

## Goal Setting

People with ongoing pain problems often stop doing a range of activities that they used to do 'without thinking twice'. These may include the more routine and uninteresting tasks such as cleaning, washing-up, vacuuming etc. They may also stop doing things that they *enjoy* - such as going out for a meal or a drink, going for a walk in the countryside, playing with the children or going to see a film with friends. This can all result in their husband, wife or partner taking over some of the daily responsibilities and the person with pain can feel down, frustrated or worthless.

Often people **stop** or **start** doing things because of ongoing pain problems.

For example: **stop** socialising or doing housework

**start** depending on other to do things for them, relying on medication or lying down to rest

## The value of goal setting

Goals can bring back direction to your life. Completing a goal, however small, can give you a sense of achievement and also encouragement to continue. As human beings, we need to have success to help us feel good about ourselves. One of the things that people with chronic pain often say is that they "can't do anything anymore" and "have nothing to look forward to". Realistic goal setting is a way to help you get back to doing the things that you want to - **despite pain**.

Thinking about goal setting can, in the beginning, be very difficult. Often people will say or just think;

- "I've tried it before and it didn't work ..... then I felt worse"
- or
- "My pain won't let me so what's the point?"
- or
- "My pain is bad enough and in the past when I did X or Y it made my pain worse"

It is understandable to have these thoughts. However, having a go at achieving goals with some careful thought about how you do this may help you succeed this time round.

In the 'definition of values and goals' section we identified five main values that define our life. These values are what we live for, they drive us in everything that we do and how we choose to spend our lives. Now choose the value with the highest ranking (5/5) and work on creating goals linked to this value.

Ask yourself what is the smallest, easiest thing I can do today that is consistent with this value?

Once you have defined your goal you need to break this down into an action plan:

- What smaller steps are required in order to complete this goal?
- What resources (if any) do I need in order to take these steps?
- When specifically will I carry out these actions?

To help with this we can set our goals around the SMART principle.

## The SMART principle

The purpose of the SMART principle is to set achievable goals that can add purpose and help reconnect with your values that you have identified.

When it comes to setting goals, make sure you set a SMART goal. There are different versions of this acronym. In this version, SMART stands for:

- |                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| <b>S</b> Specific:   | When, what, where, how often, for how long?  |
| <b>M</b> Measurable: | How you know that you have achieved your goal<br>e.g. 5 lengths of a swimming pool, ¼ mile of a walk                                       |
| <b>A</b> Achievable: | There are no other constraints<br>e.g. money - can't afford to go swimming twice a week  |
| <b>R</b> Relevant:   | This is something <b>you</b> really <b>want to do</b>  |
| <b>T</b> Timebound:  | To set a date by which time the goal will be achieved eg start my walks on November 15 <sup>th</sup> ; go swimming on Tuesdays and Fridays |

Goals are much more likely to be achieved if you:

- make sure it is something that is important to you – you **REALLY WANT TO DO IT!**
- reward yourself for achieving each step forward
- make sure that each step is small enough

Example of a vague or non-specific goal:

“I will spend more time with my kids”

A specific goal:

“I will take the kids to the park on Saturday to play football”

## Goal planning worksheet

My target is:

.....  
.....  
.....

The things that could interfere with my plans are:

.....  
.....  
.....

Ways around these problems are:

.....  
.....  
.....

My specific goal is:

.....  
.....  
.....

The steps to achieving this goal are:

	Steps	Date to be achieved by	Date achieved
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

When I have achieved this goal I will feel:

.....