

IMPORTANCE OF PACING

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Chronic pain can be overwhelming, and it can be difficult to believe that we can work with our pain. One of the most important interventions we can consider is *pacing*.

Pacing requires that you actually pay attention to the pain closely and clearly so that you can begin to identify activities and lifestyle issues that can trigger intense pain cycles. Many times we think we know how much we can handle, and many times we are wrong.

There are many reasons why we do not see our limits clearly and pace ourselves:

- We don't want to disappoint family and friends.
- We were able to do it yesterday.
- We are having a good day and do not pay attention to the body.
- We ignore the body.
- We refuse to accept what is (this is different from resignation).
- We have obligations.
- We are trying to manage intense feelings such as anger or depression that tend to cloud our ability to see clearly.
- We decide to push through pain.
- We start to wonder if we are weak.
- We feel it would be easier to continue an activity than to explain to others.
- We haven't taken the time to determine our limits.

Remember that we spiral downward into an intense pain cycle when we don't pace our activities.

- Use a log to keep track of activities, time spent, pain level for one week only – any longer and we can become too focused on pain – try to notice the actual physical sensations such as pressure, burning, twisting, or throbbing rather than thoughts or judgments about the sensations.
- Use a watch with a timer.
- Discuss limits in advance with family and friends.
- Do not overestimate your tolerance.
- Schedule rest time.
- Work on acceptance of your level of ability.
- Do not judge yourself by other's expectations or opinions.
- Do not judge yourself by your own unrealistic expectations or opinions.
- Give yourself permission to pace appropriately.