



WAPHA
WA Primary Health Alliance

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PERTH NORTH, PERTH SOUTH,
COUNTRY WA

An Australian Government Initiative

Primary Health Network Persistent Pain Program presents



'Turning Pain into Gain'

Welcome to TOPIC SIX

Today's Pain Topic:

- * **Reducing pain through challenging your thoughts and emotions**

**Presented by:
Clinical Psychologist**

What can sometimes happen



Identify unhelpful thinking

Worry

“What if the pain gets worse?”

Focus attention on
unpleasant feelings

Believe you have no
control

“I’m useless!”

PANIC !!

Avoid the situation

Drastic
behaviour
and over-
react

FEAR

“I’m a failure”

Identify unhelpful thinking

Worry

“What if the pain gets worse?”

Focus attention on unpleasant feelings

Believe you have no control

“I’m useless!”

PANIC !!

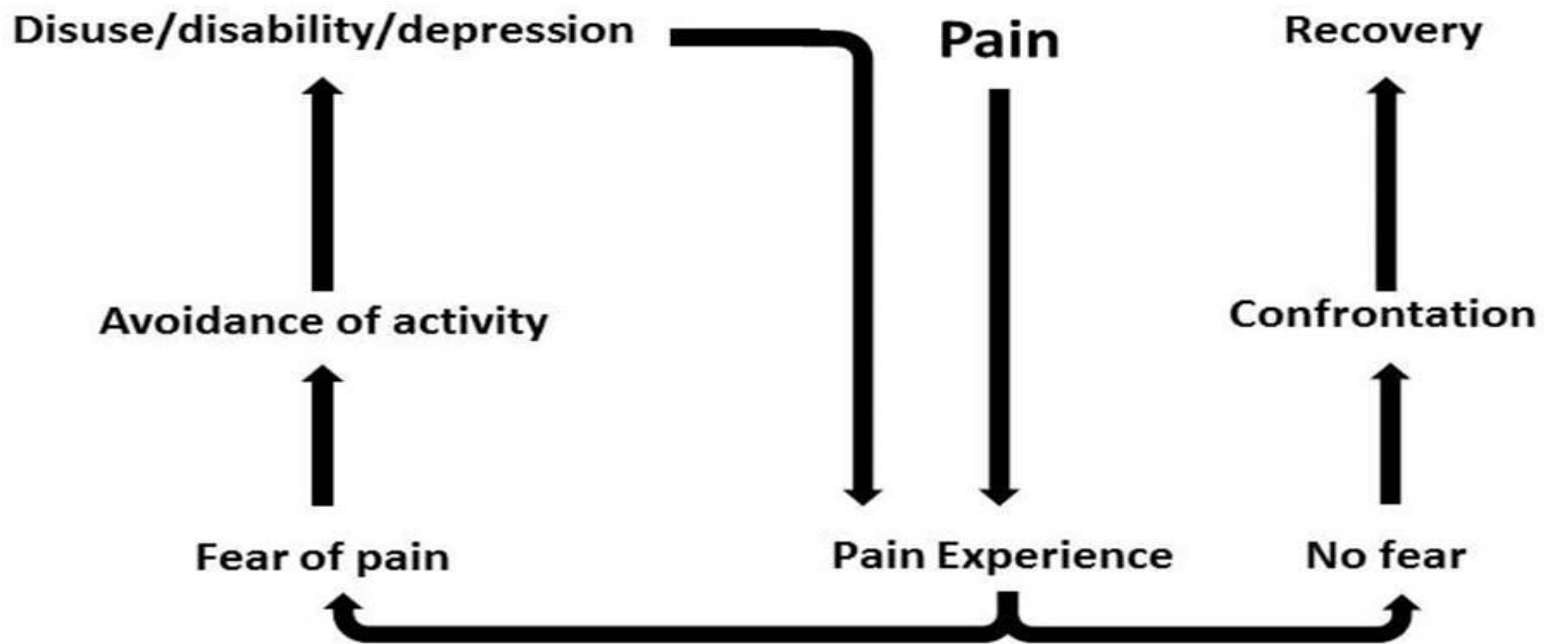
Avoid the situation

Drastic behaviour and over-react

↑ PAIN SENSITISATION

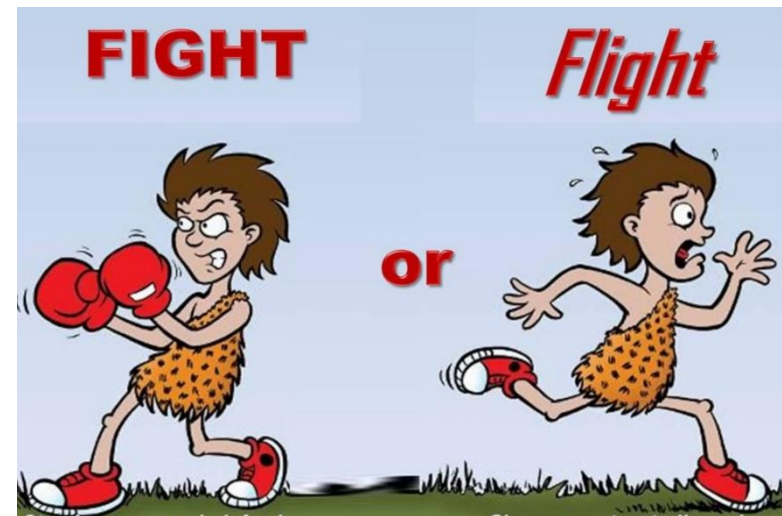
“I’m a failure”

Fear Avoidance Model



Anxiety and Pain

- * Some anxiety is essential for our survival - prehistorically it served as a way of keeping us safe!
- * When the body experiences pain, it is like the body receives a warning signal which leads to the body entering into the ***“fight or flight response.”***
- * It now becomes a way of anticipating dangers which no longer exist
- * Pain and anxiety often co-occur

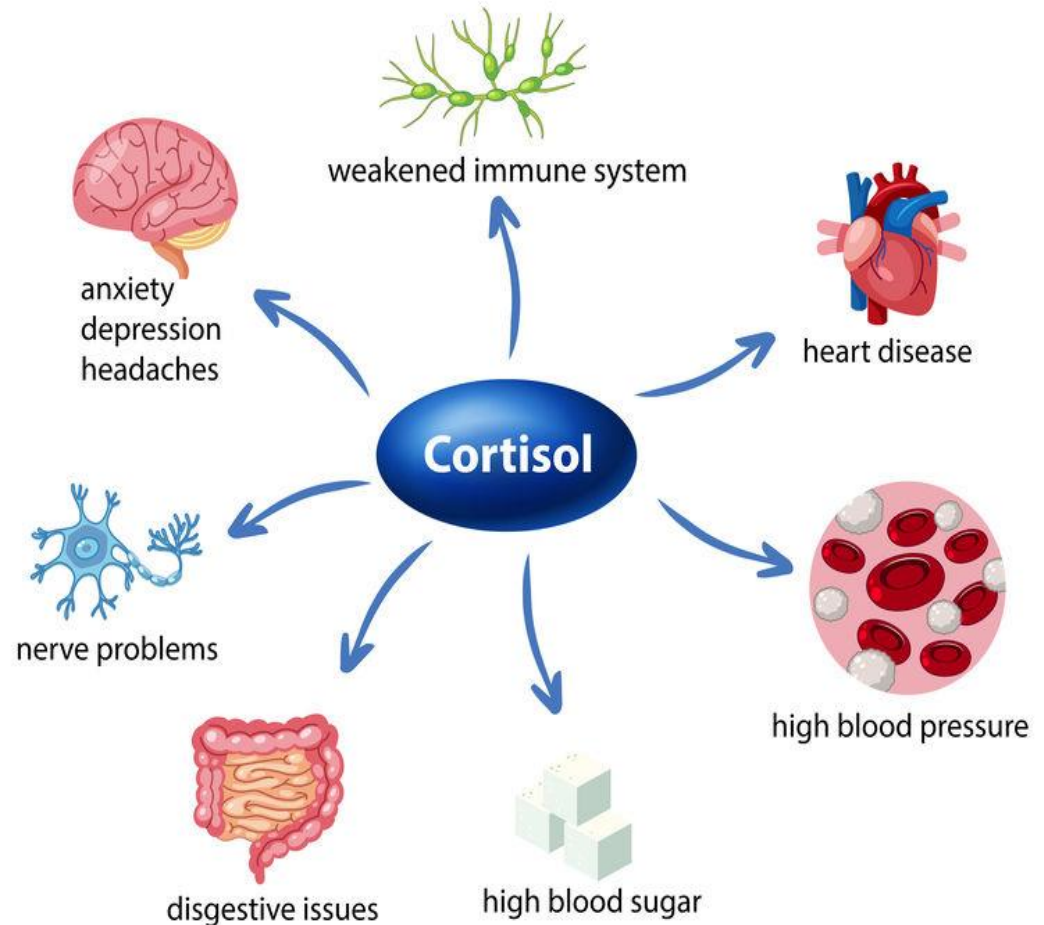


Trauma and Pain

- * There is a strong correlation between the experience of trauma and chronic pain.
- * 15-30% of people with chronic pain also have PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder)
- * Symptoms of trauma:
 - * **Numbing, hyperarousal, hypervigilance, nightmares, flashbacks, helplessness, physical tension and avoidance behaviour.**

The biology of trauma

- * During a traumatic event, the nervous system goes into survival mode (the sympathetic nervous system) and sometimes has difficulty reverting back into its normal, relaxed mode again (the parasympathetic nervous system).



How can Psychology help you?

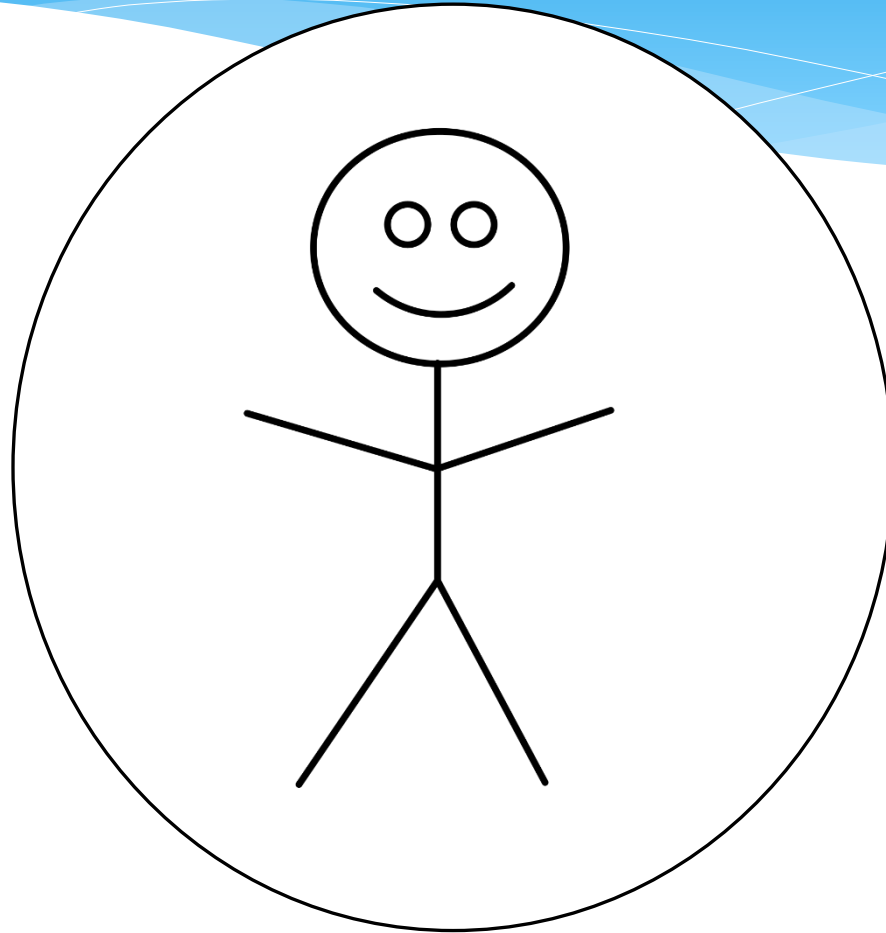
Your Pain is REAL!

Psychological strategies aims to support and teach the pain sufferer tools to reduce the pain experience

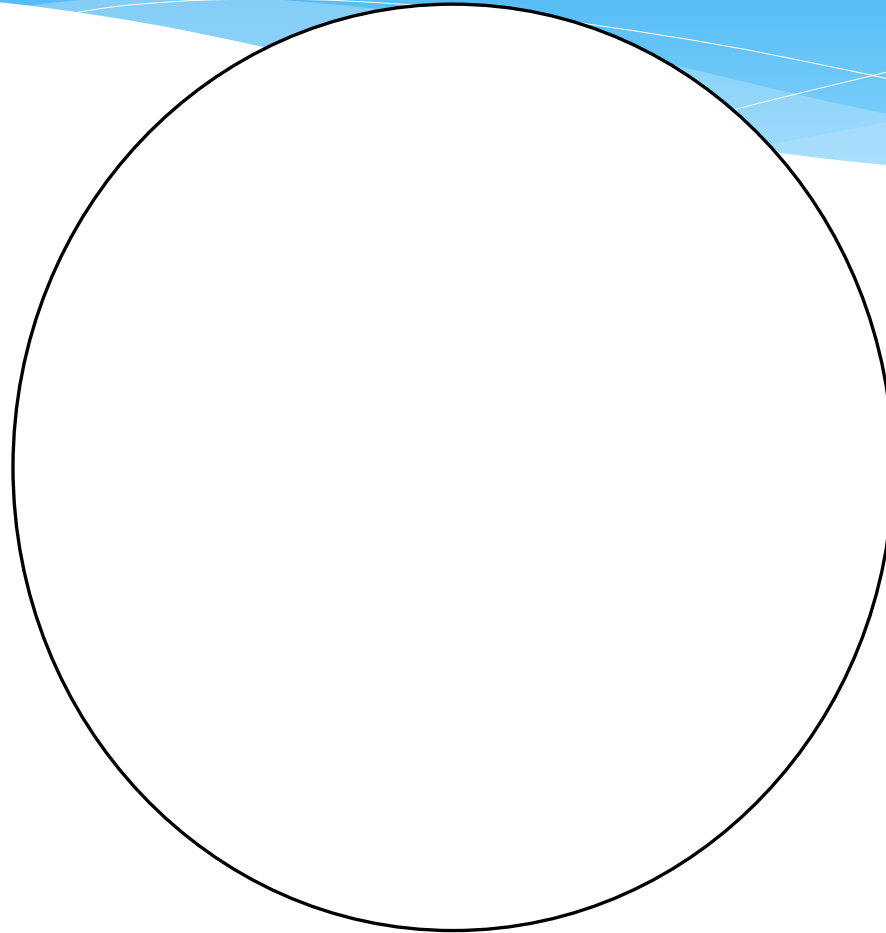
The benefits of challenging the way we think about pain

- * You become less bothered by the pain
- * Reduce sensitivity of your pain
- * Reduce the impact your thoughts have on your pain
- * Live life to its fullest despite pain

Do You Have Control?



Do You Have Control?



Relaxation

Redirecting attentional resources



Relaxation technique

Step 1: Loosen up

- * Make yourself comfortable. Close your eyes if you wish.
- * Take a deep breath, hold it a moment and let it out slowly.
- * Let yourself go loose and floppy as you breathe out.
- * Repeat again.



Relaxation technique

Step 2:

- * Do not force yourself to relax
- * Let yourself relax by letting go of your tension in your muscles each time you breathe out
- * Imagine each time you breathe out that the tension is draining from your body. Think it even if it is not immediately happening.



Relaxation technique

Step 3:

Keep your mind off the pain or worries by:

1. Focusing on one word and repeat it over and over again, or
2. Imagine a peaceful or happy scene in your mind, or
3. Keep your eyes fixed on a particular item and keep focused in a calm way



Distraction



Another way to redirect attentional resources

Some examples:

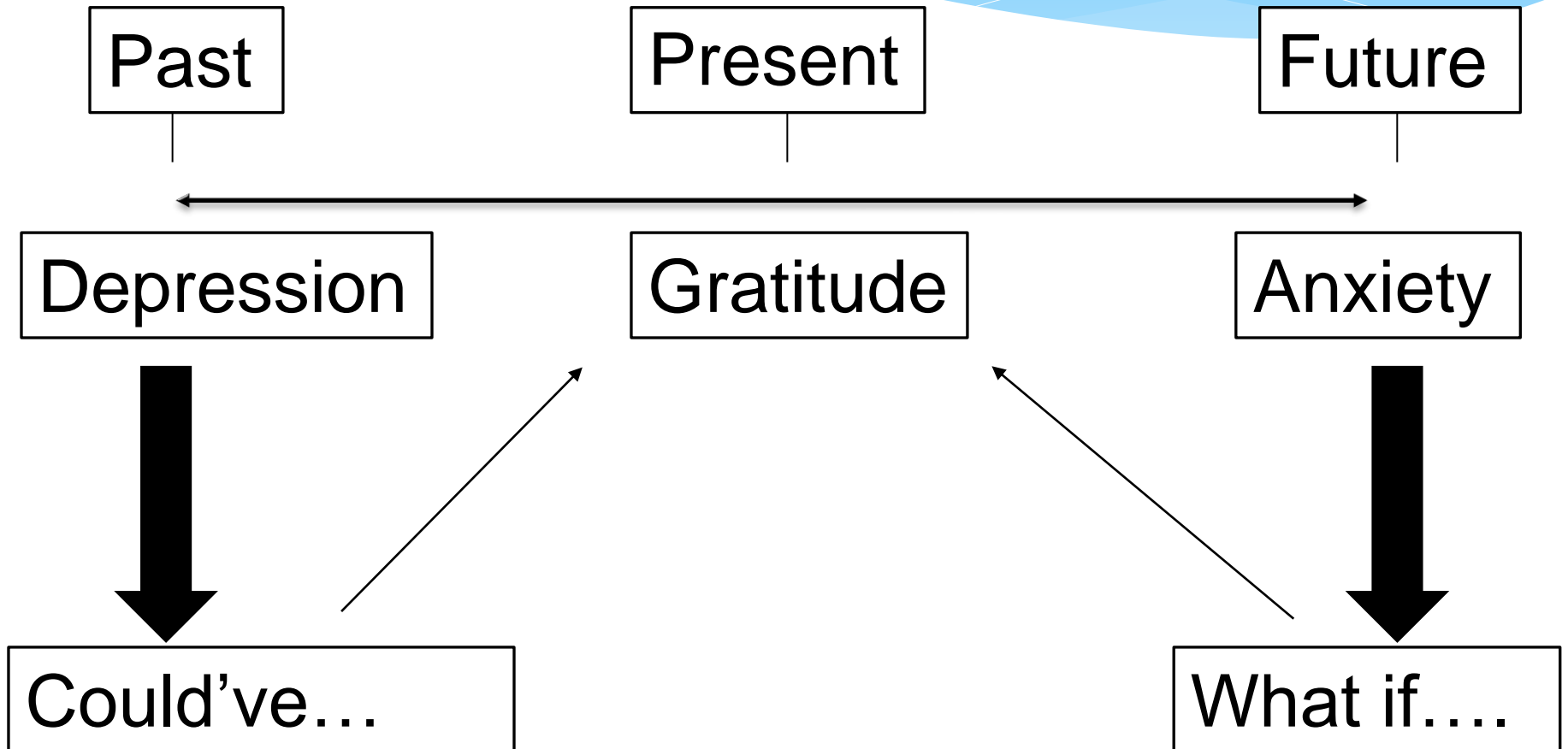
- * Imagine a pleasant, relaxing scene
- * Read a book, or audio book, listen to music
- * This may help but in persistent pain may be short lived
- * Distraction is one technique, but it is important to use a variety of techniques to manage your pain

Mindfulness

- * Living in the now, by being fully present now and experiencing each moment
- * Engage the senses – what can I feel, see, hear, smell, touch
- * Not getting caught up in the past, it can't be changed
- * Not trying to forecast the future, the 'what ifs ...'



Living in the now



Mindfulness

- * Opposite of distraction
- * Distraction is useful short-term
- * Continual use of distraction can lead to avoidance
- * If pain is avoided habitually -
anxiety can increase regarding experiencing pain
become more sensitive to pain



Stretch Break



Pain Desensitisation

Training our brain to learn the skill of pain desensitisation.

1. **Accept that the pain is there and not harmful** and to start moving and not protecting yourself against the pain.
2. **Acknowledge the pain is there but do not react to it.**



Pain sensitisation

Reduced activity

**Withdraw physically
and emotionally**

**Despair, frustration,
helplessness**

PAIN = THREAT

Increase in pain

Pain sensitisation

Reduced activity

Withdraw physically
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Despair, frustration,
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PAIN = THREAT

Inc
in

PAIN
DESENSITISATION

How to desensitise from pain

- * When the pain enters your awareness, it is recommended that we remind ourselves that pain is the early warning system designed to keep us “safe”.
- * It is not the enemy
- * Instead of fighting the pain, the aim needs to be to observe that it may be telling us we have perhaps over done something or exceeded our threshold.

How to desensitise from pain

- * Letting go, staying calm with relaxation and breathing techniques whilst focusing on the pain.
- * Continue to remind yourself that the pain will not cause any harm and has no real meaning.
- * Initially pain may be more severe but it **WILL** settle.



Pain desensitisation record chart

Day	How much does pain bother you?		How much does pain bother you?		How much does pain bother you?	
	Start	End	Start	End	Start	End
1/8/19	23 mins		20 mins		18 mins	
3/8/19	15mins		18mins		12 mins	
4/8/19	13 mins		15 mins		10 mins	
5/8/19	10 mins		8 mins		10mins	

Acceptance of Pain

- * It is human nature to want to avoid pain
- * Avoidance of all pain is not possible
- * Life is about not only pleasant things but unpleasant things too
- * Struggling with your pain takes a lot of time, energy and emotion
- * No matter how hard you struggle with your pain, it can't be made to disappear

Acceptance of pain

What it is NOT!

- * ACCEPTING PAIN is not GIVING UP!!
- * It is not mean resignation
- * It has nothing to do with liking or approving what has happened to you

Acceptance of Pain

What it is!

- * It means accepting a situation over which you have no direct control
- * It's about being willing to live a valued life despite pain
- * A different approach from reducing, eliminating or controlling pain
- * Pain doesn't have to stop you from living a meaningful life in the direction of your values
- * Exploring your values can help
- * Develop goals in line with your values

A new way of thinking

Recognise the problem and try to accept the discomfort

Although I am in discomfort there are things I can do to help myself

Focus on planning

You do have a choice! Your only choice is not to cease function. What are my options? Stretching, heat packs, short walk

Keep control

I can manage, I'll take it a step at a time in the RIGHT direction.

Increased success

That didn't go so well, what can I do differently next time?

I will cut my activities back a little but because I have a plan I will increase gradually again.

MORE Confidence

I DID IT!!!

Today's Key Messages



Changing the way we see pain, will impact the way we experience it



Continue to do your daily activities, while recognising your limits.



Be kind to yourself



Give yourself permission to ask for help!