

Pain Management Help Sheet

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Relaxation

Certain research has shown that relaxation alone reduces pain by up to 50%. Learning how to relax when moments of discomfort arise can have a huge positive impact in negating the amount of pain experienced. The label of relaxation comes under many banners – mediation, mindfulness, yoga, deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation and using guided imagery to access a relaxing setting. All of these can show marked improvement in the way physical feeling is experienced.



Disassociation

It is well known that when we dissociate from something, we reduce or move away from our level of experiencing it. The mind limits the things we absorb to what is relevant to our current situation. This allows us to deal with those things we are experiencing in the moment by not tuning into irrelevant information. As a result, when we focus on pain, we are more aware of it. Contrastingly, engaging our attention onto other factors, generally reduces the pathways of discomfort, placing them further away from our awareness. This can be seen in action when we cut our finger. Initially, we experience the soreness. However, if you answer a telephone call and engage in conversation, invariably you do not notice the discomfort at all.

CHANGING QUALITATIVE ASPECTS OF PAIN

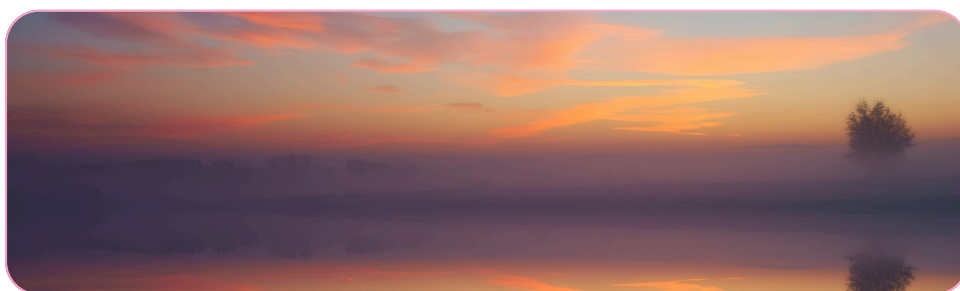
Pain has many components. It can be sharp, dull, throbbing, aching and have many other descriptive terms as well. If we acknowledge there is a feeling but instead try and change it to a different explanatory value that is less acute and more tolerable – eg numb, tingly etc, then this is a great way of bringing down the level of what we are experiencing.

ANCHORING TO A PLACE OF COMFORT

An anchor holds a vessel to a certain point on the seabed. In therapy, this technique connects an individual to a certain desired state. The idea is to make an association between a self-applied gesture, as well as an appropriate word or phrase, to a positive emotion that is the polar opposite of the negative state being experienced.

With regard to pain, something akin to comfort is the attribute being sought. Therefore, we need to think of a time when we have experienced comfort or similar physical and emotional ease in the past. This needs to be a sufficiently intense memory that evokes a deep positive response, even when accessed in the present moment. Once the emotion is experienced, a discreet gesture is maintained, for example, placing thumb and forefinger together, along with a verbal word or phrase, such as 'comfort' that is repeated several times until the positive feeling wanes. This may only last a few seconds. The gesture and word/phrase are known as triggers.

The positive memory and associated emotion needs to be brought up again and again. When they are, the continual connection between them and the associated triggers are always applied. After several weeks of doing this, a permanent connection is made that automatically allows the prior comfortable physical feeling to surface every time the triggers are applied, which subsequently replaces or reduces the pain.



HYPNOTHERAPY

Hypnotherapy or hypnosis, which is simply profound inner relaxation, is the act of learning to achieve deep internal focus, where your peripheral conscious world moves to one side. The conscious mind is logical and reasoning. The subconscious mind, which is exposed when in hypnosis, lacks intellectualisation, yet is powerful. Thus, false beliefs, untrue statements and negative ways of going about life can take hold and manifest as a reality, even though they are consciously known not to be true. Equally, reality can be altered within the subconscious – ie pain to comfort.

Positive suggestions

Once in a hypnotic or deeply relaxed state, the rudimentary act of repeated positive affirmations can take hold and actually physically manifest. This could be something simple like, “My pelvic region feels comfortable and relaxed”.



Glove anaesthesia

Again, through hypnosis, imagine one hand starting to become very comfortable and then numb, to the point that it can hardly be felt. Once achieved, place this hand on an area of discomfort and transfer the comfort from the ‘gloved’ hand to the required area.

Control room

Another hypnosis approach. Once in a relaxed state, create a ‘control room’ in the mind that governs physical ease. Note the register of comfort/discomfort on a scale of 0-10. Zero could be total comfort or maximum discomfort, depending on the end of the spectrum it is preferred to be. Somewhere is a slider or dial to rotate that can then bring the register to the desired number. When using this method, it can often alleviate feelings of discomfort.

Finally, as I am a member of the National Council for Hypnotherapy, this link from our membership site may be supportive for pain management.

<https://www.hypnotherapists.org.uk/20698/innovations-in-hypnotherapy-tackling-chronic-pain-beyond-medications/>



A caveat here. Pain and physical feelings should never be completely neutralised, except in rare temporary circumstances, such as hypno-anaesthesia. Discomfort is there for a reason. It is a message that lets us know something is wrong and should be protected. Wind it down to tolerable levels by all means but do not totally eliminate it.

A final point. The above can be helpful methodologies for any pain connected to endometriosis, or indeed any condition or situation. Nevertheless, should discomfort exist, it is vital to have an appointment with a qualified physician to assess the cause and look at medical interventions supporting alleviation. However, once appropriate diagnosis and treatment has been provided, complementary approaches along the lines of this help sheet can be beneficial. Some of these can seem simple in description but more difficult to self-apply in practice. Should this be the case, please do not hesitate to email me for support via robert@trainingalliancegroup.co.uk