

Small Steps to Great Rewards

Understanding your condition: You can play a key role in managing your health and wellbeing. It is important to get the facts about your condition and know what your pain means. Unhelpful beliefs about health can trap people.

Emotions: People with chronic pain experience a wide range of emotions. Try to be aware of your emotional responses and to understand where they come from and how you might respond differently.

Relaxation: The deliberate use of breathing and positive focus acts as a fire extinguisher for stress. It builds a skill that calms the nervous system and helps people to see through the fog of stress.

Improving Sleep: This gives your mind and body a chance to rest, repair and reboot; which then feeds in to more energy and better coping for the next day.

Pacing: This means working within your limits and not using pain as your only guide. Understanding the boom- bust cycle and the idea of having choice are vital. 'Pacing' gets the most 'yes buts'; but it's one of the most important concepts in pain management.

Baselines: Use objective measures like time/distance/amount, for key activities like standing, sitting, walking and housework. The aim is to create consistency, reduce fear, and improve function by reliably working within limits. It can be summarised as 'do less more often'.

Activity: Finding suitable ways to be more active is very important. Try walking, swimming or whatever else works for you; use baselines as a starting point and build up gently.

Nutrition: A good quality balanced diet is key to everyone's health.

Kindness: It is important to change the habit of always putting your needs last. Give yourself permission to do what you want, or need to do, rather than seeking approval or justifying yourself. Take the good advice you give others. Most people urge friends and family to 'take it easy' and 'be kinder to yourself', but we often struggle to apply this to ourselves.

Communication: It's good to be clear and talk about how you think and feel. Try to be more open and give yourself permission to say: "No thanks" and "Yes Please". Being over focused on health causes problems.

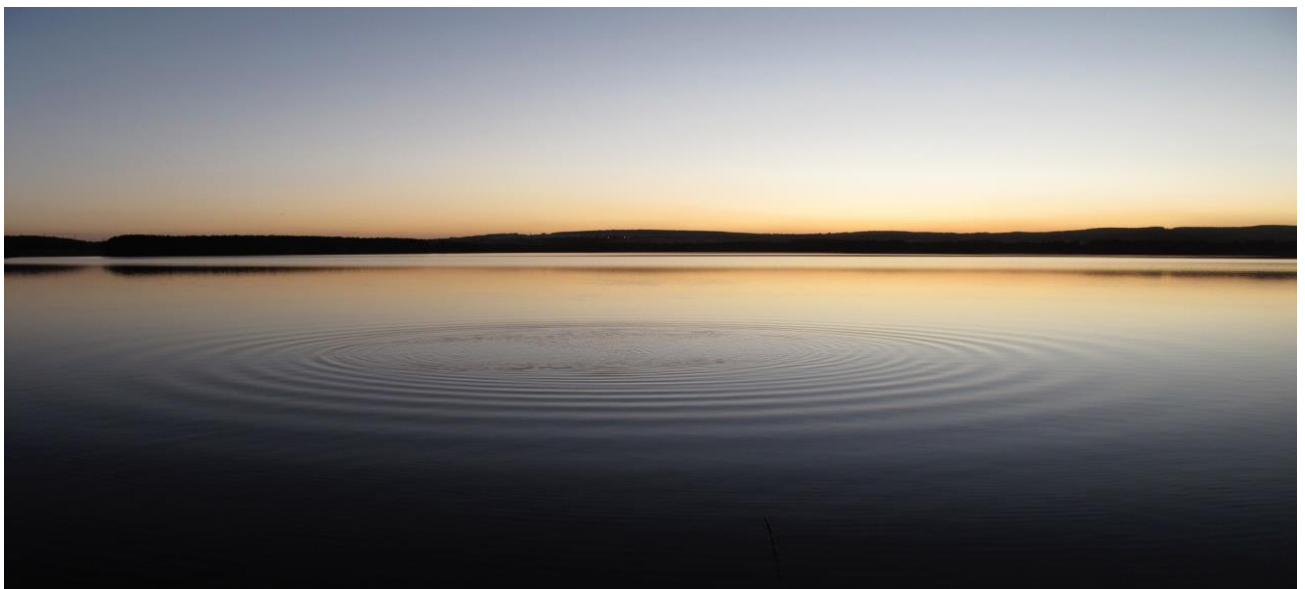
Dealing with others: Be aware of how you react to apparent criticism, sometimes your reaction can be more to do with what you think about yourself. 'You look well' and 'How are you?' often simply mean, 'Hello!'

Help: Sometimes accepting even a small amount of help can make a huge difference; both to you and the person who wants to do something to improve things for you.

The balance of life: Fillers like rest and relaxation give energy; whilst drainers, such as worry and lack of sleep take energy. Most people have too much draining and not enough filling. If we are out of balance, we suffer.

Know what makes you tick: Engaging with your interests takes focus away from your troubles. It reduces boredom, boosts confidence and improves a sense of wellbeing.

Realistic and practical: It is helpful to focus on what you can do, rather than what you can't. Adapting in this way, helps you to feel positive and more in control of your life. This is a helpful route towards a better relationship with both yourself and your situation.



The ripple effect: If you act on just one of these ideas, it can create a positive effect through the rest of your life. www.painassociation.co.uk

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