

Thriving with Chronic Pain

Moving beyond coping with pain to living a life that feels meaningful, joyful, and rewarding

Kirsten R. Ambrose, MS

Associate Director, Osteoarthritis Action Alliance
Thurston Arthritis Research Center, UNC Chapel Hill

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Learning Objectives

- Understand how emotions and coping styles influence pain and mental health, both positively and negatively.
- Learn how adaptive thoughts, positive emotions, and healthy relationships can decrease the experience of pain and lead to a more rewarding life.
- Explore simple resilience building activities, how they are effective at decreasing pain intensity and improving mood, and who benefits most from them.

Agenda

- Overview of Pain – Physical and Emotional Influences
- Strategies to Manage Pain – Mind and Body Approaches
- Getting Started – Finding what works for YOU
- Tying it all together

Overview of Pain

Physical and Emotional
Influences

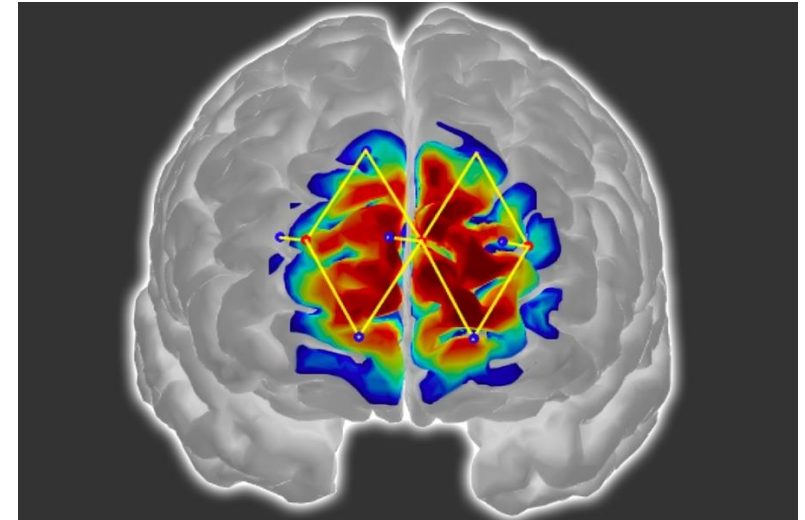


What Causes Pain?

- **Injury, accidents** – burn, broken bone, cuts, bruises, torn ligaments
- **Muscle pain** – low back pain, charley horse, exercise
- **Everyday aches and pains** – headaches, toothaches, stomachache
- **Diseases** – cancer, diabetes, arthritis
- **Emotions** – depression, heartbreak, stress/distress
- **???** – unknown, you hurt but don't really know why; an old injury that never quite healed

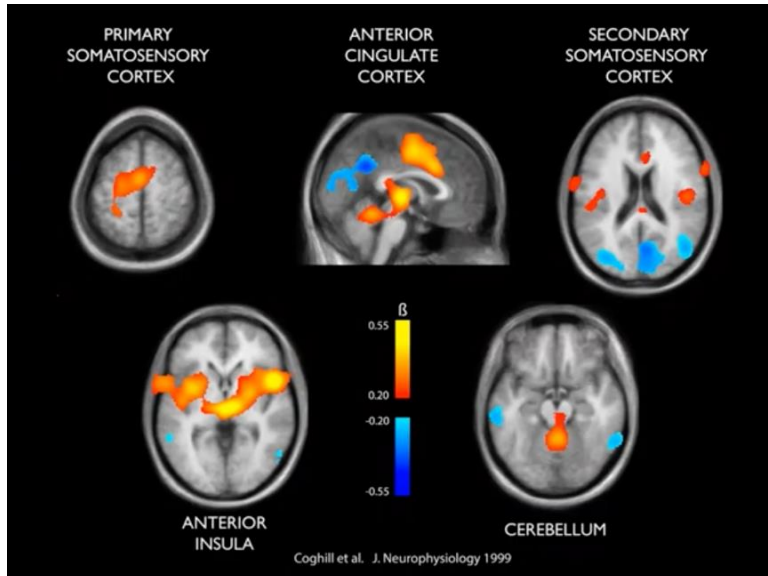
Your Pain is Real

- Your brain controls your pain
 - Neural networks are complex, interconnected
 - Top-down pain (signals from the brain), bottom-up pain (signals from the body)
 - Sensory pain (intensity), Affective pain (unpleasantness)



Acute to Chronic Pain

Acute Pain



Brain activity in response to a pain stimulus

- Sensory Network
- Attention Network
- Emotions Network
- Network involving pain control
- Network involving stress

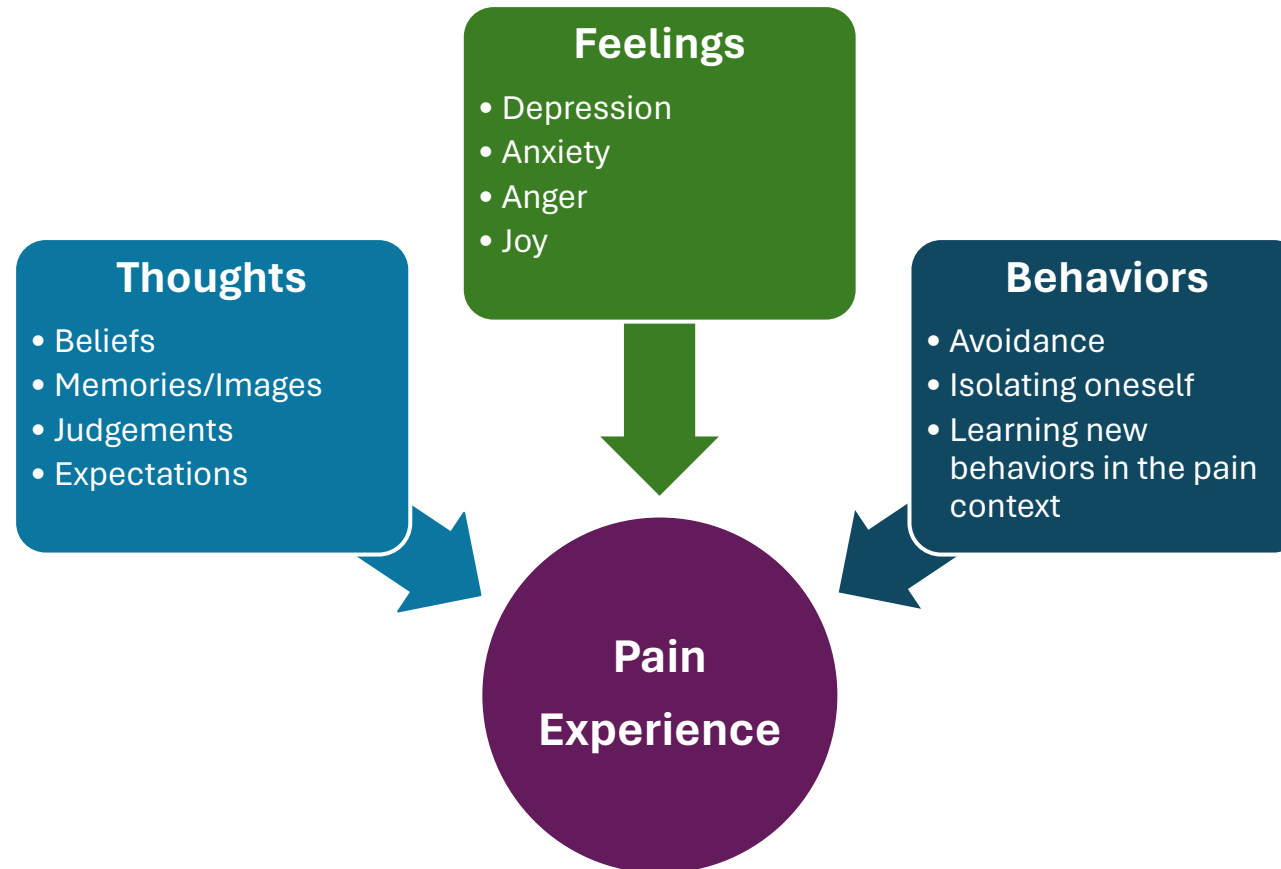
Chronic Pain



Your mind and body are a powerful team

- Natural, powerful analgesia/opioid system in your body reduces pain
- Symptoms as **feedforward** mechanism to protect
- Symptoms as **feedback** mechanism to heal
- Many symptoms are malleable

Your Pain *Experience* is also Real



You have the power to change how you feel

- Encoding *negative* thoughts and experiences is human nature
- Encoding ***positive*** thoughts and reframing negative experiences must be ***intentional***
- Rewiring the brain is possible through positive thinking, behavior, and experiences

Sparking joy- the power of positive thinking

- What do we mean by positive thinking?
- Coping with pain vs. Thriving despite pain
- Empowering yourself to take charge of your health and wellbeing

Strategies to Manage Pain

Mind and Body Approaches

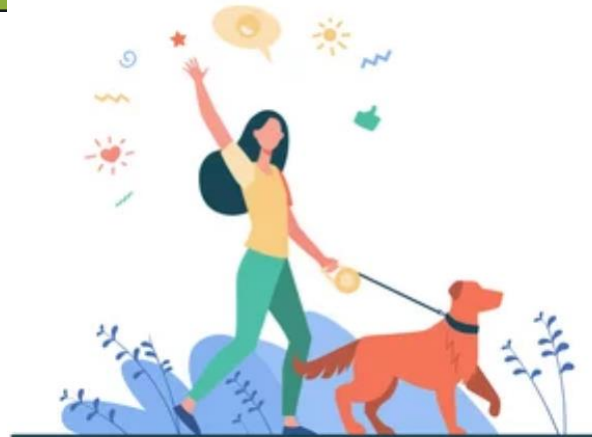


Medicine and Medical Interventions

- Prescription or Over-the-counter medications
- Medical/clinical procedures like joint injections
- Surgery

Interventions are highly individual.

Physical Activity



Sleep

- Sleep is a major factor – good sleep can improve pain, poor sleep can worsen pain (same is true for fatigue, mental focus, mood)
- Steps to improve sleep are within reach
 - ✓ Physical activity
 - ✓ Practice good sleep hygiene

Behavioral and Alternative Therapies

- Self-Management – Arthritis-Appropriate, Evidence-Based Interventions (AAEBIs)
- Cognitive behavioral therapy, coping strategies
- Alternative therapies – acupuncture, hypnosis, mindfulness meditation



Emotional Wellness

- Practicing Positive Thinking
- Engaging in Productive Behaviors
- Seeking Connection
- Scheduling Pleasant Activities
- Building Resilience

Getting Started

Finding what works for YOU



Understanding what works and tapping into what works for YOU

- Different interventions work differently for different people
- Remember –
 - ✓ You have the power to influence pain and related symptoms
 - ✓ Protective systems exist within you
- Tap into your existing power and learn what works for you
- Trial, error, persistence, and practice lead to **Success!**

Intervention Practice 1

Breathing



The background of the slide features a serene landscape at dusk or dawn. The sky transitions from a deep purple on the left to a bright orange on the right. A thin crescent moon is visible in the upper right portion of the sky. The bottom of the image shows the dark silhouette of a mountain range.

Intervention Practice 2

Gratitude

Tying it all Together



Circling back to Neural Circuitry

- Positive thinking and action matter
- Change your thoughts and behaviors to change your brain and improve your pain
- Practice makes ...practiced (not perfect, but improved)

Getting from Negative to Zero and Beyond to Resilience and Thriving

Joy

Love

Interest

Calm

Content

Awe

Glee



Shame

Fear

Anger

Disgust

Hatred

Sadness

Guilt

Hostility

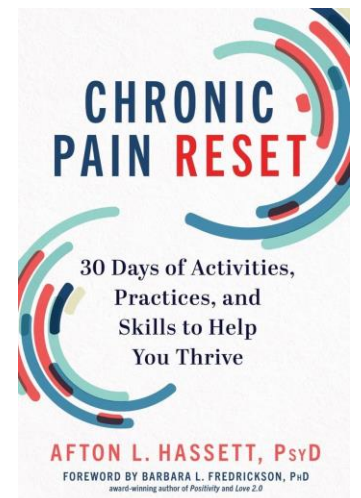
Thrive Despite Pain

- You've always had the power and the built-in systems to cope with pain
- Now you have tools and strategies to thrive

Coping with pain is good, but thriving despite pain is better.

Resources

- OA Action Alliance's Page on Arthritis Appropriate, Evidence Based Interventions – oaaction.unc.edu/aaebi
 - Cooperative Extension Services in your state
 - Parks and Recreation; YMCA; Local Library
- Chronic Pain Reset: 30 Days of Activities, Practices, and Skills to Help You Thrive, *by Afton L. Hassett, PsyD*
- AgrAbility tools and resources – agrability.org



The background of the slide features a serene landscape at sunset or sunrise. The sky transitions from a deep purple on the left to a bright orange on the right. A thin crescent moon is visible in the upper right portion of the sky. The bottom of the image shows the dark silhouette of a mountain range.

With Gratitude

kambrose@unc.edu

<http://oaaction.unc.edu>