

Five Steps for Managing Intense Pain Episodes

1. Manage your thinking. What do you think before pain episodes? What do you think during pain episodes? What do you think following pain episodes? Which of these thoughts are helpful in managing your pain? Which are unhelpful? How can you alter your thinking to make it more helpful?

<u>Unhelpful self-talk</u>	<u>Helpful self-talk</u>
I can't stand this pain.	I've dealt with it before; I can get through it again.
This pain is horrible, awful, terrible.	This pain is an 8 on a scale of 1 to 10.
This pain is ruining my life.	This is a difficult time for me.
I can't do anything to make this stop.	There are things I can do to get through this.

2. Stay as relaxed as possible. Use deep breathing when you first feel an increase in pain; continue using deep breathing throughout the pain episode.

3. Use imagery and distraction. Use relaxing imagery, watch television, listen to music, do a mentally challenging puzzle or game to distract yourself from the pain.

4. Use medications effectively. Recognize early warning signs of increased pain. Take medication early to help manage pain episodes better.

5. Use your support network. Talk with your family members or others about what they can do or say to help during a pain episode. Let them know what is not helpful during a pain episode.