

## Pain

Pain can occur for many reasons, such as due to a physical injury or continually unhealthy ways of using our body. Fluctuations in our mood can also cause bodily pain. Stress and worries for example can cause headaches or muscle tension. The intensity of pain experienced, varies from person to person. The subjective experience of pain can also affect a person's life skills and the means available to them to manage it. It is important that we attend to pain when it arises, as this can help us avoid further suffering. Sometimes, even after the original cause of our pain is removed, the pain may still remain and everyday phenomena such as the heat, the cold and touch may feel painful. It is sensible however, not to be over careful with regard to pain but to continue to carry on with life and physically be as active as much as possible.

### COPING WITH PAIN

Sometimes there is no particular reason or cure for our pain, even if we have gone for many tests with different doctors. In doing so, we understandably are trying to identify the 'real' cause of our pain. This is frustrating and we may become depressed or angry. It may be that we have suffered a lot in our lives and this suffering has endured in our body as pain. *"I have a pain in my heart"*. In such cases, it is important for us to begin to accept our life experiences and the pain associated with them. Instead of looking for the causes of such pain it can be more useful to try to find positive ways of coping and living with our pain. It is also not helpful if we start to blame ourselves for our pain. More constructively, we might say to ourselves: "because I am a worthy person, I will encourage myself to do something to improve the quality of my life." Outlined below are a variety of methods that you can use to try and relieve any pain that you may have. Different approaches help different people. It is beneficial for us to become more aware of our sensations of pain and their alleviating factors, by for example, keeping a pain diary.

### PAIN RELIEF

Physical pain can be eased, for example, by having a massage, heat and cold therapy, medicines or by exercising and doing various physical workouts.

In the experience of pain, feelings and thoughts play an important role. Even if there is a somatic explanation for our pain, the subjective experience of this pain occurs only in our brain. The experience of pain therefore, can be eased with the help of our minds, enabling the brain to suppress discomforting pain signals.

- The experience of pain will be influenced by how we interpret it and how we react to it. If we don't know what has caused the pain for example, it may seem more frightening and more powerful. In this case, the pain is harder to endure.

- When we pay a lot of attention to our pain and continually focus on it, this may intensify it and bring about extra tension in our body. Often, we may feel that it is impossible not to think about such pain. However, taking part in a pleasurable activity or having the company of a friend can help us in focusing our attention away from the pain.
- A child's pain is eased by a mother's kiss. Also as adults, the fact that someone notices and is aware of our pain is significant. The care, comfort and support of others can help us to cope with pain.
- We can learn how to cope with pain using imagery exercises. We can for example, envisage what our pain looks like, its size and colour. This can give it more form and make it easier for us to manage. We can then using relaxing breathing, focus on this image and change it so it becomes less disturbing.
- Pain is often associated with tension. Practising relaxation techniques helps us to manage pain.
- You can get help from a physiotherapist, psychologist or other professional person.
- You can practice having an attitude of acceptance towards yourself and your pain: the pain exists, but there are also many other important things in life. Pain does not have to prevent you from living a good life.