



# The Pain Toolkit

....is for people who live with persistent pain

Short Version

A persistent pain problem can be difficult to understand and manage on an everyday basis.

The Pain Toolkit is a simple information booklet that could provide you with some handy tips and skills to support you along the way to manage your pain.

It is not meant to be the last word in pain self-management but a handy guide to help you get started. All you need to be is willing to read it and take on board some of the suggestions.

Good luck!

Pete Moore

[pete.moore@paintoolkit.org](mailto:pete.moore@paintoolkit.org)

[www.paintoolkit.org](http://www.paintoolkit.org)

Twitter @paintoolkit2

Pete Moore who has persistent pain, asthma and osteoarthritis, has put these tools together with the help of friends, family and health care professionals.

Special acknowledgement to the Bradford Living with Pain Programme team.



**Tool 1** - Accept that you have persistent pain....and then begin to move on

**Tool 2** - Get involved -building a support team

**Tool 3** - Pacing

**Tool 4** - Learn to prioritise and plan out your days

**Tool 5** - Setting Goals/Action Plans

**Tool 6** - Being patient with yourself

**Tool 7** - Learn relaxation skills

**Tool 8** - Stretching & Exercise

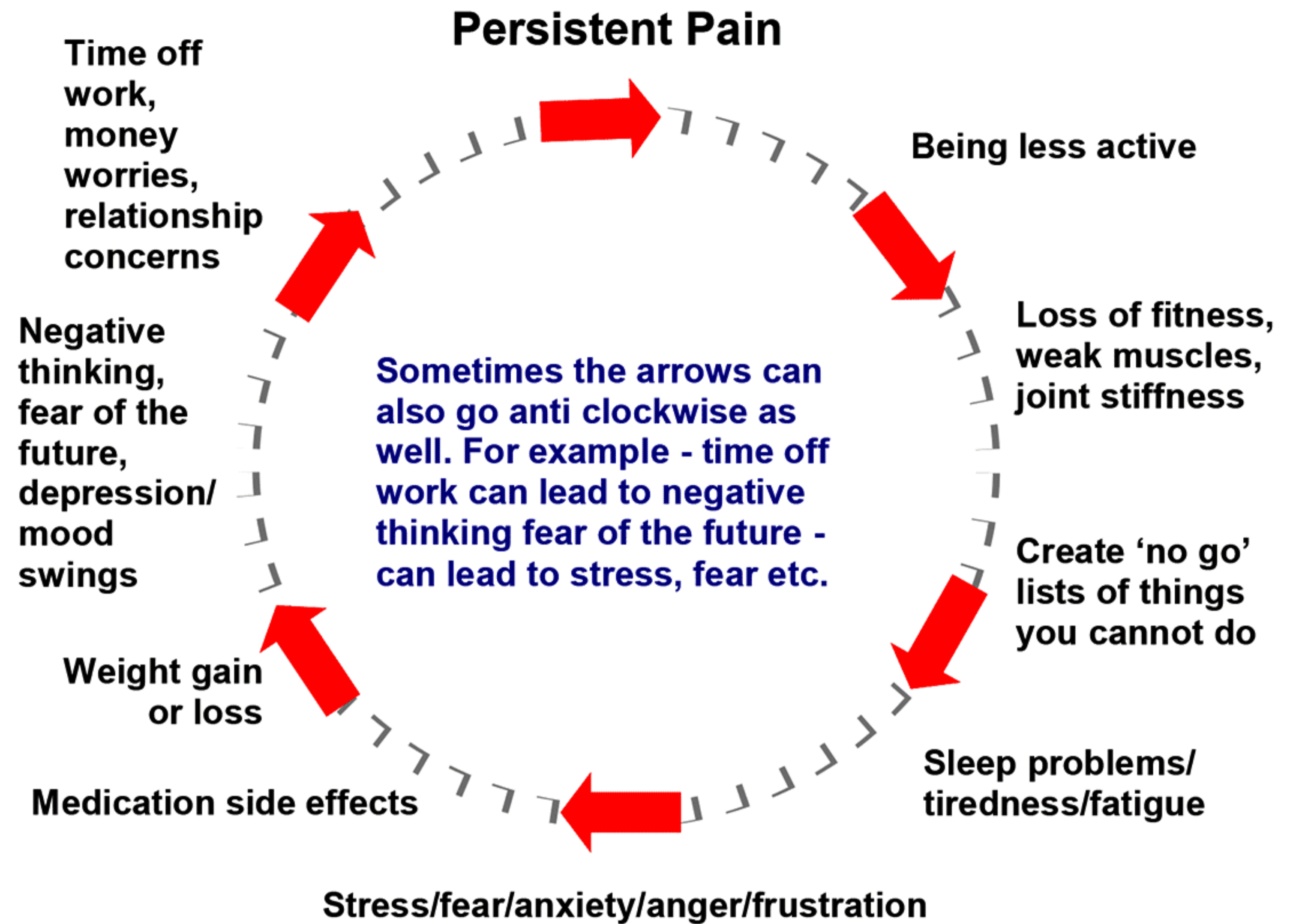
**Tool 9** - Keep a diary and track your progress

**Tool 10** - Have a set-back plan

**Tool 11** - Team Work

**Tool 12** - is keeping it up...putting into daily practice the tools from 1-11.

## The Persistent Pain Cycle



### Do you feel trapped in a persistent pain cycle?

If so, ask yourself these three questions

1. Do you do **more** on good days and **less** on bad days?
2. Are you an over achiever – doing more than you have to?
3. Are you a people pleaser? Do you have a problem saying NO to others when you are asked to do things?

Could you see yourself in the persistent pain cycle and did you recognise yourself in the three questions above? If you did, then this Pain Toolkit could be for you, so please read on.



## Persistent pain (sometimes called chronic or long-term)

**is:-** Pain that continues for 3 months or more and may not respond to standard medical treatment. It can be disabling and frustrating for many people to manage. It can also affect relationships with your family, friends and work colleagues.

Sometimes people with persistent pain are told by healthcare professionals after assessment:

*“I am afraid you have a chronic or long-term pain problem. You will have to learn to live with it.”*

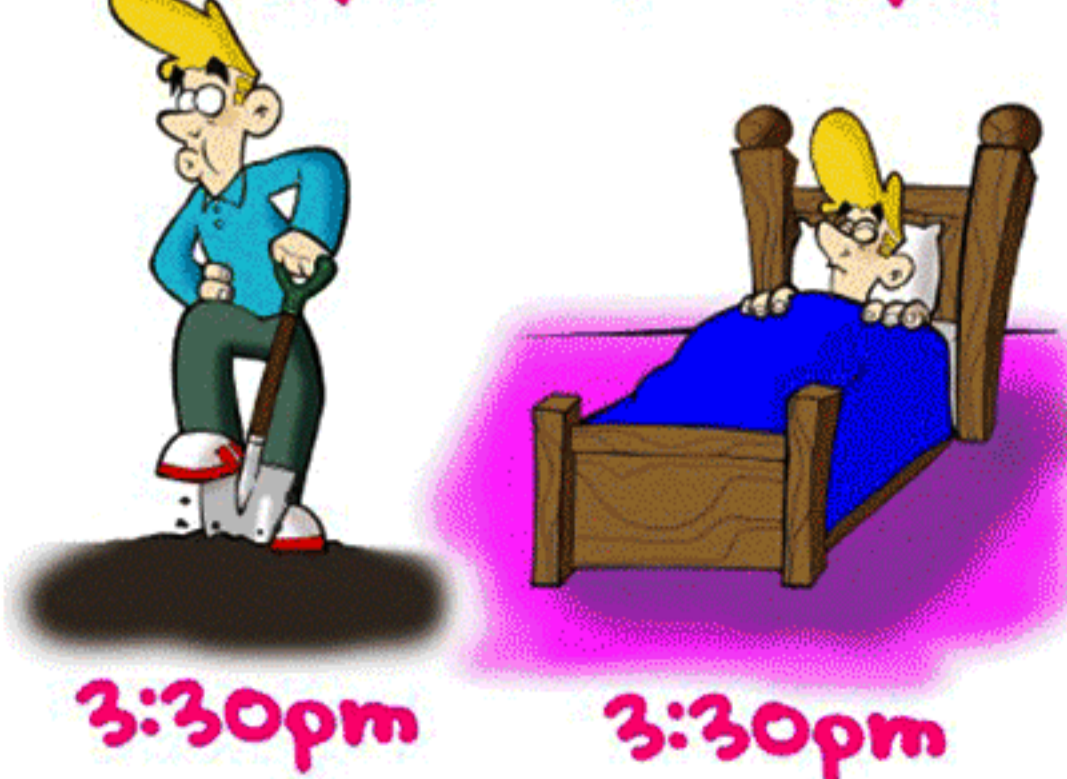


To date, your healthcare professionals may have done all that they can to help you and may have used many of the tools available in their toolkit. However there are so many things that you can do to help self-manage *your* pain with the support of your health care professional, family, friends and work colleagues. All you need is to be willing to ask for help.

## Have you become a ‘can’t do’ person?

A **‘can’t do’** person is someone who has tried to carry out or take part in everyday tasks such as going to work, doing the house work, gardening, playing a sport, taking holidays, going to the cinema, eating out or taking part in family activities but has stopped or given them up because of their pain. When this happens it is usual for your confidence levels to reduce.

**MONDAY TUESDAY**



Is this ringing any bells? If you have reached this point you need to stop and take action.

By taking on board and practising the tools in the Pain Toolkit you could become a **‘can do’** person again but it could take time so please be patient with yourself.

Look familiar?

## So is persistent pain a problem in the UK?

The short answer is yes, so you are not on your own.

Here are some alarming facts from the Chronic Pain Policy Coalition [www.paincoalition.org.uk](http://www.paincoalition.org.uk)

- **Over 14million people live with persistent pain** and of those almost one in four said pain had kept them from usual activities (including work) on at least 14 days in the last three months.
- Back pain alone is estimated to cost £12.3 billion per year.
- People with persistent pain were more likely to be anxious or depressed - 69% with severe pain reported concerns about their moods.

## Why do I need to manage my pain? After all I see my health care professional and aren't they supposed to do that for me?

Many people with persistent pain see their health care professional for treatment, help and support. But have you actually estimated just how many hours during the course of a year you spend with your health care professional?

It has been said that people with health conditions (including pain) may spend less than 3 hours a year on average in contact with a health care professional. For the remaining **8,733 hours** of the year they are on their own. So the need to learn pain self-management skills and incorporate them in their everyday activities is very

important. So as you can see, the need to become more involved in your own pain self-management is both necessary and important. It is certainly not all up to your doctor or health care professional to manage your pain. You have to play a vital part as well - it is all about teamwork.





Your next question may be **“Well, how can I become more involved and how do I get started to?”**

Using different skills and tools can be helpful. It is like a motor mechanic who has many tools in his/her toolbox to repair and maintain cars. People with pain also need a selection of tools to help them successfully self-manage it.

It is best to have a variety of tools ready to use if, and when needed just like a good car mechanic. Of course, you may not need to use all the tools suggested in the Pain Toolkit, just the ones that help you self-manage better.

Self-managing persistent pain is not as hard as you may think—so let’s get started and look at the first tool in your new pain self-management toolkit.

## The Pain Toolkit

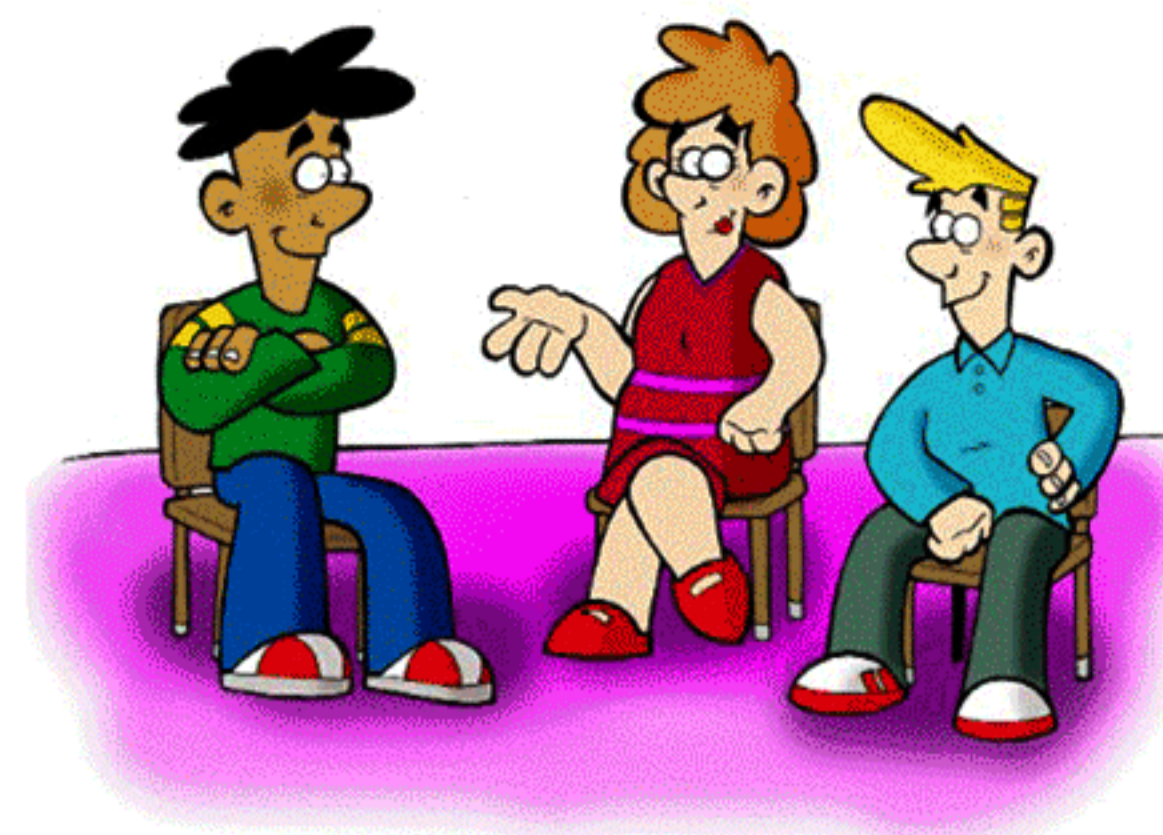
### Tool 1 - Accept that you have persistent pain....and then begin to move on



Acceptance is the first and the most important tool in your pain self-management toolkit.

Acceptance is not about giving up but recognising that you need to take more control with regards to how you can better self-manage your pain.

Acceptance is also a bit like opening a door - a door that will open to allow you in to lots of self-managing opportunities. The key that you need to open this door is not as large as you think. All you have to do is to be willing to use it and try and do things differently.



### Tool 2 - Get involved - building a support team

Being successful in pain self-management means getting both help and support from others. Ask your health care professional, friends,

family and work colleagues about working more together - becoming a team. Develop a pain self-management plan. Find out if there are other support groups in your community you could join which could provide you with more self-help management skills.

### Tool 3 - Pacing

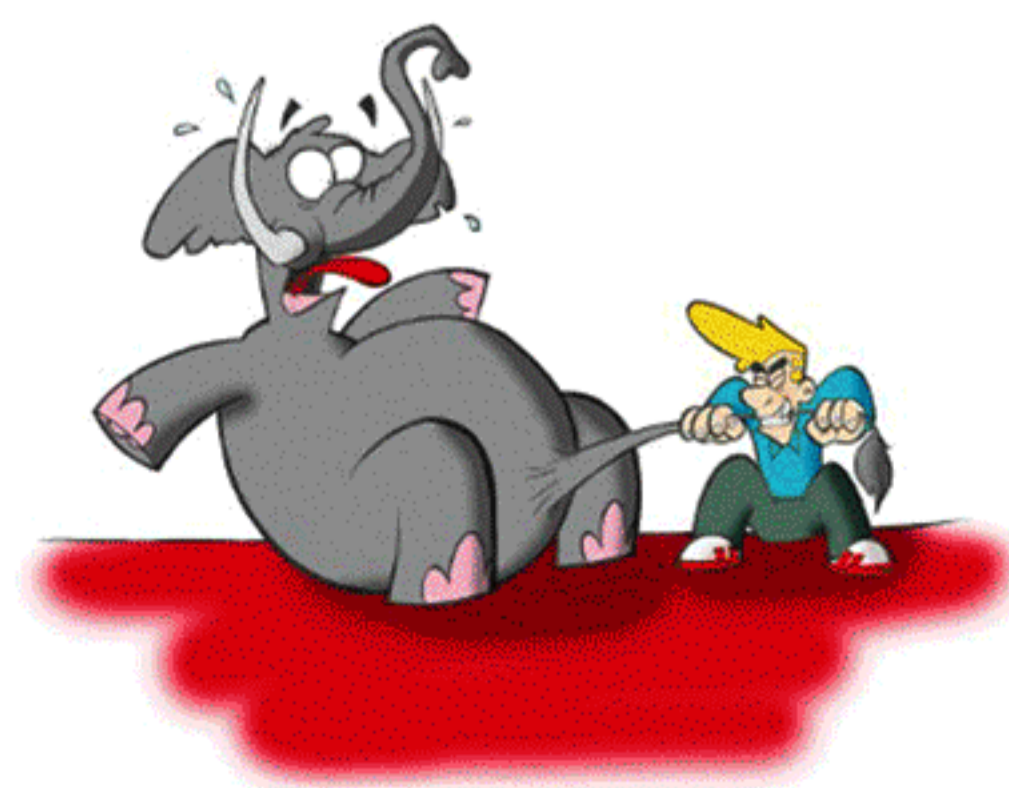
Pacing daily activities is one of the key tools to self managing your pain. You need to begin to pace your work and also other everyday activities. Did you recognise yourself from the pain cycle? You tend to over do things, or rest too much and become inactive and lose fitness.



**Pacing in short is:** taking a break *before* you need it throughout the day. But how can you remember to pace yourself?

Remember the old saying... **“How do you eat an elephant?”**

Answer: **One bite at a time!** Pacing is carrying out activities one bite at a time, and not tackling all of them at once.



For examples of pacing daily activities see page 12.





## Tool 4 - Learn to prioritise and plan out your days

Prioritising and planning your days is an essential tool. Make a list of things you would like to do but remember to be flexible. It is a great way to set yourself a starting point.

### Examples:

- Monday a.m. - vacuum the living room and have a couple of breaks so that I pace myself
- Monday p.m.- prepare food for evening meal - sit down to do this
- Tuesday a.m. - go swimming - meet friend for a coffee/tea - practise some relaxation when I get home.
- Tuesday p.m. - I write an activity plan for the next day.

## Tool 5 - Setting Goals/Action Plans

You may sometimes want to run before you can walk as that old saying goes. So to avoid this happening set yourself simple, realistic goals or action plans. Just as you need goal posts when playing football, or a finishing line when racing - you need something to aim for yourself.



Perhaps, you could set yourself a simple, hourly, daily or weekly action plan. Always ask for help from your health care professional if you are not sure. You can also learn more about setting goals and action planning when you attend a Pain Toolkit workshop or self-management programme (SMP) Pain Toolkit workshop at [www.paintoolkit.org/workshops](http://www.paintoolkit.org/workshops).

## Tool 6 - Being patient with yourself

Take things steadily. It may take you a few weeks or months to see changes or improvements. When you start to feel good, you may want to catch up with activities that you may have let go of. Don't be tempted to over do it otherwise your chances of yet another set back could increase. A good saying is 'take things one day at a time'. And also....ask for help and support from others—its not a sign of weakness but a sign of strength!

## Tool 7 - Learn relaxation skills

Relaxation skills are very important for tense muscles in the body and for unwinding the mind.

Relaxation could be:

- Reading a book
- Listening to some music
- Gardening
- Meeting friends for a coffee/tea
- Going to the cinema or a restaurant
- Relaxation exercises (usually found on CD's from the library or downloads to you your MP3 or phone)
- Meditation
- Dancing
- Walking.



### Coping or self-managing?

Coping with persistent pain can be like playing a game of snakes and ladders - a game of luck. Being an over-achiever you can tend to do more on good days (climb the ladder) and on bad days, do less and return to bed. (This is like sliding down the snake). Self-managing is taking positive, planned action which can reduce the 'luck' element in pain self-management.



## Tool 8 - Stretching & Exercise

Many people with pain fear exercise in case it causes more problems. However this is not true. Regular stretching and exercising actually decreases pain and discomfort. It prepares the body for other activities. It can strengthen weak muscles and you will also feel better for it. Remember to start slowly and build up or increase your stretching and exercising. It is not as hard as you think.



If you are in pain, remember that unfit and under used muscles feel *more* pain than toned ones. Talk with your physiotherapist or fitness coach about an individually tailored stretching and exercise programme that you can work on steadily and safely. This will help you build your confidence, muscle and joint strength. Remember that swimming (or just walking up and down in the pool) is also a low impact exercise and is good for you if you have joint problems.

## Tool 9 - Keep a diary and track your progress

Keeping a diary of your progress will help you to see how far you have come and note the successes you have achieved. This will help you to build on success. But it is also handy to note what didn't work so you can learn from those experiences. We sometimes learn more from our errors and not from our successes.

Personally, I found keeping a diary showed me how well I was doing in self-managing my pain.

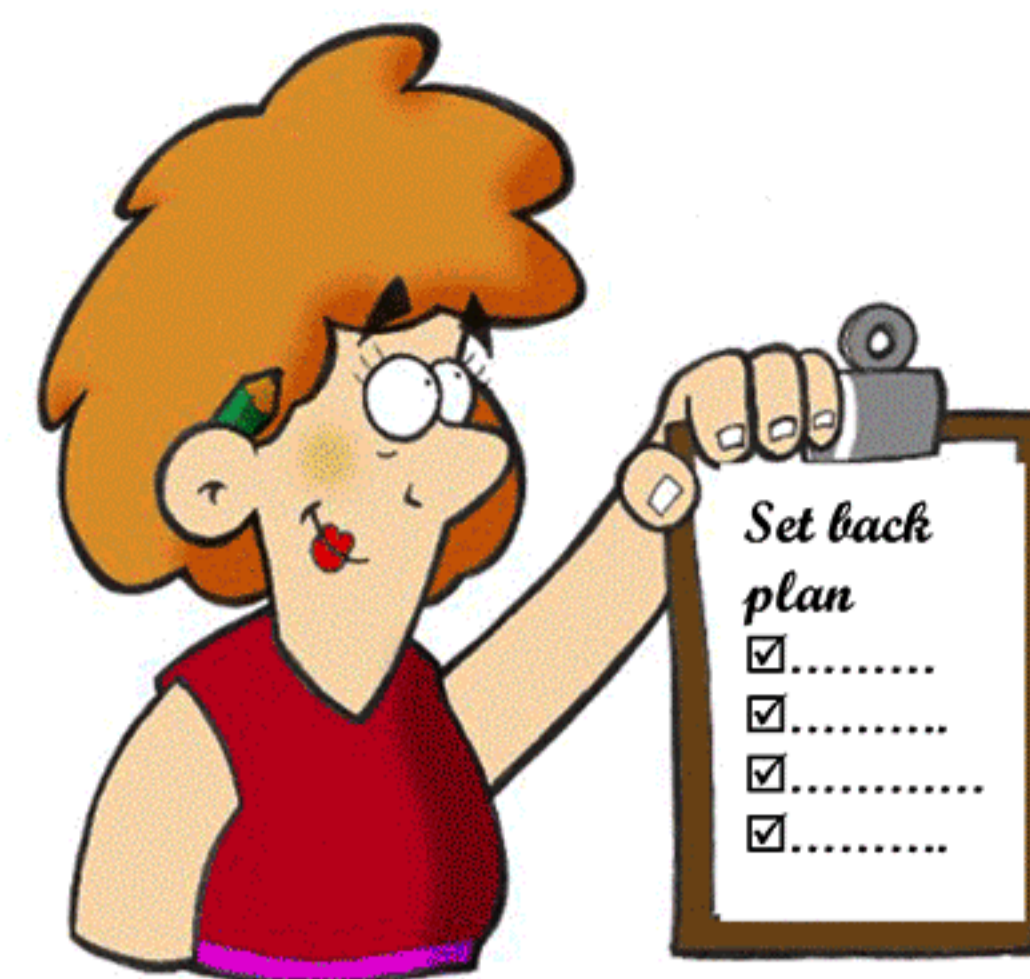


It also highlighted things I was doing that that didn't work well, and so I was able to adapt how to deal with them more positively.

## Tool 10 - Have a set-back plan

Is it realistic to think you will never have a set-back?

The simple answer is NO! Developing a set-back plan is good pain self-management. Ask your healthcare provider if you need help



in making one if you are not sure. Make a note of what triggered your set-back and what helped. This could be useful information if and when you experience another.

## Tool 11 - Team Work

Team work between you and your healthcare professional is vital. Imagine the Arsenal football team playing without a team plan.

Managing your pain is not a 'one way street' and it is unrealistic for your health care professional to totally solve it. You have an important part to play as well.

Together both you and your health care professional can set an action plan. This action plan could help you to both track your progress.

Action planning is taught when you attend a self-management programme.






## Tool 12 - is keeping it up...putting into daily practice the tools from 1-11.

You may be asking yourself do I have to put these tools into daily practice? "**What, every day**"? The simple answer is **Yes**. Just as the person with diabetes has to take their treatment/medication and maintain their diet daily, **your** treatment is planning/prioritising, pacing, setting weekly or long-term goals/action plans, relaxation, exercise, generally keeping active and being in charge of your pain. Keeping it up is difficult for many people but it's not as hard as you think once you have set yourself a routine. Just like brushing your teeth, self-managing your pain will become a habit. Get others involved and make pain self-management fun.

### What three things have I learnt about managing my pain in the Pain Toolkit?



1. ....

2. ....

3. ....



### What will I try?

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## Using the Internet

Pete says...

**Type in pain to a search engine and around 810,000,000 results will come up. Most will try and sell you something etc. Always discuss with your doctor or health care professional if you are going to try something. Remember, successful pain self-management is team work.**

*I found the Healthtalkonline site very useful. It gave me the opportunity to hear, see and read about how others live with their pain. I now know I'm not on my own.*

N.K. Somerset.

*There seem to be a lot of websites that wanted to tell me that if I took this or did that, my pain would disappear. I now tend to only visit sites that use the org.uk, .nhs.uk, .gov.uk or ac.uk addresses.* T.F. Essex



### Pain Toolkit website

There is some really useful information on the Pain Toolkit site and yes, its all easy to understand.

I particularly like the [www.paintoolkit.org/educational](http://www.paintoolkit.org/educational) link; as all the links are to You Tube.

We also have a Pain Toolkit Store where you can buy books or CD's you think could help you to self-manage.

Please visit [www.paintoolkit.org/store](http://www.paintoolkit.org/store)



## More about Pete Moore & Dr Frances Cole co- authors of the Pain Toolkit and *the motivational bit....*

Pete lives in Essex and is a keen promoter of self-management and other health conditions. Pete has written several pain self-management programmes and books.

He is often asked to provide educational seminars for health care professionals and patient groups in the UK and Europe.



Pete Moore

### Pete is a member of the:

- ◆ British Pain Society
- ◆ International Association Study of Pain (IASP)

Follow Pete on  [@paintoolkit2](https://twitter.com/paintoolkit2)

Pete says ***“Self-managing pain or a health problem is not as hard as you think and the best way to approach it is by taking small steps.*”**

***Be patient with yourself. We as they saying goes ‘we want to walk before we can run’. Easy does it. You will get there.***

***Always ask for help and support from your health care professional, family, friends and work colleagues. In time you will become more confident and in control”.***



**Dr Frances Cole** is a GP and Pain Rehabilitation Specialist and Cognitive Behavioural Therapist in West Yorkshire UK.

She is a member of the British Pain Society and co-author of the self help guide *“Overcoming Chronic Pain”*.

Dr Frances Cole

***Special thanks to all the health care professionals and patient groups who support pain self-management.***

## Useful website links for more information and support

Arthritis Care [www.arthritiscare.org.uk](http://www.arthritiscare.org.uk)

Arthritis Research Campaign [www.arc.org.uk](http://www.arc.org.uk)

BackCare [www.backcare.org.uk](http://www.backcare.org.uk)

Mindfulness pain management [www.breathworks-mindfulness.co.uk](http://www.breathworks-mindfulness.co.uk)

British Pain Society [www.britishpainsociety.org](http://www.britishpainsociety.org)

Depression Alliance [www.depressionalliance.org](http://www.depressionalliance.org)

Exercise Works [www.exercise-works.org](http://www.exercise-works.org)

Get a life [www.getalifegetactive.com](http://www.getalifegetactive.com)

Healthtalkonline [www.healthtalkonline.org](http://www.healthtalkonline.org)

Know your own health [www.kyoh.org](http://www.kyoh.org)

Fibromyalgia Association UK [www.fibromyalgia-associationuk.org](http://www.fibromyalgia-associationuk.org)

ME Association [www.meassociation.org.uk](http://www.meassociation.org.uk)

Migraine Trust [www.migrainetrust.org](http://www.migrainetrust.org)

MIND confidential help and advice on [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)

Multiple Sclerosis Society [www.mssociety.org.uk](http://www.mssociety.org.uk)

National Rheumatoid Arthritis Society [www.nras.org.uk](http://www.nras.org.uk)

NHS Direct [www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk/en/About](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk/en/About)

NHS Choices [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

Overcoming mental health problems [www.overcoming.co.uk](http://www.overcoming.co.uk)

Pain Toolkit [www.paintoolkit.org](http://www.paintoolkit.org)

Pain Concern [www.painconcern.org.uk](http://www.painconcern.org.uk)

Pain Support [www.painsupport.co.uk](http://www.painsupport.co.uk)

Pain Relief Foundation [www.painrelieffoundation.org.uk](http://www.painrelieffoundation.org.uk)

Pain UK [www.painuk.org](http://www.painuk.org)

Pelvic Pain Support Network [www.pelvicpain.org.uk](http://www.pelvicpain.org.uk)

Rheumatoid Arthritis Society [www.nras.org.uk](http://www.nras.org.uk)

Sheffield Persistent Pain [www.sheffieldpersistentpain.com](http://www.sheffieldpersistentpain.com)

Stroke Association [www.stroke.org.uk](http://www.stroke.org.uk)

Shingles Support [www.shinglesupport.org](http://www.shinglesupport.org)

Trigeminal Neuralgia Association UK [www.tna-uk.org.uk](http://www.tna-uk.org.uk)

Your Health Your Way [www.nhs.uk/yourhealth](http://www.nhs.uk/yourhealth)

