

Pain Foundations

Managing Moods

It is normal to have emotional changes when you have persistent pain. Certain thoughts can bring on specific emotions. Your thoughts and emotions can affect the sensitivity of your pain system.



Pain and mood

Depression and anxiety are common among people living with persistent pain.

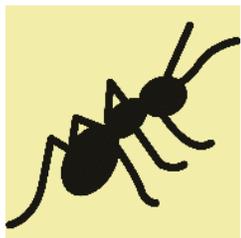
- In a recent Canadian survey, more than half of people said that their chronic pain contributed to their depression and anxiety. About 1 in 4 people said that they experience feeling that “life isn’t worth living”.
- In the USA, studies have found that up to 85% of people with chronic pain have severe depression.

Risk factors for mood disorders

People with persistent pain are more likely to have depression and anxiety if they have:

- Family history
- Past trauma
- Stress that lasts a long time
- Susceptible personality type
- Medical conditions
- Change and loss (work, relationships, or identity)
- Lack of support

Automatic negative thoughts



Automatic **N**egative **T**houghts (ANTs) are ideas your brain comes up with quickly, without your reasoning.

Many people do not notice when they have ANTs, but they do notice the negative emotion that comes with them.

Do you have ANTs?

Common patterns of negative thinking when you have persistent pain include:

- **Catastrophizing:** Believing something is the worst it could possibly be.
- **“Should” statements:** Thinking in terms of how things should, must, or ought to be.
- **All or nothing:** Seeing things as “either or” or “right or wrong” instead of in terms of degrees.
- **Jumping to conclusions:** Making negative conclusions of events that are not based on fact.
- **Mental filtering:** Focusing only on the bad and ignoring the good.

Writing down your thoughts might help you keep track of your ANTs.

Mood management tools

Many strategies can improve your mood. Often people will use several of these strategies to get the greatest benefit. There is a lot of research showing the following strategies can help manage your mood.

- Acceptance and Commitment Therapy
- Mindfulness
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
- Exercise
- Relaxation
- Scheduling pleasant activity

Acceptance and commitment therapy

Acceptance and **C**ommitment **T**herapy (ACT) is a type of therapy that uses an action-oriented approach. ACT was developed by psychologist Steven C. Hayes. Acceptance, commitment, and mindfulness strategies help you learn new ways of doing things.

The main goal of ACT for persistent pain is to help you improve your quality of life by clarifying your values.

Hexaflex of ACT Model,
developed by
Psychologist Steven C.
Hayes, 1982.

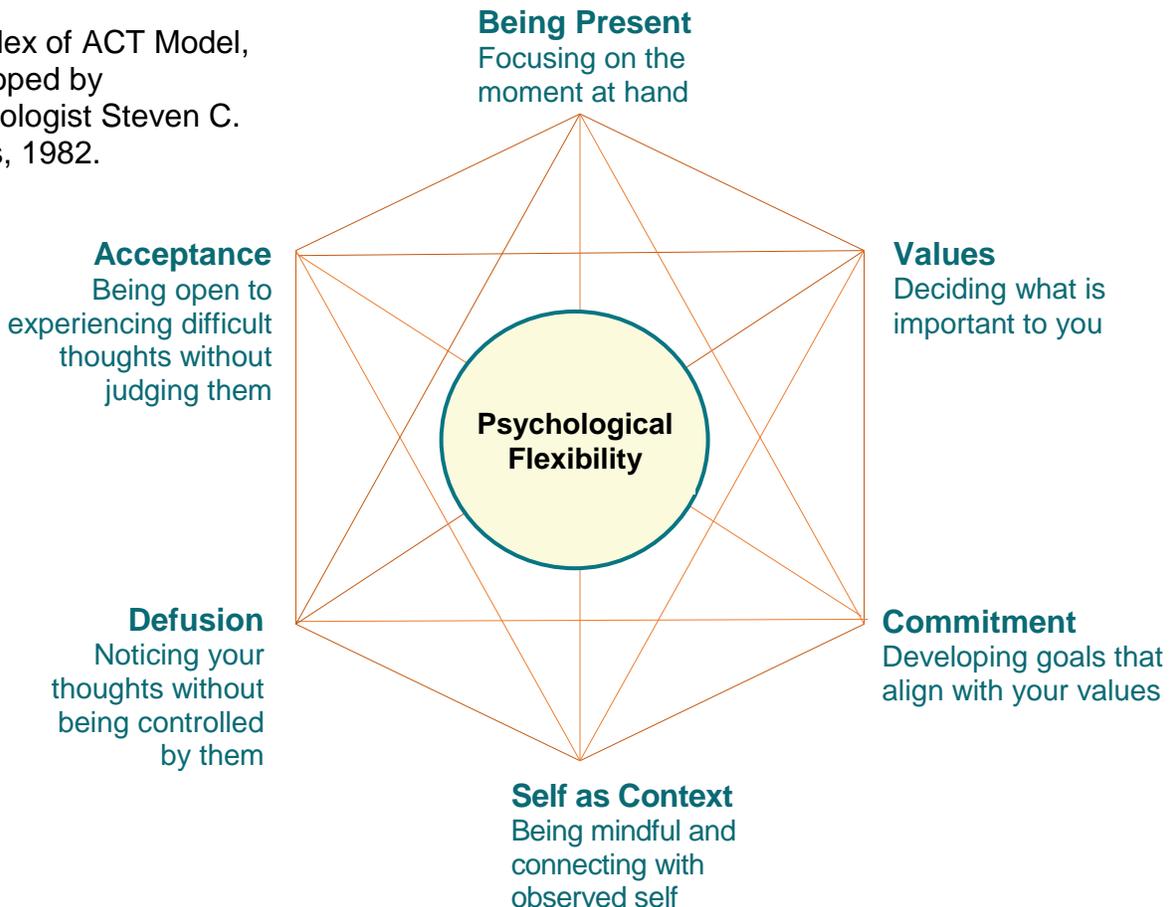


Image created by ©Fraserhealth based on work of Steven C. Hayes 1982.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness can teach you to accept your thoughts, feelings, and emotions without judgment or feeling you need to fix it. Mindfulness training helps you be less reactive to your pain and improves your pain sensitivity. It can also lead to better mental clarity, focus and problem solving.

In the Stress Management section, you learned about Tara Brach's **R.A.I.N.** as a tool to practice mindfulness and compassion. You can use the tool when you are feeling overwhelmed, stressed, or anxious.

R.A.I.N.

Recognize what's happening

- Bring awareness to the thoughts, feelings, and behaviours that are affecting you

Allow yourself to experience things as they are

- Let your thoughts, emotions, feelings, and sensations simply be there,
- Try not to change, fix, or avoid them

Investigate with curiosity and care

- Be curious about the truth and direct your attention to the present moment

Nurture with self-compassion

- Respond to yourself and others with kindness
- Providing compassion to yourself just as you would a suffering friend.

Based on R.A.I.N. tool developed by Tara Brach. Image by starline on Freepik

Cognitive behavioural therapy

Cognitive **B**ehavioural **T**herapy (CBT) is a type of therapy that can help you replace ANT's with thoughts that help to improve your mood.

CBT can help change how you view pain. It can also help reduce the negative response from the brain that can make pain worse.

CBT is a well-known treatment for anxiety and depression. Researchers have found that it is also one of the best psychotherapies for treating pain.

CBT involves learning to identify the exact thoughts that trigger your negative moods. Next, you decide how true those thoughts are. You then have the option of replacing them with different or balanced thoughts. With practice and effort, it becomes more natural to think positively and you will see your mood get better.



Positive Affirmations

Positive affirmations are believable statements that you say out loud to yourself, often while looking in the mirror, to increase your self-esteem, positivity, and gratitude. They have been shown to improve mood.

Sample positive affirmations for pain

I am listening and learning from my pain.

I am choosing peace every day regardless of how much pain there is.

I am more than my pain.

I am thankful for healing.

I am learning new skills and trying my best.

My body is resilient and strong.

I am learning to move freely again.



Image by [Freepik](#)

Getting help

Start with speaking with your doctor or any other health care professional that you feel comfortable speaking with. They can provide you with direction on next steps and help you find the support you need.

Psychologists, clinical counsellors, and other mental health professionals can help you learn how to live life with chronic pain.

If you need immediate support, the following are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week:

- Fraser Health Crisis Line: 604-951-8855 or toll-free 1-877-820-7444. Trained volunteers provide toll-free telephone support and crisis intervention counselling.
- Crisis line for Indigenous peoples: 1-800-KUU-US17 (588-8717). Provides culturally sensitive support and counselling to Indigenous peoples.

What stood out to me in this section?

Questions I still have on this topic

CBT Activity: Catching ANTs

Situation	Catch It! Identify Thought 	Check It! Is the thought unhelpful? Why?	Challenge It! Helpful Thought
<i>Went for a long walk and my pain flared.</i>	<i>I can't do anything anymore and walking must be bad for me!</i>	<i>Yes. It makes me more scared of moving and exercising and I know that moving is good for me.</i>	<i>I am hurting more because I overdid it. I know this is only temporary. Next time I will make sure to pace myself.</i>

Resources

Websites



[Pain BC](#)

Read articles and watch videos about [emotional wellbeing](#) and [depression](#) for people with chronic pain.

[Anxiety Canada](#)

Get free online, self-help, and evidence-based resources on anxiety.



[Mental Wellness FHA](#)

Learn more about what Mental Wellness is and what it means to you.

[FHA Mental Health Programs](#)

Find mental health programs and resources in Fraser Health.



[Wellness Together Canada](#)

Learn about mental health, and substance use, and get links to services available. Funded by the Government of Canada.

[Here to Help](#)

Explore strategies to help you take care of your mental health and use substances in healthier ways, and learn how you can support a loved one.



On-Line Courses



[Kelty's Key](#)

Receive free and confidential online therapy service. Get tailored treatment from an online therapist, or work on your own with our self-help resources.

[ACTivate Your Life](#)

Try this on-line self-help course from Wales Public Health site. A beginning step for those who are looking to develop skills and actions to improve mental health and well-being.



[BounceBack Program](#)

Learn from this program that provides help to adults with mild to moderate depression, low mood or stress. Delivered online or over the phone with a coach.

Books

[Antidepressant Skills Workbook](#) Self-help workbook for managing depression by Dan Bilsker and Randy Paterson. Click on title for free download.

The Feeling Good Handbook by David Burns

Mind Over Mood: Change How You Feel by Changing How You Think by Dennis Greenberger and Christine A. Padesky.