

Living with pain

There are more than 8 million people in the UK living with long-term pain. This is what some of them said.

Everything I try seems to make the pain worse!

Unless you've lived with constant pain you can't imagine what it is like!

I keep trying to do more but each time my pain gets worse.

Things I used to do without thinking have become an effort.

People think I'm faking it. My doctor said it was all in my mind!

I've no social life anymore.

I can't sleep for the pain.

I can't plan anything anymore - I never know how bad it's going to be.

I feel pretty useless!

It's ruining my whole life but no one can help.

I can't get anyone to take it seriously and do something about it.



What is the Pain Plan?

If you have been told that you will have to live with long-term pain this book is for you.

It will show you what other people did to get better control of their pain.

You can pick the things you think may help **you**.

Then we show you how to use them to build your personal Pain Management Plan.

Around the world hundreds of thousands of people have tried these methods and found them helpful.

The Pain Management Plan has 3 parts

The Diary Sheets

You can use them for your own Pain Plan.

They will record your success week by week.

The CD

A stress management programme.

Many people have told us they would “..definitely recommend it to other people with long-term pain.”

The Book

Part 1 - all you need to know to start on your Pain Plan.

Part 2 - what people did about the many problems pain can cause.



You don't need to do it all at once!

Important. Nothing in the Pain Plan should replace treatments or advice you have been given by your doctor unless you first discuss it with him or her. If your pain gets much worse, or you develop a new kind of pain, you must consult your doctor. If anything in the Pain Plan makes the pain worse do not continue until you have had it checked.

What other people living with pain said about the Pain Plan

I've got some control back - over the pain and my life, thanks.

I'll be honest, at first I was disappointed. I was looking for a cure for my pain. But I did use it and it helped me a lot. I'd recommend anyone - give it a try.

I've got back to doing things I enjoy and the pain is more manageable.

Essential! It's just essential people see this stuff.

It's all common sense really, I kind of knew it but making a plan made me do it.

It helped me and my family understand my pain.

I wanted to be able to look after my house, to get on with my kids better and to feel less fed up. I'm 90% there!

Life is better now, despite the pain.

It worked for me. While I was doing it! I need to get back to it!

I get less frustrated and that helps a lot. I sleep better too.



Long-term pain is different

This book is all about practical things you can do. But first we need to tell you about some wrong ideas that can make pain worse!

Firstly it is important to know that long-term pain is different from short-term pain.



Short-term pain is a useful warning.

If you twist your ankle or fall on your knee, or put your hand on something very hot you feel pain.

This warns you to escape from the danger and protect the part that is hurt.

As the muscles, bones and nerves heal, the pain gets less. Any pain that does not follow this pattern and goes on for 3 months or more is called '**long-term pain**'.

Most long-term pain is not a useful warning to protect your body or escape from danger.

There are a few exceptions to this such as arthritis where a flare-up in pain can be due to inflammation in the joints.



What causes long-term pain?

Sometimes it can be traced to nerve damage or an old injury or surgery.

Sometimes it is a medical condition like arthritis or infections like shingles.

But in most cases no cause can be found. Pages 52 and 53 in **Part 2** explain why. Unfortunately there is usually no medical 'cure' for long-term pain.



Long-term pain is very real!

Many people with long-term pain have been made to feel that it is 'all in your mind' or that they are making too much of it, or even that they are faking it! **This is rubbish.**

All pain, short or long-term is real. Long-term pain hurts just like short-term pain.

Long-term pain can be much harder to live with because there is no knowing when it may end and because it is **pointless and unfair.**

Ideas about long-term pain

Some of these ideas helped people - some made their pain worse.

Try the quiz on the next two pages.

There's no gain without pain.

Nobody knows what's right. They all tell you something different!

I know that I can beat this.

Pain always means something is wrong inside.

It's all the hard work I've done that has caused this.

The x-ray showed wear and tear. My back is worn out.

Hurting means harm is being done.

Pain is just part of getting old.

I need to rest more so I can heal.

There is nothing I can do.



Try this quiz - tick the ones you agree with ✓

- 1 Whenever you feel pain it always means that something is being damaged or is pressing on a nerve or further damage is being done.
- 2 There are things that I can do about my pain.
- 3 If you are living with pain it is important to plan things to look forward to.
- 4 Living with pain means you have to plan your life more than other people.
- 5 People with long-term pain should avoid physical activity and rest more.
- 6 My x-ray showed wear and tear so I should move as little as possible.
- 7 It's best to listen to your body and save doing things for a 'better spell'.
- 8 You should fight the pain and do as much as you can despite it - 'no pain no gain'.
- 9 I'm trapped, I want to do more but when I do my pain flares up.
- 10 Everyone tells you different things, they all mean well but nobody knows about my pain, I'm sick of useless advice - I just handle it my own way.

Answers - how did you do?

- 1 In short-term pain this is true, but in long-term pain it rarely means further damage is being done. Pages 52 and 53 agree about this.
- 2 Very true. Many people who thought that there was nothing they could do found that there were things that could help them live a good life.
- 3 True. Living with constant pain is stressful and depressing. Stress, low spirits and worry all increase the misery of pain. It's really important to make time to enjoy yourself.
- 4 Unfair but often true if you want to avoid a flare-up of pain. This means knowing what sets it off and finding other ways to do things.
- 5 No, people who have managed their pain tell us that avoiding normal activity and resting a lot causes worse problems. The Pain Plan will show you how to slowly and safely increase activity with no extra pain.
- 6 Not really, all adults have wear and tear in joints and backs. Doctors often say 'wear and tear', 'degenerative processes' and similar jargon if they can't find anything to explain the pain but don't want to say so!
- 7 This seems sensible and people with long-term pain are often told this but it usually makes the pain problem worse due to something called the 'over activity-rest trap'. More about this later.
- 8 This is courageous but can leave you trapped in the pain cycle. The next two pages will explain the pain cycle and how to escape from it without a fight!
- 9 You are not alone - the good news is that many hundred of thousands of people have escaped from this trap using their personal Pain Plan.
- 10 You are right. A lot of useless and contradictory advice is handed out. The Pain Plan is different, it will show you what real people, with different kinds of long-term pain, actually did. Only experience will tell if the same things will also help you.

Josh and the pain cycle

Josh was a lorry driver. Hours of being bumped around in his cab, too much sitting, weak muscles, poor posture and being overweight led to back pain.

He just took it as part of his job.

To ease his back, at home he'd lie on the floor watching the telly.

He slept poorly. Most mornings he woke up in pain.

Tired, sometimes in agony, he often snapped at his wife and children. Afterwards he felt guilty.

Then a day came when the pain was so bad he couldn't climb up into the cab.

He hobbled down to the surgery.

He was convinced there was something badly wrong. He was not amused when his doctor said "try to exercise and lose some weight."

For exercise he dragged his lawn mower into the garden and forced it through the long wet grass.

Next day he couldn't get out of bed! He had to crawl to the bathroom on his hands and knees!

He went off sick and his doctor made an appointment with a consultant.

The consultant said it was 'wear and tear' and there was nothing he could do.

It sounded like his back was falling apart. He was only 40! He felt scared and alone.

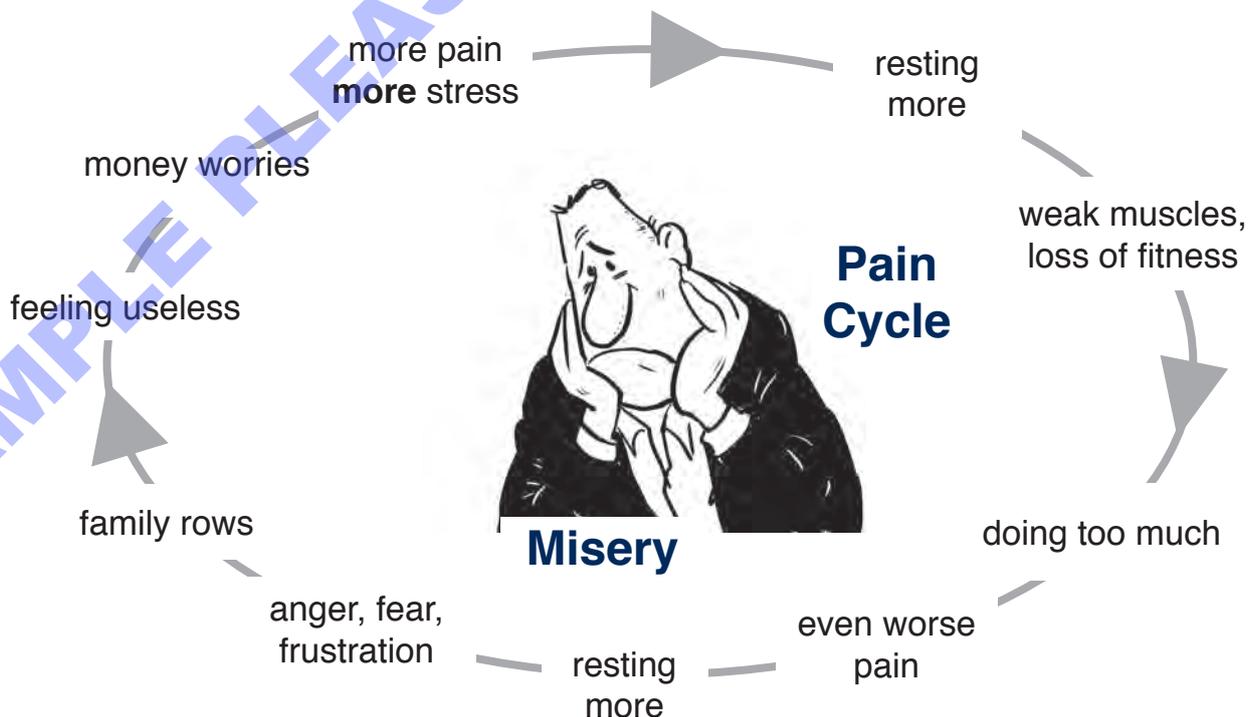
To protect his back from any more damage he rested and waited for it to get better.

Months passed.

Now it wasn't just the pain that was a problem. It was also money problems, bad feelings in the house, guilt, loneliness and boredom.

Pain was ruining his life.

He was trapped in the Pain Cycle.



Josh breaks out of the pain cycle

Josh read the Pain Management Plan and could see that he was stuck in a vicious circle.

He was resting to ease the pain. This was making his back more stiff and movement more painful.

So he had to rest even more - making the pain even worse.

There wasn't enough activity or excitement in his day to get physically tired so he couldn't sleep!

The empty days, when everyone else was at work, made him feel lonely and useless.

He was always angry.

When his wife and kids came back in the evening they avoided him!

They didn't want to talk in case it started a row.

This made him feel rejected and more angry. So they avoided him even more!

He had nothing to think about but pain. Even his thoughts were painful -

"my family can't stand me. I'm no use to anyone anymore. I don't know how much more of this I can stand!"

They added to the stress and pain.

He could see that he needed to change, but how?

He read this book and decided to make a Pain Plan of his own.

He chose the things he thought would help him.

He wrote his Plan on the Goal sheets and got started. As the weeks passed, bit by bit, he could do more.

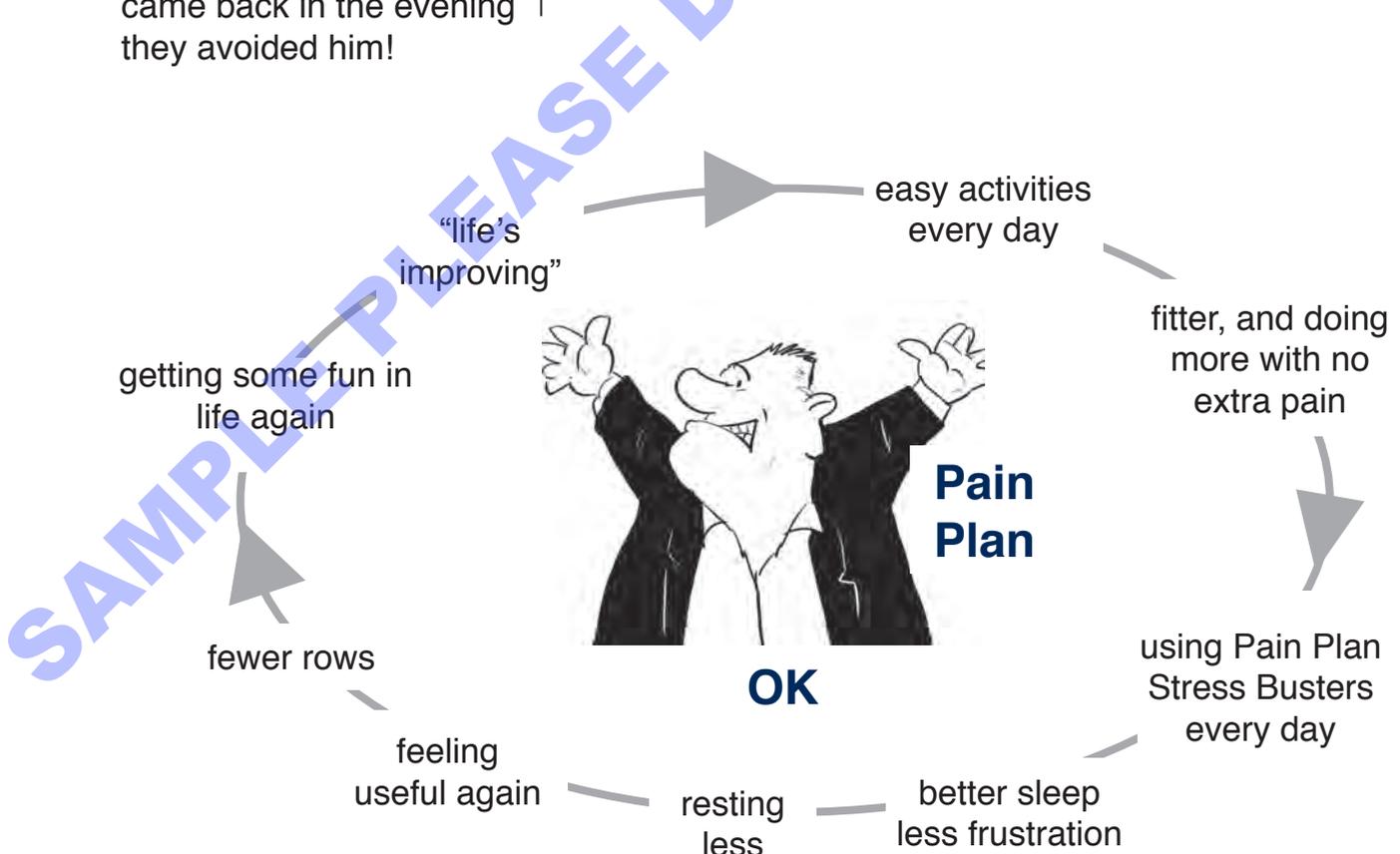
He was sleeping better, less angry. He enjoyed his kids again.

He had longer times where the pain was manageable.

Now, he does light deliveries for a chemist using his own car.

He still has pain and has to be careful, but most of the time, his life is pretty good.

He'd escaped from the pain cycle.



The stress of pain

Living with long-term pain is very stressful. This is what other people have said.

I can't work, I'm broke and life is rubbish!

I can't concentrate. It ruins everything!

I get angry about the slightest thing.

I get so frustrated at times I just want to scream!

I can't sleep, as soon as I lie down the pain is worse. It just fills your head.

I feel trapped and can't see any way out.

Being in constant pain is exhausting. It wears you down however much you try to stay cheerful.

I burst into tears at the slightest thing.

My family have lost respect for me.

I can't face a life like this. It makes me angry that they say there is nothing they can do!



Part 2

Long-term pain brings many problems with it. In Part 2 we pass on what other people with pain have told us they found helpful.

Some of these may not interest you so we've presented it as a menu.

<i>MENU</i>	
<i>Understanding long-term pain</i>	<i>50-51</i>
<i>Pain flare-up, setbacks</i>	<i>52-56</i>
<i>Check your breathing, breathing exercise</i>	<i>57-58</i>
<i>More about stress</i>	<i>59 - 67</i>
<i>Avoiding things we should do</i>	<i>68</i>
<i>Anger and pain</i>	<i>69-71</i>
<i>7 most popular Stress Busters</i>	<i>72 - 74</i>
<i>Sleep problems</i>	<i>75 - 78</i>
<i>Anxiety</i>	<i>79 - 80</i>
<i>Low Spirits</i>	<i>81 - 84</i>
<i>Depression and long-term pain</i>	<i>85 - 86</i>
<i>The pain journey - Mikes story</i>	<i>87 - 88</i>
<i>Relationships and pain</i>	<i>89 - 92</i>
<i>Pain killers and other medicines</i>	<i>93 - 95</i>
<i>Problems learning relaxation</i>	<i>95 - 96</i>