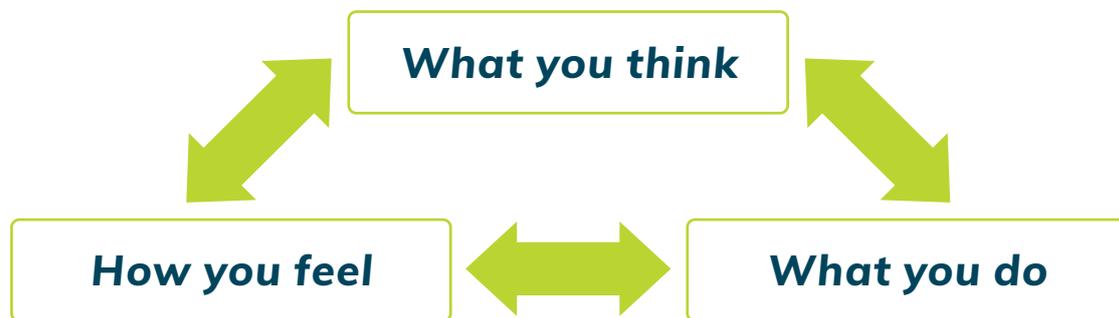




Be Pain Smart – Depression

Changing your thoughts

The way you think, feel and act are all linked and can help you to manage your chronic pain. Learning how to manage your thoughts is a big step in helping you to 'Be Pain Smart'.



The first step to managing your thoughts is starting to know what they are. If you want to learn how to notice your thoughts go to the '[Noticing thoughts](#)' tool. Try using some '[Thought swaps](#)' – these are more helpful thoughts that you can swap for your unhelpful ones. Remember, helpful thoughts allow you to deal better with your problems and to manage your pain. Unhelpful thoughts make you feel worse, get in the way of things and stop you doing what you want to do. When this happens, you can learn ways to handle these thoughts so that they are not controlling you.

There are many ways to manage your thoughts. The two main tools are:

- 1. thought defusion** – this is defusing or distancing yourself from your thoughts. Click [here](#) to find out how to do this.
- 2. changing your thoughts** – this is when you weigh up the proof you have that the thought is true.

Both tools require lots of practice. Read the section below to see how you can change your thoughts to help you manage your pain.



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In order to change your thoughts from being unhelpful to helpful, you need to challenge them. Start by thinking of an unhelpful thought you have a lot or a thought that upsets you. It can help to write this thought down, then begin asking yourself the following questions.

- 1. What is the proof that this thought is true? What is the proof that this thought is not true?**
Helpful thinking means weighing up the facts, so think about if there are any facts that you have overlooked and what real proof you have to support this thought. It can help to consider how someone else might see this situation.
- 2. Is there another way of thinking about this?** Think about the situation, there might be a different way of seeing or viewing what is going on. Is this the only way to think about this?
- 3. Will this matter in six months' time? If not, why?** Sometimes it can feel like what is going on right now will affect your whole life, but most of the time this is not true. Ask yourself if you will really care about this in the future and if it will matter in the future, maybe it is not such a big deal right now as well.
- 4. Is this thought helpful?** This is the big question! Really think about if this thought will help you to meet your goals. Ask yourself if it will help you to manage your pain or help your recovery.

After you have challenged your thoughts, you then need to make a new more helpful thought.

This has been broken down into steps in the worksheet below. Read the example and then have a go yourself in the blank form.



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Changing my thoughts worksheet

Step 1. Notice the thought – write down a common unhelpful thought.

What is the thought?
My pain is getting worse and I will never get better.

Step 2. Challenge the thought – thinking about this unhelpful thought, answer the questions below.

PROOF MY THOUGHT IS TRUE	PROOF MY THOUGHT IS NOT TRUE
<i>My pain is still there.</i>	<i>I am learning new ways to manage my pain.</i>
<i>It was getting better, but last week I had a flare-up.</i>	<i>It took me a while, but my walking has got better – so there is no reason that this will stop.</i>
<i>It has taken my 3 years to improve my walking – I am not sure if I can keep going.</i>	<i>I have days with less pain and if I follow my pacing plan, this will get better.</i>

Is there another way of thinking about this?
I may always have pain but it does not mean it will get worse or that I cannot learn to do more.





Be Pain Smart – Depression

Will this matter in six months' time? If not, why?

Sort of – but if I think about this differently, it will help me to manage my pain and in six month's time, it will not seem like so much of a problem.

Is this thought helpful? If not, why?

No – because it is keeping me trapped worrying about what will happen in the future.

If I focus on what I can do now and how to manage my pain – then the future will be ok.

Step 3. Make a new helpful thought – read over the parts above and come up with a new, more helpful thought.

What is my new thought?

I will most likely still have pain in the future, but that does not mean that it will get worse or that my recovery will stop.

Now it is your turn to have a go.



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Changing my thoughts worksheet

Step 1. Notice the thought – write down a common unhelpful thought.

What is the thought?

Step 2. Challenge the thought – thinking about this unhelpful thought, answer the questions below.

PROOF MY THOUGHT IS TRUE **PROOF MY THOUGHT IS NOT TRUE**

Is there another way of thinking about this?





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Will this matter in six months' time? If not, why?

Is this thought helpful? If not, why?

Step 3. Make a new helpful thought – read over the parts above and come up with a new, more helpful thought.

What is my new thought?

This is a new skill, so you will need to practice it a lot with different unhelpful thoughts. At the start, try asking yourself all the questions. Over time, you might notice that one or two questions are the most helpful for you.