

- Relax your face, especially your mouth.
- Don't hold your breath.
- Don't make a show of getting up and down.

If you find it hard to stop expressing pain, grimace and groan in front of a mirror. You'll quickly see why it's important!

### Replace worry with constructive thinking.

Worrying wastes the energy with which you could be solving real problems. Stop doing it!

It's not really hard to stop worrying but it does require persistence for a few weeks.

First, what do you worry about? Some worries are about genuine problems, such as money, career, and family life. These are not worries to be eliminated; solve the problem instead!

- Write down each worry.
- Write down the possible outcomes.
- Write down how you can help the good outcomes to occur.
- When the worry returns, take out the plan and read it!
- Try to carry the plans through.

Other worries are completely useless, such as worrying about things which are in the past, or which will probably never occur; they mostly start with "what if this happens" or "if only I hadn't done that". Eliminate these worries using "Thought stopping"! (Even if they're thoughts like "what if this pain goes on forever".)

Put a rubber band around your wrist. Every time you find yourself worrying or thinking about pain, pull the band out a little and let it "snap" back into place. This sharp little sensation is very effective at interrupting repetitive thoughts!

Then do something useful.

The most effective antidote to worry is action. When the worry is useless, turn to another activ-

ity. When it is worry about a real problem, set about solving it as much as possible.

### Concentrate on what you are doing.

Imagine this. You are enjoying an activity when a sudden increase in pain occurs. Do you start complaining to yourself? Try this instead:

Say to yourself: "Yes, there is pain. It is in (name the part of the body). Now, where was I?"

After a few minutes of deliberately concentrating on the activity and relaxing, you will become absorbed in your activity again, and you won't notice the pain so much.

Similarly, when you feel bored, you will be more aware of pain. **Stop complaining** about being bored, and try to do the activity well.

Even simple tasks can be interesting if you pay attention.

### Increase positive activities and conversation.

If you've reduced your activities because of pain, find new ones! There are hundreds of clubs, and thousands of hobbies. Try some, or join community groups. Return to a childhood hobby if you can. It really makes a difference to how you feel.

### Keep your head up!

Stand as if you are confident and feeling good, and you actually begin to feel that way!

Now, what can you finish today? There's nothing like success to make you feel better.

### Conclusion

Pain doesn't have to rule your life. Step by step, you can take charge again. Why not start today?

# The Pocket Pain Program

The secrets of people who have pain, but who still lead full and happy lives at work and at home.

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*Please see your doctor for reassurance and advice before starting a pain management program.*

## See your doctor for reassurance.

About 10% of people in pain have a medical condition. Your doctor can perform simple, quick tests to make sure. Once your doctor has given you the all clear, it's over to you:

## Learn more about pain.

Some pains are easy to understand:

- Pain from tension lasts until you relax. Some people get over years of soreness by relaxing.
- Pain from bruising or from simple sprains and strains usually lasts between 3 days and 3 weeks. Ice packs etc can help.
- Nerve compression pain ("pinched nerves") stops once stretching exercises have loosened the tight muscles. These exercises work for some people but not for all.
- Pain in joints can persist or even might worsen if left untreated.

Your doctor will tell you whether your pain is one of the above, and will recommend treatment if it will make a difference.

If your pain isn't one of the above, **you'll probably never find out what is causing it**, because it's likely that your pain is a chemical and electrical mistake in your brain or nerves.

So if your doctor says "stop looking for a magic answer", take that advice! You can spend your life looking for explanations, or you can use that time to help yourself—but there's not enough time to do both.

## Now YOU take charge!

Instead of looking for more and more treatment or for more and more tests, **learn from people who manage their pain**. Many of these people have some pain each day, and still lead very happy and fulfilling lives. Pain is not an issue for them—they put their attention on living life to the full.

## Eight steps to managing pain.

1. Sleep.
2. When you get angry or frustrated, stop it.
3. Practice relaxing, and do it daily.
4. Stop talking about pain and problems.
5. Stop expressing pain.
6. Replace worry with constructive thinking.
7. Move. If you can, stretch (get advice first).
8. Increase positive activities and conversation.

### Sleep.

People who don't sleep get sore even if they've never been injured. Although it's hard to sleep when you're in pain, persist until you succeed, for instance:

- No tea, coffee or chocolate after 6 pm;
- Wear a light-tight sleeping mask;
- Make the room quiet;
- Establish a nightly routine;
- "Catch the wave" - go to sleep when you're tired.

### Stop being angry.

If you had an accident or injury it's normal to be angry at the person who caused the problem, or frustrated that you can't do what you used to.

If you let these feelings go on for hours, they can make you sick. Also, when you have these feelings, your muscles tighten, making your pain worse.

Got the picture? What's happened has happened. Are you going to ruin the rest of your life resenting it?

If anger returns, talk sensibly to yourself. Tell yourself that you refuse to make yourself sick by being angry. Put a rubber band around your wrist, and pull it whenever you hear those angry thoughts.

### Practice relaxing, and do it daily.

You naturally become tense when you're in pain. It's easy to understand why your body does that—for instance, if you have a broken bone, tight muscles form a natural splint—but for most of today's pains it makes things worse. To re-educate your body, try this:

- **Gently move and stretch.** For instance, if you have a sore neck, make very small movements of your head—the smallest movements you can make.
- **Stop what you are doing** for a few minutes. Do nothing at all—or just look at the flowers.
- **Listen to classical music.** Try different pieces until you find one that relaxes you.
- **Practice deep relaxing.** Use any method!

Most people can't relax until they get things off their mind. Make a list of everything that you have to do, and write a short plan next to each item. Later, do something that is on your list.

### Stop talking about pain & problems.

If you only talk about pain, you will keep thinking about pain even when nobody else is around.

Instead, try saying quietly to yourself:

- I can handle it. Take a deep breath, and relax.

### Stop expressing pain.

It upsets other people, and makes you feel worse. Stop doing it!

- Don't grimace.
- Try to walk and move normally.