

Joint Pain Programme

This is your journal for
the Joint Pain Programme



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Welcome: what is the Joint Pain Programme?

Programme aims



Enable you to manage your pain, get back to doing things you love and used to do without pain, fear or anxiety.



Help you find exercises that you enjoy, teach you to workout safely and ultimately reduce or eliminate pain.

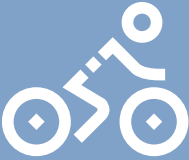





Build a support community where you feel safe and comfortable, make friends and share experiences.

Supported	12 weeks	Two Personal Trainer led education and exercise sessions a week	Session Number	Day & Time
Independent	12 weeks	Trial and application of learning with guidance from your Rehabilitation Specialist	Session 1	
Maintenance	6 months	Self-management and maintenance	Session 2	

What to expect?

The joint pain programme exercise sessions focus on four main types of training:

			
<p>Cardiovascular (CV):</p> <p>Low impact CV training, step aerobics, cycling class.</p>	<p>Mobility:</p> <p>Yoga, aqua training, progressive stretching.</p>	<p>Stability:</p> <p>Yoga, aqua training, balance training.</p>	<p>Strength:</p> <p>Strength training, compound movements, machine weights.</p>

Session 1 will be a circuit-based session covering all four types of training. These sessions focus on your physical function, making movement easier and more stable, and providing options for exercising in the gym and/or home.

Session 2 will focus on a specific type of training to maximise your physical improvement. These will rotate weekly so you will get to experience each type of training throughout the programme.

Both sessions will begin with a facilitated discussion around a healthy lifestyle topic based on the contents of this journal.

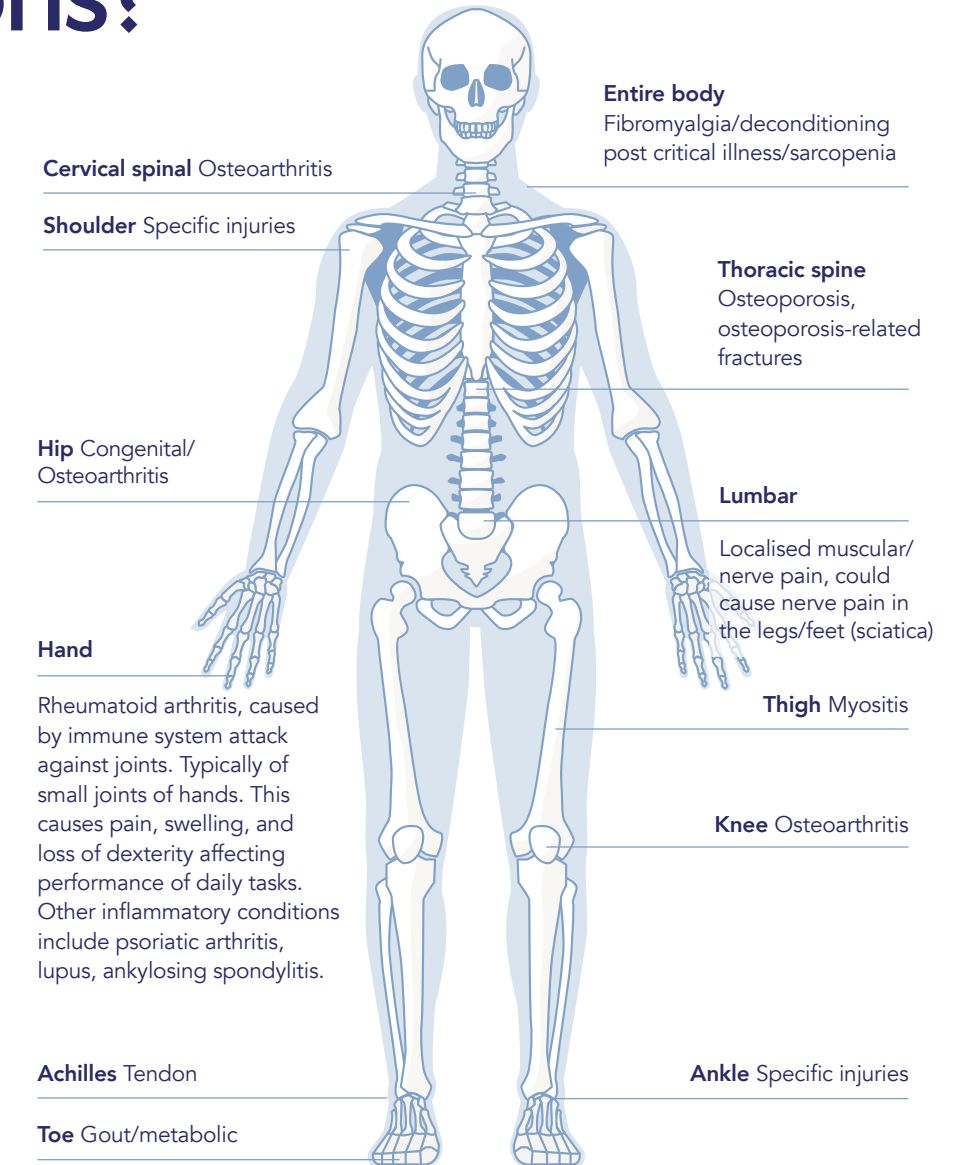
What are MSK conditions?

The term “musculoskeletal conditions” describes a broad range of health problems affecting bones, joints, and muscles.

It can also extend to conditions of the nerves and muscles that supply these body parts. These health problems can occur anywhere in the body, including the legs, arms and spine. They may arise from a variety of causes such as osteoarthritis, historical injuries to a specific body part, or even auto-immune involvement of musculoskeletal tissues as seen in rheumatoid arthritis. Common symptoms are pain, stiffness, weakness, and loss of function, which can understandably

lead to isolation and low mood. However, symptoms experienced, even for people with the same condition, are unique and person specific.

The **“What is pain?”** video covers this information in more detail and is available on the participant hub. Please watch this video before your first exercise session. Please let your Rehab Specialist know if you cannot access it.



This visual denotes areas where specific conditions can present, but some conditions can also present throughout the body too.

You and your body

Having chronic joint pain can impact on your emotional wellbeing as well as your physical wellbeing.

Joint pain and related conditions can have a negative impact on your mental health. You may find that you experience a wide range of emotions in relation to having chronic joint pain, and these can feel overwhelming at times.

It works the other way around, too. Mental health problems can worsen joint pain symptoms and related conditions.

Emotional symptoms

It is very common to experience emotional symptoms when you have chronic joint pain. Most commonly these include low mood or depression and anxiety. Other emotions can include becoming frustrated and angry or lonely and helpless. Often your confidence and sense of self are also affected.

A two way relationship

Having low mood or depression can lower your pain threshold, which can make coping with chronic pain and related conditions more difficult.

In turn, chronic pain can worsen your mood or anxiety symptoms. Having low mood or depression can also impact your engagement with treatment plans, increasing the likelihood of developing further health problems.

Some studies also show that there is also a relationship between depression and inflammation in the body. These 'domino effect's' can have a big impact on your wellbeing as well as the course of your treatment, condition and it's management. This programme will help you to understand how

your emotional health links to your physical health to help you better manage your joint pain. Whilst some days will be better than others, it can be helpful to know that there are many things that you can do to improve your emotional health, and these will be explored during the programme.

One day at a time

The programme will provide you with specialist support and self-guided learning materials to help you manage low mood, anxiety and other emotional changes you may be experiencing.

Some days might be more challenging than others, but taking things one day at a time will help set you up to make positive changes as you go through our programme.



Your body. Your mind.

The way you think about your body and how you manage your symptoms will have a huge impact on your rehabilitation journey, your future health, and goals. Beliefs which grow your confidence in your ability to make healthy changes will boost your progress.

Mindset matters

Your attitudes, thoughts and beliefs are key in shaping how you view different situations. They also determine how you will respond and react to those different situations. Your belief in your ability to take actions which will help you reach your desired goals or results is often called 'self-efficacy'. Self-efficacy is important for health as it helps us to find a way of changing our health behaviours, even when this seems hard or impossible. You can think of this as a belief in yourself and your abilities.

Overcoming obstacles

Think about how you approach challenges and setbacks. What do

you tell yourself about the situation? Do you have an inner voice which tells you to keep going and that you can do this, encouraging you to overcome obstacles and barriers bit by bit? Or do you find yourself giving up before you have started, telling yourself it is impossible and that you can't make healthy choices like eating a healthy diet or increasing your activity levels? Do you become overcome by self-doubt or do you persevere in the belief that there are positive achievements to be found beyond the challenges?

Easier said than done?

Everyone has goals for what they want to achieve in life, and you will also have goals about what you want to achieve on this programme. You

may be thinking that this all sounds 'easier said than done'. The good news is that you can learn how to improve your self-belief which in turn can help build your motivation.

Self-belief

Self-belief matters more than you think. Your ability to accomplish your goals is strongly linked to your self-belief. By working on your self-belief, you can start to view obstacles as opportunities to learn and grow, rather than things to be avoided. Self-belief can also help you develop new skills like learning how to persevere with a project or adjust to life changes.



Developing belief in yourself

You may think that self-belief is something that you either have or you don't. Like any skill however, you can learn how to develop your self-belief and give yourself a pathway to achieving your future goals.

	Success starts with one step at a time	Achieving any goal starts with small steps. Every one of these is an accomplishment, no matter how small. Success starts with the belief that 'I can' followed by one small step in that direction. Where tasks seem difficult, tell yourself that with practise, one step at a time, you can master it. Do each small step to the best of your ability.
	Learning by observation	Watching how other people accomplish goals can help you to learn and can also motivate you. Tell yourself, 'If they can from where they were to here then so can I'. Observing someone else's effort to succeed can help us to grow our own self-belief.
	Find your 'cheer leaders'	Surround yourself with people who believe in your ability to succeed. Ask your friends and family to become your coaches and cheer leaders, celebrating each small victory along the way.
	Turn your hopes into visions	Turning your hopes into reality can seem daunting. Often that is because the destination seems impossible, either too far away or too difficult to achieve. Setting clear achievable goals can help you develop a realistic action plan. A gradual pathway for achieving your hopes and dreams, one small step at a time.

 Believe you can and you are halfway there 

Importance of exercise

Exercise is a vital part of managing the symptoms associated with Joint Pain.

Because of pain, exercise is avoided by many people as it leads to people thinking that exercise can damage the joint, however exercise actually helps to reduce pain through the following ways:

Improved muscle strength

Muscles can become weaker in the presence of pain, due to inactivity. Strength training helps improve joint stability, reducing the symptoms of pain and swelling.

Weight loss

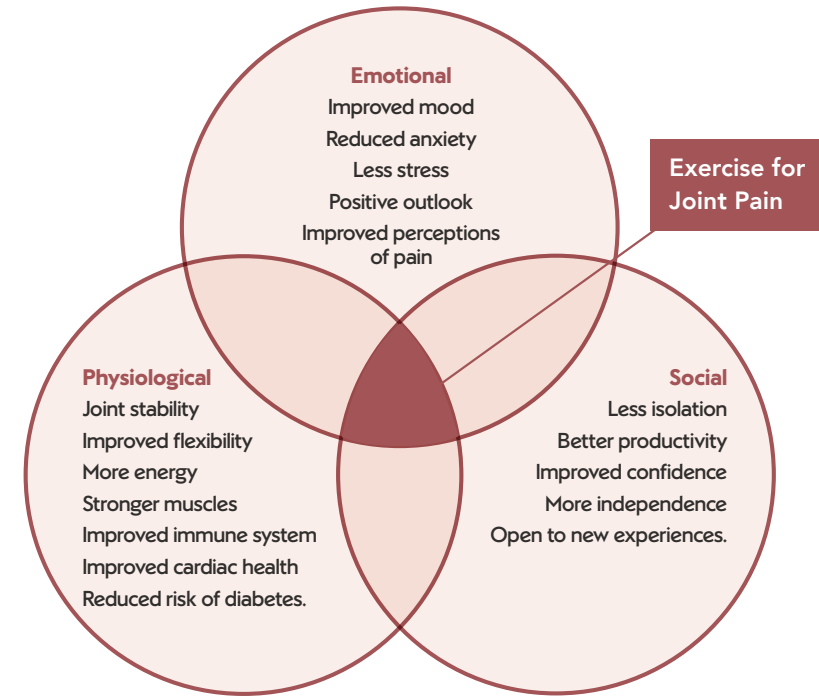
Obesity is the largest cause of osteoarthritis, with over 90% of obese people also reporting joint pain. Moving more will help to reduce weight, therefore, reducing joint pain.

Overall physical and emotional wellbeing

Sometimes pain can make you feel low in mood and low in hope. Moving more helps reduce pain, it also contributes to improved mood, alertness and can make you calmer.

Social interaction

Pain can be very isolating and a person living with pain can feel like a burden on family and friends. The joint pain programme will provide you with the ability to interact with others in a similar position, acting like a support community, giving you more confidence in the gym and everyday life. Spending time sharing experiences brings people closer together.



Which three of the above benefits do you think are most valuable to you?

“If exercise could be packaged in a pill, it would be the single most widely prescribed and beneficial medicine in the nation”
Robert Butler, National institute of aging

The important types of exercise

- Strength training
- Stability
- Cardiovascular
- Mobility

The most important factor is that you enjoy the exercise that you do so you keep doing it. If you don't enjoy a certain type of exercise, don't worry, focus on the exercises you do enjoy, to stay active.

Exercise and programming

Exercising each day is important. Whether it's several 5 minute bursts or an exercise class; moving helps the joints. When beginning to design your own exercise programme these are the fundamental principles to adhere to:

F	I	T	T
Frequency (How often you exercise) 2-3 times a week	Intensity (How hard you work) Low to moderate (maximum 7/10)	Time (How long you exercise for) 30-45 minutes	Type (The exercises you do) Strength, flexibility, cardiovascular

- **Frequency** is a vital principle, as improvements will come from consistent exercise over a period of weeks/months. When trying to make new habits around exercise, frequency is the place to start: even if you can't yet exercise for long periods, if you regularly find a slot in your day for physical activity, you can build up the minutes later!
- **Motivation** is what gets you started, using techniques such as goal setting, which we discuss later in the journal, will help to keep you motivated
- **Pacing** is key, working at your own pace and listening to your body is so important. If you need rest, rest
- **Periodisation** Only exercising once a month wont see significant improvements in your symptoms. But, exercising too much could see flare ups, increased pain and joint degeneration. Every time you exercise, your body will want some time to adapt. An example would be when your thigh

- muscles feel stiff after cycling and need to rest, you can use that time to exercise another body part or type of training. Your "frequency" can remain regular, without you over-training a particular body part or exercise-type
- **Intensity** is important to bear in mind – you do not need to over do it! It is better to work at your own pace and not compete with anybody else. 'Low to moderate' exercising is an intensity where you are sweating, but still able to maintain a conversation
- **Time** is another important principle, but one that you can build up towards. Even doing 5 minutes initially will still provide some benefit.

Should you feel stiff when you wake up, light cardio work to get the blood moving around the body in conjunction with active stretching will help to alleviate the initial stiffness.





Let's see what a weekly exercise routine may look like:

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Gym programme	Rest	Yoga class	Rest	Home workout/ swimming	Rest	Long walk

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday

Daily routine

Active stretching for 5-10 minutes	
Noon: walk	
Afternoon: exercise	
Evening: stretch	

Sleep and wake time

11pm	
6am	

Goal setting

Setting goals will create a personal ‘destination’ for you to work towards and a clear path to get you there.

Goals provide both long term vision and short-term motivation; they allow you to work on areas of development, whilst also organising your time and resources efficiently.

By setting clearly defined goals, you can measure and take pride in achievements once complete, and you’ll see continuous progress in what might have previously seemed unachievable. Recording and monitoring your goals helps you to plan realistic and achievable targets that can be adapted to ensure they work for you.



Goals should be set on several different levels, both short and long term.

First identify the long-term goals that you want to achieve. This may be a year or more away.

Break these down into smaller goals that you must hit to reach your longer-term ones. Think about the things you would want to achieve in the next six months, three months, next month, next week or today.

Keep operational goals small keep the short-term goals that you’re working towards small and achievable. If a goal is too large, then it can seem that you are not progressing towards it.

State each goal as a positive statement Express your goals positively. “Perform this exercise technique well” is a much better sounding goal than “Don’t make this exercise look stupid”.



Taking the SMART route to planning activity goals

For you to create your personal goals, it is important you follow the SMART structure.



Planning my SMART activity goals

Fill in the template below with your very own SMART goals and use the example to help you be clear and specific.



	Consider	Example	Description of goal		
Specific	Who, what, where and when?	I will do more physical activity by doing at least 10,000 steps a day on Friday and Saturday next week. I will review and re-plan on Sunday evening.	1	2	3
Measurable	How much, how many?	I will use my phone/a pedometer to record my step count.	1	2	3
Achievable	Can you do it? Is it out of reach?	I will make sure I have good walking shoes, and will choose a longer route when walking the dogs.	1	2	3
Realistic	Is this realistic?	Yes, this goal is realistic as I walk my dog every day.	1	2	3
Time-bound	When will you review?	I want to achieve this goal within 12 weeks.	1	2	3

Perceptions of pain

Pain is unpleasant and it is a complex biological mechanism that is influenced by many factors:

The definition of pain:

“ An unpleasant sensory and emotional experience associated with actual or potential tissue damage, or described in terms of such damage. ”

Pain is individual and specific to a person. No person's pain is identical to the next. In the 'what is pain?' video we talked about pain being the experience of an unpleasant sensation, as perceived by your brain. This requires a vast quantity of messages travelling through nerves to your brain before being experienced. This message-passing can be influenced at many points along the way before being interpreted by your brain. It is important to appreciate that what is experienced is not just the product of some tissue damage, but a lot of other factors.

Previous experiences

Previous negative experiences of injury/pain can increase fear and reduce confidence in the injured/painful area, perhaps leading us to fear the worst with new sensations during activity.

Medical conditions

A number of chronic medical conditions can make you more sensitive to pain.

Genes

We know that there are some genetic factors that play a part in someone's vulnerability to pain, inherited from family members.

Medication

Certain medications can form part of the problem: prolonged codeine use can cause a heightened sensitivity to pain. Paracetamol, if taken regularly over a period of time can be responsible for chronic headaches.

Emotions

Emotional wellbeing is influenced by a number of factors such as social support-systems, general health, and mood (eg, depression). The relationship between this and pain is complicated, as the presence of longstanding pain will understandably affect your mood: this can form a vicious circle.

Sleep

Sleep quality is an often-overlooked aspect of pain tolerance. Many people with chronic pain will also report that they are chronic poor sleepers, and most of us know that a bad night's sleep can make us much less resilient in general.

These factors can lead to a situation where at the site of a healed injury, pain is experienced continually.

Physical activity will bring a number of benefits to chronic pain and musculoskeletal problems, however it is inevitable that it will bring a few new aches and pains! One example would be the muscular aches people experiences in the hours to days after a new activity. This is known as DOMS (Delayed Onset Muscle Soreness). A lot of people who are regular exercisers consider it a sign of a good workout!

Over a few sessions, and with the help and support of your Rehabilitation Specialist and class-mates, you will get to experience, explore and better interpret your body's messaging system, and learn which "pain" really needs your attention, versus pains which represent your body adapting to new activities.

While the focus of this programme is your musculoskeletal problems, which may be localised to one part of your body, we ultimately want you to be healthier overall – meaning an improvement in your physical and mental well-being as that will help to reduce your pain.

That being said, none of these risk factors guarantee that you will experience chronic pain. They do not write your destiny or remove your control of your situation. An important aspect of your pain management is realising how much choice and control you still have, even if there are obstacles to overcome... feeling a lack of control of your situation is itself a risk factor for experiencing greater pain!



Changes with age

Age and time both have effects on the body, many of which can increase the likelihood of experiencing musculoskeletal pain.

75% of people aged over 65 report frequent pain from arthritis and other conditions. However, we still have control over many of the factors that contribute to this.

Age can have some direct effects on the musculoskeletal system. Bone density tends to reduce steadily with age, and at its worst can lead to osteoporosis, and bones that are prone to fracture and injury. This process can be resisted with exercise, diet and other lifestyle choices such as avoiding smoking and minimising alcohol.

As a result, exercise is even more important as we age, despite the common misconception that we should decrease our exercise levels as we get older.

Chronic medical conditions

Statistically, we tend to accumulate these through life. Medical conditions can make us more sensitive to pain, and provide some hurdles to physical activity... but these are hurdles we want to help you overcome. Physical activity will often improve that list of medical conditions, and perhaps even cut down the need for medications.

Hormones

In females, the menopause causes multiple changes through the body. It can accelerate the loss of bone density and development of osteoporosis. It is also associated with muscle loss and potentially reducing the capacity for exercise. Men go through a less abrupt

hormonal change as they age where testosterone levels lower, often linked to other health problems. This leads to greater pain-sensitivity, loss of muscle, and accumulation of body fat. Exercise can help combat these changes, and potentially address any underlying health conditions.

Mental well-being

Ageing can lead to many psychological and social changes that can reduce your confidence around physical exertion. The factors above have the potential to affect mental well-being. Through physical activity, we can prove what you're really capable of, regaining confidence and independence... it's in your hands!



Flare ups and pain management

Longstanding pain inevitably affects mood, increasing negative thoughts and anxiety. This chronic stress can reduce your ability to concentrate and perform and you may blame it for things you haven't been able to do in your life. Pain also interferes with sleep, which is essential for your robustness and ability to cope with other challenges in life. This can create a vicious cycle.

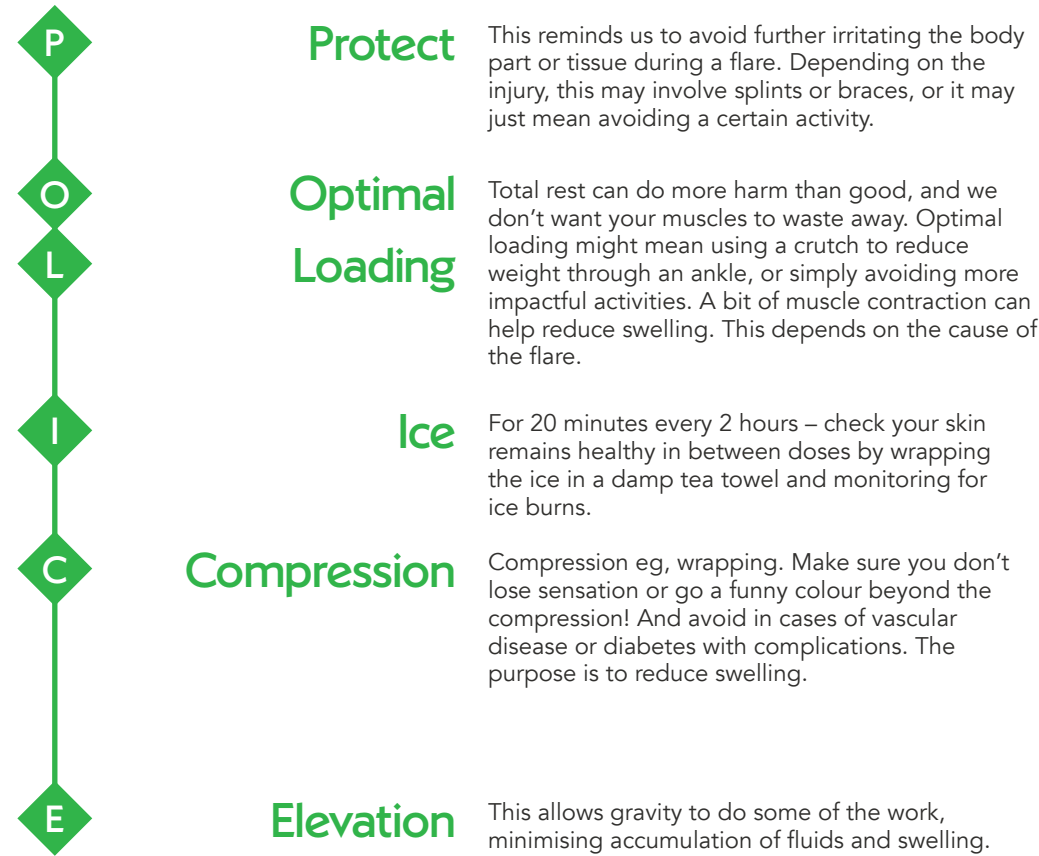
There is no shame in acknowledging the effect pain may be having on you... in fact that can be an important step to addressing those effects and minimising any negative impact.

A "flare up" refers to a temporary increase in your symptoms and pain that you experience in relation

to your underlying condition. In contrast, it is also possible to develop a new problem or injury, for example someone with rheumatoid arthritis can still sprain a ligament in their ankle.

When considering how you are going to manage a "flare up", it's important to be confident in what you're dealing with. Is it just the sort of "bad day" you've dealt with before, or is it more severe? Or longer-lasting? Are the joints swollen and puffy? Have you lost the range of motion or strength in the area of the pain? Are there other symptoms such as temperatures or feeling unwell? If something is out of the ordinary for your usual "flares" keep an open mind and consult your health-care professional.

Assuming we are simply dealing with a “flare up”, such as troublesome knees after a day of walking, there are some simple measures you can use to calm things back down: remember **POLICE!**



Traditionally, people have been inclined to use heat to manage pain. This can be helpful for certain circumstances such as muscle spasm in relation to lower back or neck pain, but in cases of tissues that have been over-used lately, ice is better for recovery. Ice is also preferable in cases of new injury such a sprained ankle.

Finally, depending on your condition and experience, there may be some medications that help you with flare ups. This could range from simple paracetamol to strong prescription medications. Some families of medications target certain types of pain eg, inflammatory, neurological. There are side effects, even to medications you can buy over the counter like ibuprofen. If you're unsure, it's worth speaking to your health-professional.

Weight management

Excess weight is one of the biggest contributors to joint pain and associated health risks. Maintaining a healthy body weight is one of the key ways to reduce pain and disease risk factors.

There are a number of reasons to maintain a healthy weight, aside from musculoskeletal health. Can you think of 5?

On the right is a list of conditions linked to poor weight management: *circle any that surprise you!*

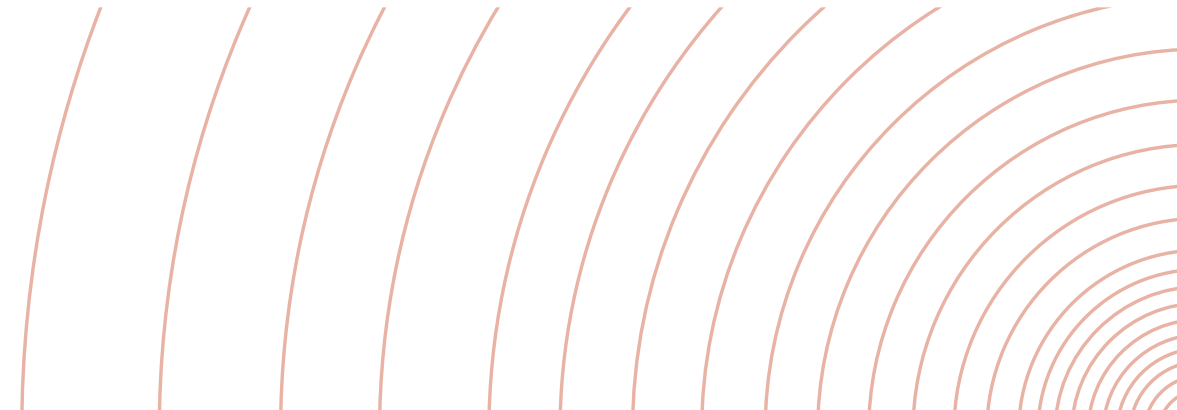
Every extra kilo of bodyweight leads to 4 kilos more load at the knees; so, imagine what a couple of stone feels like.

Excess body fat is not just a passive weight, but is also responsible for higher levels of pro-inflammatory chemicals which can exacerbate any existing joint problems.

Higher weights are also associated with osteoarthritis due to the increased pressure through joints. Even in cases of joint pain not related to osteoarthritis, increased weight will make the stress and damage worse.

By reducing excess bodyweight through exercise and a healthy diet, not only will you experience less joint pain, but your risk of developing associated diseases also decreases.

Increased risk of:
Cardiovascular disease
Diabetes
Stroke
Cancer
Depression
Sleep apnoea
Reduced libido
Indigestion issues
Dementia
Joint pain



Rest and recovery



As you make some changes to your activity levels, it is important that you listen to your body, as you will have some new sensations – good and bad.

Whilst some of these sensations are a sign of the good you are doing, it is possible to “over-do” it, meaning that you have done more training in a short space of time than your body can adapt to. Below are the signs and symptoms to look out for, to indicate whether you should be resting, or using active recovery:

Rest: Zero activity

- ♦ Severe flare ups
- ♦ Progressively worse joint pain with more exercise
- ♦ Additional symptoms such as joint swelling.

Recovery: Remaining active but reducing intensity and level of activity completed

- ♦ Mild aches and pains
- ♦ Delayed Onset Muscle Soreness (DOMS)
- ♦ Joint stiffness, that lessens with activity.

Sleeping better

Why can't I sleep? Joint pain can have a number of negative impacts on sleep. Sleep can be disrupted by many physical symptoms and pain.

Worrying about your health can cause difficulty falling asleep or can wake you up in the middle of the night. Low mood can make it more difficult to fall asleep or get enough sleep, and can also make your sleep less restorative, so you wake up feeling tired. Excessive anger and frustration can also make it difficult to relax enough for proper sleep. Sleep

disruptions can have a negative impact on your recovery. Fatigue due to inadequate sleep can worsen symptoms. When you are feeling exhausted, it can be more difficult to motivate yourself to engage in self-care.

What does good sleep look like?

Good quality sleep results in you waking with a “refreshed” feeling, and experiencing good levels of well-being and performance through the day. If this isn't the case, could any of the aspects noted in the box on the right, be responsible?



Regular “wind down” routine

Avoid stimulation for the last hour or so before bed

Bright light to the retina is particularly bad here

Avoid any intense exercise close to bed-time

Make it consistent

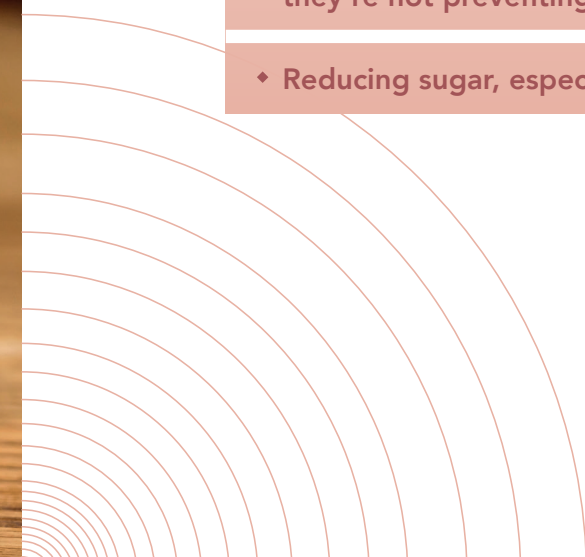
Sleeping environment, light-free room

Fresh air and ventilation.



Tricks of the trade for sleeping better:

- ◆ Get outdoors while it is light
- ◆ Reduce light-levels through the evening
- ◆ Sometimes heat can have a wind-up effect; no really hot showers
- ◆ Caffeine: Can you cut down? Or reconsider your timing (none past 2pm)?
- ◆ Alcohol: Helps you drop off, but reduces overall sleep quality
- ◆ Keep your clock out of sight
- ◆ Naps: they work for some people, but just check they're not preventing you from being tired a bedtime
- ◆ Reducing sugar, especially later in the day.



This should result in sleep which is refreshing, recuperative, and sets you up for tomorrow's challenges!



For the joint pain programme, these tricks of the trade will help you make adaptations to your exercise (improving strength and co-ordination) and improve your ability to cope with change, and ultimately experience less pain.

Rate your sleep regime from 0 (poor) to 10 (excellent):	
What three things would make the biggest improvement to your sleep regime?	
Within your lifestyle, how do you think you could go about implementing these three aspects of healthy sleep?	



Healthy eating and diet

Although the focus of this programme is your joint pain, your general health is most important.

There are some specific dietary considerations in certain musculoskeletal conditions, however, it is more important that you eat for general health first. A healthy diet helps keep your cardiovascular system in good condition, improves your immune system and will help to maintain a healthy musculoskeletal system.

As discussed previously, maintaining a healthy body weight is vital for reducing joint pain, controlling your portion size following the advice on the next page can help this.

What are my foods made from?

Proteins, carbohydrates and fats

Proteins, carbohydrates and fats are nutrients that your body can use to release energy. Proteins are the ‘building-blocks’ of our body, allowing us to create new muscle and repair damaged tissue. Carbohydrates are our body’s main fuel supply, and fats are an alternative energy supply and are vital for cell function. Don’t be scared of fats or carbs as they are necessary to keep you healthy.

Vitamins and minerals

Vitamins and minerals cannot be used for energy but are no less important. These are generally consumed in small amounts but have essential jobs around the body eg, helping your blood clot when it needs to and conducting messages to your heart muscle, allowing your cells to transport nutrients to the right place. But you generally won’t see a pile of them on your plate!

Hydration

Water is essential for maintaining normal metabolism and recovery. Aim to have 6-8 glasses of water. This may go up with exercise and hot weather. Decaffeinated coffee and tea counts towards this. Try to limit fruit juice or smoothies to 150ml daily, because of their high sugar content which can damage teeth.

My shopping list:

✓ Good carbohydrates:

Porridge oats, wholegrain cereals, wholemeal bread and pasta, brown rice, sweet potatoes.

✓ Lean proteins:

Chicken, lean meat, fish, eggs, milk, kidney beans, nuts, seeds, lentils, quinoa, tofu, greek yogurt and cottage cheese.

✓ Healthy fats:

Olive oil, oily fish, plant-based spreads, avocados, soya beans, almonds, brazils, walnuts, flaxseeds.

✓ Fruit and vegetables:

Aim to eat a rainbow, different coloured fruit and vegetables provide different vitamins and minerals. Examples are leafy green vegetables, broccoli, carrots, red peppers, tomatoes, bananas, blueberries, citrus fruit.

To help look after your heart health it is important to make sure you choose the right type of fats. By reading food labels you will learn more about the fat content of different foods. To help keep your heart healthy:

- Replace saturated fats with small amounts of mono and polyunsaturated fats
- Cut down on foods containing trans fats.
- It’s also important to remember that all fats and oils are high in calories, so even the unsaturated fats should only be used in small amounts.

Unsaturated fats:

Unsaturated fats, which can be monounsaturated fats (for example olive oil, rapeseed oil, almonds, unsalted cashews and avocado) or polyunsaturated fats (including sunflower oil and vegetable oil, walnuts, sunflower seeds and oily fish) are a healthier choice.

✗ Saturated fat:

Too much saturated fat can increase the amount of cholesterol in the blood, which can increase the risk of developing coronary heart disease. Saturated fats are typically high in processed foods and animal products (meat and dairy).

✗ Trans fats:

Another type of fat, known as trans-fat, can also raise the amount of cholesterol in the blood. Examples are cakes, fried foods and margarine.



Once your diet is good for your overall health, we can make the small adjustments that consider musculoskeletal problems more specifically.

If you find that your joint pain is diet sensitive, speak to your health-care professional about further exploring dietary options in musculoskeletal conditions.

Because the effects of the below changes are very person and condition-specific, it may be worth trying them one at a time, to see which ones really have a positive impact for you. During any period of experimentation, it is worth keeping a symptom diary to help you interpret results.

To include:

Fish: rich in Omega-3 which has anti-inflammatory properties, as well as contributing to cardiovascular health.

Green tea: for the anti-oxidant effects, but beware this tea is caffeinated.

Broccoli and kale: the stars of the fresh fruit and veg show, which provides an array of vitamins and their anti-oxidant effects.

Cherries: are more specifically linked with improvement in gout control.

Ginger, turmeric, garlic: Turmeric in particular is long-linked with anti-inflammatory effects.

Walnuts, pine-nuts, pistachios, almonds, flax and chia seeds: providing anti-inflammatory Omega-3, as well as being healthy sources of calcium, protein, healthy oils, magnesium, and vitamin E.

To minimise:

Sugar, refined carbohydrates and white flour: simple/refined sugars are quick release energy that can spike your blood sugar and insulin levels, which can cause low grade inflammation, high levels of intake long term will increase your risk of developing type 2 diabetes.

Salt: as well as contributing to a number of other health conditions (blood-pressure, kidney health etc) high salt intake can lead to water retention and swelling, as well as causing you to lose more calcium that could be used to keep bones strong.

Fried food: (and other unhealthy sources of fats like processed red meat): can be a source of omega-6 which can cause inflammation.

Alcohol: can be high in refined carbohydrates (see above) as well as purines which can drive gout and potentially complicate osteoarthritis. Alcohol can also negatively impact your general health and weight management.

Portion control and a balanced diet

The healthy eating plate

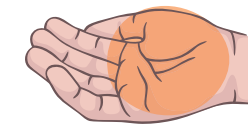
It's important to bear in mind the volume of food you eat, you can have too much of something good. If we consume more energy than we use this leads to weight gain, which as discussed can impact your joint pain. Below are some example portion sizes that you should aim to stick to:



A serving of protein = 1 palm



A serving of vegetables = 1 fist



A serving of carbs = 1 cupped hands



A serving of fats = 1 thumb



Food labels

Understanding what and how much we're eating is really important to help and support with our general health, but the labels that provide this information on foods can seem daunting and confusing, let's have a look at one that's found on the back of most food packaging:

% RI shows you what percentage of each nutrient/energy is consumed when you eat this specific food, according to the serving size, which in this case is 25g, be careful though, this serving size can often be deceiving and it's easier for you to eat more than one serving!

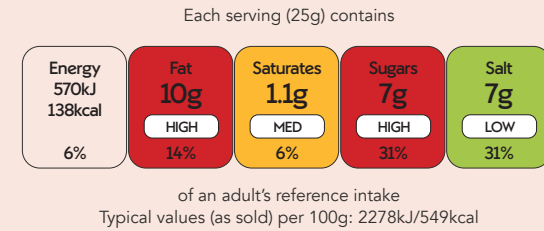
You can see the main nutrients listed, which are proteins, carbohydrates and fats, with extra information such as energy, fibre and salt. Energy is shown as both kilojoules (kJ) and kilocalories, commonly shortened to calories (kcal).

Nutrition				
Typical Values	100g contains	Each serving (25g) contains	% RI*	RI* for an average adult
Energy	2278 kJ 594 kcal	570 kJ 138 kcal	6%	8400 kJ 2000 kcal
Fat of which saturates	40.3g 4.5g	10.0g 1.1g	14% 6%	70g 20g
Carbohydrate of which sugars	33.1g 27.9g	8.2g 7.0g	8%	90g
Fibre	11.5g	2.8g		
Protein	7.8g	2.0g		
Salt	0.03g	0.02g	<1%	6g

This pack contains (n) servings
*Reference intake of an average adult (8400kJ/2000kcal)

'Reference intake' (RI) is the amount of energy/nutrient that an average adult needs each day for their daily function, it's important to remember though that this is an average and the true number varies person to person.

Labels are also provided on the front of food packaging to give you a quick glance snapshot of what a food contains:



These labels also display the quantity of each nutrient consumed per serving, and it uses a traffic light system to give a quick, visual indication as to how healthy the quantity of a specific nutrient is to consume.

Nutrients that are green shows the intake provided in the serving is low, amber shows the intake is medium levels for the serving, and red shows high levels for the serving. Looking at the example, with fat & sugar both being high intake for the serving size, it may be best to look for an alternative or only have once every so often.

Energy stays in a white box, but it's useful to look at the percentage of daily intake within the box to give you an idea of how much of your daily energy consumption is used up with this food. Using the example, with 6% of your daily energy being consumed with 25g portion of food, it may be worthwhile looking for something else, for comparison, a typical banana weighs 110g grams but contains just under 100 calories.

Healthy foods and choices are really important for our overall health, but it's okay to have high energy foods on occasion!



Focusing on your mental health

Experiencing chronic joint pain can impact on your emotional health as well as your physical health. Understanding more about your mind and emotions can help you better manage your symptoms.

The impact on your emotional health is wide ranging and symptoms can include:

Anxiety	Social problems
Depression	Loneliness
Sleep problems	Body image
Fatigue	Anger and frustration
Pain	Low confidence or self esteem
Stigma and shame	

It is not unusual to experience feelings of low mood (depression or sadness), anxiety (worry, fear) or stress when you have joint pain or a related condition.

Ongoing symptoms of fatigue and sleep disruption can further impact your mood and sense of self and you may find it difficult to do things that you would like to or could previously do more easily eg, exercise. These are understandable reactions which for some people can start to cause difficulties in themselves.

Within this section of the journal, we will consider these difficulties and look at techniques to better manage your emotional wellbeing. You will be able to discuss these with your Rehabilitation Specialist.

Mood changes

Mood changes are very common, especially feeling low or depressed or anxious and worried. Many people also feel overwhelmed. Its not uncommon to become more withdrawn or isolated or to feel frustrated, resentful or angry. Many people report feeling 'broken' or like they have become a different person. We will be exploring mood changes in more depth throughout this journal.

Adjusting to change

Experiencing changes to your body, can be a significant life adjustment, and it's normal to feel upset or even confused, or to have strong emotions of many kinds.

Emotional adjustment can also remind us of difficulties we have had in the past, such as previous traumas, losses or adjustments. It is very common for some current events to bring up the same emotions we have felt in the past about other situations. If you are experiencing difficulties with intrusive memories or nightmares, contact your GP for advice.

Loneliness

Many people with joint paint report feeling lonely. There are lots of different reasons for that. Some people feel they can't socialise with friends and family in ways they would like to. This can be because they feel they cant contribute enough to social situations, or that pain gets in the way. Many people also feel they don't want to share vulnerable feelings with friends and family through fear of upsetting them, being a burden or being seen as weak.

What are the signs of loneliness?

It can be hard to know when you're feeling lonely. Many people with joint paint may have these feelings and not realise they are signs of loneliness. However, noticing these difficult emotions may help you to find ways to deal with them:

- Constantly feeling tired
- Feeling easily rejected
- Getting very upset in disproportion to the situation
- Feeling depressed
- Feeling hopeless.



How has joint pain impacted on my emotional health?

Write down any changes you have noticed or your thoughts and feelings in the following areas:

MOOD	SOCIAL INTERACTIONS
SLEEP	BODY IMAGE
RELATIONSHIPS	PHYSICAL SENSATIONS

Introducing the '4 Corners of Me'

Within this programme we will be looking at different aspects of your emotional wellbeing

We will be using a model that looks at how your thoughts, emotions, physical feelings and behaviours are connected and related to what is going on around you.

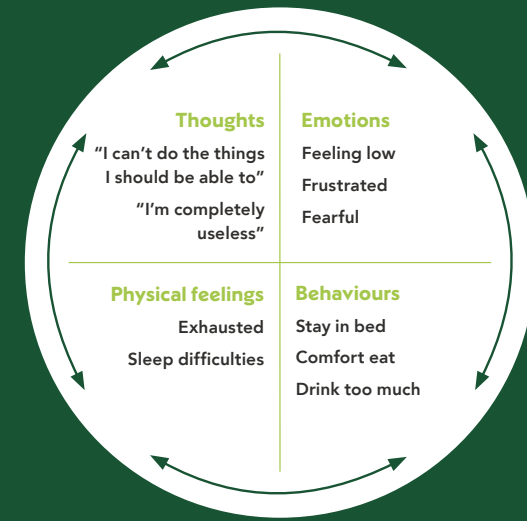
This model can help you make sense of overwhelming problems by breaking them down into smaller parts. Problems are broken down into '4 Corners of Me':



The model is based on the concept of these '4 Corners' being interconnected and affecting each other. For example, your thoughts about a certain situation can often affect how you feel both physically and emotionally, as well as how you act in response.

The interaction between these '4 Corners' can be helpful and work to support your wellbeing and condition management. Sometimes, however, when you have experienced chronic joint pain, unhelpful patterns can develop which can get in the way of your progress.

Look at the two examples illustrated. Which example most closely resembles your approach to starting this programme?



Unhelpful response



Helpful response

Understanding my own connections

What are your current thoughts, emotions, behaviours and physical feelings about starting this programme?

Thoughts – What thoughts come into your mind about life now? What are you saying to yourself?

Emotions – What emotions or moods do you experience when you think about life now?

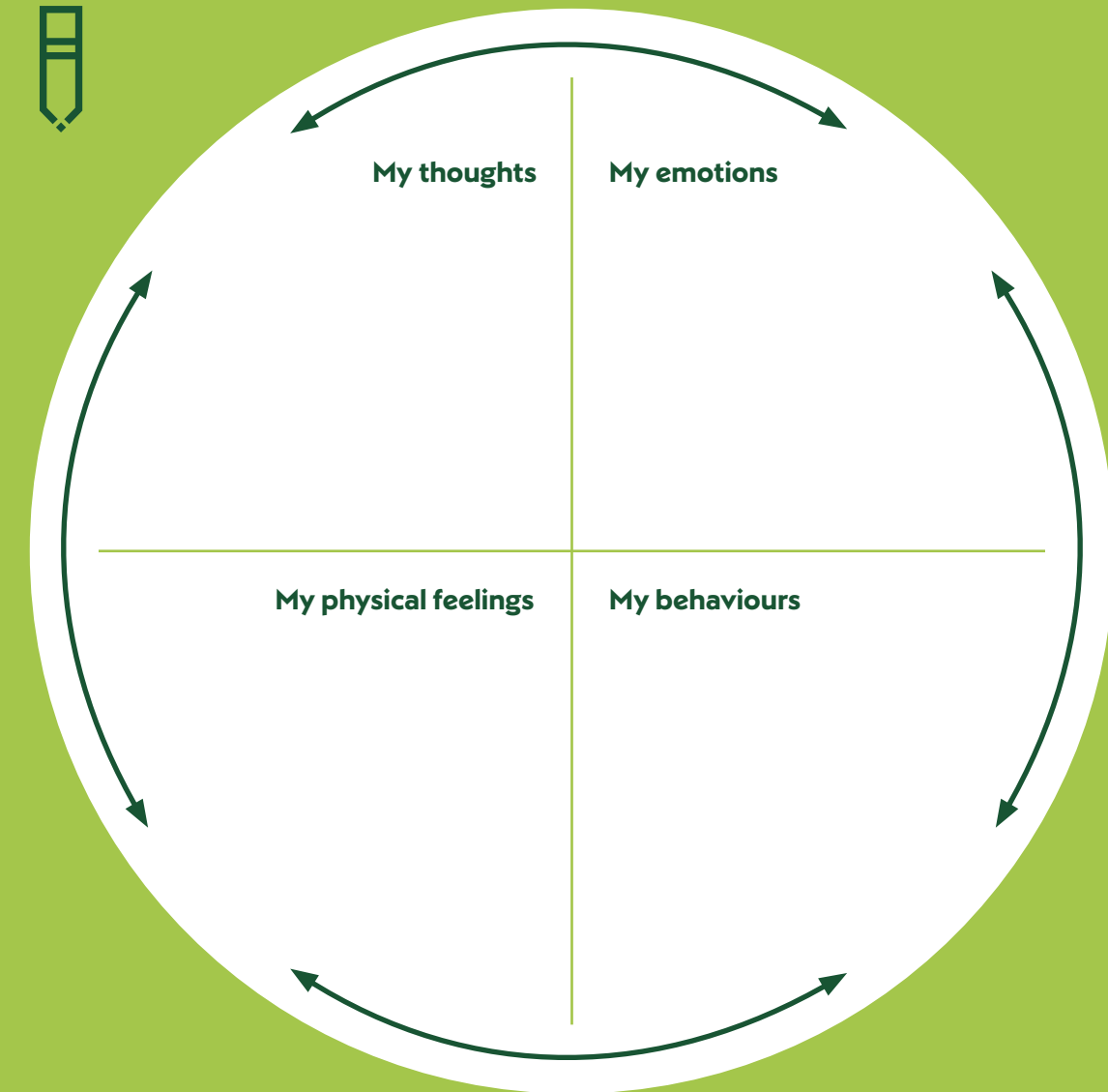
Behaviours – Has your behaviour changed due to joint pain? If so, what's different?

Physical feelings/symptoms – What physical symptoms are most obvious when you think about starting on this programme?

Think about how these four areas interact:

- How does the way you think affect how you feel emotionally?
- How does the way you behave affect your physical feelings?
- How does your emotion impact on your behaviour?
- How do your physical symptoms affect your mood?

Understanding these connections is a great way to help identify any unhelpful cycles, which you can work on with your Rehabilitation Specialist using the exercises within this journal.



Mood changes

Research shows that mood changes are very common when experiencing chronic joint pain and related conditions.

Many people experience stress or anxiety or can become fearful or restless in response to chronic joint pain. This is a normal and understandable response.

Anxiety and fear can stop people from engaging in healthy behaviours which promote wellbeing such as becoming more active, or connect socially.

Symptoms of anxiety

Anxiety can be triggered when we are dealing with difficult situations and managing joint pain presents many challenges. Most commonly anxiety is experienced in response to changes in heart rate or breathing faster, often alongside worry. Common symptoms include:



Behaviours

You may find yourself avoiding situations you associate with anxiety preferring to 'hide away'. You may find yourself seeking reassurance more from others and doing things that make you feel 'safe'.



Thoughts

Anxiety often presents with negative thought processes such as 'Something bad is going to happen'. You may think there is something really wrong with you or that you'll make a fool of yourself.



Physical

You may experience restlessness, a racing heartbeat, perspiration, nausea, shakiness, rapid breathing, dizziness and more frequent visits to the toilet.



Emotions

You may feel worry, dread, fear, panic or embarrassment more easily and often.



Anxiety and joint pain

Changes in heart rate (beat) and breathing are common when you have anxiety. These physical changes can be stressful and frustrating. Sometimes they can lead to feeling fearful or panicky and can trigger something called the fight or flight response. This is explained in more detail in the chapter on understanding stress on page 39.

After a period of ill health, you are also more likely to focus on body sensations, and anxious thoughts relating to your health. Focusing on body sensation can cause you to develop a heightened awareness of any body changes, including perfectly natural changes such as your heart rate increasing when you are more active. These anxious thoughts can develop into unhelpful cycles which increase anxiety and can even lead to panic attacks.

It is also very easy to mistake anxiety or panic symptoms as signs of serious ill health, such as thinking you are having a cardiac event making you feel even more anxious and locking you into unhelpful cycles.

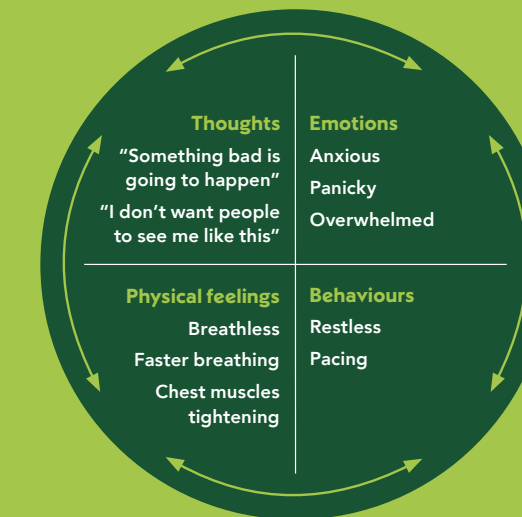
"Tell yourself firmly, I am going to be okay."

How can I tell if I'm experiencing panic?

- Intense fear and anxiety that usually comes on fairly suddenly but goes down after a short time
- Strong thoughts that something bad is about to happen, accompanied with physical symptoms such as increased heart rate, perspiration, shakiness and light headedness.

The 4 Corners model can help you to understand the mind – body – mood connection and how anxiety can become a vicious cycle. Practicing breathing techniques, managing your stressful thoughts and relaxation can help with managing anxiety and breaking any unhelpful patterns.

Unhelpful response



Helpful thoughts to combat my anxiety

Getting caught up in unhelpful thinking patterns can increase anxiety. It may be useful to try some helpful thoughts. Here are a few suggestions you could try. Write down any of your own that you find helpful in the box below.

- **This difficult time will pass**
- **Even though I feel anxious I can cope**
- **Anxiety symptoms are unpleasant but not dangerous**
- **Nothing awful is going to happen**
- **I'm going to be okay.**

Understanding stress

Understanding and managing stress is one of the most important things that you can do to improve your joint pain and build a healthy future.

Life can be stressful, and everyone gets stressed sometimes. A moderate amount of stress can even be helpful but too much can be unpleasant and can be damaging to your health. High stress levels are linked to unhealthy lifestyles and behaviours which in turn impact on joint pain and related conditions. It can also make any health condition that you may have feel worse. When your body is under stress, it releases chemicals that can trigger inflammation and pain. So you might be more likely to have flare-ups when you're feeling stress.

Importantly, stress can change how you experience pain and often increases your perception of pain. Stress can also impact on your coping abilities and cause you to feel less able to handle your pain and more easily overwhelmed by it. Learning about stress and how to manage it can be an important part of your programme. It can improve your physical and mental health and improve your life satisfaction.

What is stress

Stress can mean different things to different people, but it is usually used to describe the demands placed upon you (work, home, family, challenging life events etc) and the way your body and mind respond to those demands. You are more likely to become stressed when you perceive that you are unable to cope with challenging situations in life or the demands placed upon you. It can be a feeling of being overwhelmed or under pressure.

Causes of stress

There are many different causes of stress. It is usually caused by events or situations in your life. It can be difficult to identify exactly what's causing your stress as it could be a build-up of lots of little events, or one big one.

Examples of different causes of stress or 'stressors':

Environmental

- Weather
- Traffic, parking or crowds
- Noise and light levels

Physical

- Physical injuries
- Health difficulties

Social

- Relationships with friends and family
- Working and professional relationships

Financial

- Lack of a stable income
- Worry about paying bills

Daily difficulties

- Problems with technology not working
- Juggling appointments

Major life events

- Loss of a loved one
- Loss of a job

Change

- Changes to your work role or circumstances

Thinking styles

- Ruminating over past events.

How we respond to stress

The effect that stressors have on you is called your 'stress response'.

- You might have also heard of it as being called the 'fight or flight' response, or perhaps the 'fight, flight or freeze' response
- When you are faced with a stressor your body tries to prepare you for actions, as if you are under physical threat
- Your body responds with a series of physical changes that prepare you to either 'fight' an aggressor or flee from a harmful situation
- A key point to remember is that your body responds to 'imagined threats' in the same way that it responds to actual threats. For example, if you picture a worst-case scenario or have a 'catastrophising' thinking style your body is more likely to activate a stress response
- Your body can also activate a strong physical stress response to mental threats, such as missing a deadline or money worries
- The stress response is really helpful if you are actually in physical danger, but if you are feeling overwhelmed by life's demands it can be highly unpleasant
- If you don't understand what is happening in your body, it can even be quite frightening and even lead to panic attacks
- It can also be unhelpful. This is because all of your physical resources are directed towards evaluating and escaping danger rather than to more helpful thinking processes such as problem solving, planning and prioritisation.

You are more likely to experience a physical response to stress if you let stressors build up or become overwhelming before taking action. By learning how to identify and manage stress you can hugely benefit your health and how you manage any health conditions.

Fight or flight response

Thoughts racing

Quicker thinking helps us to evaluate danger and make rapid decisions. It can be very difficult to concentrate on anything apart from the danger (or escape route) when the fight or flight response is active.

Changes to vision

Vision can become acute so that more attention can be paid to danger. You might notice 'tunnel vision' or vision becoming 'sharper'.

Dry mouth

The mouth is part of the digestive system. Digestion shuts down during dangerous situations as energy is diverted towards the muscles.

Nausea and 'butterflies'

In the stomach, blood is diverted away from the digestive system which can lead to feelings of nausea or 'butterflies'.

Hands get cold

Blood vessels in the skin contract to force blood towards major muscle groups.

Breathing becomes quicker and shallower

Quicker breathing takes in more oxygen to power the muscles. This makes the body more able to fight or run away.

Dizzy or lightheaded

If we don't exercise (eg, run away or fight) to use up the extra oxygen then we can quickly start to feel dizzy or lightheaded.

Adrenal glands release adrenaline

The adrenaline quickly signals another part of the body to get ready to respond to danger.

Bladder urgency

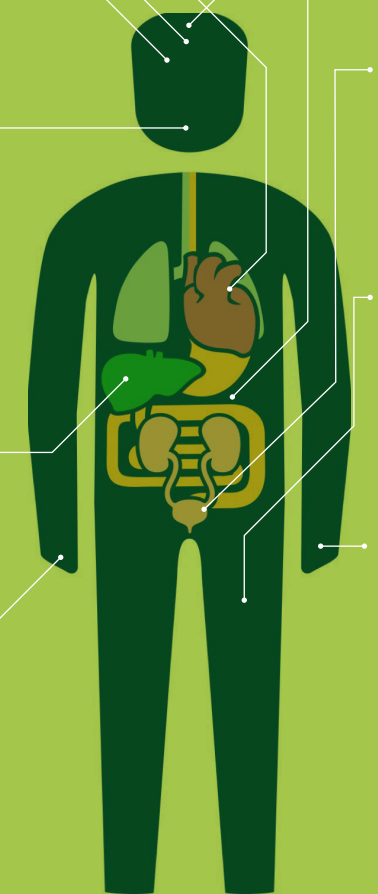
Muscles in the bladder sometimes relax in response to extreme stress.

Muscles tense

Muscles all over the body tense in order to get you ready to run away or fight. Muscles may also shake or tremble, particularly if you stay still, as a way of saying 'ready for action'.

Palms become sweaty

When in danger, the body sweats to keep cool. A cool machine is an effective machine, so sweating makes the body more likely to survive a dangerous event.



Managing stress

There are many things you can do to manage stress. Stress management techniques will help you improve your physical and mental health.

Different things work for different people. The good news is that there are plenty of different things you can try. Learning any new skill will often take time and practice. It might take several attempts to learn and practice before you notice any benefits.

This is completely normal and does not mean that you are not 'getting it right' or that it won't work for you. Be patient, keep practising and don't give up.

Knowing your stress levels

Stress is different for everyone, and your response will depend on how you think about the events in your life, and how stressful you 'perceive' them to be. What is stressful for one person may not be stressful to another. Your response will depend upon how stressful you perceive a situation to be.

Don't forget, positive life events such as having a baby, getting a promotion or moving house can all be stressful, even when you planned for them to happen.

To manage stress, it is helpful to understand what stressors are coming into your life and how these are balanced with helpful coping strategies. Identifying unhelpful coping strategies can also help you better manage stress.



Balancing my stress bucket

Once you have looked at what is in your stress bucket ask yourself the following questions?

- ◆ How do I feel about the demands in my stress bucket?
- ◆ What can I change?
- ◆ What can't I change?
- ◆ What needs to be my priority?
- ◆ Where can I get support and extra resources?
- ◆ What are some of my helpful coping strategies?
- ◆ What unhelpful coping strategies do I need to be aware of?
- ◆ Do I have a balance of stress coming in and out?
- ◆ How will I recognise if I am getting overloaded?



What's in my stress bucket?

Life events

Home and family

Social and relationships

Work

Overflow

Buffer zone

Stress zone

Relax and refresh

Positive coping strategies

eg, problem solving/worry management

Self care

Worry

Worry is a common symptom of anxiety and can occur at any time or place, often without you being aware of its exact triggers.

It can be very tiring and can interfere with your quality of life. Strategies to deal with this are 'effective problem solving' and 'worry postponement'. The chart on the right will help you to decide which strategy to use.



Is my worry important?



"By learning to postpone your worry, it will be less intrusive in your life and give you a greater sense of control"

Worry time: worry postponement

1. Create a worry zone

Choose a particular time, place and length of time for worrying. This should be the same everyday eg, 6pm, kitchen, 20 minutes.

- Make this place comfortable and free from distractions. Try not to choose somewhere you go regularly, like a lounge chair. Instead somewhere you assign for the worry period
- The time should be convenient and not close to bedtime. Note your worry zone below as a reminder.

My worry zone time:

Length of worry time:

Place:

2. Postpone your worry

As soon as you become aware of a worry, postpone it to the worry period.

- Note your worry briefly on a piece of paper (in a couple of words)
- Remind yourself that you will have time to think about it later, no need to worry about it now. You will be in a better position to deal with it in the worry period
- Turn your focus to the present moment and activities of the day. This will help let go of the worry until the worry period
- Finally, decide what is the most important thing you can do for yourself right now. Do something that is either practical, positive, pleasant or nurturing.

3. Come back to your worries at the delegated worry period

When your worry period comes around, settle yourself at the place you have planned and take some time to reflect on the worries you have written down from the day.

- Only worry about the things you have noted if you feel you must
- If all or some of the worries you wrote down are no longer bothering you or no longer seem relevant, then no further action is needed
- If you do need to worry about some of them, spend no longer than the set amount of time you specified for your worry period. Consider writing your thoughts on paper rather than worrying in your head.

Managing low mood and motivation

People experiencing issues related to joint pain often describe having times when they feel low or down.

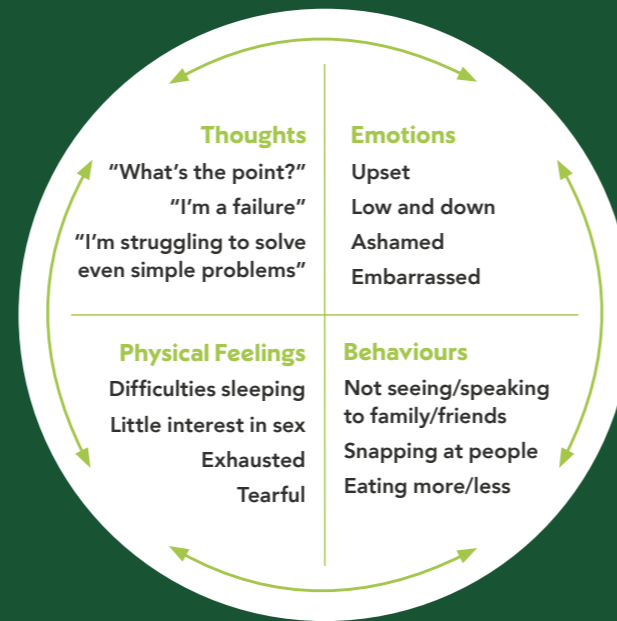
Everyone experiences low mood at times in their life. Low mood may be mild and only last a short time, with little impact on your life, or it may be more severe and hold you back from getting on with your life. People with joint pain often describe having times when they feel low or down. Sometimes those periods of low mood can become prolonged.

Your mood may be affected by frustrations about not being able to get on with daily activities, particularly if you are less motivated because of the difference between your expectations and what is achievable.

Mood, motivation and joint pain

Low mood and depression are common among people with chronic pain. Low mood can affect how you look after yourself and increase the risk of further ill health. If you are feeling depressed, you may be less motivated to follow healthy daily routines. You may skip important medication, avoid exercise and continue unhealthy behaviours such as smoking or drinking alcohol. Learning to manage your low mood is therefore an important part of your programme. Most commonly low mood is associated with a reduction in activities and also unhelpful thoughts.

The 4 Corners Of Me: **Unhelpful Cycle**
When I'm experiencing low mood



What keeps your mood low?

The way you think about yourself, how you spend your time and how you feel physically can all be affected by low mood. Changes in these areas can then lead to your mood worsening, creating a vicious circle. Events can sometimes build up and snowball to feel overwhelming. Look at the example above to see how this happens.

Activities to boost your mood

When people are feeling low, they often stop doing the things they used to do. This is especially the case when recovery feels overwhelming.

At first, doing less of certain things may help you feel better. You may feel relief around not picking up the phone to a friend or may feel better about not completing household tasks. Doing less of certain activities is a normal 'self-defence' type coping response, especially if you are already feeling exhausted and overwhelmed. Over time however you may find yourself doing less and less of these activities. In the long term, stopping doing certain activities, and withdrawing from social interaction can have a negative effect on your mood.

When you are living with joint pain, it can be really difficult to do certain activities and daily routines can seem overwhelming. So, it can be helpful to start off with doing just a little at a time. Planning activities can help you start to do things you may have stopped.

There are different types of activity that we do in our lives. It is important to find a balance of doing these types of activities, by setting small, realistic and manageable activity goals. Sometimes it can take several weeks of gradually increasing a balance of activities before you notice an improvement in your mood. Keep going – remember these things take time and practice.

EXAMPLES	
Body Care	Healthy breakfast – Early night
Achievements	Paid bills – Phoned the bank
Connections	Phoned my friend – Romantic dinner
Enjoyment	Watched a movie – Took some photos
Monday	
Tuesday	
Wednesday	
Thursday	
Friday	
Saturday	
Sunday	

How thoughts change your mood

Your mood may be affected by frustrations about not yet being able to return to your daily activities the way you would like to.

Unhelpful thoughts

When you are living with joint pain or are unable to do your usual activities thinking patterns can change and you may begin to have unhelpful thoughts. Unhelpful thoughts tend to be negative (about the self or the future) such as 'I'm useless' or 'I'll never get better', and they undermine rather than build self-confidence and demotivate rather than motivate. Look out for unhelpful thoughts that might be keeping you in that vicious circle. These can seem to pop into your head automatically so you have to work hard to notice them. You might recognise some of these styles of thinking when you feel low.

Look out for these unhelpful thoughts and ask yourself:

- Am I being fair to myself?
- What's the evidence that this is true?
- What's the evidence that it may not be entirely true?
- What would a friend say if I said that out loud?
- What would I say to my friend if they said that?
- Is there a more balanced way of thinking about this?

Taking stock

It may be helpful to keep a diary of events, feelings and thoughts. Use the approaches described to gain more balanced thoughts and look out for unhelpful thinking styles. We've given you an example below:

EVENT	
Example	<i>A neighbour ignored me</i>
FEELING OR EMOTION	
Example	<i>Low and depressed</i>
THOUGHTS IN YOUR MIND	
Example	<i>She doesn't like me – nobody does</i>
UNHELPFUL THINKING STYLE	
Example	<i>Jumping to conclusions</i>
MORE HELPFUL THOUGHTS	
Example	<i>She's probably got something on her mind She's usually friendly</i>

Unhelpful thinking styles





Managing loneliness and isolation

Many people who have joint pain can feel lonely or become socially isolated.

This can impact on both your physical and your mental health. Feeling lonely can also impact on your pain symptoms and make your pain feel worse.

Social isolation

People who are experiencing joint pain may find it more difficult to engage in all the activities that they would like to or used to. Sometimes it can be difficult to know how your pain levels will vary which can lead to cancelling pre-planned events at short notice. This can lead to frustration particularly if you were looking forward to spending time with others. Feeling isolated from others can enhance feelings of loneliness and can lead to unhelpful thoughts that you no longer have things in common with people or that people don't understand your situation.

You don't have to be alone to be lonely

Many of us can identify with how difficult it can feel to be lonely and it is likely that everyone has felt lonely at some point in their life. Sometimes you can be in a room full of people yet still feel a sense of loneliness even though you may be surrounded by friends and family. If you are experiencing feelings of loneliness it is important to remember that these feelings do not mean that there is anything wrong with you or your life or that you are broken.

Loneliness happens when there is a mismatch between how much connection you would like to have with others and how much you actually have. You can feel disconnected from others when people around you maybe don't understand you in the way you would like or need them to. Having joint pain or a chronic health condition can be hard for others to

understand what it is like to live with long term pain. Loneliness can also be a feeling that comes from life changes such as having to make changes because of your joint pain or other health problems which mean that life becomes different to how it used to be for you.

Loneliness has more to do with the *quality* of the connections you have with others rather than how many people you know or spend time with. Meaningful and authentic connections can protect you from feeling lonely and can prevent the disconnect that loneliness brings to your relationships with others.

When you're lonely it's easy to feel helpless, but there are lots of helpful actions you can take.



Get connected

Whilst having joint pain or a related health condition may limit what you can do physically at times, it doesn't have to stop you reaching out to others. You can take control of your loneliness and have meaningful and fulfilling relationships with others.

Finding new ways to interact with others is more helpful than blaming yourself for not being able to join in activities the way you used to. If you are struggling to go out as much as you would like find ways to have meaningful days or nights 'in' instead. Plan for those times where even if you have to cancel you can still participate in some way.

Make sure you stay in touch with others, in person, by phone or via social media.



Explore new hobbies or interests

If you have interests like art, cooking or sports, make an extra effort to make time for them, ideally in group settings, whenever possible.

Find out about local classes in your area or join a community group. Activities like this are a great way to meet people who share a common interest with you while also helping to take your mind off of your pain symptoms.

Talk to others about how you are feeling

A lot of the time when people feel lonely, they keep it to themselves and don't tell anyone. This is because they might be worried about what others will think or say. This fear of being judged can lead to unhelpful cycles of negative thinking that can make us feel even more alone.

The best first step you can take is to talk to someone. If you feel like you don't have anyone close to you, or are uncomfortable talking to friends or family, it might be worth talking to someone neutral.

Reach out

If loneliness is impacting on your wellbeing its important to reach out to services that can connect you with new people, communities or professional help.



If you are feeling lonely make a plan here for actions you can take to take control of your loneliness.



These are some people I can get in touch with	
This is someone I can open up to about how I am feeling	
These are hobbies and interests I can find out more about	
Here are some groups or classes I can join to meet others who share my interests	
Here are some volunteering opportunities I can explore	
Here are some organisations or support groups I can join for further help or support.	

Rebuilding my ‘sense of self’

Having joint pain can impact on your sense of self, including the way you see yourself, your self-confidence and your sense of identity.

Symptoms might include:

- ♦ **Lost confidence and trust in your own body – feeling ‘weak’ or ‘broken’**
- ♦ **Loss of control and relying on medication or walking aids**
- ♦ **Unable to engage in your previous activities**
- ♦ **Changes in your relationships and intimacy**
- ♦ **Struggling to adjust to doing less/fear of doing too much.**

Managing your self-worth when you have joint pain can feel like a mammoth task. You may not be able to do what you once did, you can easily lose faith in your abilities, and you don’t know what to do to feel better. You may feel like you have lost control and aren’t sure who you are anymore. It’s understandable that your confidence takes a nosedive, and your self-worth quickly follows.

There are however, a number of things you can do to rebuild your sense of self and increase your confidence, which are introduced in this journal. One of the most helpful things to start with is accepting these feelings, and recognising that they are normal.

Building positive relationships

Having joint pain or an associated health condition can put pressure on your relationships; some may become strained while others may become closer. As well as coping with your own feelings, you may feel pressure to deal with the emotions of family and friends.

People with health difficulties often say they feel other people don’t understand them. You might have a sense that others expect you to just ‘get on with things’. This can be frustrating and feel as if they have no idea what you have been through and continue to go through, especially if you experience both good and bad days. Many people with joint pain say that others don’t always know how to respond around them. They say that sometimes people can get frustrated with them, and other times people can be wary around them, or careful not to upset them. Sometimes people avoid getting in touch or avoid conversations. This is probably for fear of saying the wrong thing, but it can bring a great sense of loss and isolation.

Some people find their friends react in a way they didn’t anticipate; their closest friends may disappear and people they didn’t expect to may make the most effort. Communication is important in maintaining relationships.

Tips on talking to:

Your partner

- ♦ Be honest about how you feel
- ♦ Use ‘I’ statements to focus on you and your feelings rather than your partner’s behaviour. Explain what you need and how your partner can support you
- ♦ Don’t be afraid to discuss sexual intimacy. Talking, kissing, cuddling and touching are just as important as sexual intercourse. Communication and honesty about concerns are important
- ♦ Be sensitive to each other’s needs.

Your children

- ♦ You know your child best; trust your intuition. Be as specific and honest as possible
- ♦ Use language your youngest child can understand
- ♦ Talk to them about any changes to their day-to-day life.

Your friends and colleagues

- ♦ Let people know how they can support you. Reassure them they don’t need to feel pressured to say the ‘right thing’
- ♦ Consider asking someone to be a key contact to pass on information or use social media to update a lot of people quickly.

TIPS ON REBUILDING YOUR CONFIDENCE:

Accept your feelings – it is normal to have mood changes following a change to your health.

Expect some ups and downs – it is likely that some days will be better than others, and that you will have some down days. This is completely normal.

One step at a time – set small, short term and realistic goals. This will help you to feel a sense of accomplishment for the changes you make. This is more helpful than attempting too much and then feeling like you’ve failed.

Stay connected – having social interaction can help your sense of wellbeing. It helps to talk to others about your experiences.

Celebrate your successes – recognise all of your gains, no matter how small. This will give you the encouragement to keep going and achieve your goals.



Building a life of purpose and meaning

When you are living with joint pain and making life adjustments, it can be helpful to think about what you value most in life, and how you can act in ways that help you truly live your values.

A value is a life direction, an internal compass which guides us throughout life. Values are different to goals which have an endpoint. Values are often life-long, giving our lives meaning and purpose. To identify our values, we can think about what it is in life that is really important to us and gives our life meaning and purpose. Is it our relationships eg, to be a good parent? Is it our careers, connecting with nature, healthy living, community service or making a difference?


Having identified our values, we know where we want to go in life, the direction we want to progress towards. We might set goals along the way. Knowing our values will help us decide how to react to stress and distress. In spite of how we feel, we can still move in the direction of our values. This may look differently to how you lived life before.

Identifying your values

The ‘valued living questionnaire’ can help you to identify the values which matter most to you. As you reach each life component, ask yourself how important each of these areas is to your life – regardless of how much time or effort you currently put into them.

Rate the importance of each component on a scale of 0 to 10, with 0 being not important at all and 10 being extremely important. Do your best to rate them honestly, according to your true feelings, not how you think you should rate them.

You’ll then use your responses to this questionnaire in an exercise that follows, which will help you move toward engaging in what you value.

Valued living questionnaire											
LIFE COMPONENT	NOT IMPORTANT AT ALL	MODERATELY IMPORTANT					EXTREMELY IMPORTANT				
Family	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Romantic relationships	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Parenting	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Friends and social life	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Work	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Education and training	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Recreation and fun	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Spirituality and religion	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Citizenship and community life	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Self-care	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

Action for change

This exercise will help you create a more fulfilling life for yourself by formulating intentions and committed actions based on your values. It will help you think about ways to make your life feel more fulfilling based on what you think is important.

Committed action

- Using the valued living questionnaire left, identify the components of your life that you rated as a 5 or higher (from moderately important to extremely important). Put the names of those areas on the worksheet right
- Think about one intention for each of those valued components, which will help you make your life feel more fulfilling
- Then, identify the actions you are willing to commit to doing, stating when you will begin them, that will move you toward your intention.

Valued living worksheet

Identify three valued components of your life and when you intend to begin each committed action

A component of my life I value is <input style="width: 90%; height: 20px;" type="text"/> My intention for this component is <input style="width: 90%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	My committed actions include: <input style="width: 95%; height: 40px;" type="text"/>
A component of my life I value is <input style="width: 90%; height: 20px;" type="text"/> My intention for this component is <input style="width: 90%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	My committed actions include: <input style="width: 95%; height: 40px;" type="text"/>
A component of my life I value is <input style="width: 90%; height: 20px;" type="text"/> My intention for this component is <input style="width: 90%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	My committed actions include: <input style="width: 95%; height: 40px;" type="text"/>

Be kind to yourself

Sometimes, when we are living with pain or health difficulties, we can become quite hard on ourselves, especially if we feel unable to do the things we used to do. This often leads to self-criticism which can undermine motivation and wellbeing.

Self-kindness is important for our wellbeing. We spend more time with ourselves than anyone else and how we relate to ourselves has a huge impact on how we feel.

Self-compassion plays a vital role in our mental wellbeing and our bodies also benefit from giving and receiving kindness. Beneficial impacts on the body include the immune and cardiovascular systems, nervous system and even the regulation of our genes.

It's kind of hard sometimes

Despite this, the seemingly simple idea of being kind to yourself can be a difficult concept for some. Many people find it much easier to be compassionate to others than to themselves. Some people confuse kindness with weakness or worry that being self-compassionate means an attitude where 'anything goes' resulting in lowered self-expectations, standards or achievements.

Some common myths about being kind

- Being self-compassionate means, I will become lazy and won't achieve what I want in life
- Looking after myself is selfish
- Being kind to my self makes me 'soft' or self-indulgent. Other people are more important than me and need to be my priority
- I don't deserve kindness
- I need to make sure I don't make any mistakes – being self-compassionate will let me off the hook too easily
- If things get too easy for me I'm asking for trouble.

These ideas, whilst understandable, misinterpret the real idea of self-compassion. Self-compassion involves treating oneself kindly, acknowledging that as humans 'we are all in the same boat' and that everybody hurts sometimes. It also means we are motivated to balance our negative thoughts and emotions by acting to relieve our distress.

This isn't however a 'free pass' to act how we like. On the contrary, true self-compassion involves being honest with ourselves and fully accountable for our actions. The difference is that this is done with an understanding of what it really means to be human and the knowledge that no one is perfect.

Swap common myths for...

"Looking after myself is selfish."

"Being kind to myself makes me 'soft' or self-indulgent."

"If things get too easy for me I'm asking for trouble."

... compassionate phrases

"I'm deserving of help."

"I'm going to be kind to myself in this moment."

"This is a difficult moment and it will pass."

Kind self-talk

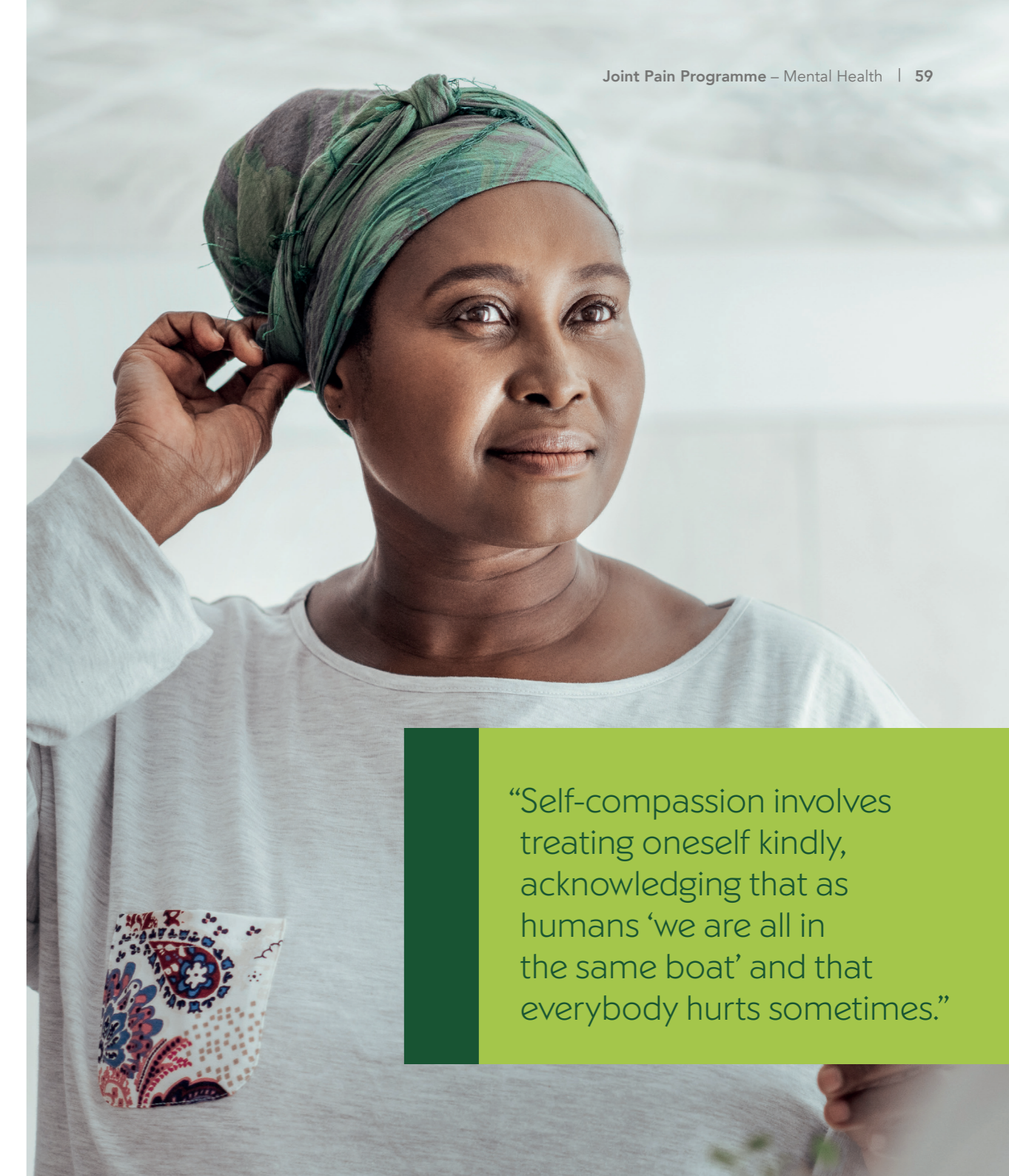
Compassionate self-talk involves talking to ourselves the way we would talk to someone whom we love and want to support and encourage. Think about the words you might say to someone else who was experiencing distress, and how you might speak to them. Imagine saying the same phrases to yourself in the same way.

If you notice you are being critical towards yourself it can help to have some compassionate phrases to hand. Think of some statements that most strongly resonate with you.

Here are some example phrases:

- 'This is a difficult moment and it will pass'
- 'I'm deserving of help and direction'
- 'It's okay to make mistakes and learn from those mistakes'
- 'I am going to be kind to myself in this moment'
- 'I deserve kindness'.

You may find speaking to yourself with kindness and compassion is difficult at times. Don't give up. Keep trying, like any new skill it requires practice, but the benefits are worth it. Be patient and be kind to yourself.



"Self-compassion involves treating oneself kindly, acknowledging that as humans 'we are all in the same boat' and that everybody hurts sometimes."



What should I be doing and how?

This is the section of your journal in which you will be able to record information regarding your two exercise sessions each week.

You will be able to refer to these pages when exercising in your own time at the gym or home. The programme cards have been produced to directly reflect the format of the exercise classes. On the left-hand side you will notice a circuit style card, and, on the right, a card to reflect the type of training completed in session 2.

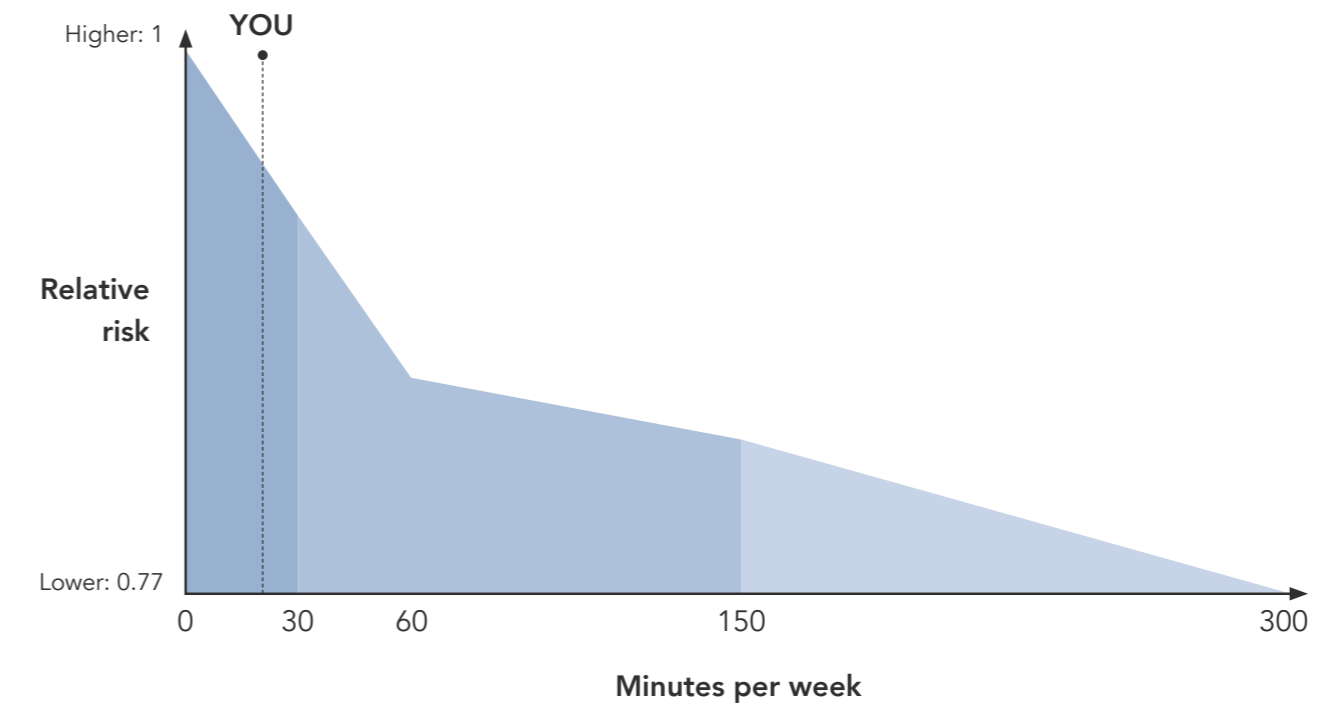
Each week you should fill out the circuit and instructor/gym led session to match what has been completed during class. The instructor led session should be in line with the type of training that was completed in the class. These will be either cardio, mobility, stability or strength-based training.

Starting an exercise program whilst experiencing joint pain can be daunting but we are here to help you to understand how to exercise safely and effectively.

Gradually increase your activity until you can achieve at least one of the following:

- ♦ At least 150 minutes of moderate intensity exercise each week. This should ideally include resistance-based strength sessions per week
- ♦ 75 mins of vigorous activity each week (build up to this carefully).

Although 150 minutes a week is a target, any increase in your physical activity is doing you good! The greatest health benefits are seen in people going from no exercise, who manage to increase it to just half an hour a week. If you feel like 150 minutes a week is a long way off, you'll get benefits even from just taking a small, manageable steps in that direction.



Types of exercise you will undertake-

Cardio

Supporting heart and lung health and improving fitness through low impact exercises.

Mobility

Increasing your range of motion and supporting joint flexibility.

Stability

Improves your balance, joint awareness and reduces the risk of injuries in the future.

Strength

Improving overall muscular strength and endurance, making daily activities easier.



How should I feel when exercising?

Recording how hard you feel your body is working when exercising will help to monitor and determine your exercise progression throughout the programme.

When exercising, it's important to monitor your intensity to make sure you're working at a pace that is challenging enough to help you reach your goals, but not so hard that you adversely affect your recovery.

While participating in exercise during both of your scheduled exercise sessions per week, it is important to keep a record of your perception of effort and how the exercise impacts your health. This perception of effort should take into consideration your breathing and muscular fatigue.

The Nuffield Health Scale of Effort

The Nuffield Health Scale of Effort enables you to rate how you are feeling when exercising. The table (right) demonstrates how this scale works. It starts at number 0 where you are not using any effort and your breathing is causing you no difficulty at all and progresses through to number 10 where your breathing difficulty is extremely hard and effort is at maximum.

Adapted from the work of Professor Patrick Doherty, University of York.

COLOUR	EFFORT	DESCRIPTION	HOW YOU'LL LIKELY TO FEEL WHILE EXERCISING
	0	No effort	You're exercising but you feel like you normally do when resting
	1	Very easy	You're able to talk normally while exercising
	2	Easy	You're able to walk at a comfortable pace and still talk
	3	Some effort	You will still be able to talk but start to hear yourself breathing
	4	More effort	You can hear yourself breathing louder but not gasping for air
	5	Increased effort	Your talking may become limited
	6	More effort	You can talk but probably just one or two words, but is more challenging
	7	A lot more effort	Talking continues to be limited to a one word
	8	Hard	You will feel like it is strenuous and fatigued
	9	Very hard	You can't talk and you're reaching for air
	10	Extremely hard	You really want this exercise/activity to end!

How to complete your effort scale

It is important to keep a diary of your effort ratings to monitor your fitness progression. As you become fitter, the same activity will become easier and your effort rating will decrease. Then you'll know it's time to increase your effort.

Record a weekly effort score for each of your exercise sessions through the programme. Here's a few tips to help you fill in this record:

- Record the highest score you experienced during this session ie. if during the warm up you scored 4 but during a particular exercise you scored 5, record 5 in this record
- Feel free to use the space to make a note next to the score of what particular exercise/activity caused you to peak at that score
- These scores will help them determine how to progress your exercises and improve your fitness so try and be as accurate as you can with your scores.

My scale of effort

Fill in your scores after every exercise session

WEEK	SESSION 1	SESSION 2
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		

Preparing for exercise

Start with a warm up

It is important to ease yourself gently into any type of physical activity. This allows time for a gradual increase in your heart rate and blood pressure in preparation for being more active. It is recommended that the first 10-15 minutes of any activity should be light, gradually increasing the intensity until you feel slightly warmer and start to become aware of your breathing.



Raise

Begin by raising your heart rate- increasing circulation, core temperature and muscular elasticity.

Activate

Engaging your muscles ready for the main activity, prehab movements linked to the session.

Mobilise

Range of motion based exercises or stretches, to improve the mobility of your joints.

Practise

Incorporating movements to mimic what is to come within the session, practising movement.

The benefits of warming up:

- ◆ Increased body temperature
- ◆ Improved ROM
- ◆ Gradual increase of intensity
- ◆ Psychological preparation
- ◆ Practice of movement skills
- ◆ Injury prevention.

Finish with a cool down

A cool down is something that you will do after a session has finished, it allows your body to come back down to a resting state by reducing heart rate and calming the nervous system. This will help to reduce muscular soreness, chance of injury and blood pooling.

Cooling down should include both a progressive reduction in intensity and also gentle stretching.

Exercising – things to think about:

- ◆ Don't exercise after a large meal – wait at least 30 mins after eating before you exercise. And keep yourself hydrated throughout
- ◆ Avoid exercising outside in extreme weather (hot or cold). In warm weather try to be active in the cooler parts of the day
- ◆ If you feel unwell in any way when exercising, stop. Get medical advice if the symptoms don't go away
- ◆ If you are diabetic you may have been advised to monitor your blood sugars. Exercising can affect your blood sugars, so you may need to monitor them more closely before and after.





To find out more about Nuffield Health visit:

[nuffieldhealth.com](https://www.nuffieldhealth.com)