



# Understanding Pain and Suffering

Physical pain is the consequence of distinct physiological and psychological components that represent a reaction of stimulus and response through the central nervous system. Suffering is what happens when we wrestle with the pain—denying, judging, arguing or forecasting. When we suffer with chronic pain, our world begins to shrink. We no longer enjoy things that used to bring us pleasure and we find it harder to tolerate being around other people.

These changes can often lead to depression and even despair, which is very common among people in chronic pain conditions. The secret element behind how much we suffer from painful experiences lies in the way we think about pain and the meaning we give to it in our self-talk. Our perception and interpretation of our pain can actually fuel our suffering in a vicious cycle: pain leads to stress and anxiety which release additional chemicals in the brain that increase pain which can lead to feelings of hopelessness and powerlessness. There are many approaches to manage pain including medications, physical therapy, and even surgery; but among many methods learning to manage our thoughts about pain is one of the most effective in improving quality of life without enduring side effects.

If you are suffering from chronic pain, ask your doctor about Cognitive Behavioral Therapy or Acceptance and Commitment Therapy for pain management.



Scan to find  
more Mental  
Health Resources.