

# **The Long Mile: Managing Chronic Pain**

## **Session 6**

### **GROUP HANDOUTS**

# Learning objectives

## Session 6: Pain Management Strategies

- Understand types of pain and the gate control theory
- Learn strategies for healthy pain management
- Master the art of pacing
- Understand the factors that influence pain
- Learn mind-body practices for pain reduction

# What is pain?

International Association for the Study of Pain

Definition of pain -2020

“An unpleasant sensory and emotional experience associated with, or resembling that associated with, actual or potential tissue damage”

Raja, S. et al, *The revised International Association for the Study of Pain definition of pain: concepts, challenges, and compromises*, PAIN: [September 2020 - Volume 161 - Issue 9 - p 1976-1982](#)

# Pain vocabulary you may have heard from your MD

1. **Nociceptive** - inflammation and injury
2. **Neuropathic** - damaged or irritated nerves
3. **Nociplastic** - intensity is turned up

More than 1 type may be present

**Chronic pain** - neural pathways are overly activated causing pain without injury or after injury has long healed (visible in fMRI scans)

**Hyperalgesia** = pain felt at a higher level than normal

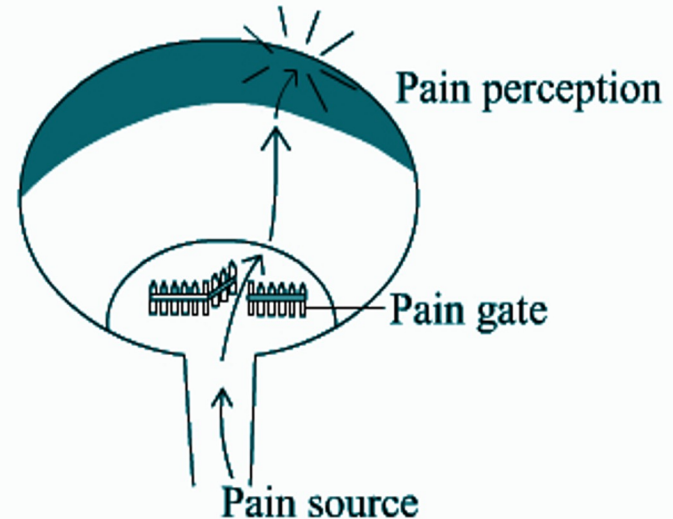
**Allodynia** = pain felt with minor stimulus such as light touch

# Why do pain signals have widespread effects?

- What we knew in the 60's
- What we know now

# Gate control theory - 1965

- Pain is a signal arising from any part of the body and transmitted via nerves to the brain
- A closed “gate” describes when input to the cortex is blocked, therefore reducing the sensation of pain
- An open “gate” describes when input is permitted, therefore allowing the sensation of pain



Melzack R, Wall PD (November 1965). "Pain mechanisms: a new theory". *Science*. **150** (3699): 971–9.

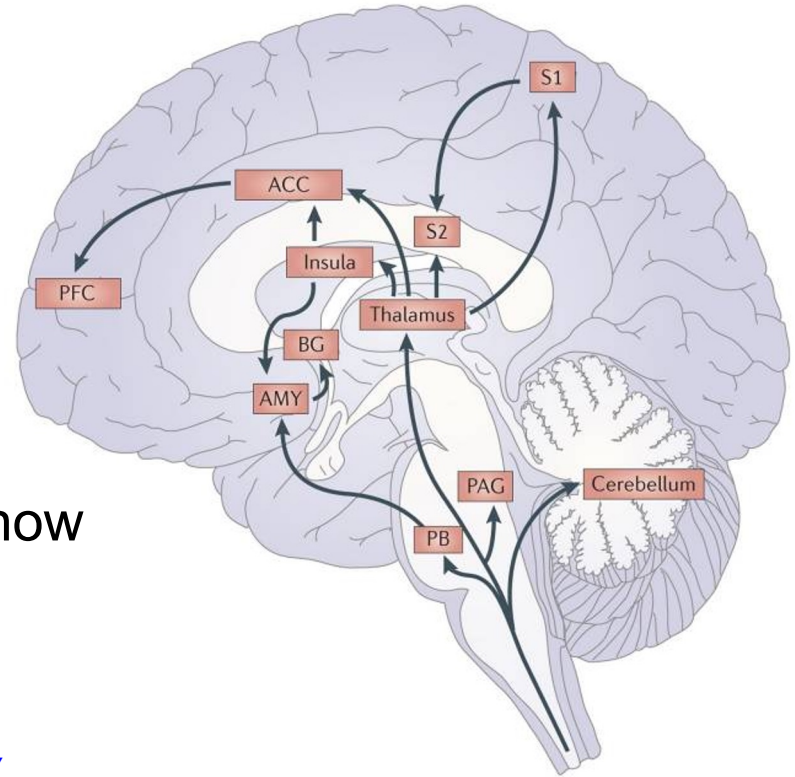
# Gate control theory

- Non-painful sensations close the "gate" to override and reduce painful sensations traveling to the brain cortex
- Pain signals can arise from harm such as a broken leg
- Pain signals can also arise when there is no harm and the injury has been healed.
- Nerves may have a “memory” of the signal and continue to fire off signals that travel to the brain
- Chronic pain hurts but there is no longer any harm.
- Muscle spasms are a natural reflex to stop moving the affected area of pain and can contribute to the distress of chronic pain

# What we know now

Pain signals go up to the brain and take multiple pathways affecting many areas of the brain

Resulting in many **ripple effects** on how we think, feel and experience life



Bushnell MC, Ceko M, Low LA. Cognitive and emotional control of pain and its disruption in chronic pain. *Nat Rev Neurosci*. 2013;14(7):502-511.



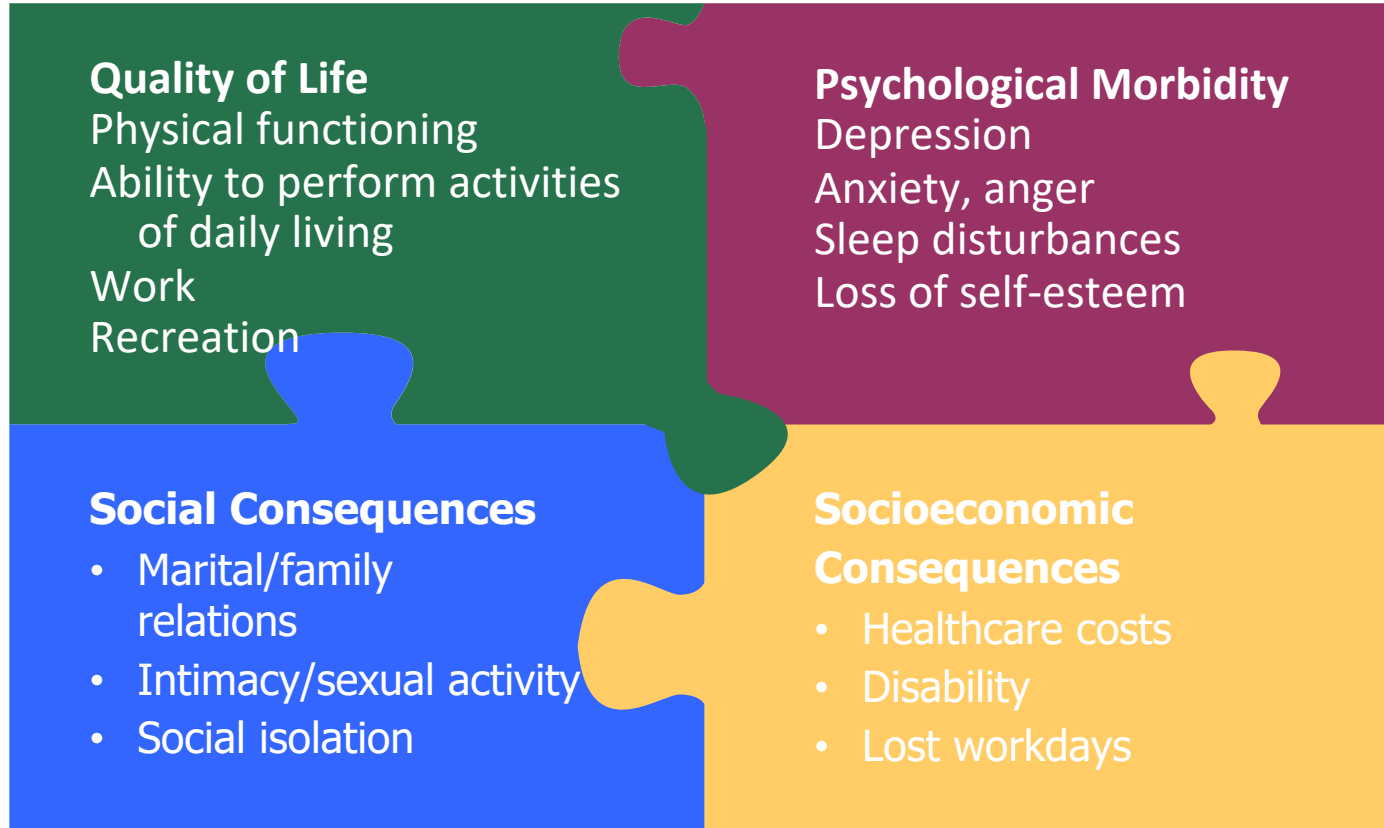
# Ripple effects of pain

Pain leads to:

- Emotional suffering
- Distorted thinking
- Disability
- Social effects
- Cultural effects
- Economic effects- both personal and national



# Biopsychosocial Impact of Chronic Pain



# Common experiences of people living with chronic pain

- roller coaster
- downward spiral
- locked in a cage

Are we stuck forever or can we breakthrough?

# Some strategies for healthy pain management

- Pacing
- Setting realistic goals
- Stretching, posture, appropriate exercise
- Reducing stress
- Mind-body practices
- Relaxation
- Guided imagery
- Changing negative thoughts and beliefs
- Greater involvement with life

(opposite behaviours worsen chronic pain symptoms)

# The Art of Pacing

- Pacing is essential for pain management
- Aim is to reduce the severity and frequency of flares

People who have trouble pacing are:

- hard workers
- high achievers with high standards
- value productivity
- often perfectionists

**We have been taught how to work but not how to pace**

# The Art of Pacing

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**We have been taught how to work but not how to pace**

Do you find yourself trying to catch up with all the things you need to do when you have a good day?

Only to overdo and suffer a flare of pain



# Some signs that you would benefit from improved pacing:

- You have trouble taking a break even though you need one
- You feel guilty that you are not able to work as hard as you did in the past
- You tune out your needs and function out of habit
- You want to get “it” done and won’t stop until it is finished
- You feel useless and unproductive during rest times and push yourself
- You push yourself because you worry what others may think
- You justify overdoing it because you have huge responsibilities
- You are constantly frustrated as your standards are too high for what you can reasonably accomplish



# 4 steps to master pacing

1. Accept current level of function whatever it is. Current level is only temporary as we work towards recovery.
2. Make a commitment to pacing as it is critical to improve well being and to allow the recovery process to progress steadily.
3. Plan ahead to make pacing part of everyday life. Set goals that can be reasonably accomplished without sacrificing your wellbeing.
4. Use self-management techniques to reduce symptoms of pain, anxiety, tension or fatigue to improve efficiency and tolerances.

# Setting activity goals

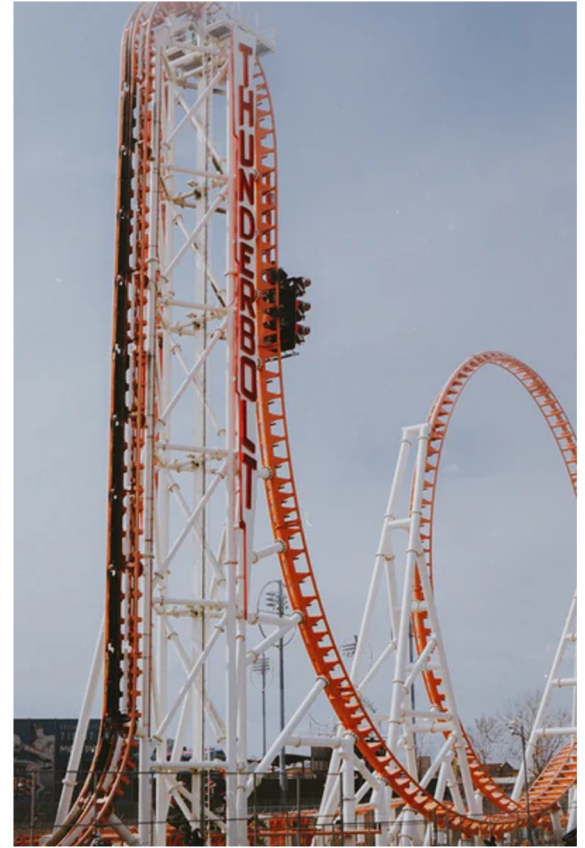
- Write down each activity and time you feel you can manage doing it without causing severe flare of pain. It is fine if pain goes up 1 or 2 points on a scale of 0-10 and it comes back down to baseline level during rest.
- If pain goes up several points and it takes a whole day or more to recover to baseline then you have overdone it and need to scale back expectations
- If pain worsens the next day then the activity needs to be scaled back

# Pain work sheet (example)

Type of physical work	Work time (minutes)	Rest time (minutes)	Restful activities
Cleaning Bathroom	15	20	Listen to music Reading Meditation
Yard work	20	30	

# Tips to avoid the roller coaster of repeated flares

- Review pain worksheet every few weeks and make adjustments to the times as strength and function improves
- A smart phone may be helpful to serve as a timer or count your steps when out walking.
- Ask for help if possible





# How do we stop the downward spiral?

- People living with chronic pain can easily slip into a downward spiral progressively worsening symptoms, greater medication use and a poorer quality of life.
- Life diminishes until we feel locked in a pain cage.



# Where would you like to be?



# What keeps us in the pain cage?

- Attention on the pain
- Fear, worry, anxiety, guilt
- Anger, irritation, frustration, depression
- Pessimism, negative thinking
- Fear of relapse or worsening of pain
- Worry of disability and low functional level
- Waiting to be fixed
- Dependence on medications
- Reduced activities, isolation
- Loss of confidence





# What keeps us in the pain cage?

...and even more reasons...

- Weakness, fatigue
- Poor sleep, poor nutrition
- Lack of motivation
- Loss of friends, conflict with loved ones
- Overdo and crash cycles
- Not working, financial stress
- Waiting for insurance/disability award



# What frees us?

Some suggestions:

- Reduce attention on the pain
- Eat well, improve sleep
- Develop a routine
- Reduce stress
- Do relaxation exercises daily
- Enjoy family, friends, pets
- Have fun, laugh



- Reduce dependence on medications
- Focus on the can do's, not the can't do's
- Set realistic goals, plan ahead
- Stretch and exercise with good pacing
- Take reasonable chances

# What frees us?



Further suggestions:

- Cultivate positive thinking
- Let go of past and forgive others
- Return to meaningful work or volunteer work if possible
- Change harmful beliefs to healthy beliefs
- Accept that you can't please everyone
- Work towards a balanced life
- Develop a spiritual connection
- Be kind to yourself

# Courage to step out and fly ...(toward neuroplasticity)

- Doctors and therapists can only advise.
- We can make choices and take action toward healthy pain management.
- We can gradually build a life of freedom outside the cage.



# Discussion guide

- Discuss pacing. Share tips on how to cope with pacing.
- Discuss the impact of a pain signal. How does it affect our lives, our families, our jobs etc.
- Workshop exercise

# Pain workshop exercise

Get your sheet of paper, crayons, colour pencils or felt markers



# Instructions

- Draw a large simple picture symbolizing your pain
- Use your non-dominant hand - left hand if you are right handed
- Do not worry how beautiful the drawing is, kindergarten level is fine
- Picture should represent what the pain looks or feels like
- Some examples are: erupting volcano, fire, stabbing knives, knotted rope, heavy boulder
- Take 5 minutes to complete drawing

## After drawings are complete

- Participants show or describe their pictures. Note the similar drawings.
- Group brainstorms for each drawing an image that reverses the pain that can be used for today's guided imagery exercise.
- For example, pain represented by a volcanic eruption can be reversed by snowfall cooling the lava.
- For those who have pain at this moment rank your level of pain on a scale of 1-10, (10 being the worst) and write the number on your picture. After the guided imagery exercise rank your pain level again.
- If you do not have pain at the moment use the guided imagery exercise as practice. You can do it again when you experience a relapse of pain.



# Time to kick back

## Relaxation exercise

9. Pain reduction imagery

10. Pain reduction visualization



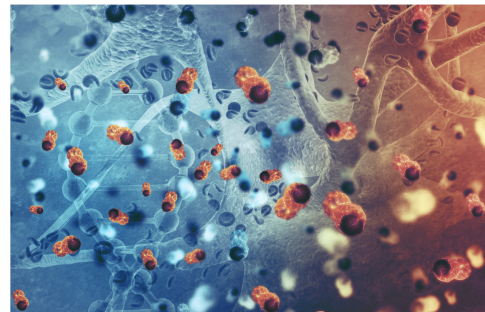
# Wellness Group Medical Visits



## The Long Mile: Managing Chronic Pain

Dr. Teresa Clarke

This 10-week series will help you on your chronic pain journey. You will learn how to promote healing through integrative approaches and optimize your physical and mental well-being.



## Immune Health & How to Optimize Your Immunity

Dr. Teresa Clarke

In this session, you will learn integrative health approaches to promoting immune health. These approaches can be added to public health recommendations to reduce your risk of serious viral illness.



## Acupressure for Chronic Illnesses

Dr. Teresa Clarke

In this series of three workshops, you will learn how Acupressure can be utilized in a self-treatment approach to improve wellbeing and symptom management in patients with chronic illnesses.



## Osteopathy & Chronic Conditions

Fabio Bocchetti

In this series of four workshops, you will learn how Osteopathy can explain and treat several types of headaches, low back pain, knees or hip pain as well as digestive issues.

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# Ask the Expert Cannabis Series

## 101: Cannabis Counselling & Treatment Plans

**By participating you will learn about:**

- The endocannabinoid system
- The differences between cannabinoids (THC & CBD)
- Routes of administration (oral oil & vaporization)
- Symptom management using cannabis
- Customized treatment plans
- How to dose your cannabis safely
- How to monitor for symptom improvements
- Potential side effects
- Drug interactions
- Supply options through a Health Canada licensed seller
- Cost of medication & discount programs available
- Extended health benefits & claiming as a medical expense
- Driving & travelling
- How to store your medication

## 201: Inhaled Cannabis; Dried Flower, Vape Pens & Extracts

**By participating you will learn about:**

- The difference between smoking & vaporization
- Is vaporization safe?
- When to consider using vaporized cannabis for symptom management
- Finding the right temperature for optimal benefit
- Types & cost of vaporizers
- Choosing the best strain to vaporize (sativa, indica, hybrids)
- How to determine your optimal dose & monitoring effects
- Taking proper care of your vaporizer
- Where am I allowed to vaporize my cannabis?
- Safe storage of vaporizer & cannabis
- Driving & travelling
- Inhaled extracts

## 301: Cannabis Edibles, Oral Preparations & Topicals

**By participating you will learn about:**

- The difference between medical & recreational cannabis
- Edibles (mints, baked goods, snacks, candy, chocolates, teas & other beverages)
- Tinctures & sprays
- Creams, salves & liniments
- Differences between onset of actions for various routes of administration
- Risks & side effects
- Choosing a product that is right for you
- Dosing of extracts and edibles; the basics
- Driving & travelling
- How to determine your optimal dose & monitoring effects

**REGISTER NOW**

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