

The Pain Management Programme: Keeping going



Exceptional healthcare, personally delivered

Keeping going

During the course of the programme you have been working on making several different kinds of improvement in everyday life. Each week we have discussed goals and achievements. In some areas you have probably been very successful. In other areas perhaps less so. So what happens now, after the programme has ended?

Evidence from pain management programmes elsewhere shows that people divide equally into three groups. A third manage to **maintain** all that they have achieved in the programme. A third don't manage to keep it going and go **backwards** instead. A third go even further **forward**, achieving new goals, and becoming even better with earlier goals.

How will you get on? Here are some tips about keeping going in the future.

Good Planning

It nearly always helps to look ahead and to set goals for yourself, keeping a check along the way to see how you're getting on. This has been the reason for the record keeping you did during the programme. You may not want to write so much and so often as you have up until now, but it will help to keep some sort of record, and to check-up on yourself from time to time.

Try asking these questions:

1. What do I want to improve? (is this a realistic achievable goal).
2. What are the small steps along the way to achieving this goal? (remember pacing).
3. How well do I manage this at the moment? (try to be objective).
4. When will I take the next step?
5. How will I reward myself for my achievements?

Setbacks

It will also help to plan to cope with setbacks. These can happen very easily. This doesn't simply mean those periods when the pain gets much worse. It also means those times when you are not coping as well as you used to, or perhaps when you have become less active than before. Be alert to the possibility of setbacks and try to learn more about how they develop. The sooner you become aware of a setback developing the sooner you can start to deal with it. You may not be able to prevent occasional worsening of the pain but you can deal with many of the problems that come with it, depression, defeat, return to bad habits etc.

Some of the more common features of setback are:

Strain and Emotional Distress; perhaps one big crisis or a build-up of several stresses on you.

Poor Planning; not monitoring how well you're getting on, setting goals that are unrealistic, failing to make an allowance for when pain is at its worst, failing to reward yourself for achievements.

Unrealistic/Negative Thinking; ideas which are not true when you think about it carefully e.g. "this pain will always stop me doing anything" or "I should always be able to do what I like no matter how bad this pain is", or "what's the point?"

Running for Pain Killer Medication: A kind of knee-jerk reaction when pain flares up is to resort to large dose of drugs and to forget all about the other things you have been doing that are helpful as well.

Self-Isolation: e.g. "Why should anyone want to know me when I'm like this?" You may have given up seeing friends, perhaps keeping the family at arm's length. This can cut away a vital support when you really need it.

When a Setback Does Occur

This is going to be quite a challenge to you. Can you remember what happened last time? How long did it go on for then? How did you cope in those days? Will you be dealing with it any differently this time? Will you be able to improve on how well you cope with it this time compared to last time?

1. First of all try to work out why this has happened. Has there been any extra stress on you recently? If so, is there a way of reducing this for a while. Remember increased stress is associated with worse pain, reduced stress is associated with reduced pain.
2. If you have worked out a plan for relapses it's time to put it into practice.
3. If pain has flared up you may need extra medication for a while. If so, remind yourself this is for the short-term only and set a date for yourself to check on it and start reducing the dose again. At the same time try to keep going with other things that help. Don't rely on the medication alone when you really need to apply all that you know to help yourself.
4. If you find you have become negative and gloomy in your thinking it is worth assessing how true these ideas are. Sometimes this is realistic but more often it is out of proportion and probably making you feel much worse. Asking yourself if negative ideas do really apply to you will help to get this back into proportion and help you feel better.
5. Try to get the best out of your supporters, your family and friends. You may feel you are prickly and bad-tempered. Perhaps you have been! You may feel like a burden on others but this won't necessarily be so. Those close to you may actually **want** to help. It is important to let people know when they have been a help to you, reassuring them when they've done the right things.

NHS Constitution. Information on your rights and responsibilities.
Available at **www.nhs.uk/aboutnhs/constitution**
[Last Accessed March 2010]

**PATIENT
APPROVED**



How to contact us:



0117 340 3890



0117 340 3891



www.nbt.nhs.uk

If you or the individual you are caring for need support reading this leaflet please ask a member of staff for advice.