
Changing the way you think and feel...

COMMUNICATION & PAIN 1

How Do We Communicate When We Are In Pain?

When we are in pain the ways in which we communicate to others tend to change. Our communication can become less **verbal** and more **non-verbal** in nature, meaning we talk less and instead present behaviours to the world to indicate we have a difficulty. This happens because it can be difficult to talk about pain and we may try hard not to talk about it because it is upsetting. So instead we might unwittingly use non-verbal communications such as groaning, rubbing or holding parts of our bodies, using crutches, or a stick, or limping. With these changes in our communication can come problems, as non-verbal ways of communicating can be misunderstood more easily. When they are misunderstood people either do not know how to respond, or do not respond in the way we hoped they would and this can cause conflict between you and your loved ones. Non-verbal communications can also be missed or can leave you feeling ignored or unsupported.

Most people with chronic pain recognise this and do one of two things:

1. Try to cover up their pain and not show it or
2. The behaviours become a permanent feature and are something which the person does all the time.

Think about how you present yourself to your loved ones and the world and think of the advantages and disadvantages of different types of behaviour. It is important to

remember that how we present ourselves affects how other people behave towards us.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- **How do other people behave towards me?**
- **How do I want other people to behave towards me?**
- **How will others react to a 'different me' who takes time out for themselves, exercises, relaxes and works towards goals. Will they be pleased or worried?**

Remember if we want other people to change their behaviour, it may require a change in our own behaviour first.