



A FOCUS ON CHRONIC PAIN

Pain is associated with many injuries and diseases, and is sometimes the disease itself. Persistent pain can interfere with your enjoyment of life. It can make it hard to sleep, work, socialize with friends and family, and accomplish everyday tasks. Chronic pain may be part of your life, but it is not who you are. Managing your pain is an important step toward taking back your life and ensuring that pain does not control you.

Living with chronic pain requires changing the way you think about your health care and your life. Good communication with your healthcare providers is vital to getting the help you need to live well in spite of your pain. We hope these 10 Steps can help you move from patient to person.

STEP 1: Accept the Pain

Learn all you can about your physical condition. Understand that there may be no current cure for your condition, but there are treatments and support programs to help you accept the fact of pain in your life.

STEP 2: Get Involved

Take an active role in your own recovery. Follow your doctor's advice and ask what you can do to move from a passive role into one of partnership in the course of your own health care.

STEP 3: Learn to Set Priorities

Look beyond your pain to the things that are important in your life. Set priorities that will help you find a starting point to a more active life.

STEP 4: Set Realistic Goals

We have to walk before we can run. Set goals that are within your power to accomplish, or break a larger goal down into manageable steps. Make sure you take the time to recognize and enjoy your successes.

STEP 5: Know Your Basic Rights

We all have basic rights. Among these are the right to be treated with respect, to say "no" without guilt, to do less than is humanly possible, to make mistakes, and to not need to justify your decisions with words or pain.

STEP 6: Recognize Emotions

Our bodies and minds are one. Emotions directly affect physical well-being. By acknowledging and dealing with your feelings, you can reduce stress and decrease the pain you feel.

STEP 7: Learn to Relax

Pain increases in times of stress. Relaxation exercises are one way of reclaiming control of your body. Deep breathing, visualization and other relaxation techniques can help you better manage your pain.

STEP 8: Exercise

Most people with chronic pain fear exercise. Talk to your doctor to identify a modest exercise program that you can achieve safely. As you build strength you will begin to feel better about yourself.

STEP 9: See the Total Picture

As you learn to set priorities, reach goals, assert your basic rights, deal with your feelings, relax, and regain control of your body, you will see that pain does not need to be the center of your life. You can choose to focus on your abilities, not your disabilities.

STEP 10: Reach Out

It is estimated that one person in three suffers with some form of chronic pain. Once you have begun to find ways to manage your chronic-pain problem, reach out and share what you know. Living with chronic pain is an ongoing learning experience. We all support and learn from each other.

Source: American Chronic Pain Association,
www.theacpa.org

STAYING Connected These resources are focused on wellness and support.

American Pain Foundation: www.painfoundation.org

Pain.com: www.pain.com

The National Foundation for the Treatment of Pain:
<http://paincare.org>

Partners Against Pain®: www.partnersagainstpain.com