

The Long Mile: Managing Chronic Pain

Session 8

GROUP HANDOUTS

Learning objectives

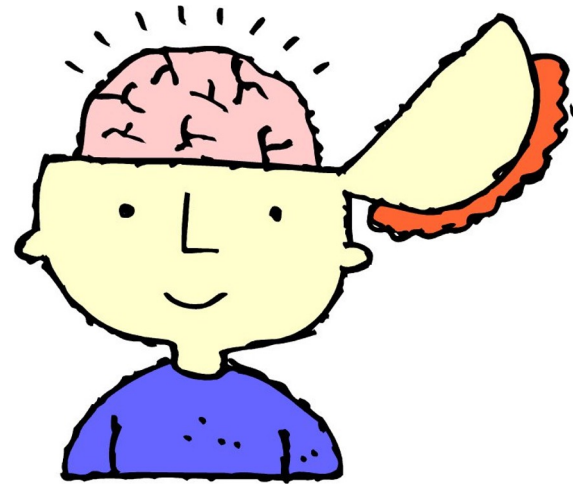
Session 8: Building Cognitive Assets

- Understanding how cognitions and emotions affect chronic pain
- Health benefits of positive thought habits
- Choosing attitudes and beliefs that support health
- Influencing the brain's pain pathways and the autonomic nervous system

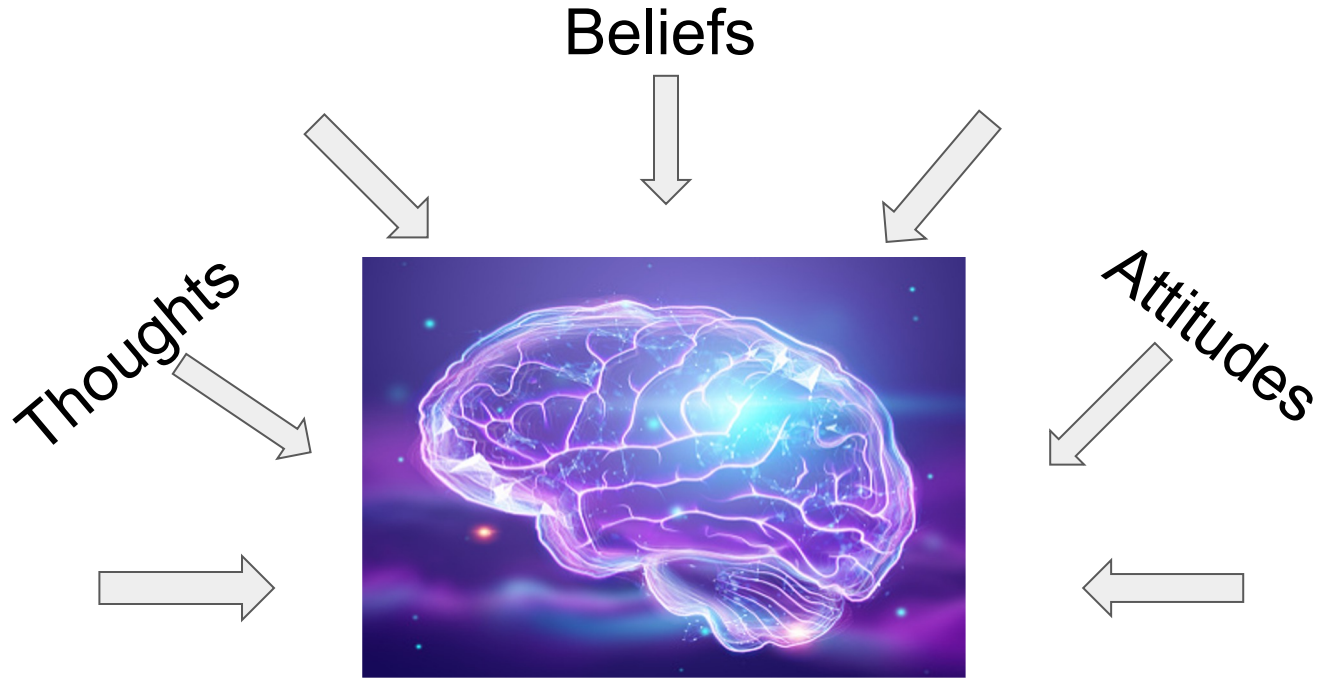
Do non-physical thoughts affect our physical brain?

Can software change hardware?

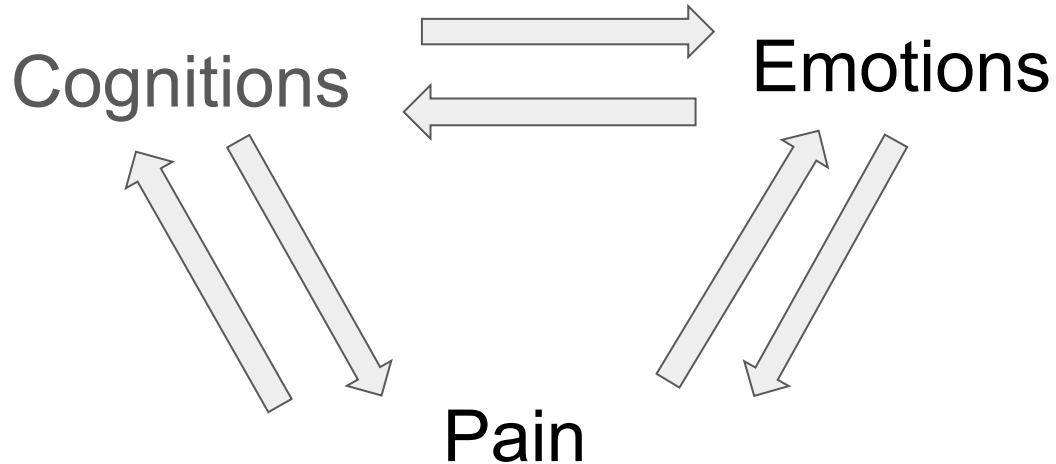
Let's look within



Influencing pain pathways



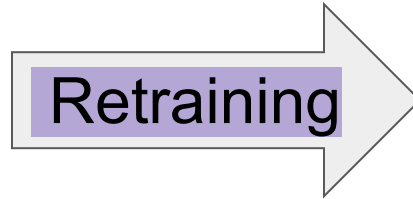
Cognitions and emotions affect pain



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.

Retraining thoughts, beliefs and attitudes

Slowing
down
recovery



Promoting
recovery

Is change possible?

- Habits are just habits, not good or bad, and not permanent
- Do our thought habits serve us?
- Are they supportive of good health and recovery?
- Laying our **cards on the table**: negative or distorted thinking, dysfunctional attitudes or beliefs

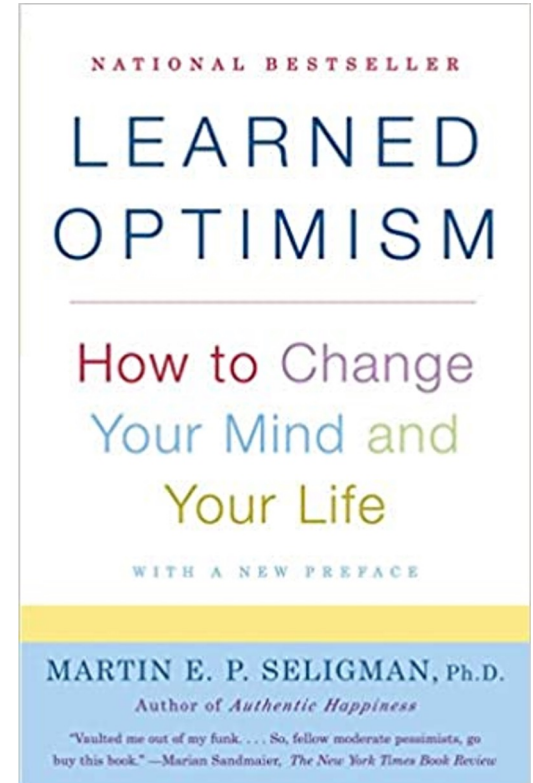


Can we reshuffle the deck and choose?

Examining the deck

- Optimism versus pessimism
- Learned optimism vs learned helplessness
- Dr. Martin Seligman, psychologist: just a 16 hour workshop on Learned Optimism improved depression and anxiety

Discovery Health. *Learned Optimism Yields Health Benefits*.
American Psychological Association, 1997. Learned Optimism
Yields Health Benefits



Other health benefits of optimism

- Cardiovascular disease
- Cancer
- Pain
- Physical symptoms
- Mortality



Rasmussen HN, Scheier MF, Greenhouse JB. Optimism and physical health: a meta-analytic review. *Ann Behav Med.* 2009;37(3):239–56. doi:10.1007/s12160-009-9111-x

We can change our mind...
...can we change our thoughts?

“You can’t control the world, but when
you
control your thoughts, you bring order.”

Bernie Siegel, MD (author of *Love, Medicine and Miracles* 1984)

Challenging negative thinking

Some examples of negative thoughts:

- I made a real fool of myself
- I will never be able to do it right. I am hopeless
- I only got the job half done. I might as well not bother to even try.
- I was so frustrated with the kids. I must be a terrible mother/father
- I did badly at work today. I'm sure to get fired.

Counter argument questions:

- What is the evidence?
- Am I jumping to conclusions?
- What alternatives are there?
- What thinking errors am I making?
- What is the effect of thinking the way I do?

Positive thoughts are precious

Weed

Seed

Feed

**your positive
thoughts**



Cards on the table: Distorted thinking

- Styles of thinking likely acquired from role models in childhood
- Not supportive of healthy connectivity in the Default Mode Network and midbrain
- Contributes to arousal of the amygdala and sympathetic system
- Persistent stress from automatic thought patterns may hinder neuroplasticity



Reshuffle the deck and change the thinking patterns that hold back recovery

Examples of distorted thinking patterns

- Neglecting self
- Catastrophizing
- Blaming
- Should statements
- Filtering
- Black and white thinking
- Personalization
- Comparing
- Victimhood
- Control needs
- Justice must happen
- Need to change others

Neglecting self

- You have strived all your life to be unselfish
- You go overboard into selflessness or self neglect
- You totally focus on the needs of others

Solution:

- You have valid needs like anyone else
- It is fine to meet the needs of others AND yourself
- Healthy self care is a balance between the two extremes of selfishness and self-neglect

Catastrophizing

- A small problem is blown up out of proportion
- Fears are magnified
- Problems happening in other parts of the world make you feel like disaster will strike you tomorrow

Solution

- Remind yourself that catastrophes are few and far between
- Life has been good to you so far and is likely to continue
- Remember that mankind has survived many challenges with people helping each other

Blaming

- Others are responsible for your illness
- You are the victim of an accident, injury or disease
- Flip side of the coin: you blame yourself for everything and suffer guilt

Solution:

- Let go of always having to assign responsibility
- Learn to be non-judgmental
- Let go of past blame/guilt which perpetuates anger, resentment and bitterness - feelings that are not supportive of brain health

Should statements

- You have high standards about how you and others should act
- You feel guilt or shame if you don't meet your high standards
- You feel frustrated when others don't meet your standards

Solution:

- Let go of having ironclad rules about life
- Let go of the words “should” and “must” from your vocabulary
- Remember you can push “delete” when the word enters your thoughts

Filtering

- You pick out the negative details in any situation and dwell on it
- You ignore the positive details
- You observe the world with a negative critical lens

Solution

- Watch out for your critical statements as well as inner criticisms
- Do not engage with people gossiping about others
- Watch out for your own or others complaints (about anything - government, healthcare system, even the weather)
- Appreciate the positive

Black and white thinking

- You see things as good or bad with no middle ground
- If you are not perfect you are a failure
- Mistakes make you feel inadequate and worthless

Solution

- Suspend judgment about any situation or anyone as good or bad
- Appreciate the shades of gray
- Learn to accept without judgment all situations as learning experiences

Personalization

- You think that everything others do or say reflects on you and you take everything personally
- You assume responsibility for a negative event when there is no basis for doing so

Solution:

- Taking things personally hurts our emotional health. Resolve not to hurt yourself.
- Let go of crippling guilt and burdensome sense of responsibility

Comparing

- You compare yourself or your children with others to see who is smarter, more attractive, more successful, plays the piano better etc.

Solution:

- Honour the uniqueness of you
- Comparing yourself to others will either make you vain or bitter as there will always be others greater or lesser than you.
- Respect everyone's abilities and accomplishments.

Victimhood

- You feel externally controlled and see yourself as a helpless victim of fate and circumstances
- You assign to others the responsibility to ensure you have a good life or good health and feel bitterly disappointed when this doesn't happen

Solution:

- Decide to be a victim no longer
- Assume responsibility for your life, your health, your happiness
- Start taking steps to optimize your recovery to health

Control needs

- You think you have some internal control and feel you are responsible for the happiness of everyone around you

Solution:

- Give up the extraordinary burden of responsibility for the happiness of others. The burden has weighed you down long enough
- Let each individual be responsible for his/her own life

Justice must happen

- You believe that justice is due to you
- You know what is fair but others may not agree with you
- You feel angry and resentful when judges or insurance companies do not give you fair compensation

Solution:

- Accept that life is not always fair in every situation
- Move on and focus on regaining your health

Need to change others

- You want others to change to suit you
- You put pressure on them and nag or cajole them to change
- You think that you can't be happy until they change

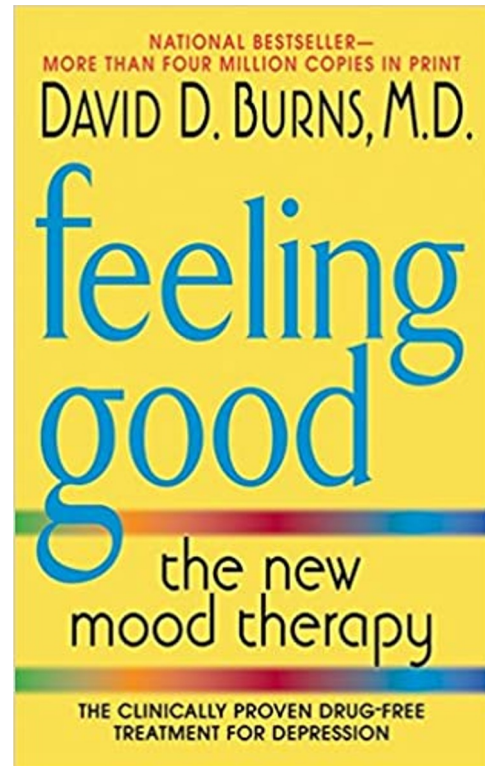
Solution:

- Accept others the way they are and suspend all judgment of how they should be
- Work on your own happiness

Where to start?

- Restructure the distorted thinking habits
- Start with self-awareness and examining your thought habits
- Choose to change old thinking patterns or adopt new ones that are supportive of health and living a quality life
- Find a good resource such as a professional counsellor, book, or website
- “Bibliotherapy” can be very helpful
- Thinking skills can be learned

We can influence our brain pathways



Tips to boost your self-esteem - David Burns

- Talk back to that inner critic and refute the negative
- Cultivate awareness of the distorted thinking in your automatic negative thoughts
- Substitute with more rational, less upsetting thoughts
- Challenge the “buts”. Develop a “but rebuttal”
- Remind yourself that you are supporting the rewiring of your neural connections toward a healthier brain
- Be kind to yourself

Cards on the table: Attitudes and beliefs

- Attitudes and beliefs are typically formed early in life
- Children are naturally suggestible and pick up attitudes, beliefs and also prejudices of parents, teachers and media culture
- We can learn skills and tools to crush the negative thoughts, beliefs and attitudes that take away our happiness and self-esteem



Words of wisdom

Re-examine all you have been told... dismiss whatever insults your own soul, and your very flesh shall be a great poem.

Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*

Some examples

- If you can't do it right there is no point in doing it at all
- I must be useful, productive and hardworking
- It is shameful to show weakness
- Mistakes are bad
- Being alone leads to unhappiness
- What others think of me is very important to me
- I should try to do my best in everything
- A good person tries to help everybody who needs help
- My happiness depends on the good things that happen in my life
- When bad things happen my feelings are beyond my control



Questions to ask ourselves

- Are our attitudes and beliefs logical or not logical?
- Are they healthy or not healthy?
- Are they supportive of us being authentic to ourselves?
- Will they allow us to respect, honour and care for ourselves during illness such that we can make progress to full recovery?



Unhealthy attitudes may lead us to:

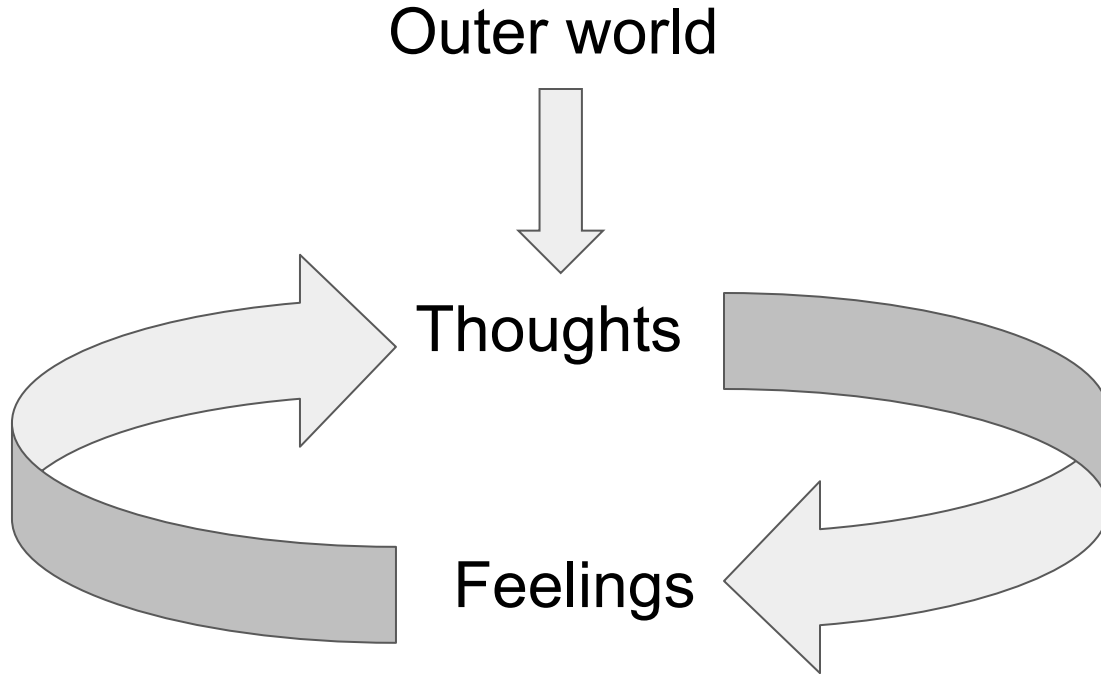
- Push ourselves too hard
- Put up a front
- Do what is expected
- Be self-critical, self-sacrificing
- Be a people-pleaser
- Look after everyone's needs but our own
- Worry over what others think
- Feel disappointment, rejection or guilt
- Feel overwhelming responsibility

Resulting in slowing down our recovery and causing more suffering

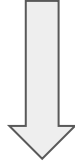


For there is nothing either good or bad,
but thinking makes it so.

Shakespeare, *Hamlet*

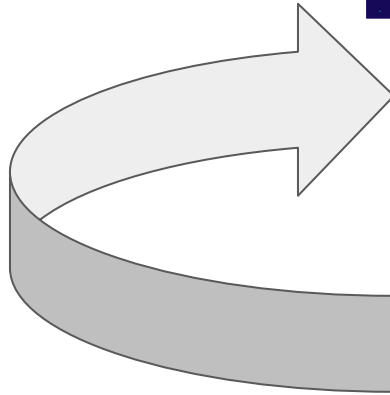


Outer world

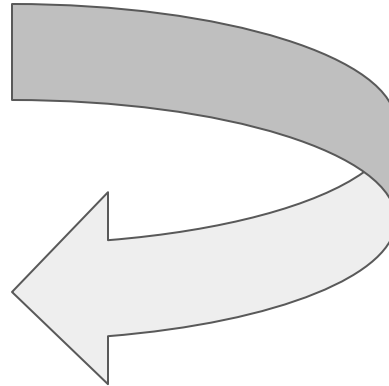


- Healthy nutrition
- Good sleep
- Supplements
- Complementary therapies
- Medications if helpful
- Mindfulness practices

Thoughts



Feelings



Change starts with awareness and insight



Beliefs and attitudes may be reprogrammed with affirmations

Good affirmations are short, positive, present tense and usually begin with “I”

Some examples:

- I can learn how to pace
- I am happy with small accomplishments
- My health is important
- I am free from unhealthy expectations of myself and others
- I can learn the skills to cultivate healthy thoughts, beliefs and attitudes

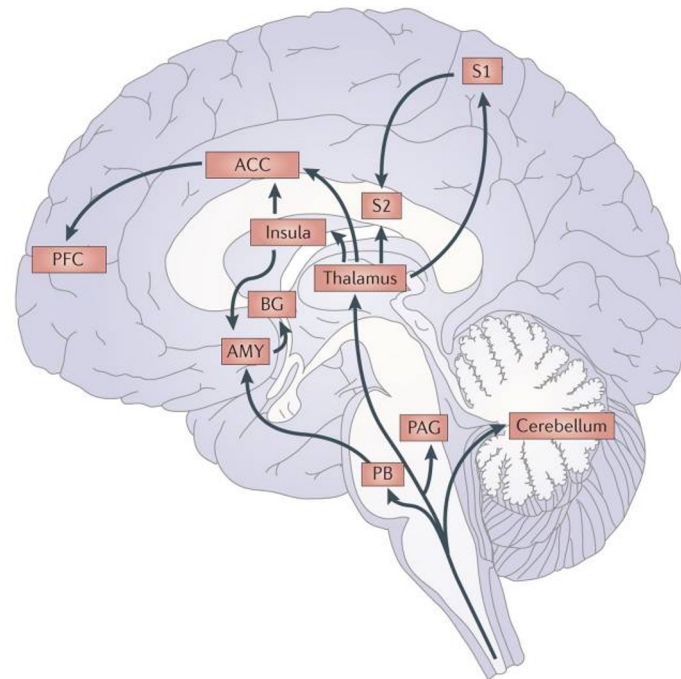


We can influence our brain pathways

Multiple pathways involved in pain processing in the brain.

Brain areas commonly activated:

- Primary somatosensory cortex (S1)
- Secondary somatosensory cortex (S2)
- Anterior cingulate cortex
- Insula
- Amygdala
- Prefrontal cortex
- Thalamus
- Cerebellum



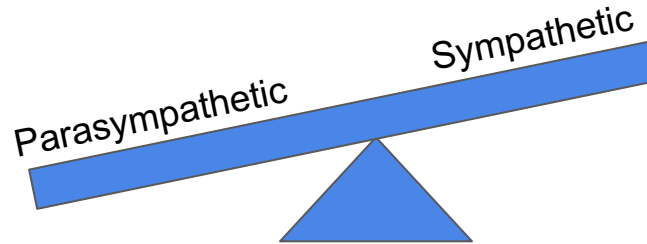
Bushnell MC, Ceko M, Low LA. Cognitive and emotional control of pain and its disruption in chronic pain. *Nat Rev Neurosci*. 2013;14(7):502-511. doi:10.1038/nrn3516

Influencing the autonomic nervous system

Neuroplasticity is supported with training and strengthening our parasympathetic state. Tip the scales in your favour.

Relaxed
Happy
Emotionally balanced
Resilient

Vagus nerve promotes:
homeostasis, growth,
restoration, healing and
rebuilding our resources



Flight or fight
Distress
Drains resources
Energy depleting
Unhappy

Time to kick back

Relaxation exercise

12. Backpack visualization

13. Cruising to the future



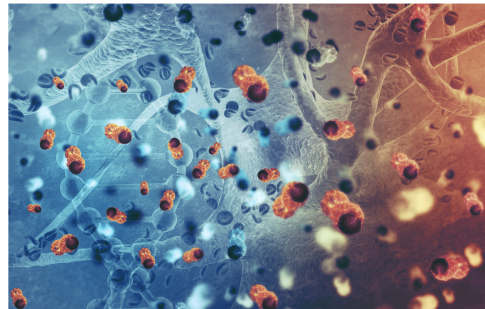
Wellness Group Medical Visits



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 Webinar 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
- Acute adverse 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
- Patient safety

201: Inhaled Cannabis; Dried Flower, Concentrates & 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
- 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
- Potential drug interactions
- Differences between cannabinoids: CBD, THC, CBN & CBG
- Edibles: oral products, beverages, chocolates, baked goods, chews & candies
- Topicals
- Onset of action
- Acute adverse effects
- Choosing a product that is right for you
- Dosing considerations
- Patient safety
- Determine your optimal dose & monitoring effects

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