



ACPA[®]

American Chronic Pain Association

Ten Steps From Patient to Person

Step One: Accept the Pain. Learn all you can about your physical condition. Understand that there may be no current cure and accept that you will need to deal with the fact of pain in your life.

Step Two: Get Involved. Take an active role in your own recovery. Follow your doctor's advice and ask what you can do to move from a passive role into one of partnership in your health care.

Step Three: Learn to Set Priorities. Look beyond your pain to the things that are important in your life. List the things that you would like to do. Setting priorities can help you find a starting point to lead you back into a more active life.

Step Four: Set Realistic Goals. We all walk before we run. Set goals that are within your power to accomplish or break a larger goal down into manageable steps. And take time to enjoy your successes.

Step Five: Know Your Basic Rights. We all have basic rights. Among these are the right to be treated with respect, to say no without guilt, to do less than humanly possible, to make mistakes, and to not need to justify your decision—with words of pain.

Step Six: Recognize Your Emotion. Our bodies and minds are one. Emotions directly affect physical well-being. By acknowledging and dealing with your feelings, you can reduce stress and decrease the pain you feel.

Step Seven: Learn to Relax. Pain increases in times of stress. Relaxation exercises are one way of reclaiming control of your body. Deep breathing, visualization, and other relaxation techniques can help you to better manage the pain you live with.

Step Eight: Exercise. Most people with chronic pain fear exercise. However, unused muscles feel more pain than toned, flexible ones. With your doctor, identify a modest exercise program that you can do safely. As you build strength, your pain will decrease. You will feel better about yourself.

Step Nine: See the Total Picture. As you learn to set priorities, reach goals, assert your basic rights, deal with your feelings, relax, and regain control of your body, you will see that pain does not need to be the center of your life. You can choose to focus on your abilities, not your disabilities. You will grow stronger.

Step Ten: Reach Out. It is estimated that one person in three suffers with some form of chronic pain. Once you have begun to find ways to manage your chronic pain problem, reach out and share what you know. Living with chronic pain is an ongoing learning experience. We all support and learn from each other.