



Pacing for Low Energy and Persistent Pain

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- Developed for the Manitoba Pain Care Program by: Jessica Erickson and Vanessa Voth, Feb. 2024



Acknowledgement of Indigenous Ancestral and Territorial Lands

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

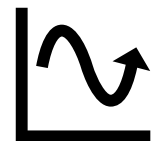
PAIN,
ENERGY &
FLARE UPS



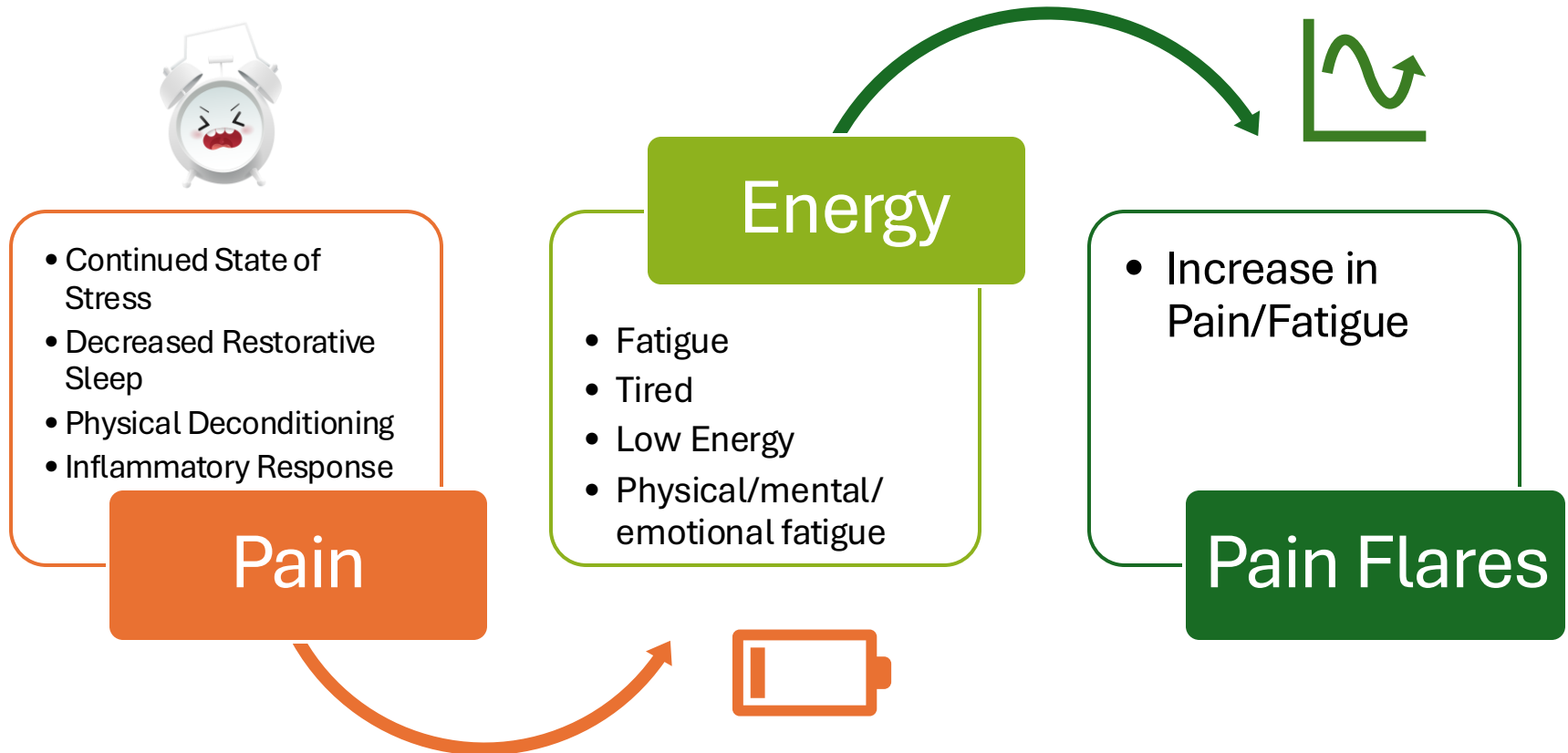
ACTIVITY
PATTERNS



PACING
STRATEGIES



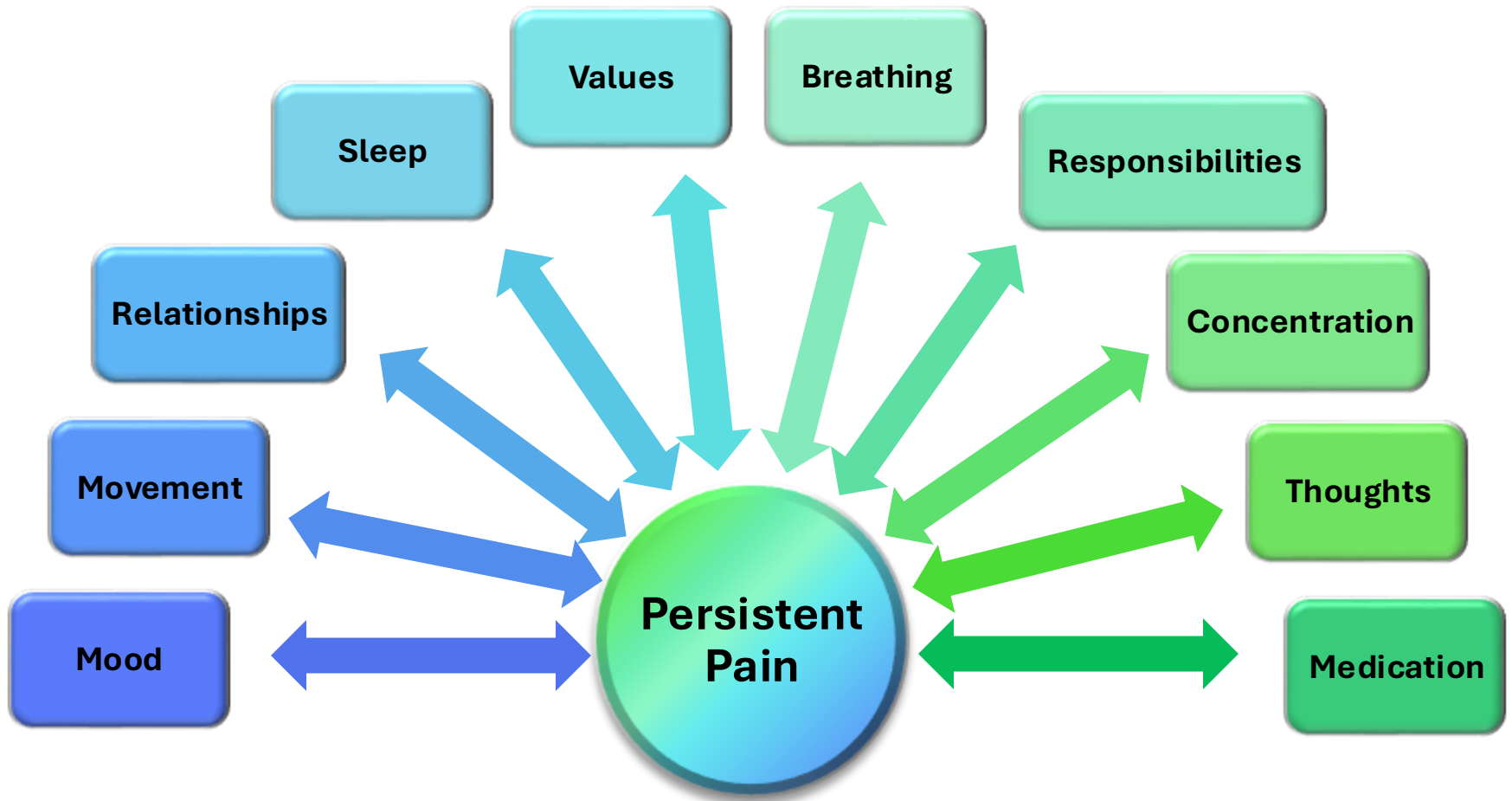
The Pain-Energy Cycle



"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



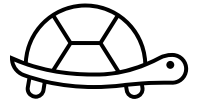
Helps reduce
secondary
symptoms



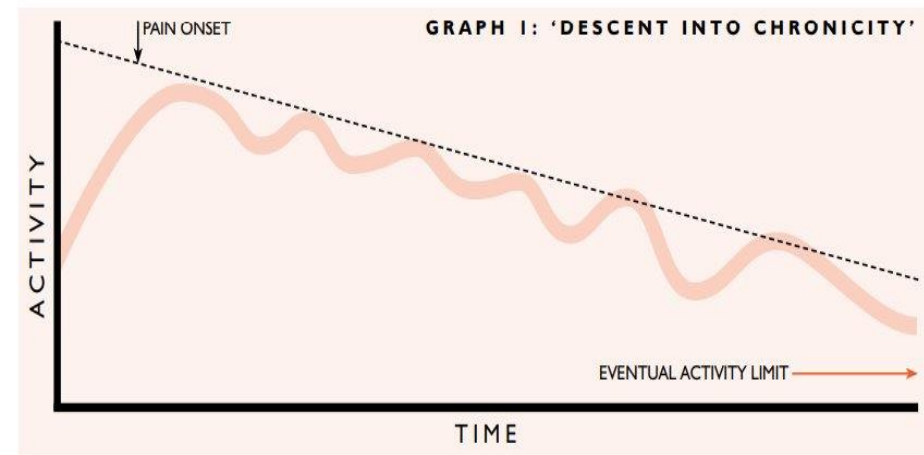
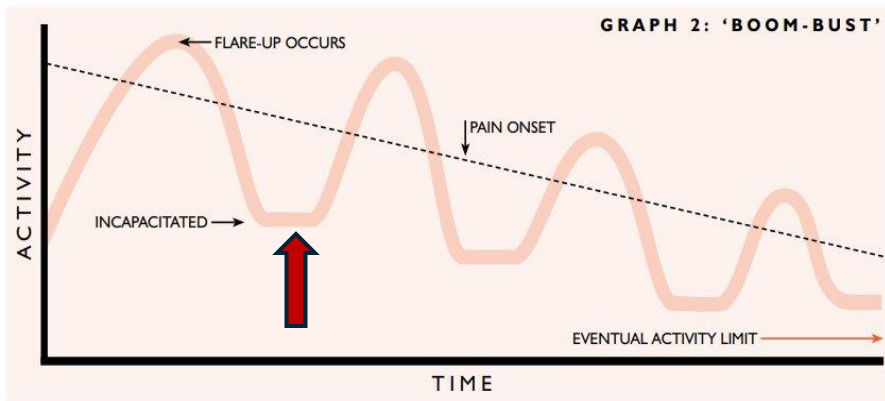
Allows us to use
our energy for what
we want/need to do

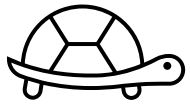


Helps us be more
in tune with what
our body needs



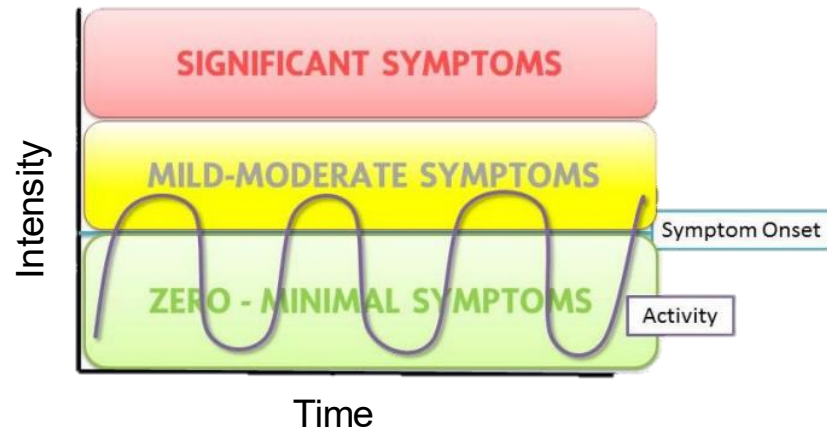
Gradual Decline in Activity



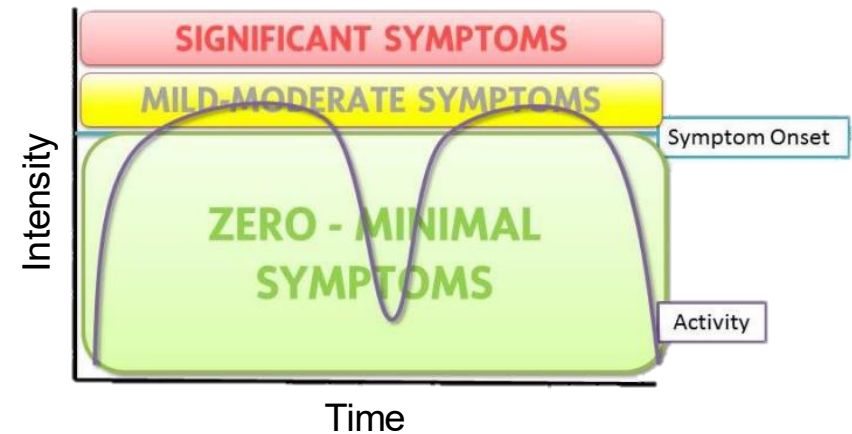


Activity Pattern Targets- The Goal of Pacing

Persistent Symptom Target Activity Pattern



Long Term Activity Goal



How Pacing Helps



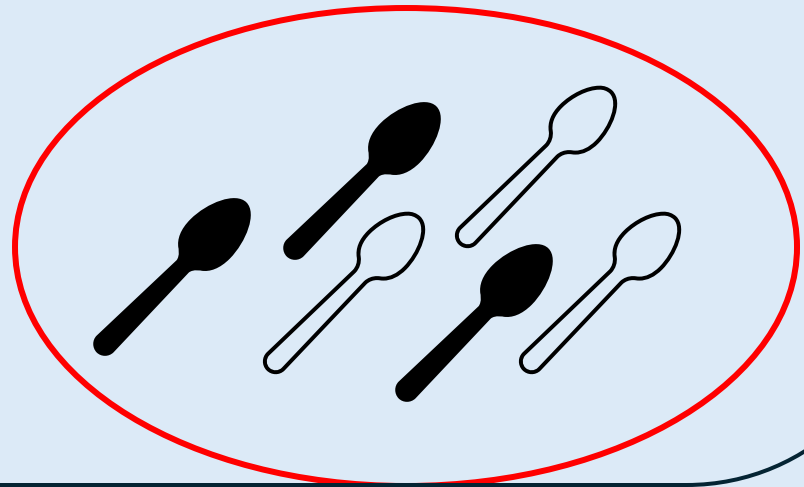
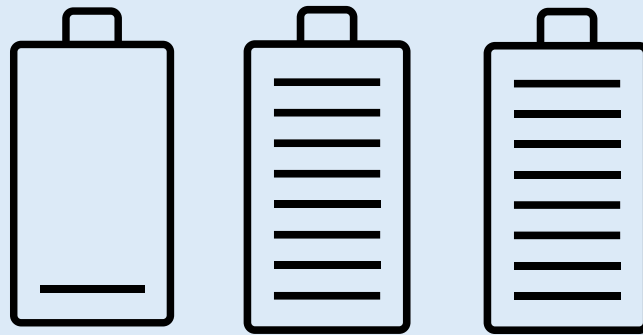
How you can use pacing to help with fatigue

oo

A CANCOV video

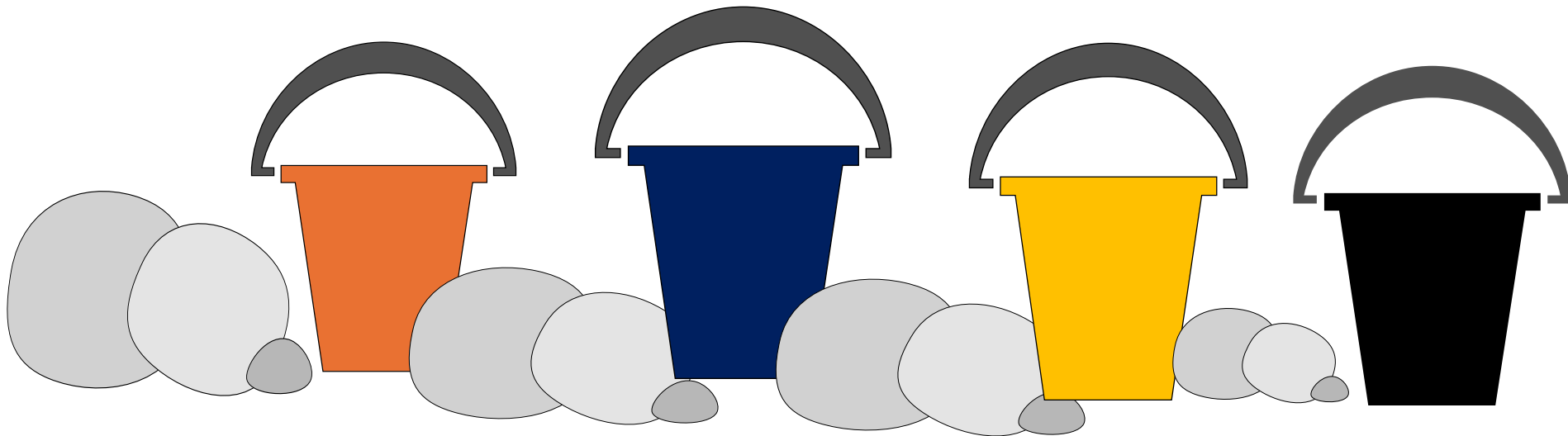


How can we think about energy?



Considerations for Pacing

- Physical
- Thinking/Cognitive
- Emotional
- Environmental



How much do you start with?

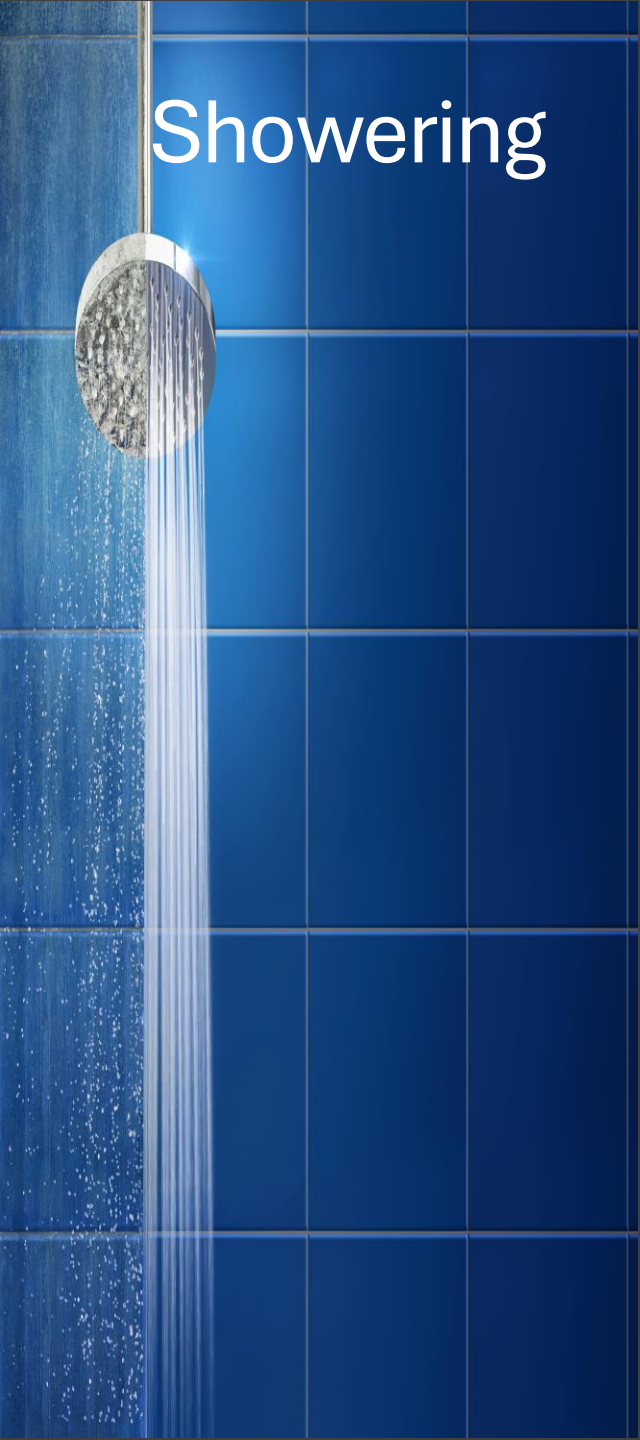
- Sleep
- Pain level
- Illness
- Stress
- Mood
- Prior activities
- Activities for the day



Jane-
30 spoons



Terry
15 spoons

A close-up photograph of a shower head mounted on a wall of blue square tiles. Water is spraying out of the shower head, creating a misty spray. The word "Showering" is written in white text in the upper left corner of the image.

Showering

- Jane- 1 spoon
 - Little physical effort
 - Minimal thinking effort
 - Feeling positive
- Terry- 3 spoons
 - Physical movement
 - Thinking how to move safely
 - Feeling discouraged

Getting Ready to Leave Home



Jane- 2 spoons

- Thinking/ Planning
- Moving through her home

Terry- 4 spoons

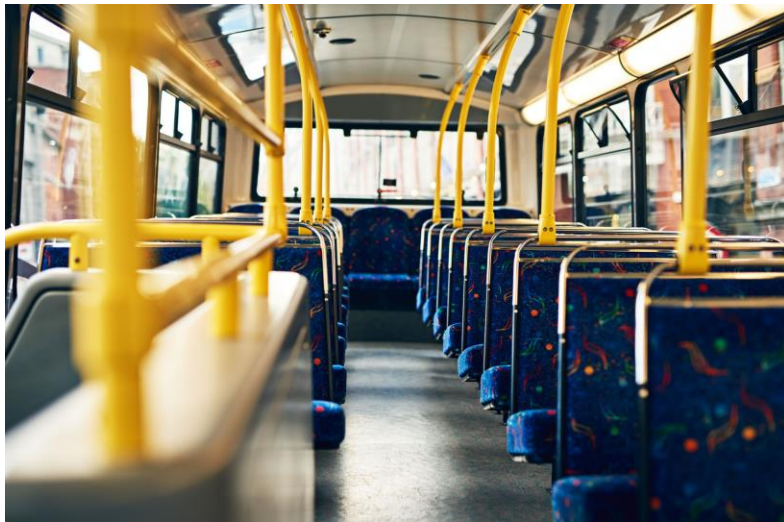
- More physical effort
- Forgetting location of items
- Feeling frustrated



Getting to an appointment

Jane- 4 spoons

- Walking
- Waiting
- Standing on a crowded, noisy bus



Terry-1 spoon

- Friend on time
- Smooth drive
- Positive social connection

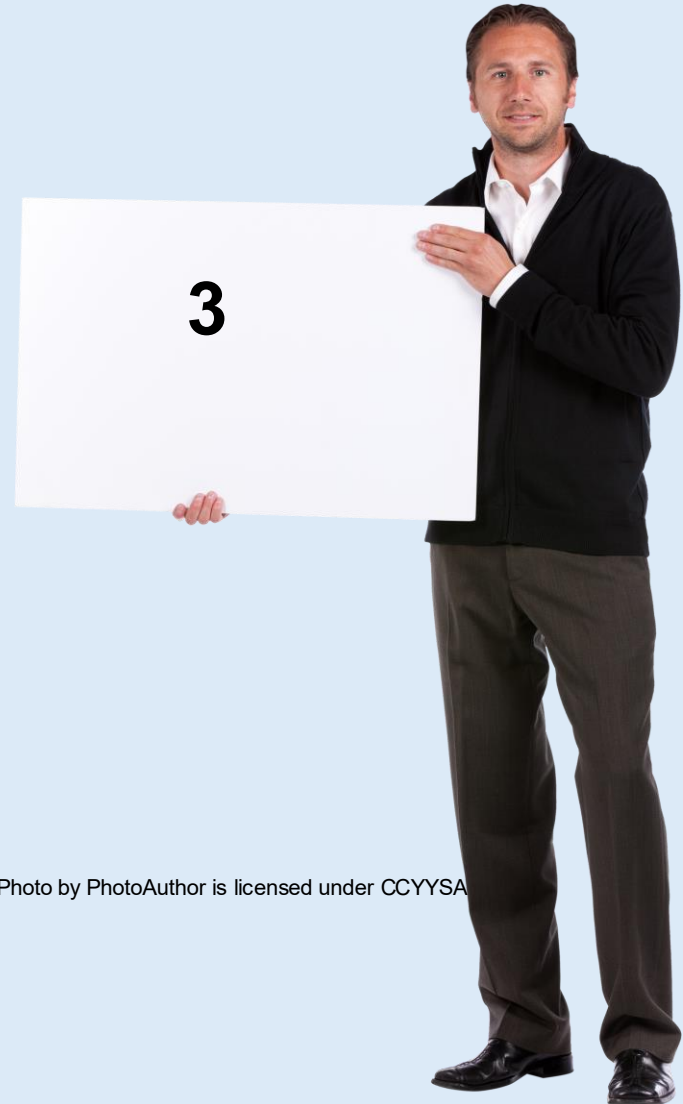


Attending the Appointment

- Jane-2
 - Easy walk
 - Limited emotional demands
- -Terry- 4
 - Difficult walk
 - Many concerns to discuss



What do they have left?



ThePhoto by PhotoAuthor is licensed under CCYYSA

How will it impact the rest of their day?



PACING

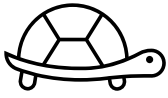
- **Balancing Rest and Activity**
- **Planning Breaks**
- **Breaking up Activity**
- **Grading Activity**



2

3

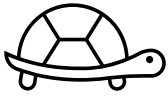
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Pacing: Planned Breaks

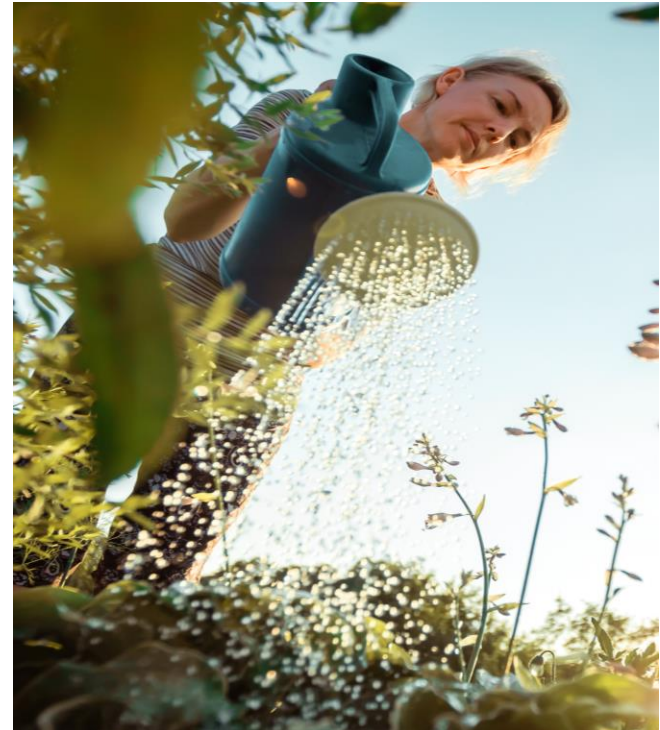
- Stop before your body makes you stop
- Reduces recovery time needed
- Helps improve consistency
- Teach your body that movement is safe
- A way of working with our nervous system





Pacing: Planned Breaks

- Switch Activity
- Switch Positions
- Gentle Stretches
- Deep Breathing
- Relaxation





Pacing : Breaking down the Task

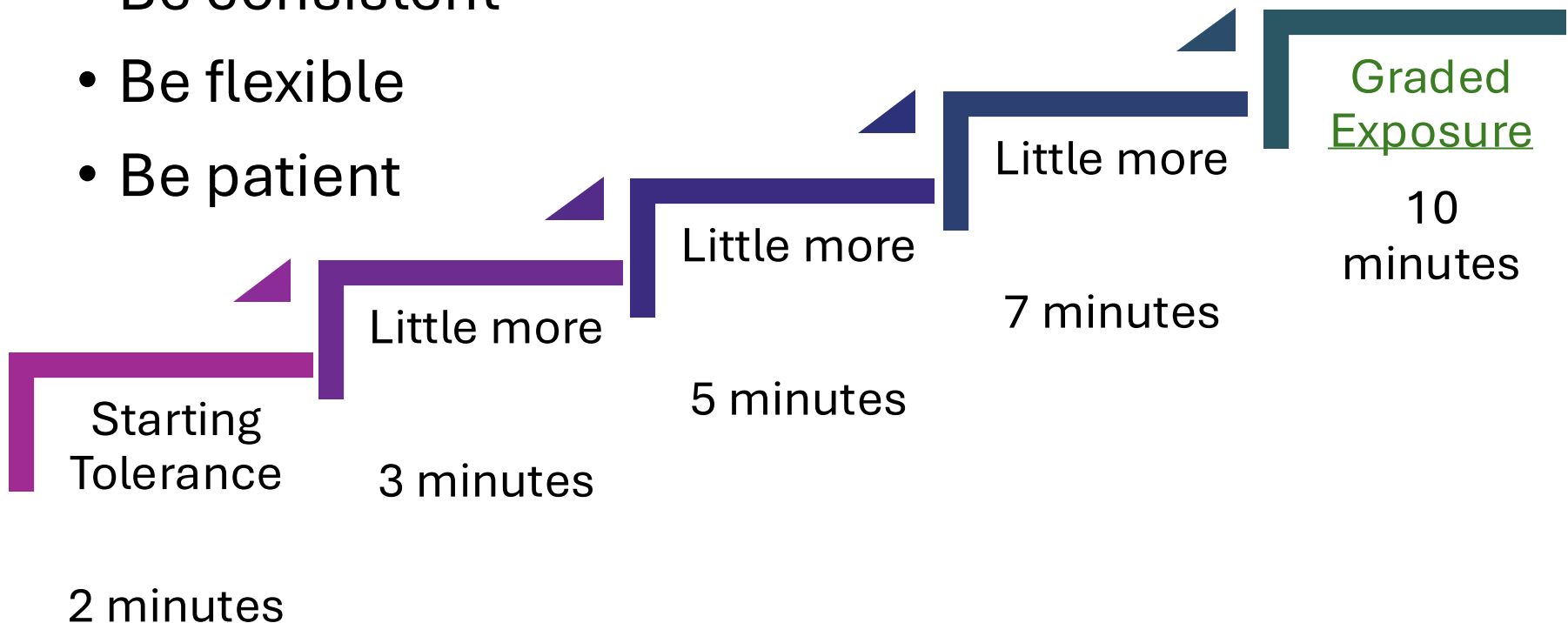
- Makes the task:
 - More manageable
 - More realistic
- Use a timer
- Divide the task into smaller chunks
- Eg. Unload one rack of the dishwasher vs. Clean the whole kitchen
- Alternate Positions





Pacing: Grading Activity

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



Tips to Progress Activity



- Slowly

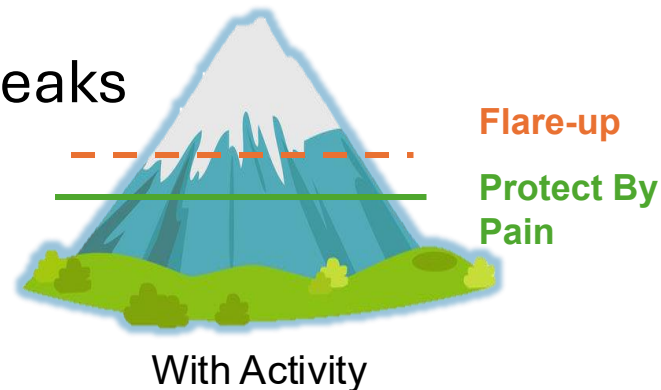


- Increase

- Duration – How long
- Intensity – How much
- Frequency – How often
- Reduce the amount of breaks

- Anticipate obstacles

- Have a **Flare-up Plan**

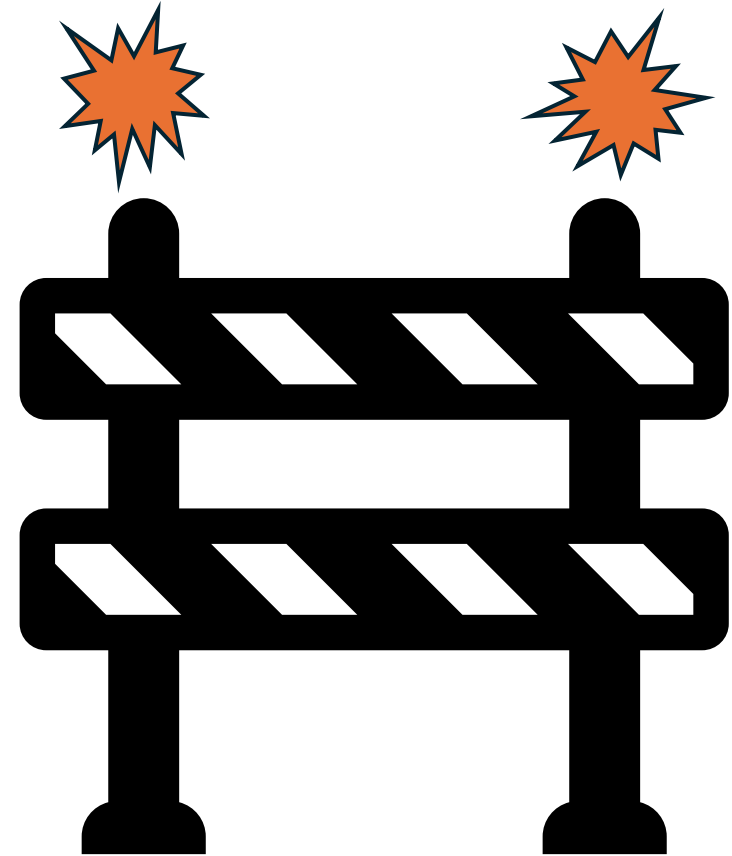


Mountain image taken from: <https://images.app.goo.gl/MAiZwtZrNFuMnZpW7>



Barriers / Obstacles

- Habits
- Time
- Expectations
- What are things that might get in the way of your plan?
- Comparisons
- "Shoulds"
- Asking for help
- Frustration/anger/guilt
- Good days





PLAN



Planning



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 goals and valued activities 
- Balance activities you need and want to do 
- Identify if you need support 
- Gives you a sense of accomplishment 



Task Management

Identify Values



A word cloud featuring various values and virtues. The words are arranged in a non-uniform, overlapping manner. The colors of the words include shades of blue, orange, red, green, and yellow. The words are: humour, morals, beauty, calmness, nature, adventure, family, love, fun, success, honesty, friends, spirituality, independence, freedom, recognition, loyalty, knowledge, and responsibility.

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



Goals

SMART Goal Handout



SMART Goal Action Plan

SPECIFIC

I want to: _____

Example: improve my walking

What I am going to do: (be specific) _____

Example: I am going to walk standing upright with good posture, without slouching.

How am I going to do it? _____

Example 1: With my friends

Example 2: Do some stretching exercises to warm up and prepare

Where I will do this: _____

Around my neighbourhood

When I will do this: _____

Saturdays – every week, Afternoon – 3 pm

MEASURABLE

How I will measure this to see my progress: (amount, # minutes, # days per week):

Week 1: 5 minutes

Week 7: 8.75 minutes

Week 13: 15.25 minutes

Week 2: 5.5 minutes

Week 8: 9.5 minutes

Week 14: 16.75 minutes

Week 3: 6 minutes

Week 9: 10.5 minutes

Week 15: 18.5 minutes

Week 4: 6.5 minutes

Week 10: 11.5 minutes

Week 16: 20 minutes

Week 5: 7.25 minutes

Week 11: 12.75 minutes

Week 6: 8 minutes

Week 12: 14 minutes

I will know I have achieved my goal when: _____

Example: I will have made excellent progress when I can walk for 20 minutes.

ATTAINABLE:

How **confident** am I that I will be able to accomplish this goal?

Not sure

Somewhat sure

Extremely sure

0

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

How **important** is this goal to me?

Not important

Somewhat important

Very important

0

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

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10

Example:

How **confident** am I that I will be able to accomplish this goal?

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How **important** is this goal to me?

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POSITION

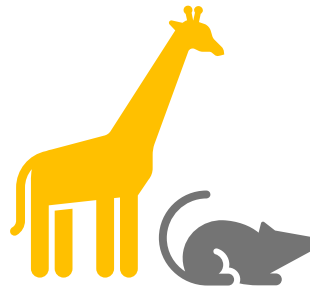


Ways to Modify Positions

"Your next posture is your best posture!"



Movement
Break



Height of
working surface



Assistive
Equipment



Adaptive Aids



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Take Home Messages

- Activity patterns can impact your pain and energy levels
 - Doing too much or too little can limit you
 - Pacing can help
 - Many things can get in the way of pacing
 - Planning, prioritizing, values and setting goals can help to pace yourself
-

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- Complete Handouts

Activity Adaptation Worksheet

Tips for adapting activities:

- Work smarter, not harder
- Making changes to HOW you do something so you can continue to do it
- People tend to want to keep doing activities the same way as they always have
- Changing your habits can help you to keep doing your meaningful activities
- Pacing and adapting activities should INCREASE your activity level, not decrease it
- Identify barriers that may stop you from doing the activities that you want and/or need to do, and coming up with possible strategies to overcome these barriers

Analyze your difficult activities

Think of an activity that takes you some time (20 minutes or longer) to complete and is likely to cause fatigue or stress. Use this activity to fill out the table below:

My activity:

Strategy	How can I use it in my activity?
<i>Prioritize:</i> Do the most important activities first - So that if you get tired, you can take a break and postpone the less important tasks	
<i>Eliminate:</i> Cut out what you don't need in terms of activities or part of activities	
<i>Delegate:</i> Give the activity or parts of it to someone else - Could delegate tasks that are not that important to you, and keep the important and/or meaningful ones - Share tasks with others - Trade tasks with someone	

Next Steps

- Practice the Strategies Discussed today
- Ask for help
- Online Resources:
- **Power Over Pain Portal**
(poweroverpain.ca)

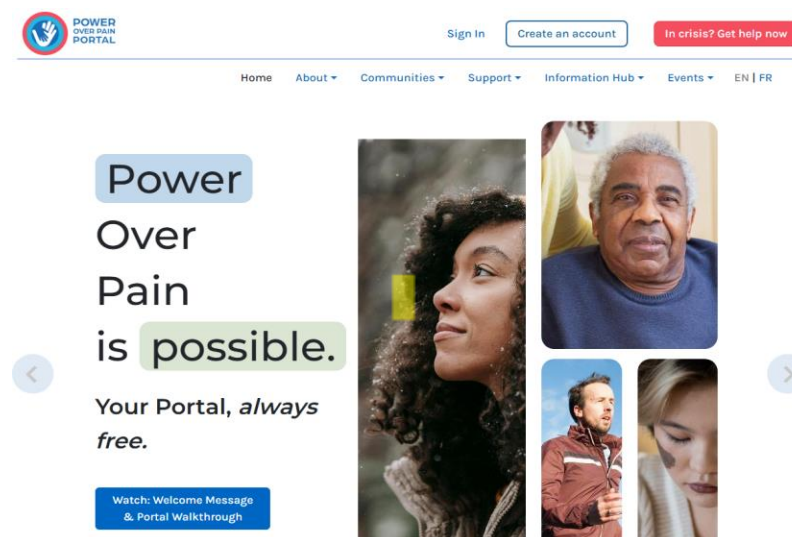
Pain U Online through TAPMI (Toronto Academic Pain Medicine Institute) :

- 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 \(TAPMI\)](#)



Recommended Workshops

Power Over Pain Portal – Power Over Pain

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>

Upcoming Pan Am Clinic Workshops

ACTing on Persistent Pain

Thursday, October 8th from
1:00-2:30 p.m.

Understanding Back Pain

Thursday, October 15th from
1:00-2:30 p.m.

Self-Compassion and Communication for Persistent Pain

Thursday, October 22nd from
1:00-2:30 p.m.



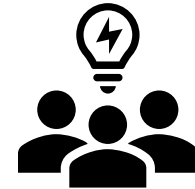
RECLAIM Group

RECLAIM is a **6-week skills-based group** offered to patients of the Manitoba Pain Care Program. This group is run by an Occupational Therapist, Physiotherapist, and Pain Psychologist. This provides patients an opportunity to learn and practice pain self-management strategies in a supportive group setting. It offers peer and therapist support to implement strategies and set value-based goals. You will be provided with a workbook that covers content and provides practical exercises. These exercises will be done in the group setting as well as on your own as homework. We encourage people to share their experiences with the group so we can learn from each other.

- **Held in person at Pan Am Clinic Thursday mornings from 10:00-12:00**
- **NEXT SESSION STARTS OCTOBER 15th!**

The following topics will be covered in the group:

- Understanding Pain and Pain Beliefs
- Values and Goals
- Pacing and Self-Compassion
- Physical Activity and Flare up Management
- Barrier Planning, Communication and Stress Management
- Relapse Prevention and Consolidation



Questions?

