

Information from your Patient Aligned Care Team

Five Steps for Managing Intense Pain Episodes

- 1. Manage your thinking:** What do you think before pain episodes? What do you think during pain episodes? What do you think following pain episodes? Which of these thoughts are helpful in managing your pain? Which are unhelpful? How can you alter your thinking to make it more helpful?

| Unhelpful self-talk | Helpful self-talk |
|---|---|
| I can't stand this pain. (Underestimating ability.) | I've dealt with it before; I can get through it again. (Acknowledging ability to tolerate pain.) |
| This pain is horrible, awful, terrible. (Emotional evaluations.) | This pain is an 8 on a scale of 1 to 10. (Concrete, unemotional evaluation method.) |
| This pain is ruining my life. (Global assessment.) | This is a difficult time for me. (Specific assessment.) |
| I can't do anything to make this stop. (All or nothing thinking.) | There are things I can do to get through this. (Avoiding all or nothing thinking.) |

- 2. Stay as relaxed as possible:** Use deep breathing when you first feel an increase in pain; continue using deep breathing throughout the pain episode.
- 3. Use imagery and distraction:** Use relaxing imagery, watch television, listen to music, do a mentally challenging puzzle or game.
- 4. Use medications effectively:** Recognize early warning signs of increased pain. Take medication early to help manage pain episodes better.
- 5. Use your support network:** Talk with your family members or others about what they can do or say to help during a pain episode. Let them know what is not helpful during a pain episode.

Reference

Hunter, C. L., Goodie, J. L., Oordt, M. S., & Dobmeyer, A. C. (2009). *Integrated Behavioral Health in Primary Care: Step-by-step Guidance for Assessment and Intervention*, American Psychological Association.