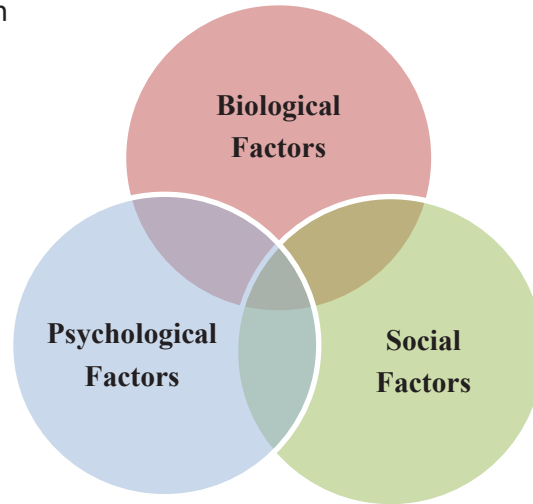


Factors That Impact Pain

Chronic pain touches many parts of your life, and each piece affects others. The interaction between each circle shown here impacts how you feel overall:

1. Biological
 - Pain, medical issues
2. Psychological
 - Emotions, attention, thoughts
3. Social
 - Relationships, job, hobbies



The good news is, while some factors may increase or turn the volume up on pain, other factors may decrease it. And you can decide how to manage many of these factors.

Below are just a few examples of factors that may impact your pain:

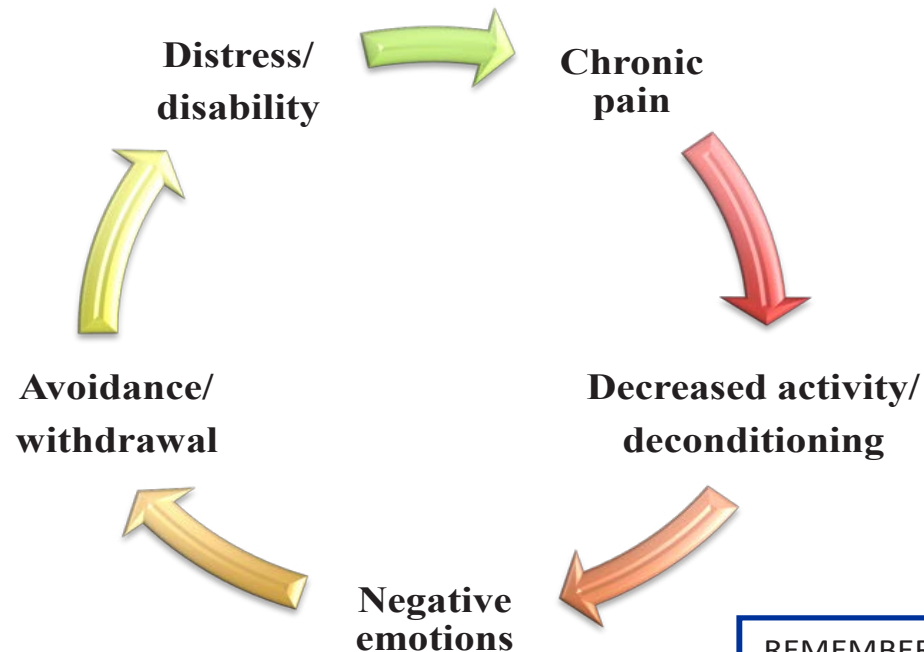
| Factors That May Increase Pain | Factors That May Decrease Pain |
|---|--|
| <i>Physical Factors</i> | |
| Degenerative Changes | Medical interventions |
| Muscle tension | Relaxation techniques |
| <i>Thoughts</i> | |
| Catastrophizing | Having balanced thoughts |
| Focusing on pain | Using distraction to focus on other things |
| <i>Emotions</i> | |
| Depression or anger | Challenging negative thoughts |
| Stress/worry/anxiety | Exercise and relaxation techniques |
| <i>Behaviors</i> | |
| Under-or over-activity | Using pacing regularly |
| Lack of involvement in hobbies | Increasing pleasant activities |
| <i>Social Interactions</i> | |
| Social isolation | Positive time with family and/or friends |
| Lack of or too much support from others | Volunteering/community involvement |

The Chronic Pain Cycle

Many people with chronic pain fear that movement will increase pain or cause physical damage/injury. This often leads to a decrease in activities, which leads to physical deconditioning (e.g., less strength and stamina, weight gain). Dealing with constant pain may also lead to negative thoughts and emotions such as frustration and depression. All of these factors contribute to increased avoidance of people and activities. While this cycle is understandable for those with chronic pain, it is *not helpful!* In fact, it actually makes your pain and its effects worse over time. Now that we are aware of the cycle, we must learn how to break it.

The Costs of Inactivity

- More pain
- Poorer physical fitness
- Less time with family/friends
- Depressed mood
- Increased irritability
- Lower self-esteem
- Strain on relationships
- Decreased quality of life



REMEMBER: THERE'S **HOPE!**

Understanding the cycle gives us the power to break it!

Relaxation: Benefits & Tips

The goal of relaxation is to reduce the effects of stress on your health. Since chronic pain produces chronic stress on the body, it is important to regularly practice relaxation techniques that can help your mind and body recover. Relaxation is more than resting or enjoying a hobby; it involves using specific strategies to reduce tension.

Benefits of Relaxation

Relaxation is important for good health. When you are relaxed, your muscles are loose, your heart rate is lower, and your breathing is slow and deep. Learning how to relax can help especially when you feel pain.

Relaxation won't cure pain or other chronic symptoms, but skills that relax the body and the mind may help decrease muscle tension, prevent muscle spasms, and relieve the stress that can aggravate pain and other symptoms.

Taking time to relax and refuel your energy provides benefits such as:

- Improved mood
- Increased energy and productivity
- Improved concentration and focus
- Improved sense of control over stress and daily demands
- Improved nighttime sleep
- Increased self-confidence
- Greater ability to handle problems
- Decreased anxiety and other negative emotions such as anger and frustration
- Increased blood flow to muscles and reduced muscle tension
- Lower blood pressure, breathing rate, and heart rate
- Decreased pain, such as headaches and back pain

Relaxation Practice Tips

Relaxation is a skill that requires practice. You may not feel the benefits immediately, so don't give up! Remain patient and motivated and you'll reduce the negative impacts of stress. And remember: If relaxation feels foreign or unnatural, that likely means you are a person who needs it most!

Establish a routine

1. Set aside time to practice relaxation at least once or twice a day. Pairing relaxation with a regular activity may help you remember to practice (for example, take ten relaxed breaths before bed or whenever you sit down to eat).

2. Practice at various times throughout the day until relaxation becomes natural and you can use it readily when you feel stressed. You may want to leave "reminders" for yourself to relax (for example, sticky notes on the bathroom mirror, kitchen cabinets, or car dashboard with the words "relax" or "breathe").

Be comfortable

1. Practice on a comfortable chair, sofa, mat, or bed. Dim the lights.
2. Loosen tight clothing and remove shoes, belt, glasses or contact lenses, if you like.

Concentrate

1. Eliminate disruptions. Turn off the TV, radio, or telephone.
2. Practice in a quiet, calm, environment.
3. Close your eyes to reduce distractions and improve concentration. If you prefer, keep your eyes open and focus on one spot.
4. Move your body as little as possible, changing positions only for comfort. Don't worry if you have some distracting thoughts—it happens to everyone. Just notice that your thoughts have wandered and then gently, without judgment, return your attention to your breath.

Relax

1. Begin and end relaxation practices with relaxed breathing techniques.
2. Use a relaxation recording if it helps. Gradually, learn to relax without a recording so that you can use relaxation techniques anywhere.
3. Let relaxation proceed naturally and spread throughout your body. Do not try to resist.

Be patient

1. Give yourself time to learn relaxation skills. Practice is required for these techniques to become automatic.
2. Try not to become upset if you have trouble concentrating. A wandering mind is normal and expected. Keep bringing your attention back to your breath.
3. Don't worry about how well you are practicing.
4. After a few weeks, select a word, such as "calm," "relax," "peace," or "patience" that you can say during relaxation practices. Eventually, simply saying that word may help you relax.

Incorporate relaxation into daily life

1. Over time, move relaxation practices from planned, quiet settings to "real life." The goal is to be able to calm yourself when necessary, no matter where you are.
2. Use relaxation whenever you notice yourself feeling stressed or anxious, such as waiting in line, at a doctor's appointment or during a difficult meeting.

Deep Breathing Relaxation

1. Start by becoming aware of your breathing. Place one hand on your stomach and the other hand on the center of your chest. Without trying to change anything, simply notice how you are breathing. Notice *where* you are breathing from, whether your shoulders are rising and falling, whether your chest is rising and falling, or perhaps your belly is rising and falling. Notice how your hands move as you breathe. (PAUSE)
2. Now notice the rate of your breathing. Are you breathing rapidly or slowly? Are you breathing deeply or more shallow? (PAUSE)
3. Now as you slowly inhale, imagine the air flowing deeper into your belly. Feel your belly fill with air as your lower hand rises. Pause at the top of your breath, and then follow your breath out as you completely exhale. Slowly take a breath in, two, three, four, and slowly exhale, two, three, four. Let any tension melt away as you relax more deeply with each breath. (PAUSE)
4. Notice how the air feels, as cool fresh air enters your nose, passes through the little hairs in your nasal passage, reaches the back of your throat, and descends deep into your lungs. Notice what happens as that breath of fresh air enters your lungs. Notice what happens when you exhale. Feel the temperature of each breath, cool as you inhale, and warm as you exhale. Count your breaths as you breathe in and out. (PAUSE)
5. Notice your breath becoming smooth and slow. Feel your belly and ribcage expand outward with each breath, and feel yourself become more relaxed with each exhale. Allow your shoulders to become heavier with each exhale. (PAUSE 15 sec)
6. Continue breathing slowly and gently. (PAUSE 15 sec)
7. As you breathe, notice the cool temperature of the air, as it enters your nose or mouth. Notice how the air becomes warmer as you follow it deep into your belly and out through your mouth.
8. Continue breathing slowly and gently. (PAUSE 15 sec)
9. Again, slowly take a breath in, two, three, four, and slowly exhale, two, three, four. Feel yourself become more and more relaxed with each exhale. (PAUSE 15 sec)
10. Now, as I count from five to one, feel yourself become more alert. Five, bringing your attention to this room. Four, feeling calm and relaxed. Three, start to wiggle your fingers and toes. Two, slowly start to move and stretch your muscles. One, open your eyes, feeling refreshed and rejuvenated.

