

Active Strategies to Manage Pain

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Outline



- Pain in MS
- Recommended treatments for pain in MS
- Practical strategies for improving pain management

What is pain?

‘An unpleasant sensory and emotional experience associated with actual or potential tissue damage, or described in terms of such damage’.

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF PAIN, 2007



- *How many people here have ever experienced pain?*
- *How many people here experience pain on a regular basis?*
- *How many people here have experienced pain on more days than not, for a period of three months or longer?*

Pain in MS

- Prevalence of pain is high in people with MS, with studies consistently identifying point prevalence at between 48% and 66%.
- Constant pain is experienced by 40-57% of people with MS.

KHAN & PALLANT, 2007



Where does pain in MS come from?

- MS-related pain:
 - Neurological causes: MS-related damage to the brain, spinal cord and nerves. Often described as tingling, stabbing or burning pain.
 - Musculoskeletal causes: damage to changes to the body's bones, muscles and soft tissues. Often described as dull, aching or throbbing pain.
- Non-MS related pain
 - Approximately 20% of the general population experience pain. This 'general pain' can affect people living with MS. E.g. a bad back from lifting incorrectly or a sore ankle from an old soccer injury.

Painful terminology

- Acute radicular pain
- Central neuropathic pain
- Dysaesthetic extremity pain
- Glossopharyngeal neuralgia
- Lhermitte's sign
- Optic neuritis
- Pressure area pain
- Pain related to fractures
- Pain related to spasticity
- Muscle spasms
- Painful tonic spasms
- Trigeminal neuralgia
- Visceral pain syndrome

Impact of pain in MS

- Pain can have a big impact on the lives of people with MS:
 - Lower quality of life
 - Increased doctors visits
 - Increased levels of stress
 - Impact on employment
- This impact is similar to the impact of pain on people who don't have MS

Getting help for pain



If pain persists, see your doctor...

1. Visit your GP

- Help with sudden or severe pain and the day-to-day management of pain
- Help to establish if pain is caused by something other than MS

2. Talk to your Neurologist

- Help to review pain management plan
- Important for Neurologist to see the overall picture

Talking to your doctor



- Be prepared:
 - What do you want to know / ask your doctor?
 - How will you remember what they tell you?
- Things to tell your doctor :
 - Detail about the pain: where you feel it; when you feel it; how the pain feels; if anything changes the pain; how the pain affects you; what you have done to try and relieve the pain.
 - If your pain has changed, worsened or gone away.
 - Any life changes you have made recently.

- It's important to remember that your Doctor is there to help you. Don't worry about taking up too much of their time or giving too many details.
- If you don't feel comfortable with your Doctor, or are not satisfied with the outcomes of your visit, it is OK to seek a second opinion.

Getting help for pain



- Don't forget your family and friends
- Communication is key
- Tips for working with your family & friends:
 - Let them know about how your pain affects you and what they can do to best support you
 - It's OK to ask for help, but be specific when making requests (task, time, level of assistance)
 - Don't let them take over all of your tasks / jobs
 - Agree to sometimes not talk about pain

Medication for pain

- Many different types of medication can be used to treat MS-related pain, including:
 - anti-convulsants
 - anti-depressants
 - simple and strong analgesics
 - anti-spasmodics
- Medication rarely relieves MS-related pain completely

Pain management in MS



- Pain management strategies:
 - Non-opioid analgesics (45-82%)
 - Anticonvulsants (65%)
 - Manipulation (physical/electrical/temp; 21-44%)
 - ‘Alternative’ strategies (psychosocial, distraction, relaxation, acupuncture; 27-65%)
 - Exercise (13-36%)
 - Rest / Sleep (9-42%)
- While these are regarded as the most helpful strategies, they are also most often listed as “things that don’t work”.

Recommended treatments



- Limited research on MS-specific interventions.
- So what is recommended?
 - **Step 1:** Conservative & symptom management
 - Analgesic or other medication (e.g. spasticity)
 - Appropriate seating
 - Good pressure care
 - Stretch & strengthening exercise
 - Rotating injection sites
 - Active fatigue management
 - Continence management

- So what is recommended?

Step 2: If conservative management is not successful, the use of active pain management strategies is indicated...

- ACTIVE PAIN MANAGEMENT
- Self management principles
- Multidisciplinary input
- Cognitive behavioural principles



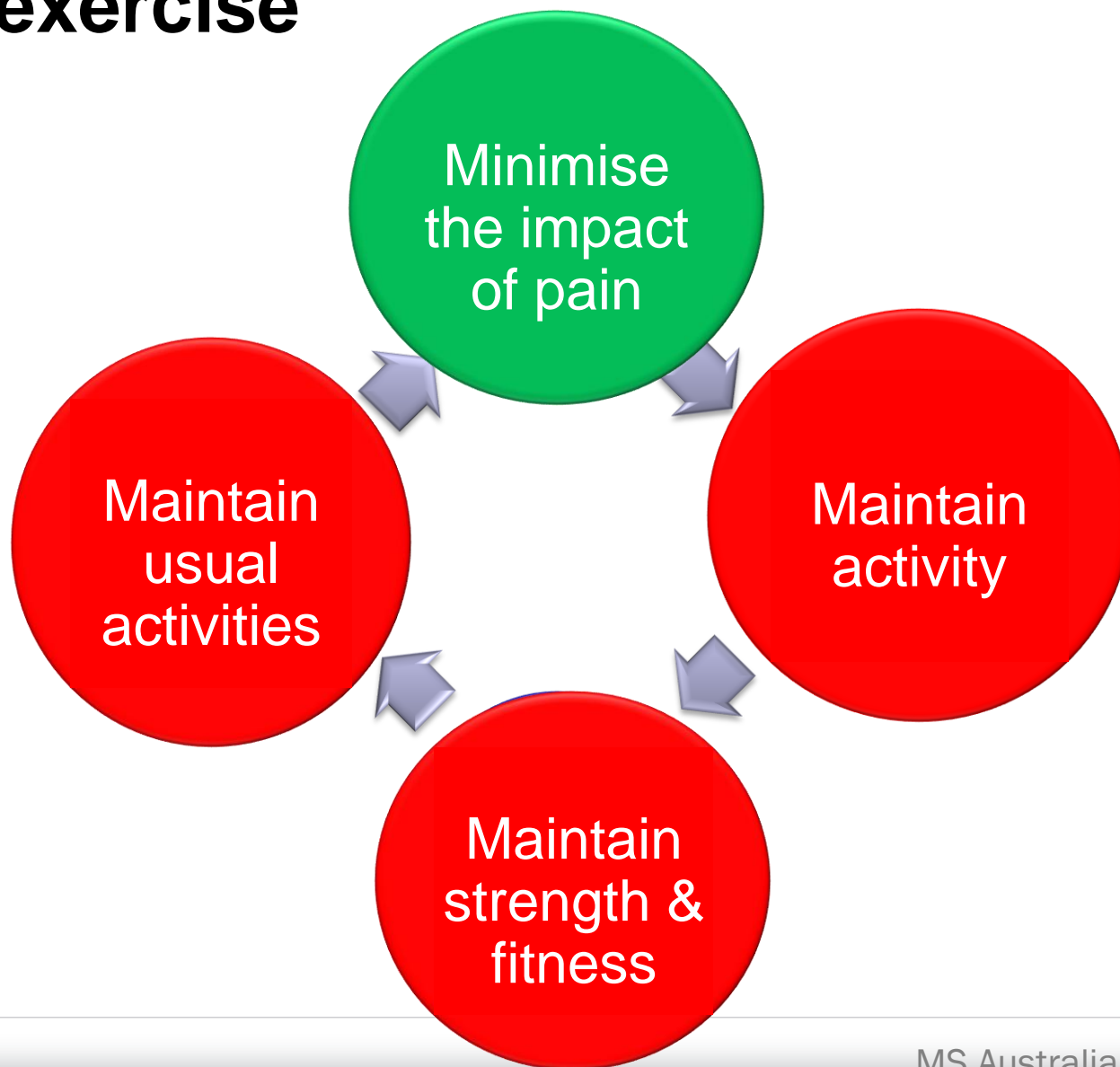
Active pain management strategies



- Aim to maintain function despite pain
- “I manage pain instead of it managing me”
- Examples of active strategies:
 - Regular exercise and activity pacing as needed
 - Slow breathing and relaxation
 - Setting goals and making action plans
 - Active problem solving
 - Challenging unhelpful thinking
 - Working collaboratively with health care professionals and accessing services as appropriate



Physical activity and exercise

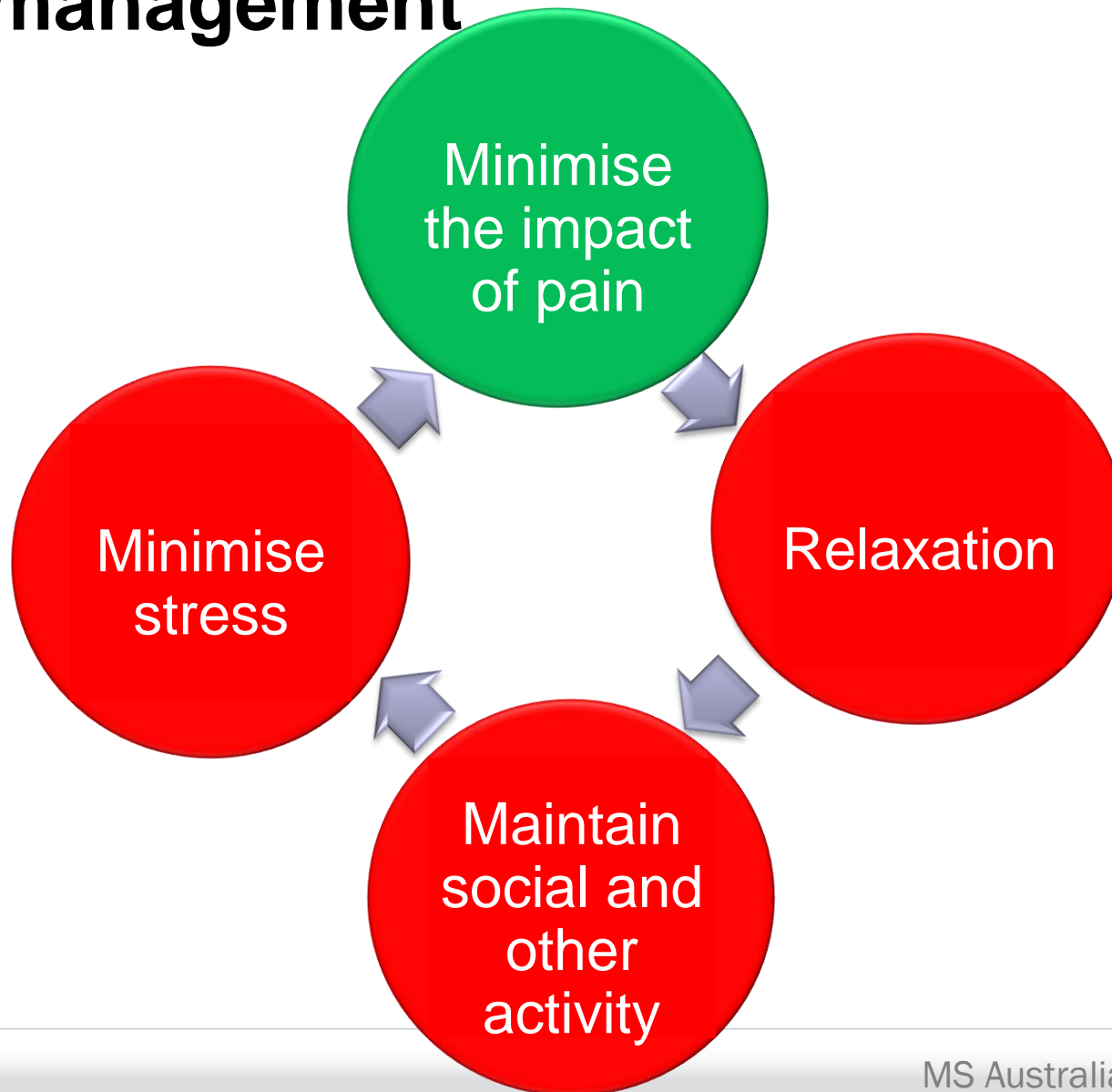


Maintaining physical activity

- **Activity Pacing:** break large tasks into smaller chunks and take regular, short breaks before you over do it.
- For example: washing up
 1. Wash the glasses (5 minutes)
 2. Take a 5 minute break
 3. Wash the plates and bowls (5 minutes)
 4. Take a 5 minute break
 5. Finish the washing up (5 minutes)



Relaxation and stress management

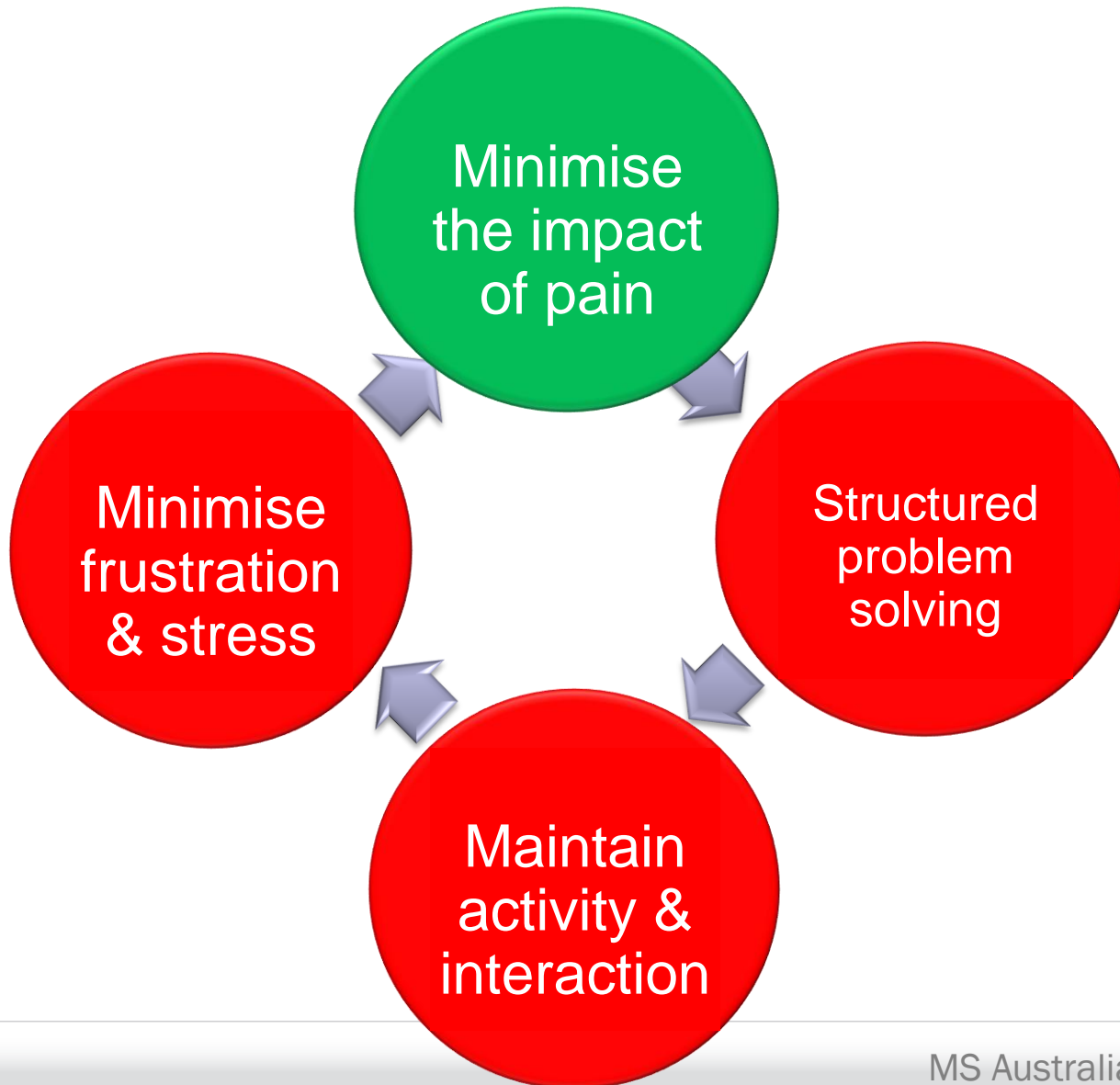


Effectively managing stress

- Be proactive → do things to lower stress levels *before* you feel stressed
- Enjoyable activities
- Slow breathing
 - Sit or lie comfortably
 - Breathe in for 3 seconds, hold for 1 second
 - Breathe out for 3 seconds, hold for 1 second
 - Repeat for at least 10 breaths
- Relaxing activities
 - Yoga, meditation, stretching, tai chi, listening to music, day dreaming, reading...



Problem Solving



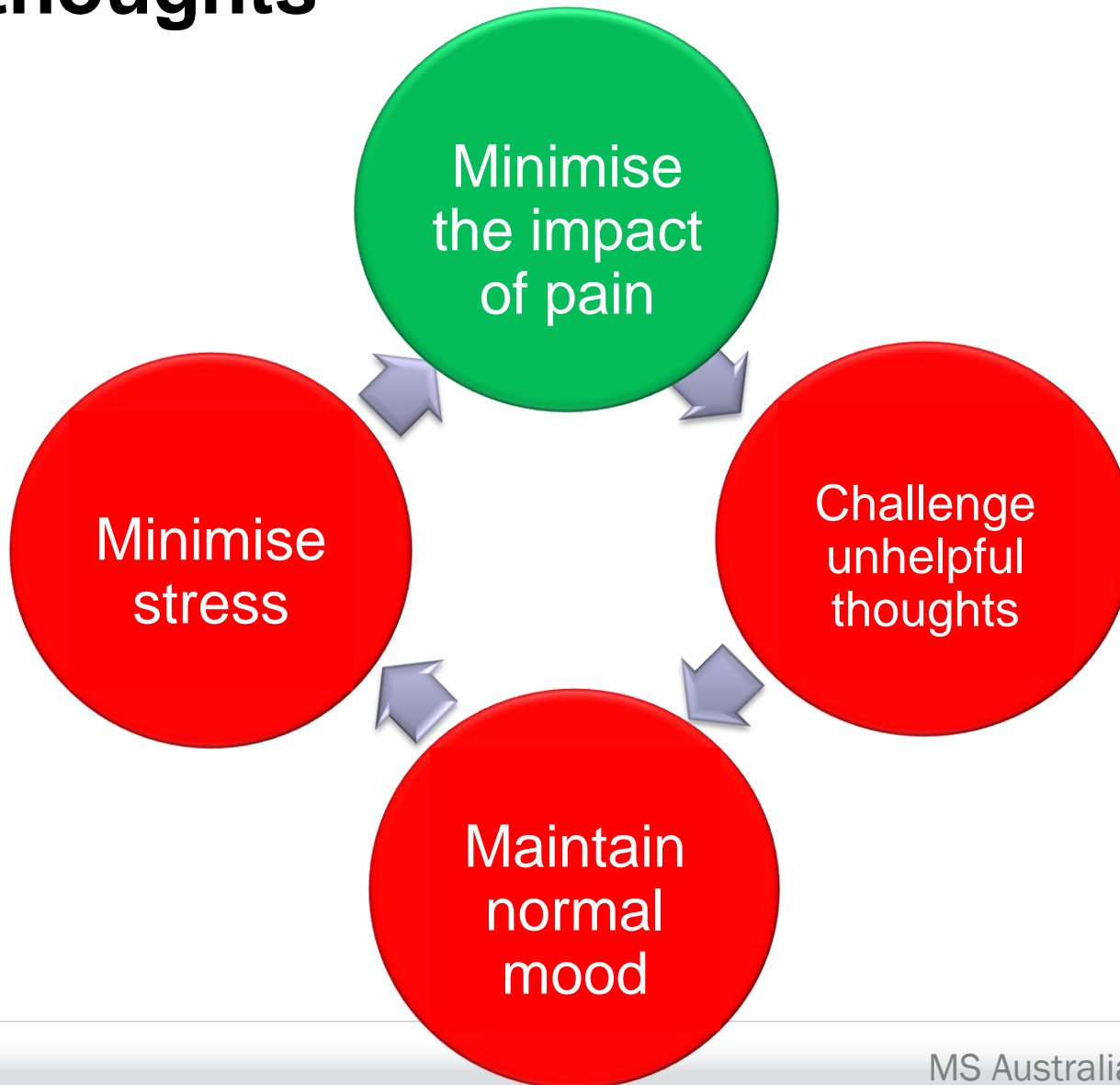
Problem Solving



1. Identify the problem
2. Generate multiple possible solutions (brain storming)
3. Weigh up the pros and cons of each
4. Choose a solution (often combination of options is best)
5. Develop a plan for taking action
6. Take action (Do it!)
7. Evaluate your action (Did it work for you?)
8. Return to (2) or (4) if necessary.



Challenging unhelpful thoughts



Challenging unhelpful thoughts



Situation  Feelings

Pain

Rainy weather

School holidays

Stress

Disappointment

Excitement

Pain

Rainy weather

School holidays

Anticipation

Relief

Dread

Challenging unhelpful thoughts



Pain

Oh no, not again!
Massage tomorrow

Stress
Anticipation

Rainy weather

I can't picnic today
I can't mow today

Disappointment
Relief

School holidays

My kids are angels
My kids are demons

Excitement
Dread

Challenging unhelpful thoughts



- You may not be able to change the situation, but you can change how you are thinking about it...
- Ask yourself:
 - What advice would I give to a good friend?
 - What's the alternative?
 - What is a more helpful way to think about this?
 - How else could I look at this situation?

Challenging unhelpful thoughts



- Common pain challenges:
 - This hurts, but it's not actually killing me.
 - If I take a break I'll be able to come back to this later.
 - It's hard, but I can do this.
 - I know I can do this because I've done it before.
 - It's OK to ask for help.
 - Unhelpful thinking only ends up in me feeling bad.
 - I don't like it, but I can manage.
 - This is difficult, but not impossible.
 - It's OK to do things differently.

Managing Pain

For People Living with MS



Freecall 1800 042 138

www.msaustralia.org.au

<http://www.mstas.org.au/publications/>

Specialist Pain Clinics



- Need a referral from GP or Neurologist
- Pain Management Unit
Royal Hobart Hospital, Hobart
Tel: 03 6222 8087
- Pain Management Tasmania
St Helens Private Hospital, Hobart
Tel: 03 6224 5288



Questions?



Remember...

1. Discuss pain with your Doctor
2. Discuss pain with your family / key supports
3. Take steps to actively manage your pain

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