



**East Gosford
Physiotherapy
& Exercise
Physiology**



WHY DO I STILL HAVE PAIN?

Your Self-Help Guide to Managing your Persistent Pain & Getting Back into Life.

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Everyone feels pain from time to time, you cut your finger or pull a muscle and it hurts for a short period of time, to let you know you have hurt yourself. But if your pain is lasting for over 3 months and your body keeps hurting for months or years, then you have a problem we call Chronic or Persistent Pain, and your life will have been significantly affected by this pain.

Have you
“stopped life”
due to your
pain?

Are you not
enjoying
things you
used to?

Are you having
trouble moving
and have
stopped moving
because it
hurts?

Are you scared
to move and
worried about
your pain getting
worse?

Have you
stopped
socialising?

Is it effecting
your relationship
with your
spouse?

If you have had pain for more than 3 months and you have answered YES to some of these questions.....

This eBook will help you and is your self-help guide to “getting back into life” and to start moving again, simply by understanding some of the neuroscience behind PAIN.

We are designed to move – when we stop moving (due to fear and pain) our pain will get worse and we will move less, leading to a cycle of protective stiffening of our spine and joints and weakness of our core and postural muscles and causing a chemical release of stress hormones. This effects our normal “pain controlling” chemicals in our brain, changes our breathing pattern and further weakening our core muscles, all making it harder to move and causing more pain.





There Is Good News!!

You can start feeling better and moving better once you understand some simple things about pain and how your body reacts to pain.

You must always remember pain does not ALWAYS mean tissue damage or injury especially if your pain has been present for months..... YOUR PAIN CAN “HANG AROUND” once your tissue has healed!

What is the difference between Acute Pain and Persistent Pain.

You may have been involved in an accident or strained your back.

And it hurt – right?

This is normal. If you strain something like a joint, muscle or disc you will get pain.

This is **ACUTE PAIN**, and the feeling of pain comes from electrical signals passing through your nerves, to your BRAIN, and your brain will process this information and send out the message that you hurt.

Acute pain is very important in your body and it's your brain and body's way of telling you to STOP and REST and let it heal.

The body is great at healing. Think about what happens if you cut yourself - your skin heals with scar tissue and becomes normal again within a couple of weeks.

The same happens internally. Our internal structures like muscles, discs and bones all heal over time. It is often painful in the healing phase, but this gradually gets less, and you will soon forget about the injury and you will be moving normally again. A sprained ankle is a good example.





During this time your nerves become ‘sensitive’ and your brain becomes a bit more ‘protective’ because it is getting information from your nerves about the injury and tries to protect you from further injury.

This is **TOTALLY NORMAL!**

The over sensitive nerves which is **NORMAL** with an acute injury should gradually settle down over a couple of weeks, especially if you treat your injury well.

BUT OCCASIONALLY THIS DOES NOT OCCUR!

Sometimes your over sensitive nerves, can “stay” over sensitive and your pain from the acute trauma **PERSISTS**. The signal which usually stops when the cause of the pain has resolved ie: your wound has healed, sometimes keep firing, even after you have healed.

The switch which turns on the sensitivity of the nerves in an acute injury, **STAYS TURNED ON**, and keeps firing the signal.



If it stays **TURNED ON** for longer than a couple of months your brain now starts to exaggerate its response to the pain and keeps you “protected”, but you don’t really need this protection any more.



Unfortunately this means your body is still reacting as if you have acute pain and injury despite the injury healing. You may worry about the pain getting worse so you stop doing things you like doing because of fear of re-injury or just fear of making the pain worse.

This is what happens in **chronic** and **persistent pain** and often the fear of pain is worse than the pain itself. This is different from acute pain as there is often no persisting tissue damage to be protected, and the overprotection pain and fear to move, becomes the problem.



The exciting thing is...

The tissue has healed (just like your skin healed after the cut). The sensitised nerves and fear of pain and re-injury can be improved and settled down and your pain can be “healed” with the right education and treatment.



Think of Pain as an Alarm.

Think of acute pain as an alarm “going off” when a burglar breaks your window to rob you.

You want the alarm to go off, if you are being robbed. You want the alarm to be as loud as possible to attract the police. You want to do something about it.

Just like with acute pain “we need to do something about it” and pain, like a loud alarm, attracts attention to “do something about it” – rest, ice, protect it. Your sensitised nerves make that alarm loud and strong to alert your brain of DANGER.

If your pain hangs around for weeks or months your nerves stay sensitive and it will keep making you react like your window is being broken again and again.

We know the tissue or injury is most likely healed, but your body stays in pain because the alarm keeps going off as if there is tissue damage, because it is just too sensitive.

This is now like a tree branch rubbing against the window and setting off the alarm. Not broken into just touching the window.

We don’t really want to know when something simple like this happens as there is no “damage” – it’s just a sensitive system which reacts at a low threshold as if you are being robbed.

This is what happens with **chronic and persistent pain** – your system is “sensitive” and your alarm or pain response is greater than what it needs to be, and unfortunately keeps happening.

It tends to keep happening until you can “reset” the system with knowledge and movement and show the brain that there is no tissue damage (no “broken window”) just sensitivity of the alarm system and all the nasty responses that go with it.





Imagine something for a moment....

You are sitting in your lounge room and an African lion jumps into the room. You panic, your heart rate goes up, you release “stress chemicals” in your brain and body (flight or fight reaction) you become very tense, hold your breath, etc. You are scared!”

Now remember the lion is only in the room. It hasn’t hurt you yet (no tissue damage) but you are scared it will injure you, and your body reacts with all the fear responses to protect you.

Now I want you to think of that lion being your chronic or persistent pain. It’s in the room with you, creating all these responses, with no tissue damage. What we need to do is turn that big scary lion into a baby lion cub that you can hold and pat.

You still need to respect it because you could be scratched but you won’t be really hurt and you can calm down all your body responses which occurred due to fear.

Once you have “your pain” - your real pain – in a place where you are not scared to move and are able to move with some pain - but not worsening the pain – (remember the alarm story and the window being touched not broken), you will start to feel better and better manage your pain.

If you can move and breathe normally again, knowing your pain will not get worse or create more tissue damage, your over sensitive alarm system will be reset.

The branch on the window will no longer set off the pain alarm and you will “start life again”

You will start enjoying life and movement again.
You will start socialising again.

And the great news is, if you have got to this stage of the e-book and believed at least part of it you have already started your treatment program for chronic or persistent pain.

PLEASE REMEMBER THIS....

The chemicals available in your brain (Natural Endorphins), are possibly the best medicine known to mankind to help pain.



HOW WE CAN HELP...



East Gosford Physiotherapy and Exercise Physiology are highly trained in helping people manage their PAIN, and especially if your pain has become chronic.

Our program will commence with a detailed and complex assessment where we will get to know you and learn about the things you have stopped doing because of your pain.

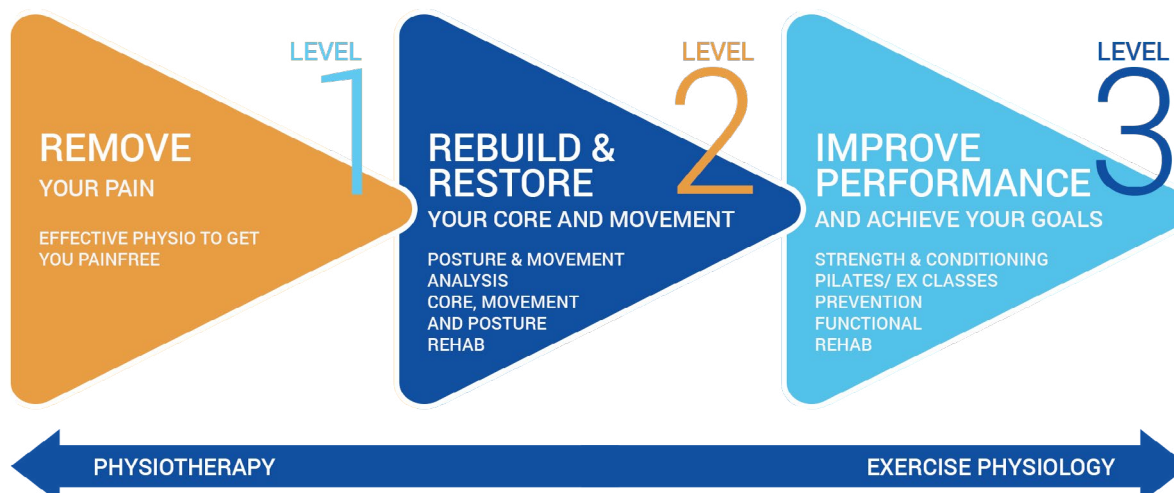
We will then set you a PATHWAY to recovery which includes setting goals and showing you how we work towards those goals.

This often involves many discussions about your pain, and where you can learn about the latest information in neuroscience for Pain management, and HOW we can use this evidence-based Treatment to help you.

Everyone is a bit different, and we need this information, so we can tailor a management program for you.

This often involves our specially trained Physiotherapists and Exercise Physiologists. We liaison with your GP and Pain Specialist and become part of the team to help you. Other professionals like Clinical Psychologists and Dietitians may also have a role and can be involved.

So, we invite you to make an appointment with one of our Physiotherapists and we can help you to **Get back into LIFE.**



References

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