

Low Energy and Persistent Pain

*What can you do
about it?*

- Presented by: Laura Foth OT Reg (MB), Angie Janssens PT, Dr. Gregg Tkachuk, Psychologist
- Developed for the Manitoba Pain Care Program by:
 - Jessica Erickson and Vanessa Voth, Feb. 2024

Acknowledgement of Indigenous Ancestral and Territorial Lands

Health services across Manitoba are provided in facilities located on the original lands of First Nations, Inuit, and on the national homeland of the Red River Métis Nation.

Manitoba's health authorities respect that First Nations treaties were made on these territories, acknowledge harms and mistakes, and we dedicate ourselves to collaborate in partnership with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples in the spirit of reconciliation.



Housekeeping

Please be respectful and remember confidentiality

Please silence your phones

Please do not record today's presentation

Download or print off the presentation slides at: **panamclinic.org/patient-resources/**

Outline

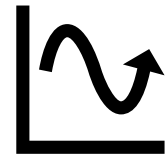
PAIN,
ENERGY &
FLARE UPS



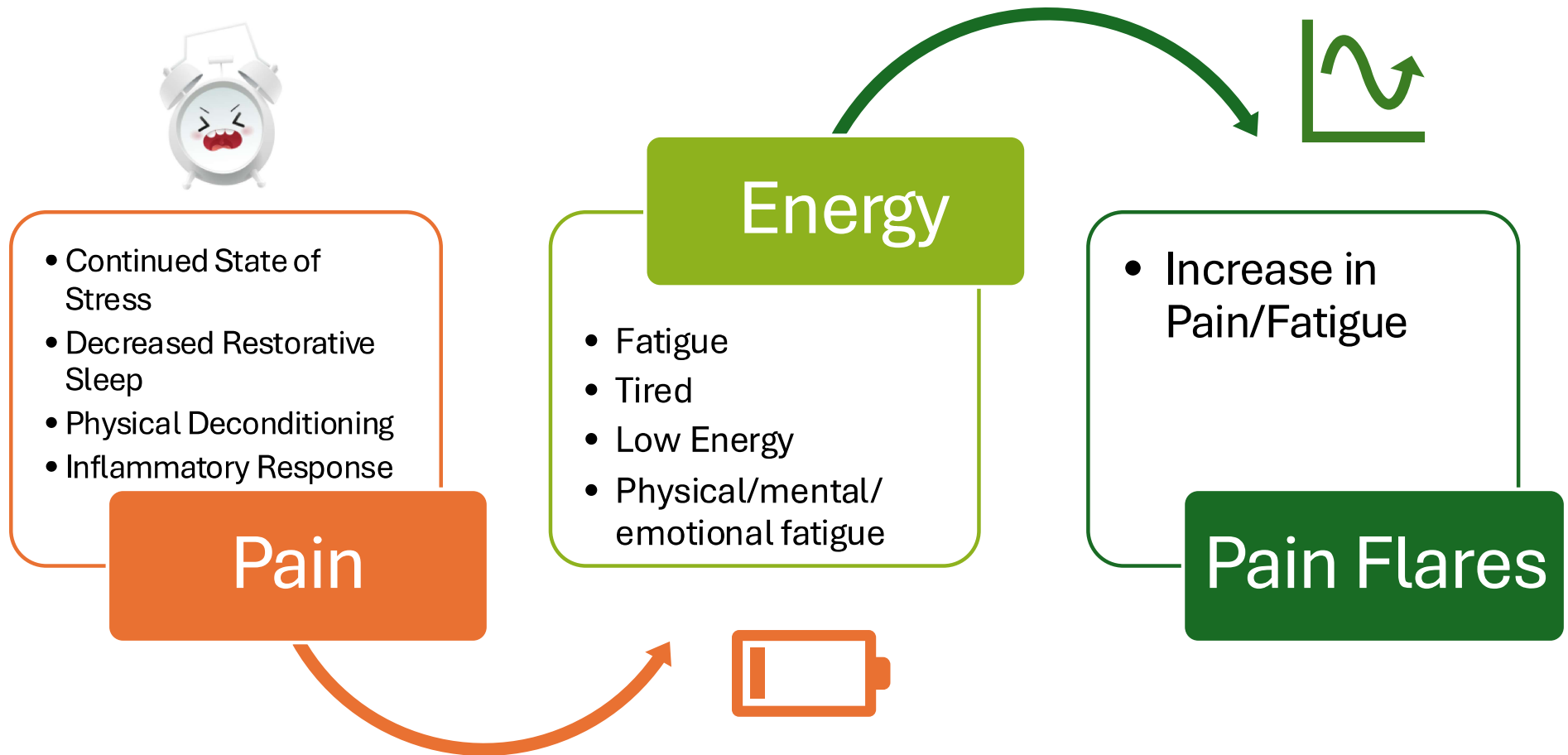
ACTIVITY
PATTERNS



PACING
STRATEGIES



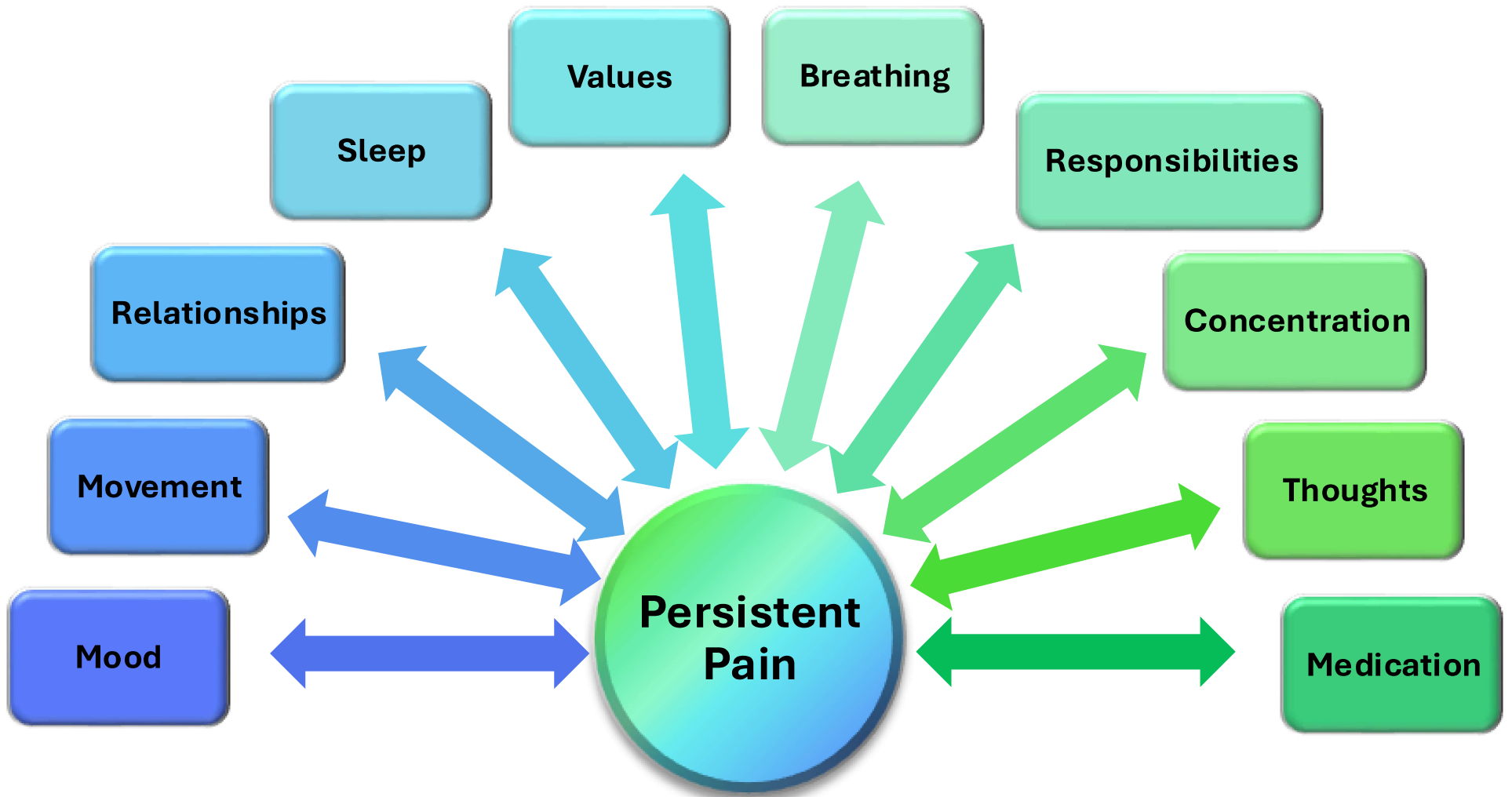
The Pain-Energy Cycle



"I don't have enough energy left to do what I enjoy"

"On a good day, I can get a lot done, but then I am paying for it for days"

Persistent Pain is COMPLEX!



Why is energy management important?



Helps reduce
pain flares



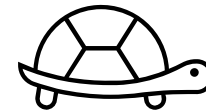
Helps reduce
secondary
symptoms



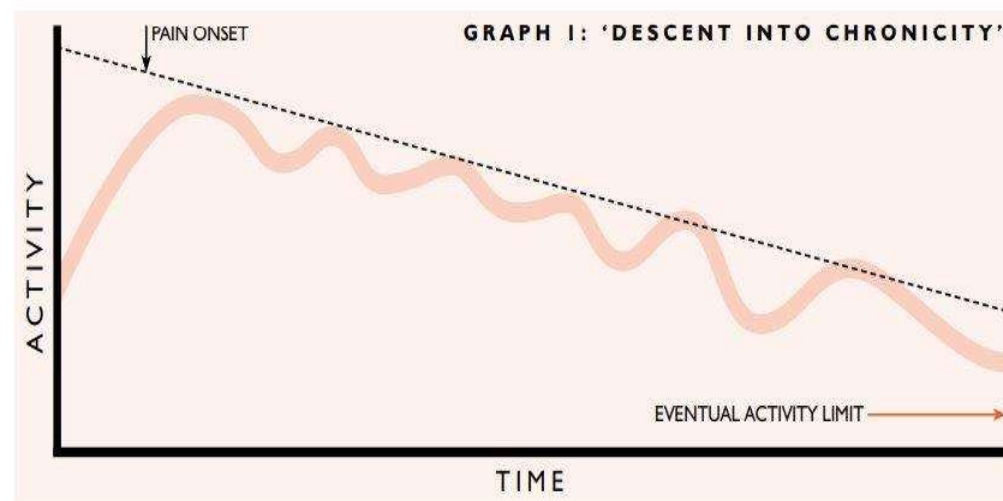
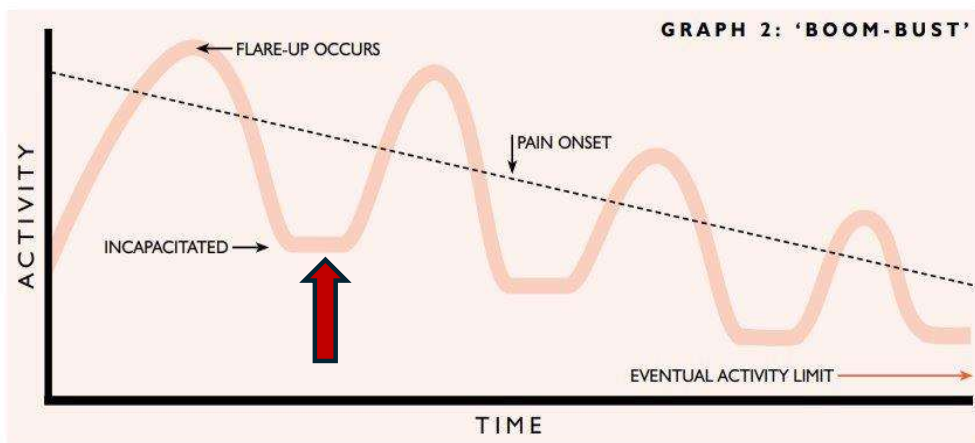
Allows us to use
our energy for what
we want/need to do

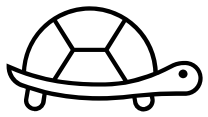


Helps us be more
in tune with what
our body needs



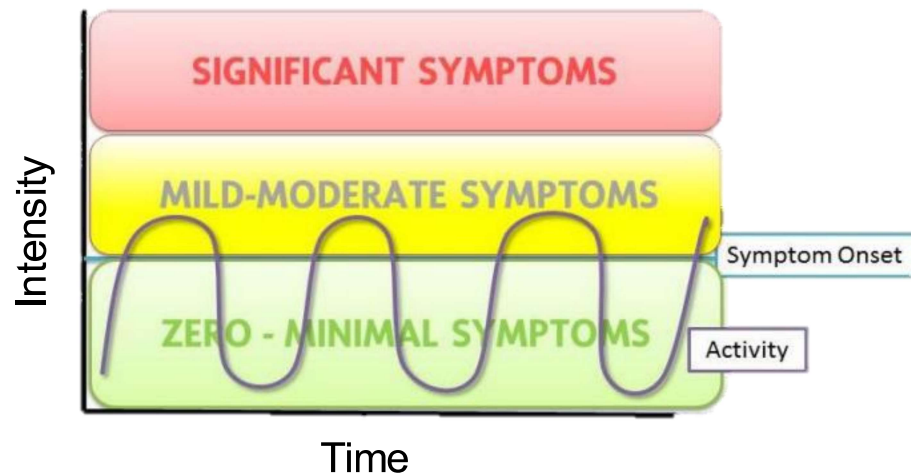
Gradual Decline in Activity



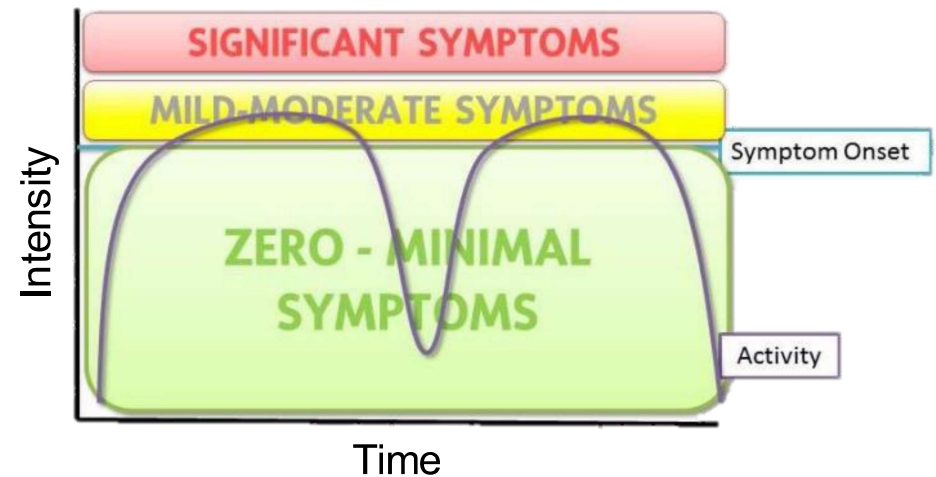


Activity Pattern Targets- The Goal of Pacing

Persistent Symptom Target Activity Pattern



Long Term Activity Goal



How Pacing Helps



How you can use pacing
to help with fatigue

oo

A CANCOV video

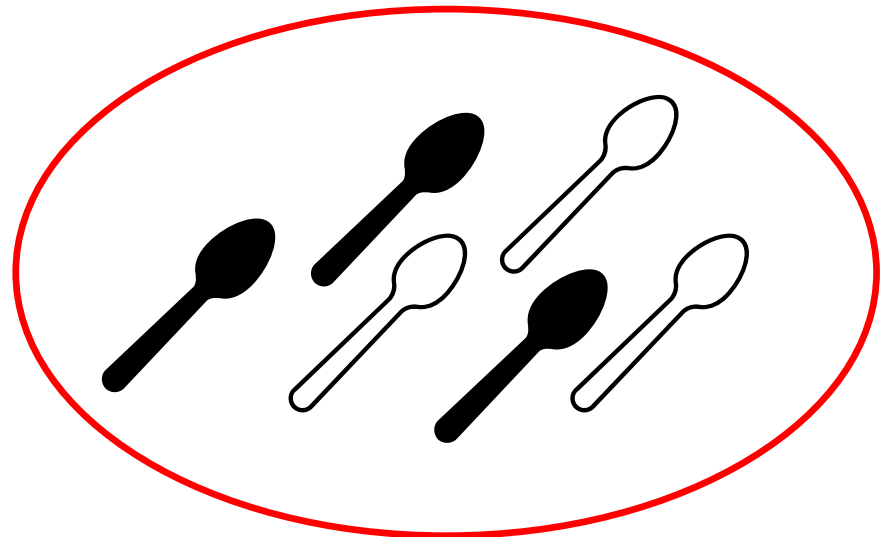
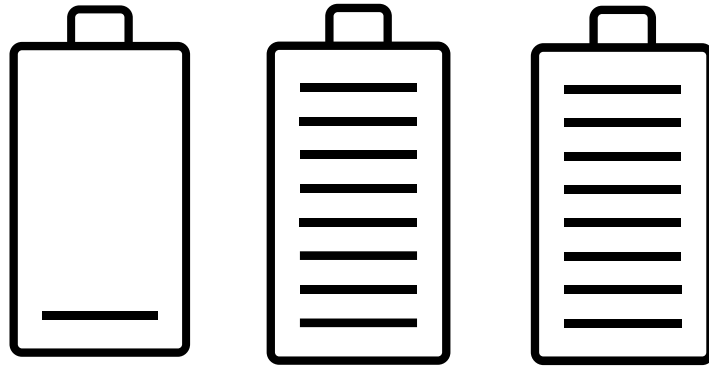
 **UHN** Toronto General
Toronto Western
Princess Margaret
Toronto Rehab
Michael G. DeGroote Institute

 **Cornerstone**
PHYSIOTHERAPY

 **RIA** RESEARCH
INSTITUTE
for AGING
Enriching Life

 **UNIVERSITY OF
WATERLOO**

How can we think about energy?





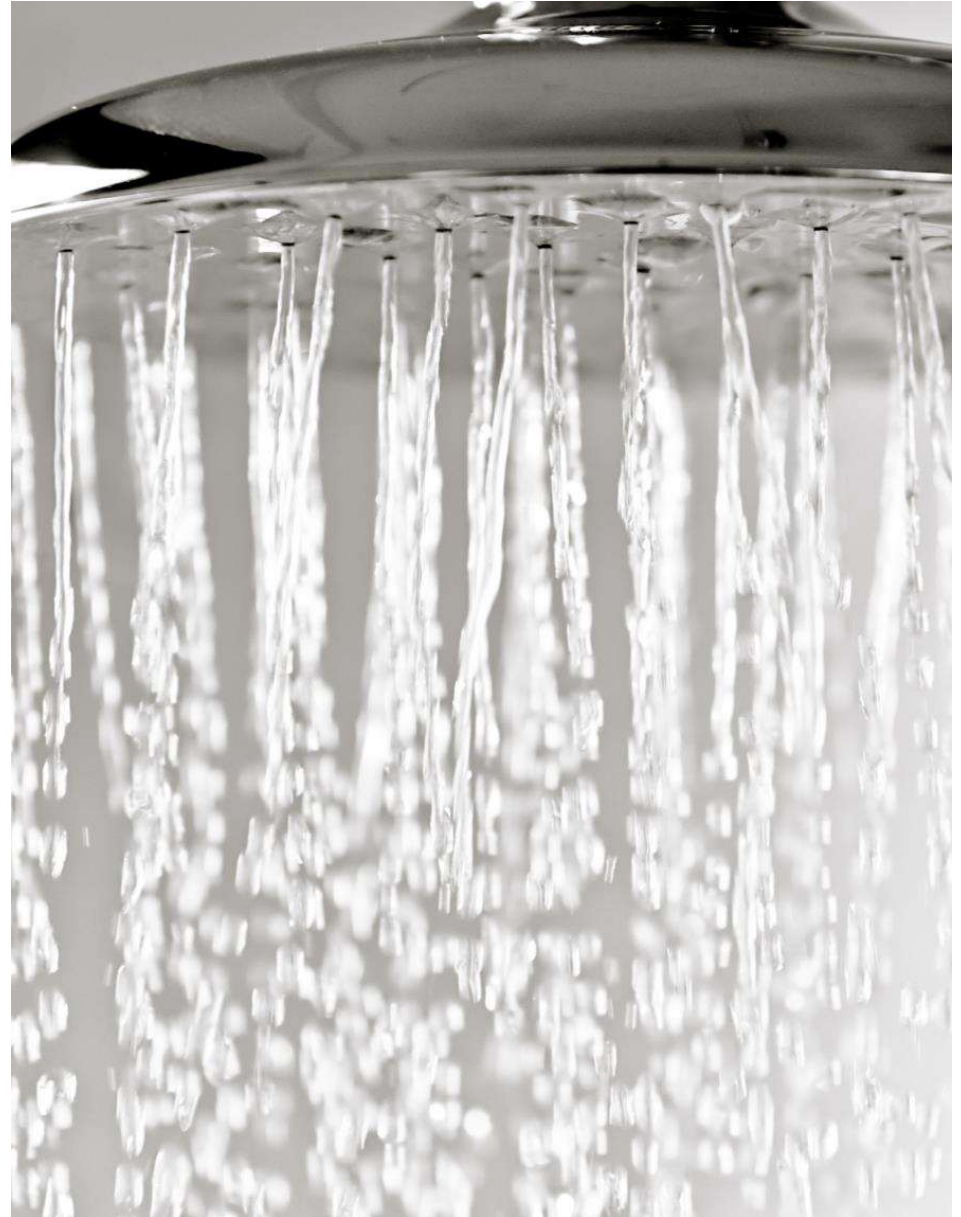
How many do
you start
with?

Plastic: 20
Wood: 15

ThePhoto by PhotoAuthor is licensed
under CCYISA.

Showering

- Plastic spoons-1
- Wooden spoons-3



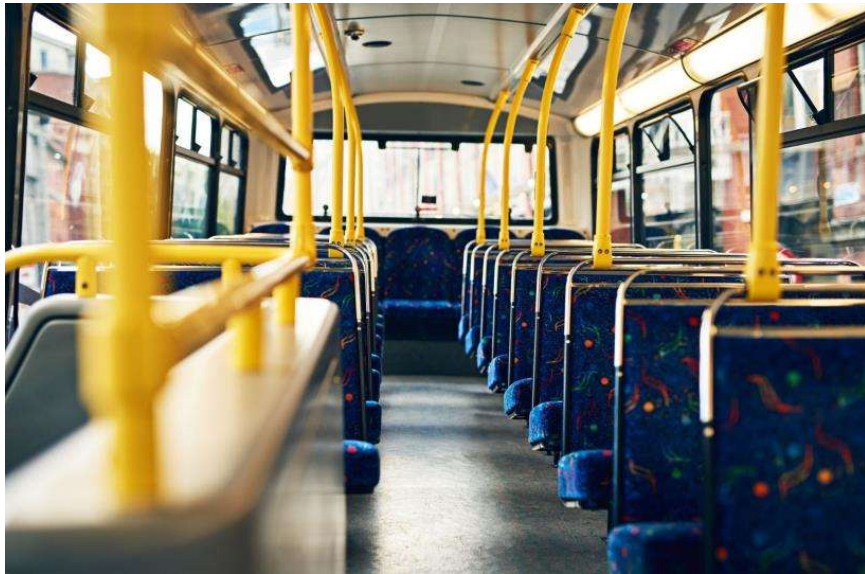
Getting ready to leave the house

- Plastic-2
- Wood -4



Getting to an appointment

Plastic- 4



Wood-1

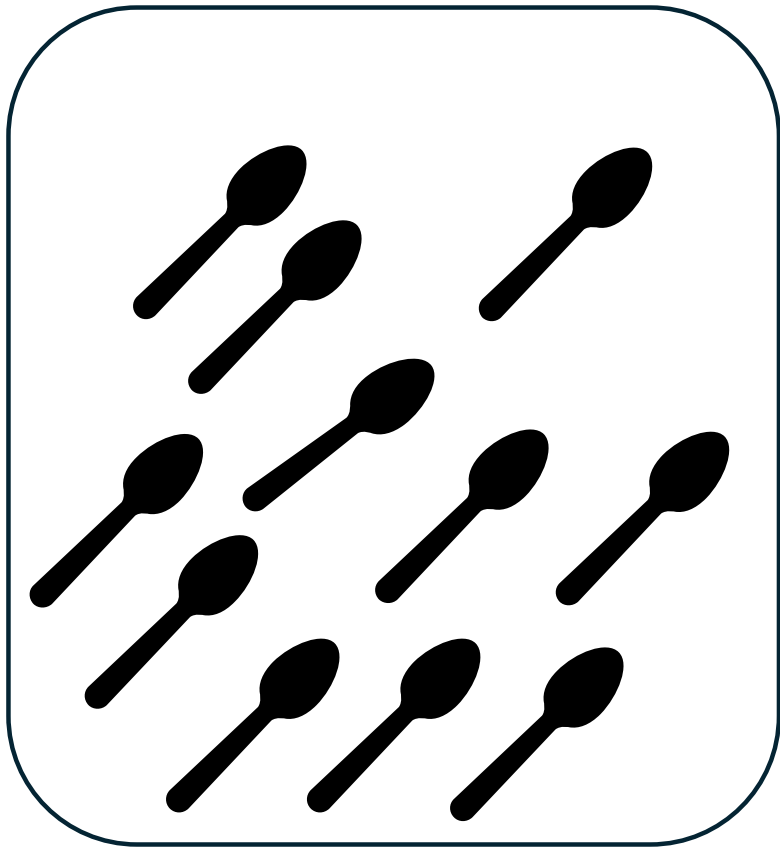


Attending the Appointment

- Plastic -2
- Wood- 4



What do you have left?



How will it impact the rest of your day?





1



2



3



4



5

PACE



Considerations for pacing



Physical



Thinking



Emotional



Environmental



Considerations for pacing



Physical



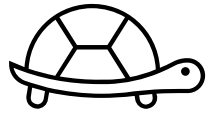
Thinking



Emotional



Environmental



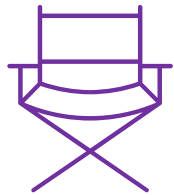
Options for pacing



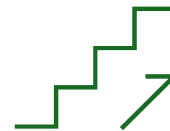
Taking planned
breaks



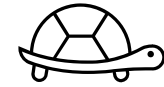
How often you do
the activity



How you do the
activity



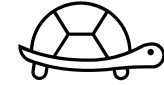
Breaking task into
smaller steps



Taking a Planned Break

- Switch from weeding to watering (a lighter task)
- Do some stretches
- Get a drink of water and have a seated rest
- Deep breathing or other relaxing activity



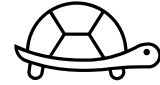


How often you do the activity

- Choose certain days to garden
OR
- Garden more frequently for shorter amounts of time
- Pick days when you do not have other commitments



How you do the activity



- **Changing the work height**

- Raised beds
- Garden pots

- **Adaptive Aids**

- Gardening chair or stool
- Adapted tools

- **Time of Day**

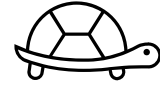
- Time of day when you have energy

Environment

- Pick the time of day when there is less direct sun/heat



Breaking Task into Smaller Chunks



- Divide garden into sections
- Set a timer and only garden for a set amount of time each day (or every other day)
- Break up your gardening time, do some in the morning and some in the evening
- Alternate between heavy and lighter tasks





M

T

W

T

F

S

1

2

3

4

5

10

7

9

8

17

16

15

14

13

24

23

22

21

20

31

30

29

28

27

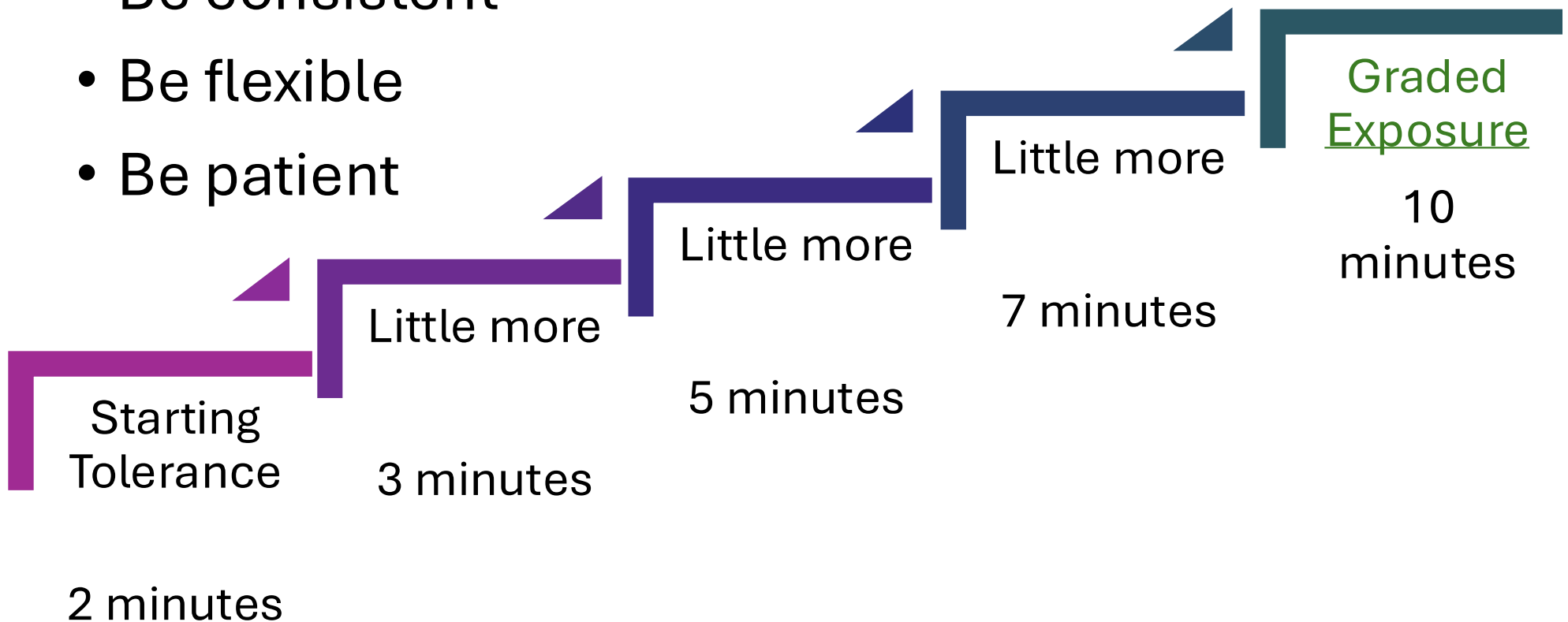
26

PLAN



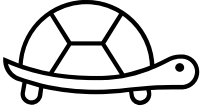
Where to start

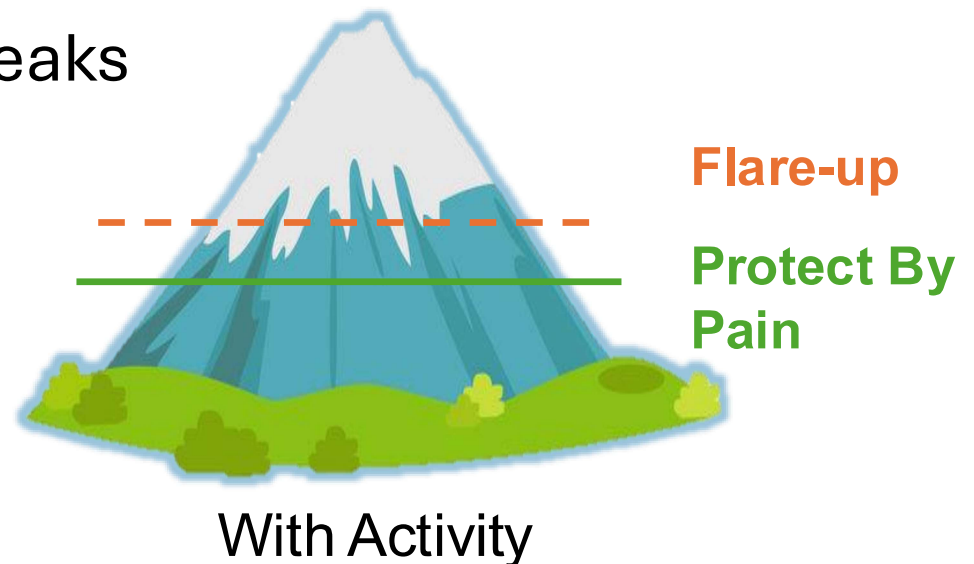
- Establish a baseline
- *Then slowly* increase
- Be consistent
- Be flexible
- Be patient

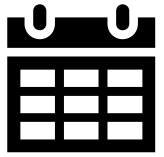




How to progress activities

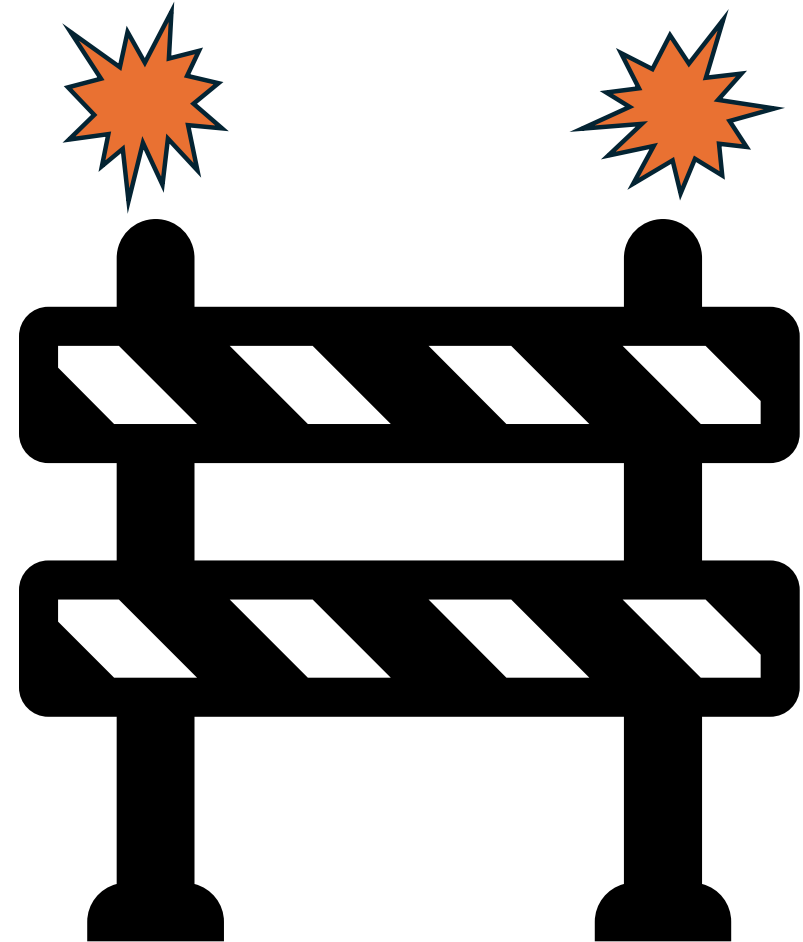
- Slowly 
- Increase
 - Duration – How long
 - Intensity – How much
 - Frequency – How often
 - Reduce the amount of breaks
- Anticipate obstacles
- Have a **Flare-up Plan**





Barriers / Obstacles

-
- Habits
 - Time
 - Expectations
 - Comparisons
 - "Shoulds"
 - Asking for help
 - Frustration/anger/guilt
 - Good days





Additional Strategies



Establish
a routine



Notice time
of day



Set realistic
goals



Gather
needed items







Use a calendar
or planner



Control
sensory input
(4 buckets)

Prioritize



- Identify our goals and valued activities 
- Balance activities we need and want to do 
- Identify if we need support (delegate or drop activities) 
- Gives us a sense of accomplishment 



Goals

Identify Values

A word cloud featuring various values and traits. The words are arranged in a roughly circular pattern and are color-coded. The colors include shades of blue, orange, red, green, and yellow. The words are: humour, morals, beauty, calmness, nature, adventure, success, family, love, fun, honesty, independence, friends, spirituality, freedom, recognition, loyalty, knowledge, and responsibility.

humour morals
beauty
calmness
nature adventure success
family love fun honesty
independence friends
freedom spirituality
recognition loyalty
knowledge responsibility



Task Management

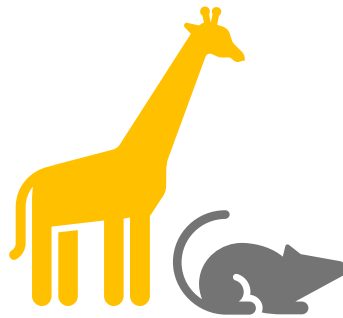
POSITION



Ways to Modify Positions



Movement
Break



Height of
working surface



Assistive
Equipment

Assistive Equipment

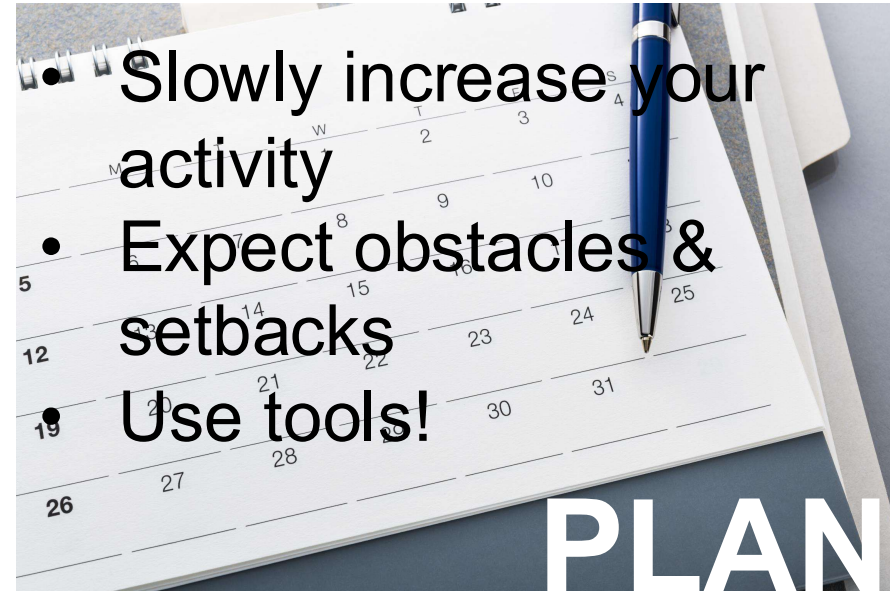


Take Home Messages (continued)



- Pacing isn't static – it changes!
- Remember the 4 buckets
- Multiple ways to pace an activity

PACE



- Slowly increase your activity
- Expect obstacles & setbacks
- Use tools!

PLAN



- Set goals
- Identify values
- Do, Decide, Delegate, Delete

PRIORITIZE



- Change positions
- Adapt the environment
- Use equipment

POSITION

Self-compassion

“With self-compassion, we give ourselves the same kindness and care we’d give to a good friend.”

-Dr. Kristen Neff



Next Steps

- Practice the Strategies Discussed today
- Ask for help
- Online Resources:
 - **Power Over Pain Portal**

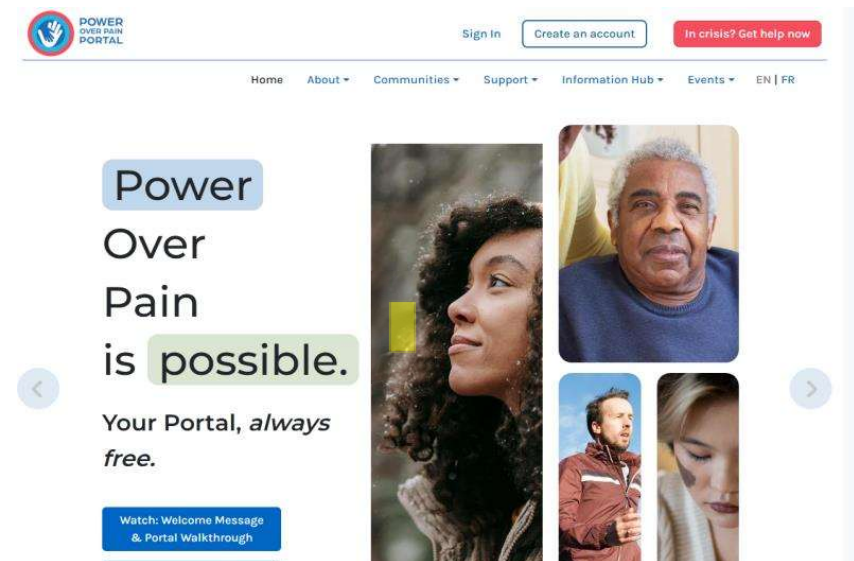
Pain U Online through TAPMI (Toronto Academic Pain Medicine Institute) :

- Pacing Module

[Pacing Physical Activity | Toronto Academic Pain Medicine Institute \(TAPMI\)](#)

- Pain Flares Module

[Pain Flares, Flare-up factors, Warning signs, and Management | Toronto Academic Pain Medicine Institute \(TAPMI\)](#)



Filter Clear all

TOPICS

- Indigenous
- Mindfulness
- Mood
- Movement**
- Nutrition
- Pain
- Pain and Surgery
- Sleep
- Stress
- Substance Use

CONTENT TYPE

- Articles
- Phone Services
- Podcasts
- Self-directed Courses
- Support Groups
- Text Services



Physical Activity by Pain U Online

Living with pain can make it harder to exercise sometimes. Being inactive however can lead to less strength and flexibility, and more pain. Go through this module from Pain U Online to learn how physical activity can help you manage your pain.

[Learn More](#)

[Access resource](#)



Pacing Physical Activity by Pain U Online

Activity pacing is an important tool in chronic pain self-management, preventing the detrimental "all or nothing" cycle. Complete this module to learn the importance of pacing.

1. Go to "Resources" under "Information Hub" tab

2. Click on "Movement" filter

portal.poweroverpain.ca

Next Steps Continued....

- Power Over Pain Webinars

1. Go to "Recordings" under "Events" Tab

PORTAL

Home About Communities Support Information Hub **Events** EN | FR

Events

Upcoming Events **Watch Past Workshops** National Pain Awareness Week

Adapting activity when you have chronic pain

Sarah Sheffe, OT Reg. (Ont.)
Occupational Therapist

June 16, 2025

How to Modify Activity for Chronic Pain Management
June 16, 2025

In this workshop you will learn practical strategies to adapt activities while living with chronic pain. Discover how to conserve and increase your energy, explore tools and devices designed to ease daily tasks, and learn time management techniques to help you stay productive. This session includes guided exercises.

TAPMI Toronto Academic Pain Medicine Institute
Institut Universitaire de Médecine de la Douleur de Toronto

WCH WOMEN'S COLLEGE HOSPITAL
Healthcare REVOLUTIONIZED

Navigating Healthcare: Communicate with Confidence

Recommended P.O.P Workshops

How to Modify Activity for Chronic Pain Management (June 16, 2025)

<https://vimeo.com/1096047804?fl=pl&fe=sh>

Pacing : Moving Ahead Instead of in Circles (November 1, 2023)

<https://vimeo.com/882270173?fl=pl&fe=sh>

How to Get Involved in your Pain Care (April 22, 2024)

<https://vimeo.com/910199589?fl=pl&fe=sh>

Questions

