



Introducing Health Sciences: The Pain Clinic

Beating Body Pain

Woman

The aim of the physiotherapy part of the program is to help them reactivate and to help them increase their flexibility, increase their strength, become more confident in what they can do so they gain an understanding really of what their body can manage, and also what's going to be helpful to their bodies in, for their bodies in the longer term. When people have a painful problem they respond to it in the way that one would expect, that is they will often rest expecting the pain to be related to damage and therefore needing to heal, and when you have that pattern establishing itself they get into a habit very often of not using their bodies, and in order to change that, to turn it around we start them off with what we call setting a baseline, so it's finding a level that they can manage in a consistent way, that's appropriate for their level of lack of fitness and de-conditioning, and gradually get back so it's about finding small amounts, beginning to repeat it, being consistent, and then building up.

Man

If the person believes that there is ongoing damage, or that doctors have missed something, or if they entertain images like one of the patients that we've had on the program a while ago that my spine is made of glass, then it is extremely difficult for this person to move on, to shift, and to start using their bodies as normally as possible despite the pain. And if you, for example, believe like this lady that their spine is made of glass you're not going to use it because it is going to shatter, it's going to break, and that is a major step cognitively and psychologically for this person to accept the fact that this pain doesn't mean anything, it doesn't mean ongoing damage, and I must build up my body, I must start using my body again.

Woman

I'm going to loosen up the trunk with our arm swings. Taking the arms a little bit higher to try and loosen higher up. And relax the arms. Loosening up the neck with nodding dog. And bring the head forward again.

Man

Many of the patients that we see are extremely petrified of using their bodies because of the fear of ongoing harm or ongoing damage, so to change that perception to help them to conceptualise and understand the pain and pain physiology better, and also the neurology of pain, pain pathways in the brain, etcetera, and we find that the moment a patient starts to understand the pain experience better and pain physiology better, they automatically start managing the entire process so much better, and that has a positive effect on mood and behaviour, and how they engage in activity.

Woman

And we turn the toes out on the back foot, stretching the inner thigh muscle bending that front knee again, one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve and straighten.

Man

If a person is interpreting their pain in a very catastrophic way, for example that they are convinced that there is ongoing damage, for example and, or they focus and zoom in on the pain constantly I just, for example, I can't cope with this, this is the end of the world, this is really terrible and bad and I'm going to be in a wheelchair in five years' time, and I'm certainly going to lose my job and I'm going to lose my family and my partner, that sort of catastrophic thinking quite often prevents a person from shifting and moving on, and dealing with the situation. But, equally, if a person says well, I'm experiencing this pain but there are ways

around it, and I can move on and find new ways of dealing with this and at least, you know, taking one step at a time I can start building up my fitness and strength, set goals, pace my activities, engage socially, occupationally, quite often we find that those patients do much, much better.

Woman

So you might want to focus on some more of the techniques that are actually more helpful for the times when your mind is very busy and is jumping around, so something like the counting technique or the calm word technique. Counting, count up to twenty and every breath out you count one and then you've got to come back down so, you know, twenty and then go from twenty back to one again, because I have a tendency to have a lot of mind chatter when my brain won't shut off, so by counting it focuses it on one thing 'cos I find it hard to do the, like thinking I'm in a log cabin because everything else comes into my brain then, so the ones where I have to concentrate on one thing keep me going, so that's good.

Woman

Because the visualisation one does require you to have to calm those thoughts a little bit, you know quite difficult. Or on the grief ones and you can build up to using the visualisation for when you feel that you've got it a little bit more under your belt.

Woman

I love relaxation, there isn't many of us who doesn't for a start. I did use relaxation before I came on the course but they have enhanced some more of the skills, but we're looking at trying to relax the muscles and the breathing so we can be laying down, sitting or anything, we've learnt many different styles. We had noise out here when we were in there and we had to actually listen to the noise as part of the meditation so that if you're in a busy place you can learn to cope and still relax with it, and with deep breathing exercises, with visualisations of being in a log cabin on the mountain, to really simple ones with a square in your head to think about breathing, holding it, letting it go, thinking about breathing, breathing and doing that in that square in your head. And it does work to calm the mind, it does work to relax the muscles, and it does help to take time out, especially for me, being such a problem with pacing.

Woman

So now hopefully you've got a broad spectrum of relaxation techniques that can be used at different times.

Woman

Can I just go back to why you're doing relaxation, why have you learnt how to do it, why are you doing it?

Woman

Relaxes your muscles.

Woman

OK. Reduces tension.

Woman

Reduces the stress as well.

Woman

Reduces the stress. And perhaps feel a bit re-energised. Any other reasons?

GENERAL CHAT

Woman

I've got a place that I go to in my head that's near a lake and trees and it's what works with me but, yeah, I use it to go to sleep at night, I use a counting one where you count from one to twenty visualising the number in your head, and usually if the pain's not too intense I can

be asleep by the time I get to fifteen, it can be that good. And they really are, they really do help, just stop and start again.

Woman

From this course I think that you learn actually that by being angry and tense all the time in fact you're hindering your own body 'cos all you're doing at that point is tensing everything up and everything then becomes magnified I suppose so, you know, learning the relaxation on this particular course has been very helpful and something that I didn't at all believe in but now I feel it's a very important part of the routine, the day routine.