

Welcome and Introduction to the Course

Your pain is likely to have had a big effect on you and your life. You will have explored treatments and investigations to abolish your pain, but there is currently no suggested cure or “fix”. The pain may have resulted in a reduction in activity in a number of areas, such as work, around the house, sport, or other interests, and also affected the way you feel. You may feel frustrated, more irritable with yourself, your body, family and friends, more worried, or depressed at times. Pain can change the way you react to situations and how you cope with things.

You have been invited to join this group because you have indicated interest in broadening and strengthening your pain management strategies. We aim to provide an environment where you can draw from the experiences of others and share and practise skills that improve your ability to manage your pain.

You are one of a group of people with long-standing, chronic pain using an online platform to learn about pain and relevant topics and meeting online (Zoom). One weekly online group sessions will be facilitated by a peer facilitator and the other session by one of two clinician facilitators.

The modules have been developed by physiotherapists, occupational therapists, and clinical psychologists and one of our doctors has helped with one of the sessions too. Previous patients have also contributed by sharing their experiences of doing this programme and how it affected them. You will have the opportunity to meet the other group participants online once a week to discuss the week’s module, how you have understood and made sense of it or questions that have come up and were not answered in the module.

The programme is set out in modules and each module reflects a week in our in-house programme. We encourage you to go on this journey of the programme together, exploring the week’s module in depth **prior** to the online discussion. Please be mindful that the purpose of this programme is to support and encourage change and new opportunities to manage pain.

Please ensure you familiarise yourself with the resources in each week’s module. Feel free to go back to those from previous weeks, we understand that being in pain can get in the way of taking up information and therefore reading or listening to some resources again can be helpful.

We are pleased you have made the time commitment to this programme and that you feel ready to embrace an active approach to managing your pain. This will require you to review and evaluate your current pain management strategies and to be open to making changes and sticking with these for a while to see their effect.

Group Guidelines

- Confidentiality - What is shared in the group stays in the group. You are expected to respect personal information that is shared by others. Do not record or share other participant's contributions in a way that can identify them to others. Do not login in to the Zoom sessions in public spaces and ensure you let the group know if there are others in the room with you that can hear what is being said.
- Respect – Use the sessions for the purpose they are designed, ensuring every group member has the ability to contribute. At times we may need to contain group discussions to ensure everyone gets the opportunity to participate and to ensure we cover the important elements of the session. Have your video on when at all possible.
- Commitment – Try not to miss any sessions! Many sessions build on the content of previous sessions. The team considers it will be critical for you to attend the first four sessions in order to get full benefit from the programme. If you miss more than one of these sessions, or three sessions in total, we will recommend restarting the programme with the next available group. If your pain is bad, please still come in – the very purpose of this programme is to help you manage this and the group design will provide you with additional support. If for any reason you cannot make it, please let us know by phoning 385 5344.
- Reflective learning -During the programme we will discuss some evidence based practical strategies. There will be an opportunity to reflect on your success or challenges with implementing these at the beginning of each day. Your commitment to trying out different things and sharing your experiences with the group will determine the value of this programme for all participants.
- Curiosity – This programme covers a lot of information. With an open and flexible mind you will explore your and find ways to put some changes in place. When we want things to be different, looking at areas of change is the key and this programme will look at which of the strategies currently used are still helpful now. Our role is to facilitate such reflections and apologise if this may feel challenging at times.
- Compassion - this is an environment where we accept others' experiences and explore our own in a kind and accepting manner
- Perseverance – and by keeping going you will find out their effect on you and your pain. Trying something different is hard, keeping it up is an even greater challenge! This includes doing the homework, reading, reflections and exercise on a regular basis
- Safety - Everyone responds to medication differently therefore medication management needs to remain under medical care. Sharing of medication that is not prescribed will have potentially dangerous consequences and we ask everyone to be respectful in such interactions. If at any time you have safety concerns or issues please arrange to talk a group facilitator. Safety concerns will affect the confidentiality agreement outlined above.