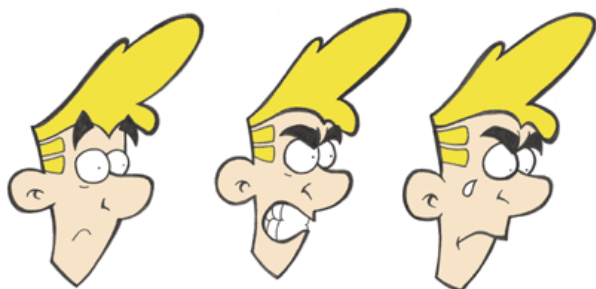
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Tool 6 - Being patient with yourself

Take things steadily. It may take you a few weeks or months to see changes or improvements.

When you start to feel good, you may want to catch up with activities that you may have let go of. Don't be tempted to over do it otherwise your chances of yet another set back could increase.

A good saying is 'take things one day at a time'. And also....ask for help and support from others—its not a sign of weakness but a sign of strength!



June 2012

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Tool 7 - Learn relaxation skills

Relaxation skills are very important for tense muscles in the body and for unwinding the mind.

- Relaxation could be:
- Reading a book
- Listening to some music
- Gardening
- Meeting friends for a coffee/tea
- Going to the cinema or a restaurant
- Belly breathing (your health care professional could show you how to do this)
- Meditation
- Dancing
- Walking.



July 2012

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Tool 8 - Stretching & Exercise

Many people with pain fear exercise in case it causes more problems. However this is not true. Regular stretching and exercising actually decreases pain and discomfort. It prepares the body for other activities. It can strengthen weak muscles and you will also feel better for it. Remember to start slowly and build up or increase your stretching and exercising. It is not as hard as you think.

If you are in pain, remember that unfit and under used muscles feel *more* pain than toned ones. Talk with your physiotherapist or fitness coach about an individually tailored stretching and exercise programme that you can work on steadily and safely. This will help you build your confidence, muscle and joint strength.

Remember that swimming (or just walking up and down in the pool) is also a low impact exercise and is good for you if you have joint problems.



August 2012

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Tool 9 - Keep a diary and track your progress

Keeping a diary of your progress will help you to see how far you have come and note the successes you have achieved. This will help you to build on success. But it is also handy to note what didn't work so you can learn from those experiences. We sometimes learn more from our errors and not from our successes.

Try to write down one piece of evidence each day to show yourself how you are positively self-managing your pain. Doing this has been shown to increase people's confidence.



September 2012

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Tool 10 - Have a set-back plan

Is it realistic to think you will never have a set-back?

The simple answer is NO!

Developing a set-back plan is good pain self-management. Ask your healthcare provider if you need help in making one if you are not sure. Make a note of what triggered your set-back and what helped. This could be useful information if and when you experience another.



October 2012

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Tool 11 - Team Work

Team work between you and your healthcare professional is vital. Imagine the Arsenal football team playing without a team plan.

Managing your pain is not a 'one way street' and it is unrealistic for your health care professional to totally solve it. You have an important part to play as well.

Together both you and your health care professional can set an action plan. This action plan could help you to both track your progress.

Action planning is taught when you attend a self-management programme.



November 2012

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Tool 12 - is keeping it up...putting in- to daily practice the tools from 1-11.

You may be asking yourself do I have to put these tools into daily practice?

"What, every day?" The simple answer is Yes. Just as the person with diabetes has to take their treatment/medication and maintain their diet daily, *your* treatment is planning/prioritising, pacing, setting weekly or long-term goals/action plans, relaxation, exercise, generally keeping active and being in charge of your pain. Keeping it up is difficult for many people but it's not as hard as you think once you have set yourself a routine.

Just like brushing your teeth, self-managing your pain will become a habit. Get others involved and make pain self-management fun.

Well done and give yourself a treat for self managing your pain for another year

Seasons Greetings from Pete and the Pain Toolkit Team.



Pete Moore

December 2012

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