



Reframe the Pain

The last thing people in pain want to hear is that “it’s all in your head” – but the truth is, how we think about our pain is related to how much we suffer from it. People who are able to retrain their brain can experience less pain over time and improve their quality of life. When you are having intense suffering related to pain take these steps:



- **Catch the thought.** Notice your thoughts and self-talk
 - Are you filtering out the good and only focusing on the negative?
 - Are the words “should,” “must” or “have to” creeping into your self-talk?
 - Are ideas that use the words “always” or “never” setting you up for discouragement?
 - All-or-nothing thinking blocking other ideas or solutions?
- **Check the thought:** Ask yourself, “is this thought helpful or unhelpful?”
- **Change the thought.** Choose a new, helpful thought to replace the unhelpful ones. Ask yourself: What am I getting out of this negative thought? What might be an alternative more empowering thought?

Managing Thinking to Manage Pain

Catch the thought	Check the thought	Change the thought
“I haven’t had too much pain today, but I know it’s only a matter of time.”	Focusing on negative	“Sure, not all days will be pain-free. But I’ve had some days without pain lately, so I know that not every day will be painful.”
“I’ve taken all my medicine like I’m supposed to, so I should have no pain at all.”	Should	“Medicine can help, but it may not solve the whole problem. Using them along with healthy thinking gives me the best chance of coping with my pain.”
“There’s really nothing I can do to help my pain.”	Overgeneralizing	“Some days my pain may feel tough to manage, but there have been days when it has been better. There are things that I can do to help my pain.”
“Standing for more than two hours is impossible. There is no way I can work.”	All or nothing	“I may not be able to return to my exact job, but I can be open to other arrangements that will allow me to continue to work in a similar way.”

**Adapted from Healthwise.org



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