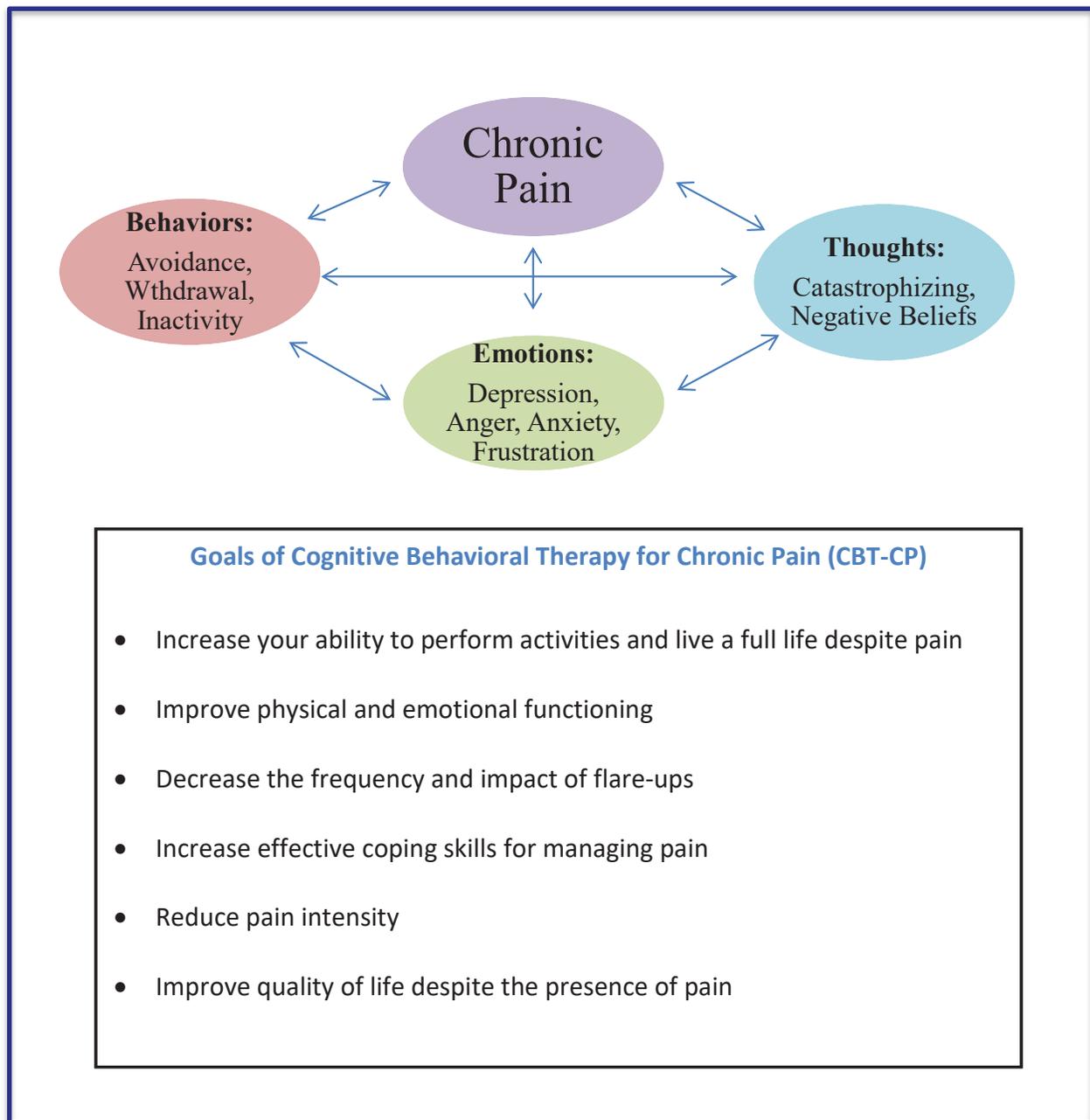


## Cognitive Behavioral Approach to Chronic Pain

One's experience of chronic pain involves more than the pain itself. Chronic pain is best understood as an interaction between the physical components of pain, behaviors, thoughts, and emotions. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Chronic Pain (CBT-CP) focuses on these biopsychosocial interactions between thoughts, behaviors, and feelings that impact your chronic pain experience. As shown below, all of these pieces affect each other. The aim of this treatment is to help you develop adaptive coping skills so that you feel a greater sense of control over your life and your pain, and to improve your quality of life despite pain.



## Brief Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Chronic Pain

Brief Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Chronic Pain (CBT-CP) is a biopsychosocial approach to help manage chronic pain. Brief CBT-CP aims to decrease distress and disability from pain and improve quality of life. It is safe for almost anyone and can be used in addition to other pain management strategies. It is a core part of a team-based approach to chronic pain in primary care.

Brief CBT-CP includes up to seven, one-to-one meetings of about 30 minutes each with an Internal Behavioral Health Consultant (IBHC). We ask that patients complete a minimum of three appointments. Treatment is spread out over several weeks, with appointments often scheduled every other week.

A new pain management skill is covered at each appointment based on the order you prefer. Key topics and skills include:

- Activity planning and pacing, which helps with avoiding a common pitfall of overexertion that causes a pain flare-up.
- Relaxation training, which will help to reduce tension in your body and manage distress.
- Cognitive coping, which will help with managing unhelpful thought patterns.
- Developing an action plan, which will help you move forward with meeting important personal goals based on new pain management skills.

Brief CBT-CP is flexibly structured around seven modules. **All patients complete the first two modules:**

Module A: Assessment and Goal Setting  
Module B: Education and Relaxation Training 1

All patients also complete a **minimum of one additional module**, based on their goals:

Module C: Activities and Pacing  
Module D: Relaxation Training 2  
Module E: Cognitive Coping 1  
Module F: Cognitive Coping 2  
Module G: The Pain Action Plan

## Before You Go: Additional Information About Chronic Pain Treatment Options

Today we discussed some of the challenges of living with chronic pain. We also discussed some options available to help manage chronic pain. One option that may be a good fit for you is brief cognitive behavioral therapy for chronic pain, or Brief CBT-CP. Some key information about Brief CBT-CP is summarized here, in case you would like to begin this treatment at a future time:

1. Brief CBT-CP aims to decrease distress and disability from pain and is safe for almost anyone.
2. Brief CBT-CP includes up to seven, one-to-one meetings of about 30 minutes each. We ask that patients complete a minimum of three appointments. Treatment is spread out over several weeks, with appointments often scheduled every other week.
3. A new pain management skill is covered at each appointment based on the order you prefer. Key topics and skills include:
  - Activity planning and pacing, which helps with avoiding a common pitfall of overexertion that causes a pain flare-up.
  - Relaxation training, which will help to reduce tension in your body and manage distress.
  - Cognitive coping, which will help with managing unhelpful thought patterns.
  - Developing an action plan, which will help you move forward with meeting important personal goals based on new pain management skills.

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*Here's a quick deep breathing exercise to consider that can help manage the stress that comes with living with chronic pain:*

1. Find a safe, quiet place to sit or lie in a comfortable position for at least five minutes. Use soothing music to block out distracting noises, if necessary.
2. Breathe in deeply, but comfortably, taking a moment to focus your thoughts on your breathing.
3. Count to yourself "one" at your next inhale, and exhale at your own pace. Continue to count (e.g., "two" ..., "three" ..., "four" ...) each time you inhale until you get to ten.
4. Take a moment to notice your breathing as it slows and develops a new rhythm. If disruptive thoughts enter your mind, re-focus on counting each inhalation.
5. Count in sets of ten breaths for as long as you feel comfortable. Practicing two to three times a day for short periods can be helpful when first learning this skill.



Visit the Defense Health Agency Connected Health website (<http://t2health.dcoe.mil/products/mobile-apps>) or VA mobile app store (<https://mobile.va.gov/appstore>) to download free apps to help with stress management and healthy lifestyles. These are a few examples of the health topics these apps address:

- Sleep
- Weight loss
- Smoking cessation
- Stress management
- Coping with depression, anxiety, PTSD, and other behavioral health concerns



We discussed several options that can help you with better pain management and overall wellness. Here is a summary of next steps to follow:

**Provider:** Include helpful information below on referrals to other services initiated today.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_



**Living with chronic pain can be very challenging.** It can negatively impact how we live our lives, including our ability to participate in activities and important relationships with others. Treatment options are available that can lead to new ways of coping with pain to maintain connections to the people and daily routines that we value. My goal is to work with you in a way that you find supportive and empowering.

If you would like more information about your treatment options for chronic pain or related concerns, please contact me at the number below:

Provider/Clinic name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_  
Additional information: \_\_\_\_\_

# SMART Goal Setting

A SMART goal is set using the following guidelines:

<b><u>S</u>pecific</b>	<b>Identifies a specific action or event that will take place.</b>
<b><u>M</u>easurable</b>	<b>Should be quantifiable so progress can be tracked.</b>
<b><u>A</u>chievable</b>	<b>Should be attainable and realistic given resources.</b>
<b><u>R</u>elevant</b>	<b>Should be personally meaningful and really matter.</b>
<b><u>T</u>ime-Bound</b>	<b>States the time period for accomplishing the goal.</b>

*Adapted from Doran, 1981*

## Short-Term Goals

Short-term goals can be accomplished over the course of the next several weeks to months. Once goals are identified, track them on a weekly basis to ensure that progress is occurring. If it is not, make adjustments as needed. For each goal, consider if it fits the SMART criteria listed above. These should be personally meaningful goals that motivate you to apply the skills of the Brief CBT-CP program.

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## Long-Term Goals

Long-term goals are those for the next 6-12 months or perhaps even longer. These are often our most important goals for the future, so they can be an important motivator.

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