



## Be Pain Smart – Anxiety

### Pain and anxiety thought swaps

Swapping unhelpful and anxious thoughts for helpful ones can aid you with managing your pain and meet your goals. Remember, your thoughts, feelings and actions are linked, so the way you think about your pain is important.

Many people with chronic pain also start to feel anxious, this can lead to a cycle of avoidance, which often makes pain worse. Remember, that the way you think, feel and act are linked. The way you think about your pain is really important. Often these thoughts can be worries about what might happen, you might think that because you are not happy with how things are right now, the future will be worse.

Some people talk about positive or negative thoughts, but it is more useful to think about your thoughts as helpful or unhelpful. Helpful thoughts allow you to deal better with your problems and meet your goals. Unhelpful thoughts make you feel worse and lead you further away from your goals.

It can be hard to find helpful thoughts when you are in pain. There is no point denying that you are in pain – but what is the most helpful way to think about this?

**‘Yes, I am in pain but the best way for me to deal with this is to stay calm, stop getting stressed and remind myself that the pain will pass, I have dealt with this pain before and I will be okay.’**

This is more helpful to you than becoming distressed or angry, thinking the pain will never go away, it is worse than ever and that you cannot cope with it.



## Be Pain Smart – Anxiety

### What kind of thinking would you prefer?

Sometimes it is hard to stop those unhelpful thoughts. It can be easier to swap these for more helpful thoughts.

Let's look at some examples below.

In the first column there are some common unhelpful thoughts you might have about your pain and anxiety. We know these are common thoughts because lots of people with chronic pain say this is what they are thinking – are these thoughts familiar to you?

Next to these are some more helpful thoughts – you can call these **thought swaps** – these are thoughts that you can swap for the unhelpful anxious thoughts.

Read through the different thoughts below to see which ones work for you.

UNHELPFUL THOUGHT		THOUGHT SWAP
<i>The pain is going to get worse and worse in the future.</i>		<i>If I keep using the pain management tools there is no reason that the pain will get worse.</i>
<i>What if I my physical problems get worse and I can do even less in the future?</i>		<i>I am doing all I can to keep my mobility and movement and there is no point worrying about things that might not happen in the future.</i>
<i>I cannot risk going away on holiday because I might have a flare-up in my pain.</i>		<i>There is a risk of my pain flaring up, but there are more benefits in having a holiday.</i>
<i>Everyone will think I'm a fool.</i>		<i>I do not really know what they will think. Why should I worry what they think? They are probably not taking as much notice as I think.</i>
<i>What if I lose control?</i>		<i>If I get emotional, it is not the end of the world. Everyone gets upset sometimes.</i>



## Be Pain Smart – Anxiety

Now, it is your turn to create your own **thought swaps**. They work better when they are personal to you.

Take a moment to think of one of your anxious thoughts you have about your pain. Write the thought down below.

**My unhelpful anxious thought...**

Now think of a new, more helpful thought to swap with the old one.

**My new, more helpful thought...**



# Be Pain Smart – Anxiety

Keep going with making more **thought swaps** about your pain and anxiety.

Write your unhelpful thoughts in the first column and then make a new, more helpful thought to swap it with.

UNHELPFUL THOUGHT	THOUGHT SWAP
-------------------	--------------




---




---




---




---