

Pacing Yourself to Increase Valued Activities

When people first injure themselves pain serves as a signal that harm has been caused to the body. The natural and healthy response is to stop doing whatever is causing the pain (e.g., walking on a sprained ankle, lifting with a strained back). In this case, harm is being done to the body and the body's warning system (pain) is working properly. However, with chronic pain, healing has usually occurred but pain remains. Thus, the body's warning system is no longer working properly. In other words, the pain no longer indicates harm is being done to the body. Using the body in moderate physical activity, even if pain occurs, is not harmful.

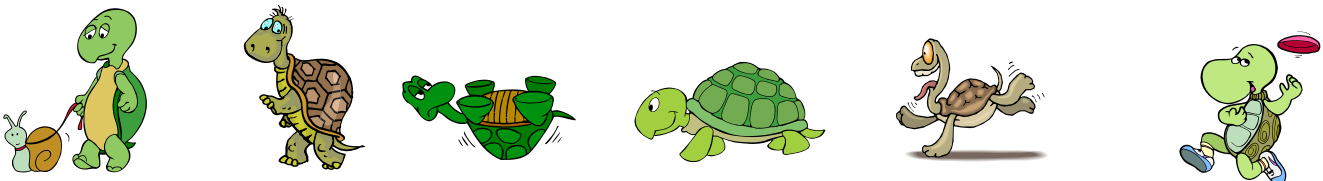
People with chronic pain are often very inactive during episodes of severe pain. Through the course of the natural pain cycle, they eventually experience some pain relief. In response to this decreased pain, people start to feel better and then often try to make up for all the things they were unable to do during the severe pain episode. Unfortunately, people in this situation often overdo something and end up hurting themselves worse. Since their body has lost strength and endurance during these extended periods of inactivity, even resumption of normal life activity can result in increased pain. As a result, a cyclical pattern of 'under-doing' it followed by 'overdoing' it is created. Moderating, or "pacing" activities enables pain patients to break this cycle.

How to pace

- ◆ Stop or change an activity when your pain level goes two points (on a 10 point scale) above your normal pain level.
- ◆ Do something less active until your pain returns to your normal level.
- ◆ If this rule is followed throughout the day, then pain will be no worse at the end of the day than at the beginning.

What to expect when pacing

- It will be challenging to learn the right combinations of up and down times. You may find it works best to tackle small portions of your daily routine at a time rather than changing your entire day at once. Start with activities that are most important to you or that increased pain causes the greatest challenge to you.
- Avoiding over activity that can result in severe pain episodes and longer downtimes will increase your success at engaging in effective pacing.
- Expect to reassess your pacing plan on a regular basis (increasing uptime and decreasing downtime as appropriate). When you first start pacing, you may find that your uptimes are shorter than you would like and your down times are longer than you would like. What you should find is that your uptimes gradually increase and your downtimes gradually decrease.
- Setting realistic goals for yourself may help keep you from getting frustrated and disappointed with the slow rate of improvement as you gradually recondition your body.



Rank the following areas of your life from 1 to 6 (with 1 being the most important and 6 the least important).

| Important Areas Life | |
|---|----------------------|
| General Area | Value Ranking |
| Marriage/Significant Other Relationship | |
| Enjoyable or Relaxing Activities | |
| Spirituality | |
| Personal Improvement | |
| Work | |
| Relationships With Immediate or Extended Family | |
| Other: _____ | |
| Other: _____ | |
| Other: _____ | |

Goal Setting Example

| Making a Behavioral Health Plan for Valued Activities | |
|---|--|
| Steps | Plan |
| 1. What is the valued activity (be specific)? | Reading a book |
| 2. How many times a week do you want to do this activity? | 3 Times |
| 3. Where will you do the activity? | In the living room |
| 4. When will you do the activity (day of the week and time)? | Tuesday, Wednesday, Saturday at 7pm |
| 5. How long will you do the activity? | 30 minutes |
| 6. Anything that might stop you from completing your plan? | TV too loud on Saturday |
| 7. If yes to #6, can you change part of your plan so that you are more likely to complete it. If so what needs to change? | Read in bedroom on Saturday |

Potential Valued Activities

Review items below and see if you can find valued activities that are in your top two important areas that you would like to start doing or use the list below to help you think of other things you would like to start doing.

| | | |
|--------------------------------|--|------------------------------------|
| Listening to music | Driving | Complimenting or praising someone |
| Taking a walk | Being with animals | Going to a "drive in" |
| Knitting/sewing | Going to social/church functions | Thinking about people I like |
| Playing golf | Making snacks | Being with my parents |
| Fishing | Skiing | Having daydreams |
| Reading stories, novels, poems | Being in a city | Kicking leaves, sand, pebbles |
| Playing with the kids | Making food or crafts to give away | Playing lawn sports |
| Talking on the phone | Playing pool or billiards | Going to school reunions |
| Writing a letter | Being with grandchildren | Seeing famous people |
| Cleaning the house | Playing chess or checkers | Kissing |
| Straightening the office | Putting on makeup, fixing hair | Being alone |
| Playing cards | Visiting people who are sick/isolated | Cooking meals |
| Painting | Watching wild animals | Budgeting my time |
| Playing tennis | Gardening, landscaping, yard work | Doing "odd jobs" around home |
| Gardening | Sitting in the sun | Being at a family get-together |
| Doing a crossword | Just sitting and thinking | Giving a party or get-together |
| Watching a movie | Talking about philosophy or religion | Washing my hair |
| Going to church | Listing to the sounds of nature | Coaching someone |
| Visiting friends | Dating | Using cologne, perfume, aftershave |
| Playing board games | Having a lively talk | Talking about old times |
| Going out to eat | Listening to the radio | Having peace and quiet |
| Dancing | Having friends come to visit | Visiting friends |
| Woodworking | Giving gifts | Writing in a diary |
| Exercising | Going to school/government meetings | Saying prayers |
| Going for a drive | Getting massages or backrubs | Giving massages or backrubs |
| Riding a bike | Getting letters, cards, or notes | Meditating or doing yoga |
| Swimming | Watching the sky, clouds, or a storm | Talking with people on the job |
| Playing an instrument | Going on outings (park, picnic, BBQ) | Being relaxed |
| Camping | Buying something for family | Reading the newspaper |
| Bird watching | Gathering natural objects | Walking barefoot |
| Going to a sports event | Helping someone | Playing Frisbee or catch |
| Shopping | Working on my finances | Doing housework or laundry |
| Working with computer | Being in the mountains | Being with my roommate |
| Daydreaming | Hearing jokes | Talking about sex |
| Singing | Talking about my children/grandkids | Going to a barber or beautician |
| Watching t.v. | Meeting someone new | Going to the library |
| Ceramics | Eating good meals | Preparing a new or special food |
| Photography | Improving my health | Watching people |
| Being in the country | Wrestling or boxing | Building or watching a fire |
| Talking about sports | Organizing a closet | Confessing or apologizing |
| Going to a concert | Hunting or shooting | Having coffee or tea |
| Planning trips or vacations | Playing in a musical group | Going to auctions/garage sales |
| Buying things for myself | Hiking | Playing with pets |
| Being at the beach | Going to a museum | Organizing my kitchen |
| Reading the scriptures | Writing papers, essays, poems | Visiting a pet store |
| Rearranging/redecorating house | Fishing | |
| Breathing clean air | Doing a job well | Others: |
| Working on machines | Loaning something | _____ |
| Playing cards | Pleasing employers or teachers | _____ |
| Laughing | Counseling someone | _____ |
| Shaving | Going to a health club or sauna | _____ |
| Having lunch with friends | Learning to do something new | _____ |
| Taking a bath or shower | | |

Goal Setting Worksheet

| Making a Behavioral Health Plan for Valued Activities | |
|---|-------------|
| Steps | Plan |
| 1. What is the valued activity (be specific)? | |
| 2. How many times a week do you want to do this activity? | |
| 3. Where will you do the activity? | |
| 4. When will you do the activity (day of the week and time)? | |
| 5. How long will you do the activity? | |
| 6. Anything that might stop you from completing your plan? | |
| 7. If yes to #6, can you change part of your plan so that you are more likely to complete it. If so what needs to change? | |