



Our Mob

Look after your mind, body and spirit to manage pain

YOU CAN CHANGE your pain

Aunty Annette's story

Aunty Annette lives in Shellharbour with her pets, daughter and grandson. As a young person, she was a top sportswoman: pretty handy with the javelin! She has lived with pain for 25 years: osteoarthritis, bursitis, spinal canal stenosis, peripheral neuropathy... and there's more!

She can't take any medications for pain as they make her sick, and so she has had to learn to cope in other ways. She had good days and bad, and then something crops up, that just "tips her over the edge". She talks about 'silent crying' with pain.

But... she has learnt to adjust what she does everyday to her changing levels of pain. "When you ache... you have to redirect your activities". When she feels good, she does fine jewellery work, but when her hands are too painful, she does macramé, listens to music or works in the garden. She sets herself projects to do every week to keep herself busy. They also give her a sense of purpose.

She has been told in the past that the "pain is all in her head". People often report the fact that others don't believe the pain is real! She thinks that is very unfair, but what she knows for sure is that "it comes down to you"... and when "your mind is occupied, then your pain gets better". She sets herself tasks each day, so then at the end of the day, she knows she has achieved something and can feel proud. This is what we call 'pacing' and it's a great way of keeping on going in spite of pain: not too much and not too little.

She reckons in dealing with pain – "it's your own journey – you develop your own skill". She has learnt to meditate to help her sleep at night. She also thinks the food you eat can make pain better or worse. Bush medicine is worth a try, but even better, go back to natural foods like fruit and berries. This might help to get the weight off as well. "Too much weight on your bones makes your pain worse!"



Aunty Annette's top tips:

- Think about what you eat – take your food, look at it and think about what is better for you.
- Be active whatever way you can: Aunty Jean's in Wollongong is a great activity programme and you can meet people and talk about your problems where they understand. You can also help others with their problems. I also have set up a gym at home where I can exercise in private.
- Think of projects to keep you busy and give you purpose! I set out to do two activities every day, but adjust them to the way I am feeling.



www.aci.health.nsw.gov.au/chronic-pain/our-mob

