

SETTING GOALS WHEN YOU HAVE PAIN

Information for you

Reaching your Goals

Pacing and graded activity are useful methods of managing and increasing your activity levels. Other people with chronic pain have found that they really do work. However, they take time - weeks and months, not just days.

You may feel that it is easy to lose track of what you're trying to do when the pain gets in the way, especially when progress seems so slow. It may help if you set yourself goals to work towards and aim for - like the finishing line of a race.

There are a few things worth considering when setting goals.

- Identify goals that are **important to you**. This could be anything from walking your dog, going out for a meal with friends, or getting back to work.
- This should be something **you** want to do. If you find this difficult, ask yourself: What do I really want to get back to? What did I used to enjoy? What would make my life a bit better? Use the exercise on pages X to help.
- To begin with, set goals that you can start to work on and achieve in the **next few weeks** (short-term goals). It's easy to give up on goals that take too long to reach (long-term goals). If you have a long-term goal, break it down into 'do-able' steps.

The key is to set goals that are:

1. **Precise**

State exactly what you want to achieve. Make sure it isn't vague. For example, "I want to be able to do family things" is too vague. What family things? How will you know when you have achieved it? "I want to take my daughter to the park" is more specific.

2. **Realistic**

Ask yourself whether the goal is within reasonable reach. Set a goal that you are likely to achieve. Break big goals down into 'do-able' steps. For example, walking the 20 minutes to the park with your daughter might not be achievable right now. However, walking to the end of the garden once a day may be. Use graded activity techniques to build up your walking distance gradually. Progress can be slow and isn't always straightforward, but these set backs are useful learning points.

3. Time limited

Try and decide on a time frame. Being able to track your progress encourages you to keep going and reach your goal. It may be that you feel a certain length of time is realistic. Alternatively, perhaps you have worked out how much progress you can make in a week and then you can work out how long it will take you to reach your goal. Be generous with your timescales, set yourself up to do it!

Some examples of goal setting

Anna is 40 and has a long history of back pain. This has gradually got worse and she has been off work for the past six months. Her husband and two daughters are supportive and have been doing more and more to help around the house. However, deep down, Anna finds this frustrating and would like to be able to look after them as she used to.

Anna's Plan

Goal: To make the evening meal

How I am going to achieve it:

Tell my husband and daughters my goal and discuss with them what my physiotherapist has told me about pain and deconditioning.

Write a shopping list and ask my husband to go to the supermarket. Going to the supermarket on my own is a long-term goal!

Use pacing to break down preparing the meal into smaller steps and rest between steps.

When do I want to achieve it by: Tomorrow night

Andrew stopped playing golf with his friends after developing lower back pain. The course is just over four miles long but he hasn't walked much further than half a mile or hit a golf ball since last summer.

He realised that playing a round of golf with his friends was a long-term goal. He broke it down into 'do-able' chunks (short-term goals) that he was confident he could achieve over 6 months.

Andrew's Plan

Long-term Goal: Play a round of golf with my friends.

Short-term Goals:

1. Draw up and stick to a **graded walking plan**. I can walk for half a mile at the moment without overdoing it. This is my starting point, and I will build up gradually to four miles, sticking to my plan on good and days.

2. I will go to the **driving range**. I think I could hit 20 balls without overdoing it. This is my starting point, and I will draw up and stick to a **graded activity plan**, building up gradually to 50 balls.

When do I want to achieve these goals by: Three months

Next short-term Goal:

3. I will go to the golf course on my own. I think I could manage 6 holes without overdoing it. This will be my starting point, and I will draw up a **graded activity plan**, building up gradually to 18 holes.

When do I want to achieve this goal by: Six months

Goal Setting Sheet

Name:

Goal 1 =

(Check that your goal is precise and realistic)

How am I going to achieve it?

[You may need to break long-term goals into 'do-able' chunks]

Goal 2 =

(Check that your goal is precise and realistic)

How am I going to achieve it?

[You may need to break long-term goals into 'do-able' chunks]

Tell your family and friends what you are planning to achieve, they will be able to help and support you.

- Reward yourself when you have achieved your goal. Achieving our goals helps stimulate the production of feel good chemicals called endorphins, which help reduce pain, tiredness, stress and improve mood.
- If you are finding it difficult to set goals, this exercise might help you to identify goals, which are important to you.
- Setting goals is part of a series of reliable, evidence-based advice to support you along the way to improving your function and quality of life, with pain.

What are your Values?

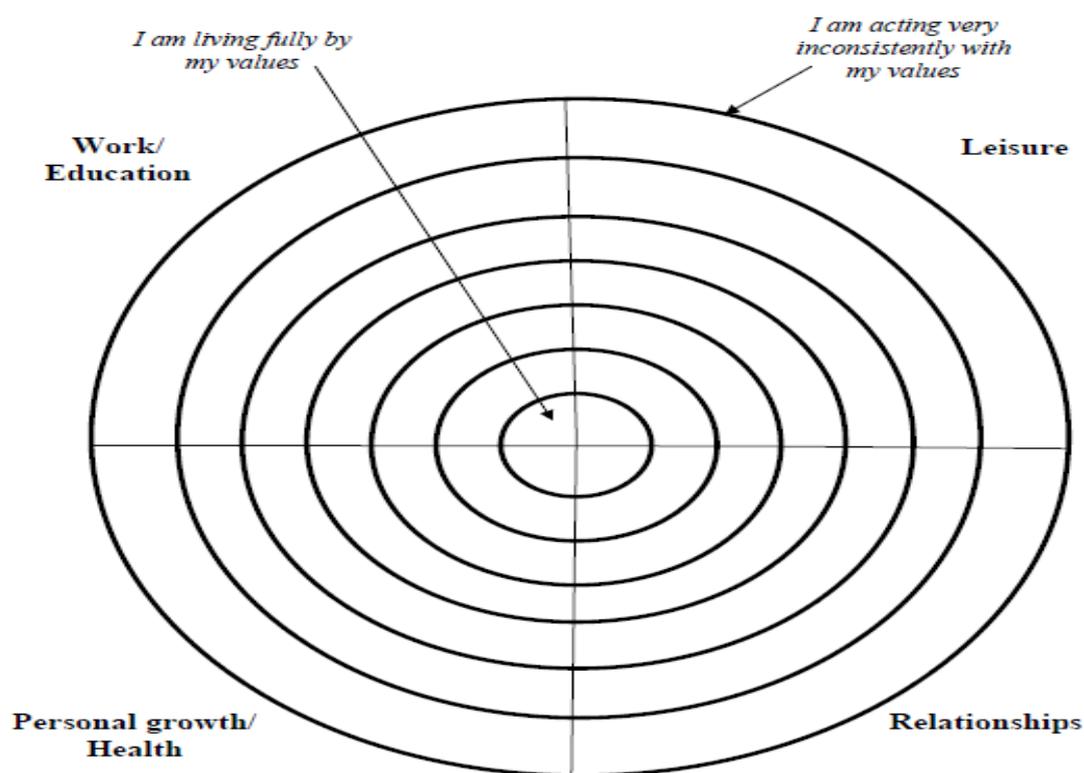
Deep down inside, what really matters to you?

Mark an X in each area of the dartboard, to represent where you stand today. An X in the Bull's Eye (the centre of the board) means that you are living fully by your values in that area of life. An X far from the Bull's Eye means that you are way off the mark

in terms of living by your values.

- **Work/Education** Includes work, career, education, training courses. Could also include home life (housework, shopping, cooking, gardening, DIY).
- **Relationships** Includes your partner, children, parents, relatives, friends, work colleagues, and other social contacts.
- **Personal Health Includes** exercise, looking after yourself (clothes, hair) and addressing health risk factors like smoking, alcohol, or being overweight.
- **Leisure** Includes social life, family activities, hobbies, interests, leisure, days out, holidays and relaxation.

You may think of others...



Further information is available from:

- www.chronicpainscotland.org
- www.nhsinform.co.uk/msk

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