



Key Messages

Persistent pain is common and can affect anyone

People who live with pain often feel isolated, alone, and disbelieved.

TOP TIP: Letting someone with persistent pain know that you hear them and believe them will go a long way.

Hurt does not always mean harm

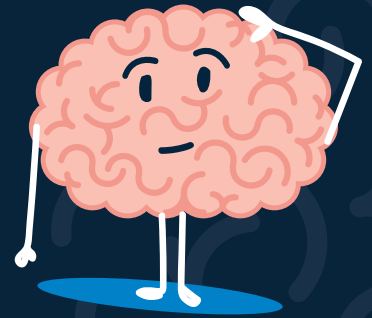
Sometimes pain starts after an injury (acute pain), but continues long after the tissues have healed (persistent pain). Sometimes persistent pain starts without any injury at all. In either case, persistent pain is **very real**, but is not directly related to the health of our tissues (bones, joints, muscles etc).

TOP TIP: Make sure to check for red flags and to listen to the person's history carefully. But generally, although it can be painful, getting back to usual activities is safe and important for improvement.

Everything matters when it comes to pain

And we mean **everything!** From worries, emotions, stress, systemic impacts, past experiences, to the things family and healthcare professionals might say. Our nervous system takes its cues from the things around us.

TOP TIP: Consider all of the things having an impact on the person: what can be changed?



Understanding your pain can be key

Talking to someone about pain isn't likely to be a useful intervention. However, exploring someone's beliefs about pain to see where they could feel more empowered, or looking at where they can make their life bigger where pain has been making it smaller, can help to put the person living with pain back in control.

TOP TIP: see the 'What can I do in ten minutes?' section of this document for more guidance. You could also explore what other services are available in your area to reinforce these messages and provide additional support.

Medicines and surgeries are often not the answer

There is a place for medications and surgery in healthcare, but in primary persistent pain they might not be the answer. In some cases, opioid treatment can actually make persistent pain worse due to opioid-related hyperalgesia.

TOP TIP: Work with the person to find effective ways of managing their pain and reliance on outside resources. Then help them to gently reduce their medications when they are ready.

Recovery is possible

Recovery looks different for everyone, but research has shown that there is hope that persistent pain can improve.

TOP TIP: Even just increasing an understanding of pain and reducing the fear around it can be a large step towards recovery. So it's important to give opportunities for people to learn

What can I do in 10 minutes?

Dial down the threat alarm: words matter!

If you tell someone their arthritic joints are wearing away or their spine is crumbling, not only is it probably inaccurate, but you're likely dialling up their nervous system's protective response. Help to spread facts not fear!

Allow the person in front of you to feel heard

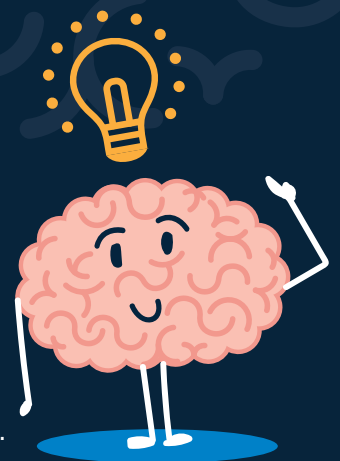
Lots of people living with pain say they feel invalidated or dismissed by healthcare professionals. Maybe because the professional feels short of time or because they're not sure what they can do to help. But listening and allowing a person living with pain to know they are believed is powerful.

Take it slowly

Don't feel like you need to flip someone's understanding there and then in one appointment. Explaining pain to someone is rarely useful. Instead, focus on practical ways to help the person in front of you get back to doing the things they love doing in small steps.

Be a great coach

Know when to cheer someone on, when to adjust the pace and when to share your knowledge. There is even evidence that the expectations of the clinician can have an impact on a person's reported pain!



Resources



Webinars

All our past webinars are on the Events page or our YouTube channel (search 'Flippin' Pain') for your patients to watch for free. Look out for the specialised events such as Flippin' Fibromyalgia and Flippin' Arthritis.

Real Stories

Check out the Flippin' Pain Formula where people can work through the Key Messages through videos, audio podcasts and quizzes.

www.flippinpain.co.uk/formula

Interactive Journey Through the Key Messages

Many of our Flippin' Pain Friends have shared their stories of living with pain and how they flipped their understanding.

www.flippinpain.co.uk/real-stories

And more...

Take a look at our Resource page for many more websites, books and other resources for you and the people with pain you work with.

www.flippinpain.co.uk/resources