

Exercise

US English

Pacing For Pain And Fatigue



Pacing For Pain And Fatigue

Description

Some forms of chronic pain and fatigue are thought to be maintained by 'boom and bust' patterns of activity – the individual will be active when they are feeling well but will often 'overdo' it, leading once again to high levels of pain or fatigue. Pacing is a technique whereby activity is increased from a low baseline in a controlled manner – the idea is to make activity more consistent and less dependent upon how the individual is feeling. *Pacing For Pain And Fatigue* is an information handout which presents information about the technique separately for chronic pain and fatigue. It should be noted that current evidence for pacing is somewhat equivocal.

Instructions

This is a Psychology Tools information handout. Suggested uses include:

- Client handout – use as a psychoeducation resource.
- Discussion point – use to provoke a discussion and explore client beliefs.
- Therapist learning tool – improve your familiarity with a psychological construct.
- Teaching resource – use as a learning tool during training.

References

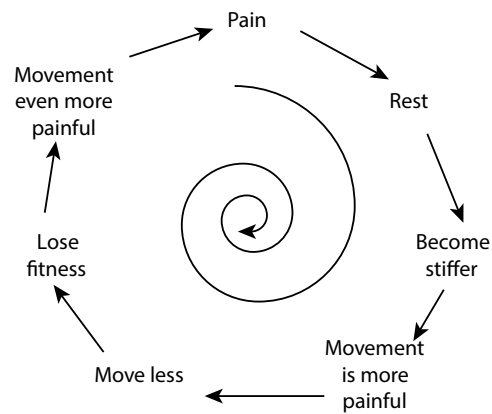
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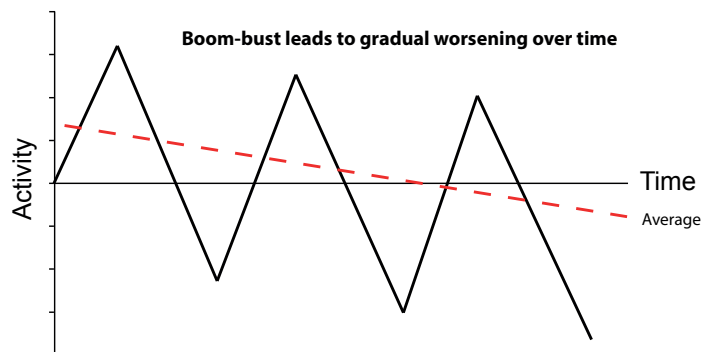
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Pacing For Pain

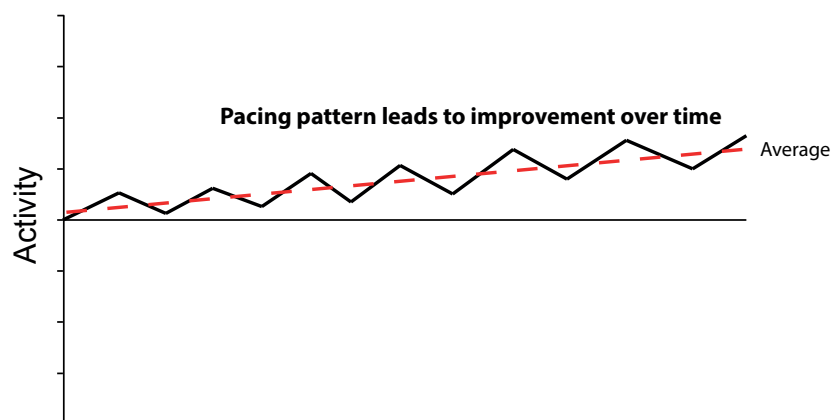
Chronic pain often leads to a dilemma. People with pain know that activity can lead to pain. Some people make the choice to protect themselves by doing less, resting, or to doing nothing. These approaches makes a certain amount of sense, but are not normally a good choice. Doing nothing can lead to boredom and depression, which can make the pain worse. Also, resting makes you less fit. This means that it takes less and less activity to make you feel pain – and lack of fitness makes you more susceptible to future injury.



Other people choose to be very active and to battle through the pain. This approach also makes sense, but it can also be counterproductive. Some people find that they push themselves too hard and end up suffering. They can be laid low for several hours or days following over-exertion.

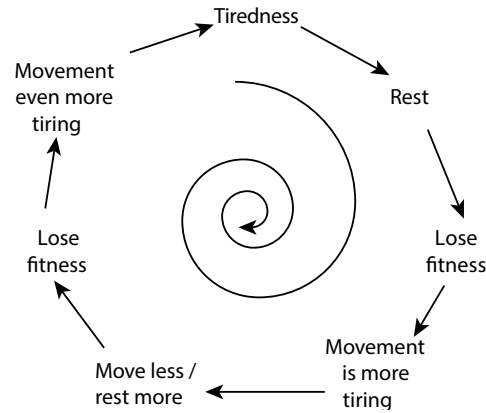


Pacing is a skill that enables you to consistently carry out activities without causing extra pain. It is a middle ground between doing nothing and over-exertion. Pacing also means spending just enough time on an activity to get the most out of it, without pushing yourself so far that you end up in a lot more pain. Over time you will find that pacing increases your fitness, enables you to do more, and makes you less vulnerable to further injury.

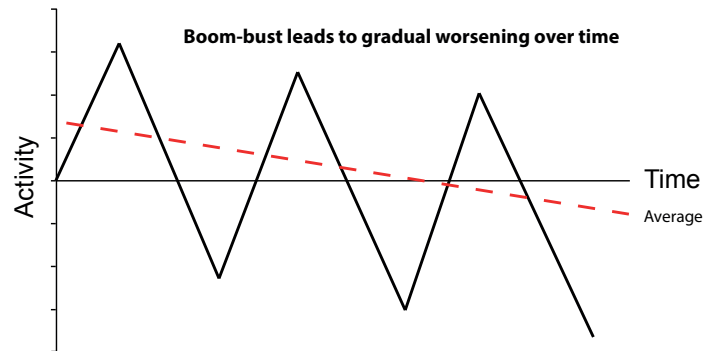


Pacing For Fatigue

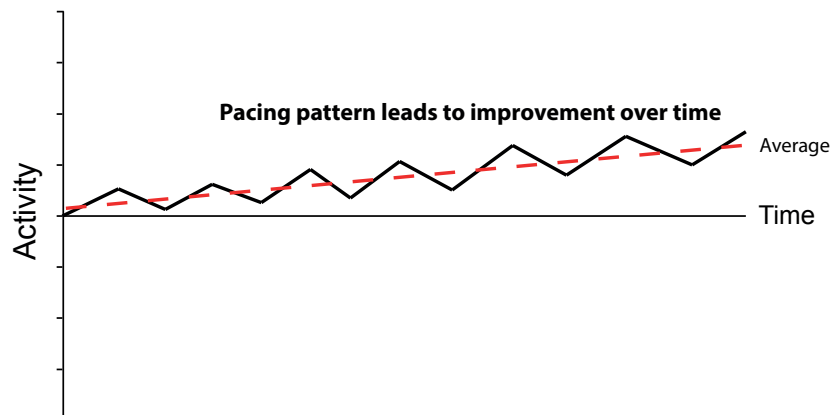
Fatigue often leads to a dilemma. People with fatigue know that the more they do, the more likely they are to become tired. Some choose to do less, or to spend a lot of time resting. These approaches makes sense in the short term, but come with unintended consequences. Doing nothing can lead to boredom and depression, which can make the fatigue worse. Also, extended resting makes you less fit. This means that it takes less and less activity to make you feel tired.



Other people choose to be very active and to battle through the fatigue. This approach also makes sense, but it can also be counterproductive. Some people find that they push themselves too hard and end up suffering. They can be laid low for several hours or days following over-exertion.



Pacing is a skill that enables you to consistently carry out activities without causing extra fatigue. It is a middle ground between over-resting and over-exertion. Pacing also means spending just enough time on an activity to get the most out of it, without pushing yourself so far that you end up a lot more tired. Over time you will find that pacing enables you to do more.



Pacing Instructions

To find a comfortable starting point (baseline)

1. Choose an activity – e.g. sitting, walking, mowing the grass.
2. Measure the length of time you are comfortably able to do this. Do this at least three separate times – on good days and bad days.
3. Take the average of these times, then subtract a fifth.

Example: Sitting

Time 1	Time 2	Time 3	Average	Average - 1/5
15 minutes	10 minutes	7 minutes	11 minutes	9 minutes

Common difficulties with pacing

"I got so involved I lost track of time"

Good pacing means knowing when to stop and take a break. Place a clock in full view, or set an alarm to go off after a certain amount of time.

"I don't know how long to break for or what to do"

To make the most of a break it is important to change your position and body posture, and do something which engages you. It is less helpful to just stop and do nothing. Walk around, do some stretching exercises, put on the radio. Some activities require shorter breaks, other will require longer breaks.

"I make decisions based on how I'm feeling at the time"

This is often part of the boom/bust over-exertion cycle – doing more on good days and then suffering the consequences.

Remember

- Pacing is about judging when to stop an activity based on TIME and not on PAIN / FATIGUE.
- Pacing will give you more control.
- The baseline should be used on 'good' days and 'bad' days. To begin with you may find it difficult to limit yourself on good days.
- Using a baseline leads to improved tolerances and achievement.
- You may find a timer useful to remind yourself to change position.
- Taking a break is not a sign of weakness or failure: it is a wise move to allow you to gradually build up your stamina.

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