

Stress You Can! Strategies to Manage and Live with Stress



- Manitoba Pain Care Program
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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
- No recording of the presentation
- Download or print off the presentation slides at panamclinic.org/patient-resources/



Housekeeping

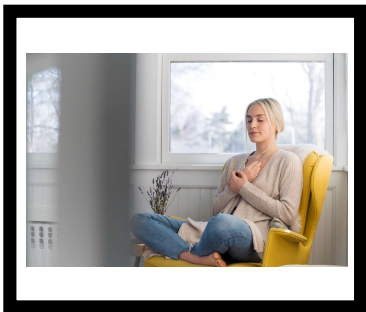
- We encourage participation in practical exercises
- This session provides information and recommended strategies for pain self-management that applies to *most* individuals / persistent pain conditions but may not meet the needs of those seeking more specific or detailed information about their unique concerns or pain condition.

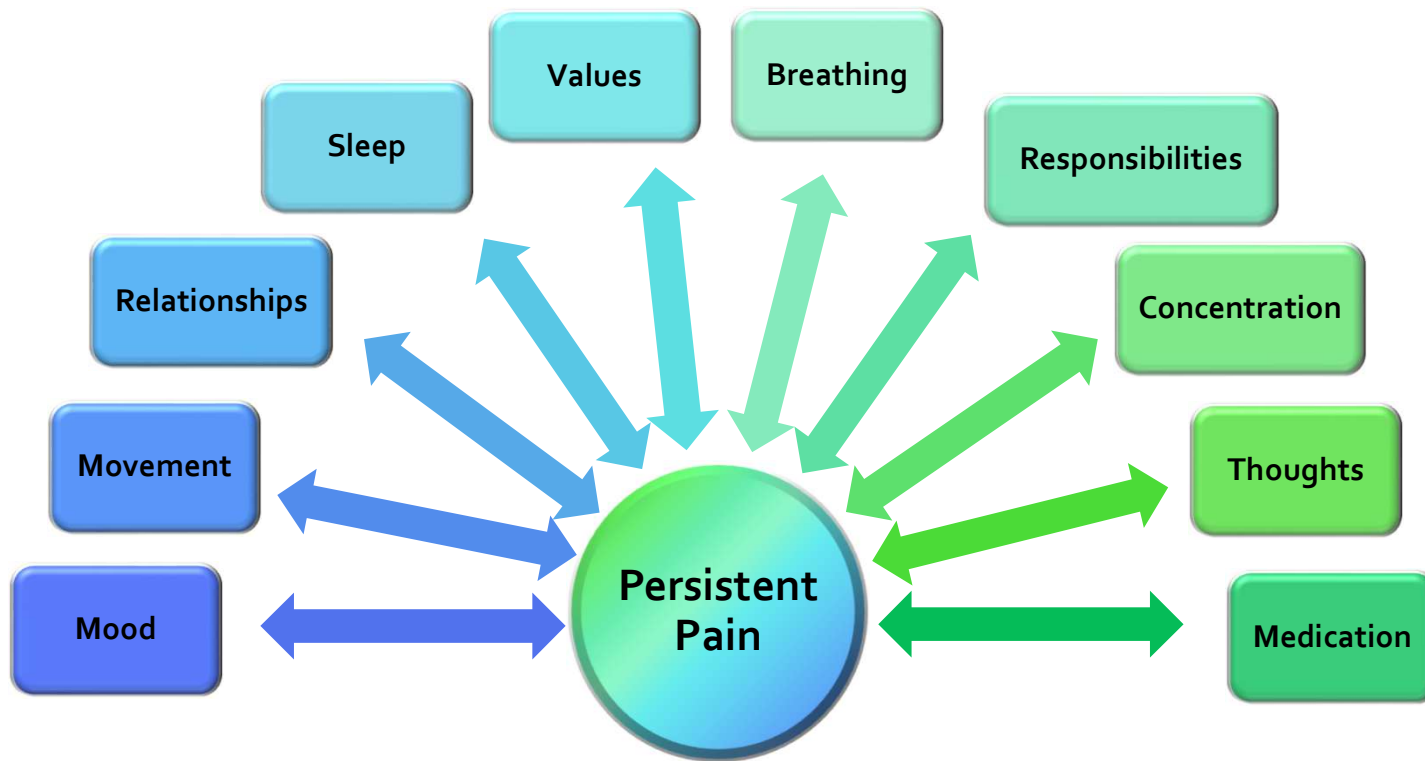




What We Will Cover Today

- **What is stress?**
- **Stress and our nervous system**
- **Stress and pain**
- **Stress management strategies**



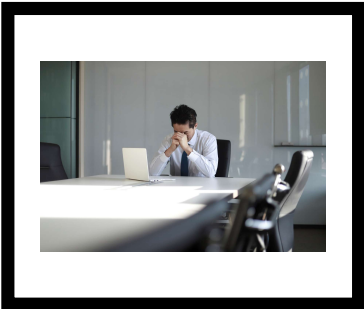


Adapted from: Biopsychosocial Model of Pain, George Engel 1977



What Is Stress?

- Stress is our cognitive, emotional, and physical reaction to anything exciting, upsetting, or unexpected.
- Stress can be a response to a positive or negative event
- Stress can be the result of a major event or minor hassles



What Is Stress?



Stress can increase pain



Our bodies are equipped to handle acute stress



It is a necessary reaction to protect us



The Autonomic Nervous System

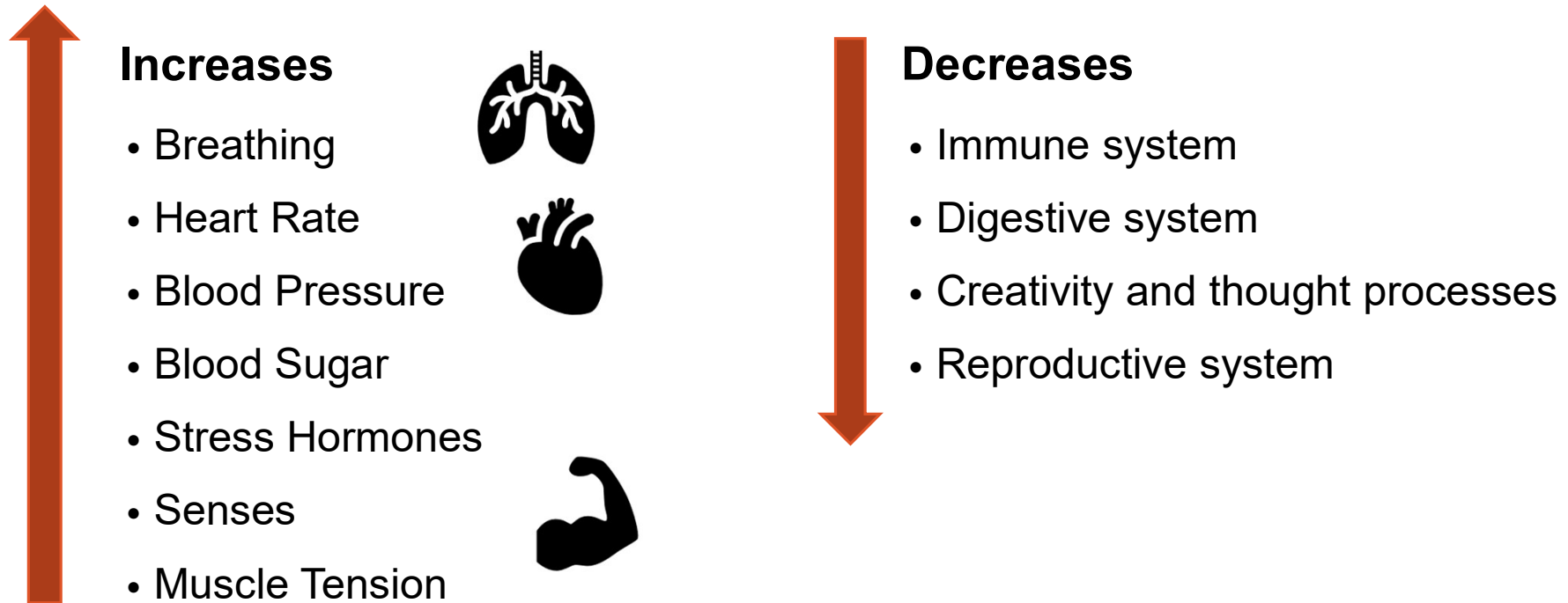
**Sympathetic
(stress response)**

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**Parasympathetic
(relaxation
response)**

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Nervous System- Stress Response (Sympathetic)



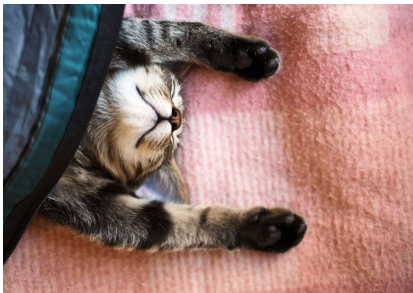
Adapted from the TAPMI Pain Education Workbook 2019

Nervous System- Relaxation Response (Parasympathetic)



Increases

- Immune system
- Digestive system
- Creativity and thought processes
- Reproductive system



Decreases

- Breathing
- Heart Rate
- Blood Pressure
- Blood Sugar
- Stress Hormones
- Senses
- Muscle Tension

Adapted from the TAPMI Pain Education Workbook 2019

Acute vs. Chronic Stress

- Acute stress: Equipped to handle
 - Benefits: Bear Example- keeps us safe
 - Risk of not experiencing stress = Bad News Bear!
- Chronic stress – Not equipped to handle
 - Can impact our health and well- being



Signs of Stress

Tip: Identify your signs + what are the FIRST signs

Physical

Feelings

Cognitive

Behavioural

Physical	Feelings	Cognitive	Behavioural

Place a ** beside the first signs you experience.

How does Chronic Stress Influence Pain?



Increases
sympathetic nervous
system activation



Increases
"danger" sense in
the body



Increases muscular
tension

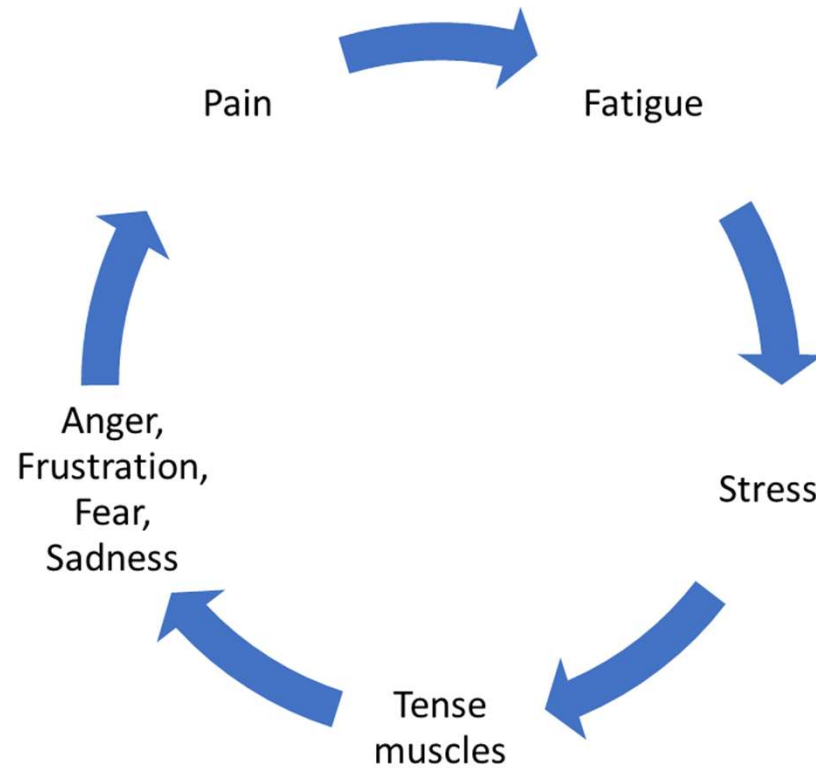


Affects how we
think and feel about
pain



Affects our ability to
use coping
strategies

Pain-Stress Cycle



Adapted from the Arthritis Society Canada 2024

In summary

- The stress reaction is meant to be a short-term response
- Maintained activation of our stress response system = body doesn't get a chance to restore itself
- Dials up our pain experience

Stress Management

Behavioural / Problem Solving

- Exercise/Pacing*
- Sleep Strategies*
- Social Support
- Goal Setting
- DIMS/SIMS

Mindfulness / Breath-focused

- Mindfulness in every day life
- Name it to Tame it
- Mindful Breathing

Acceptance / Self-compassion

- Acceptance and Commitment Therapy*
- Compassionate Hand

* Indicates a workshop available within the MB Pain Program

Tip: Keep Track!

Listen to your Body

- Listen to what your body needs
- It may be challenging to get into a state of relaxation - this is normal
- Relaxation takes practice
- It may be difficult to relax due to unwanted or unpleasant thoughts, emotions and sensations
 - If you can tolerate these thoughts/emotions/sensations, be a curious observer
 - If you cannot tolerate these thoughts/emotions/sensations, add movement or stop the exercise

Compassionate Hand

“Self- compassion means treating yourself with the same warmth, caring and kindness that we’d extend to someone we love or deeply care about if they were in similar pain”

Taken from “The Happiness Trap” Dr. Russ Harris



What's Keeping your Nervous System in High Alert? "DIMS"

Tip: Identify what's keeping you in high alert, so you can address it.

Things you see, hear, smell, taste and touch



Things in your body



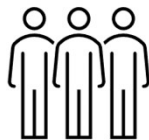
Things you think and believe



Things you say



People in your life



Things you do



Places you go



Adapted from NOI Group

What can calm your nervous system? "SIMS"

Tip: Identify what calms your nervous system, so you can use it.

Things you see, hear, smell,
taste and touch



Things in your body



Things you think and believe



Things you say



People in your life




Things you do



Places you go



Adapted from NOI Group

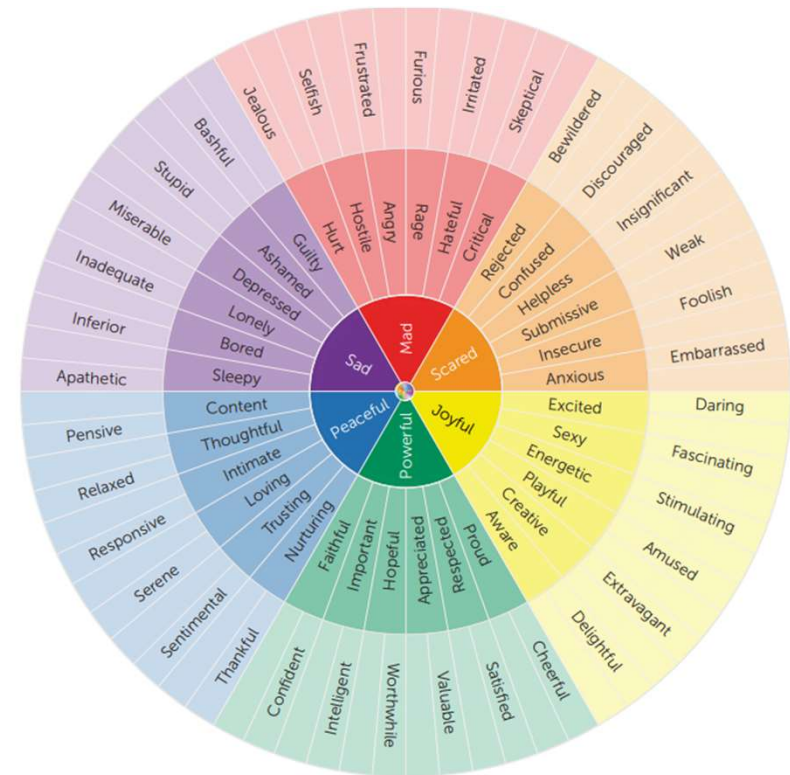
My DIMs and SIMs			My Protectometer
DIMs Danger in Me		SIMs Safety in Me	<p>Remember: Anything that makes you feel:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Safer ✓ Stronger ✓ Better ✓ Healthier ✓ More confident <p>Will help your pain level go down and improve your quality of life</p> 
	Things I hear, see, smell, taste & touch		
	Things I do		
	Things I say		
	Things I think & believe		
	Places I go		
	People in my life		
	Things happening in my body		

Adapted from Moseley, GL & Butler, D (2015) The Explain Pain Handbook: Protectometer, Adelaide Australia: Noigroup Publications

Name it to Tame it

Naming our emotions:

- Can decrease our stress reaction
- Can create space
- Helps us figure out what we need
- Helps us communicate our experience to others



The Feeling Wheel
by Gloria Willcox

Benefits of Deep Breathing



Moderates pain
signals



Decreased stress
reaction



Relaxes mind and
body



Regulates
breathing rate



Regulates heart
rate

Mindful Breathing



Review

- Our stress response and relaxation response are **regulated by our nervous system**.
- The stress response is intended to be a **short-term** response; if it continues for a long time, it can affect your overall health.
- Stress can **influence our pain experience**, and pain can contribute to stress.
- There are **several strategies** that you can use to help encourage the relaxation response in your body and/or to address the stressors themselves.
- Strategies take practice and may be challenging at first. **This is normal.**

Stress Management

What strategy did you use?	When did you use it?	What did you notice?

Optional Next Steps



Practice the Strategies discussed today



Access these online resources:

- Pain U Online (TAPMI) Stress Management module
[Stress Management | Toronto Academic Pain Medicine Institute \(TAPMI\)](#)
- Live Plan Be+
[LivePlanBe+](#)



Optional Next Steps (Continued)

Power over Pain Webinars:

- Exploring Mindfulness: Foundations of Meditation

<https://vimeo.com/1073324747?fl=pl&fe=sh>

- Mood Matters: Unravelling the Connections Between Emotions and Pain

<https://vimeo.com/951169923?fl=pl&fe=sh>

- Pain is Stressful

<https://vimeo.com/877146484?fl=pl&fe=sh>

Ask for referral to the ACT or Self Compassion group

If still needing individual assistance, you may request a referral to psychology



QUESTIONS?

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- Pain BC Pain Foundations Course for Allied Health Professionals: <https://painbc.ca/pain-foundations>
- Mimi O'Connor Love & Support The Science Behind Why Naming Our Feelings Makes Us Happier: [The Science Behind Why Naming our Feelings Makes us Happier – 'Ekahi Ornish Lifestyle Medicine](#)