

My Pain Toolkit

A pain management guide for children



**Paediatric Psychology and Liaison Service
(PPALS)**

Royal Hospital for Children and Young People

We hope that this booklet helps you to understand more about your pain and find some ways that can help you to manage your pain.

You can work through the booklet at your own pace, by yourself, with the help of a parent/carer or your clinician.

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Understanding pain

What is pain?

Pain is an uncomfortable feeling that we feel in our body.

Pain can feel different for everybody.

Pain can feel sharp, like a bruise or like an ache.



Pain can be there all the time, but it can also be like a wave that comes and goes.



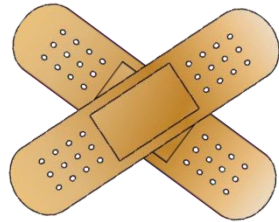
Why do we feel pain?

Pain is our body's way of telling us to do something to protect our body.

For example, if we put our hand near a hot kettle, we know to pull our hand away quickly, so that we don't burn ourselves!



We can feel pain when we hurt ourselves, but we can also feel pain when we are ill.



We don't always understand where our pain has come from or why it started.

When we are in pain, we can feel sad, stressed, worried or frustrated. When we feel this way, we can notice pain more, which can make it feel worse.

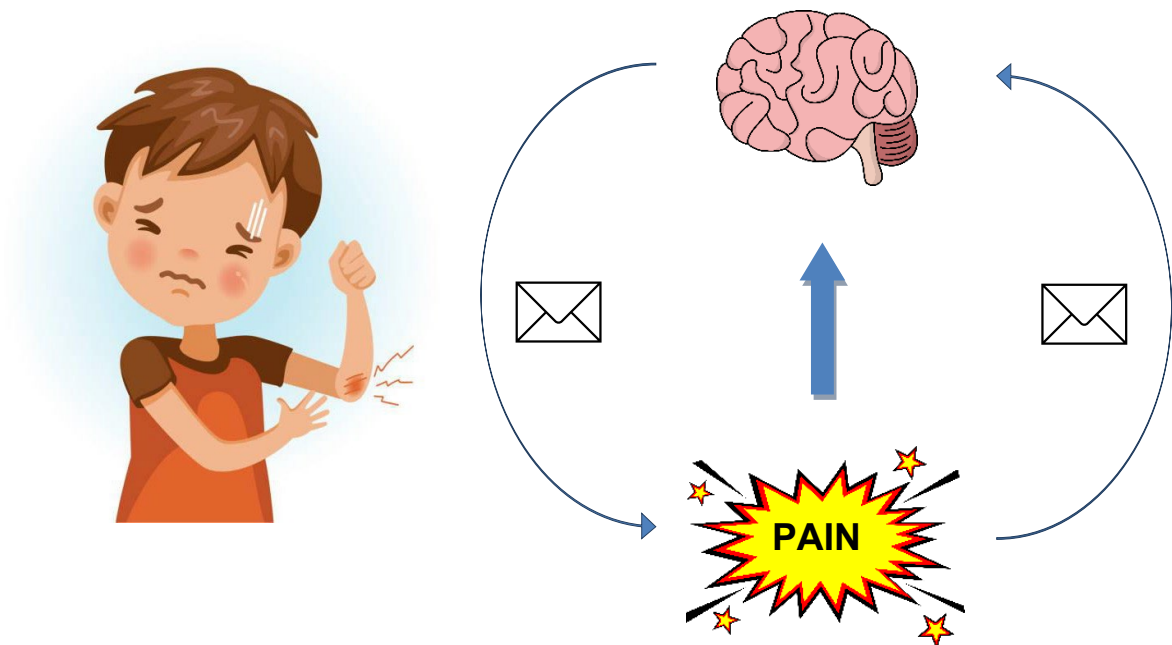


How does our body feel pain?

Our body works together to feel pain.

Pain is a message that goes to your brain and lets you know something is sore.

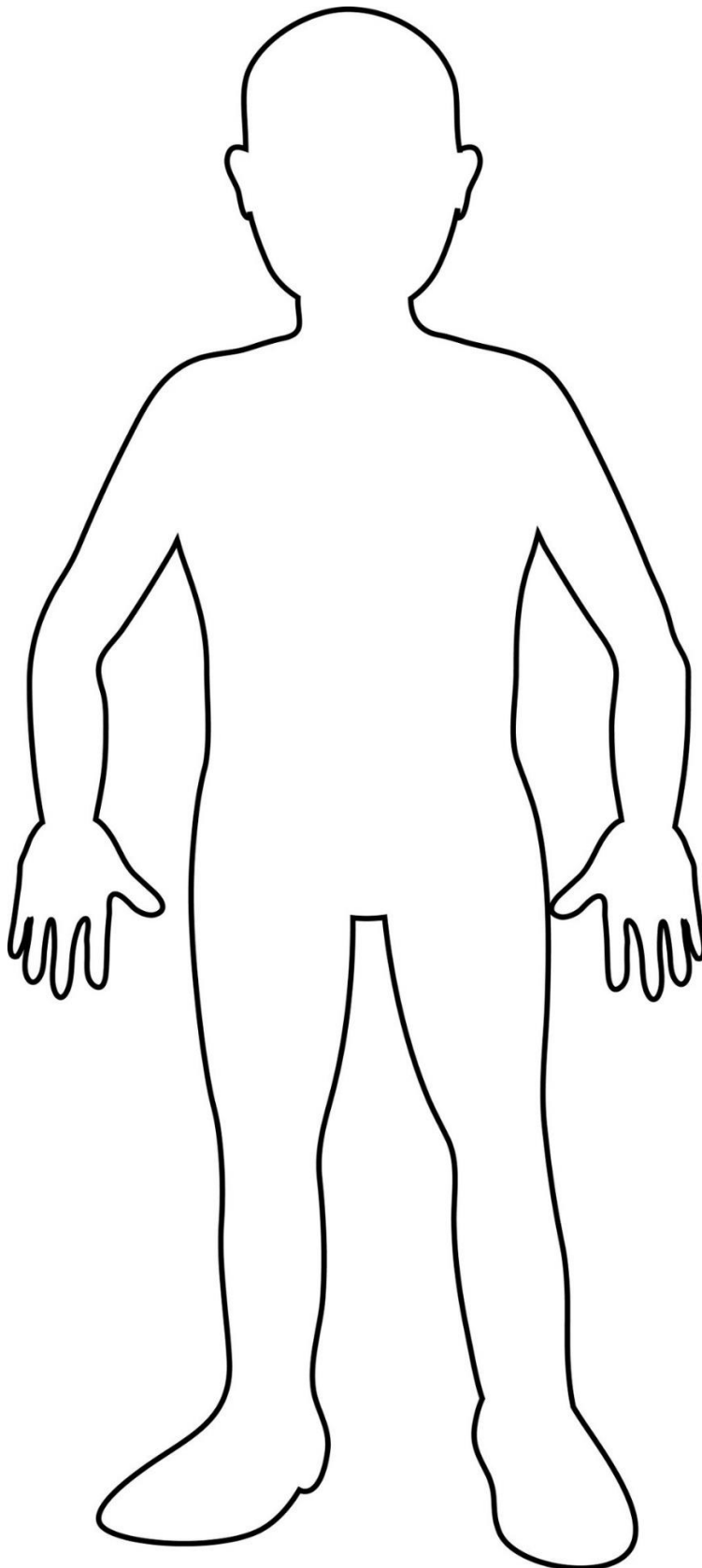
Pain sends a signal that travels through our body all the way to our brain.



Sometimes our body can feel pain for a long time, even after an injury or illness.

When the pain does not go away, this is what doctors call persistent pain.

Can you draw where your pain is and how the message gets up to your brain?



Pain messages are like cars on a busy road

These messages in our body are a bit like a road.

The pain message is like a car on the road.

The more cars that are on the road, the more pain we feel.



When people have had pain for a long time, the road can become very wide.

When the road is wide, more cars can fit on the road, like a motorway.

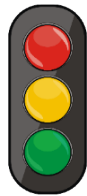
The body gets very used to lots of pain messages because they can travel up and down the wide road very easily.

When there are lots of pain messages, just like on a motorway there can be traffic jams.



To try and help with these pain messages, we need to think about ways to slow down the pain message going up to the brain.

Coping with pain is like putting up traffic lights or a roadblock or a no-entry sign:



Pain gates

Stopping pain messages can also be like opening and closing gates.





An open gate means more cars can travel through so we will feel more pain.

A closed gate means less cars can travel through so we will feel less pain.

What closes and opens the pain gates?

Understanding our pain, and what opens and closes our pain gates, can help us manage our pain. The gate does not have to be fully shut to help make the pain better.

Closing the gate makes pain better	Opening the gate makes pain worse
	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Distraction• Relaxation• Good sleep• Eating well• Medicine• Balance of moving and resting our body• Focusing on things that make us feel good• Having fun• Help from friends and family	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focusing on pain• Stress• Poor sleep• Becoming unwell• Doing nothing• Doing too many activities• Not having ways to manage sad, angry or worried feelings• Arguing with friends and family

Managing pain

There are lots of other things we can do to feel less pain.

We can do something relaxing to calm our brain and body down.

Or we can do a fun activity to distract our body from the pain.



Can you think of any activities you like to do, where you don't feel your pain much?

Pain diary

Let's try and be pain detectives and find some clues to help you notice when your pain is better or worse!



Ask an adult to help you with this! Try and see if you notice any patterns for a week.

Date	Bodily Feeling Where does it hurt?	Situation What were you doing? Where? Who with?	Thoughts What are your thoughts?	Feelings What was your mood like?	What you do? What makes the pain better/worse?

Story time: Muffins the cat

We're going to have a look at an example together.

If you need help, ask an adult or an older child to help you go through this example!



Imagine you are in bed and about to drift off to sleep...



Then you hear a big



outside your window!

What was
that noise?

What are your thoughts?

Is it a
burglar?

How do you think this will make you feel?

Why am
I feeling
hot?

How will your body feel?

What is
your
breathing
like?

What do you think you will do?

???

Cry for
help?

BUT...

But, what if we now looked out of our window and saw that the loud crash was not a burglar...

... but it was Muffins the cat!



Silly Muffins was rummaging in the neighbour's bins and dropped a glass bottle which made a loud oise!

It's just a
loud noise!

**Now you know it was Muffins,
what are your thoughts?**

There is
no need to
worry!

How do you think this will make you feel?

How will your body feel?

What do you think you will do?

This example with Muffins the cat can help you see how your thoughts can affect what we feel, how our bodies feel and what we do!



If we have negative thoughts (“It’s a burglar”), then our body will feel worried and scared.

But when we realise it’s only Muffins the cat, our body feels relaxed and relieved.



This can be similar with our pain as well. If we have negative thoughts about our pain, then our body will notice our pain more.

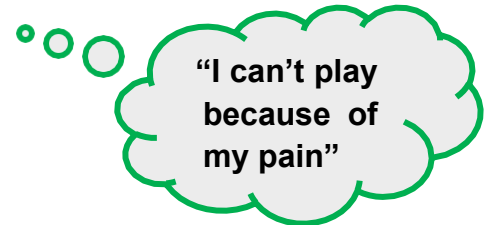


If we try to have more positive thoughts about our pain, then this can help us feel our pain less!

Give it a go!

Have a think about what you think when you have pain

What kind of thoughts run through your head?





How does this make you feel?

What might you feel in your body?



What might this lead you to do?



Pain management strategies

How do I manage these thoughts and feelings?

There are lots of different things we can do to help us feel our pain less.

This booklet will introduce **5** different strategies that you can try at home.

1

Distraction

2

Grounding

3

Relaxation

4

Helpful thoughts

5

Managing energy

1 Distraction

When we notice and pay attention to our pain, it can hurt more.

Focusing on something else can keep our brain busy and close our pain gates!

Doing fun activities can be a great way to distract yourself from your pain.

Activities:

- Watching a good TV show or film



- Listening to music or a podcast



- Read a book or a magazine



- Playing a game



- Drawing, painting or crafting



- Baking or cooking



- Playing with a friend



Which of these activities do you like to do?

Are there any more that you like that are not on this list?

Write your favourites below!

Number games:

- Count backwards from 100
 - If it's too easy, try counting backwards by 2 or 3! (100, 98, 96, 94, 92...)



- Play “Fizz-Buzz”
 - A number game where you can't say the number 3 or 7; instead you have to say “fizz” for 3 and “buzz” for 7
 - 1, 2, “fizz”, 4, 5, 6, buzz, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, fizz-teen
 - This can get very silly because 31 will be “fizzty-one”

Colour games:

- Spot how many things in the room are blue
Or pink or green or yellow!



2 Grounding





Use the 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 method to help your brain focus on what is going on around you rather than focusing on your pain.


Start by sitting in a comfortable place and take a deep breath.

Then think of:

5 things you can see 

4 things you can feel 

3 things you can hear 

2 things you can smell 

1 thing you can taste 

3 Relaxation

Relaxation is another great tool to help us feel less pain!

It is another way to help us close the doors or our pain gates.

It is good to practice these exercises a lot, so that you can use them in many different situations. For example, they can help you sleep!



The more you practice, the easier it will become.

It is a bit like riding a bike – we don't get it right the first time, we have to learn and practice to ride a bike before we are good at it!



Have a look at some of these relaxation exercises on the next pages to find your favourite!

When we are worried, we can sometimes feel like our heart is beating really quickly and our breathing gets really fast.

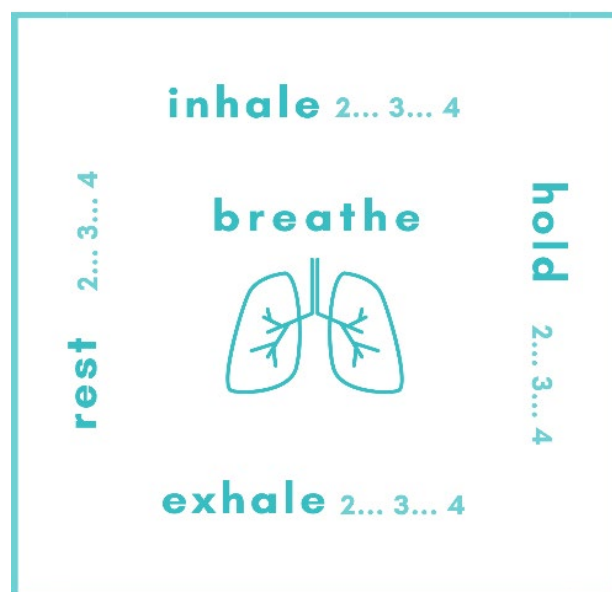
Taking some deep breaths is a very good exercise that you can use anytime and anywhere to help you slow your breathing down and relax your body!

Square breathing

This is an example of a slow breathing exercise.

- Draw a square on a piece of paper
- Slowly breathe in for 4 seconds and move your finger along one side of the square
- Then try holding your breath for 4 seconds, while moving your finger along the next side of the square
- Now breathe out for 4 seconds and move your finger along the next side of the square
- Then have a rest for 4 seconds
- Repeat this a few times until you feel calmer

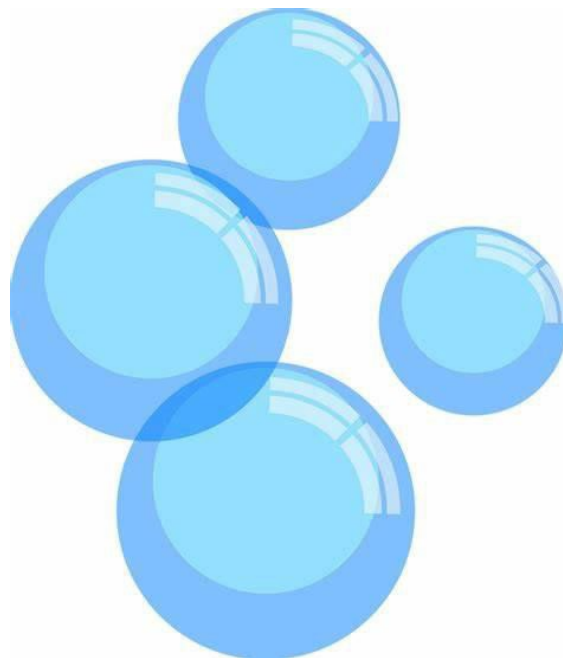
SQUARE BREATHING






Bubble breathing

This is another deep breathing exercise.

- Imagine you have a wand to blow bubbles
- Take a deep breath in through your nose
- Slowly breathe out through your mouth as if you are blowing a bubble!
- Try and imagine you are blowing the biggest bubble you can!
- Repeat this a few times



Here are some apps that can offer more examples of breathing exercises and distractions for you to try:

App	Helpful for...
Smiling Mind 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Age: suitable for all ages• Different guided relaxation and mindfulness exercises• Free
Chill Panda 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• For children• Work through quests and tasks based on how you are feeling• Breathing and stretching exercises• Free
Hospichill 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• For children• Includes different activities such as relaxation skills with animations, distraction ideas and other helpful tools for managing anxiety about an upcoming hospital appointment or procedure• Free

Muscle relaxation

When we are in pain, our muscles can feel tense and our body can start to hurt.

Muscle relaxation can help make this a bit better!

What you need to do is focus on one part of your body and try and squeeze that muscle!

Make sure that an adult (mum, dad or doctor) tells you this is safe for you to do before you start practicing them.

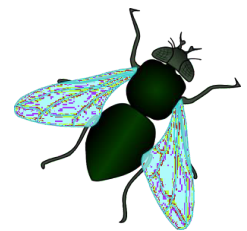


Have a go at squeezing different muscles in your body:

Face

Pretend there is a fly on your nose that you are trying to wriggle off!

Scrunch up your nose, stretch your cheeks, squeeze your eyes tight, push your lips together... hold for a few seconds... and then relax!



Neck

Pretend you are a giraffe with a very long neck!

Pull your shoulders down as low as they go and stretch your neck as high as you can... hold... and relax!

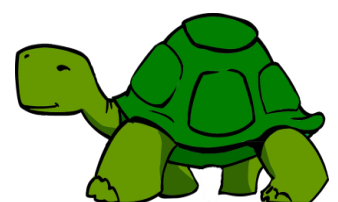


Shoulders

Now pretend you are a turtle that's hiding in its shell.

Gently roll your shoulders upwards and forwards. Now try rolling your shoulders backwards again.

Do this back and forth and then relax!

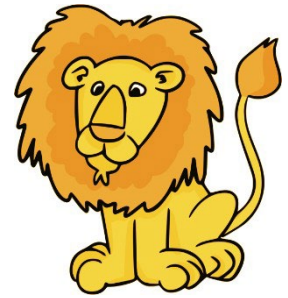


Arms and hands

Pretend you are a lion having a big stretch!

Stretch your arms out in front of you and clench your hands, as if you are getting ready to pounce like a lion.

Hold this for a few seconds and then have a big stretch and relax.

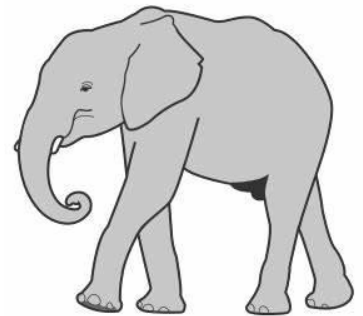


Stomach

Now pretend you are an elephant!

Take a big, deep breath, pushing your tummy out and breathe in as much air as possible. Feel the tightness in your tummy when it is full of air.

Hold your breath for a few seconds and then take a big breath out, feeling your tummy getting smaller.



Legs and feet

Lastly, imagine you are stomping around in a big puddle!

Stomp and push your feet through the puddle and into the ground.

Try this for each leg and then rest your legs and feet.



Imagery for pain

Imagery is how we describe picturing something in detail in our mind. This is where we can let our imagination run wild!

Give it a try!

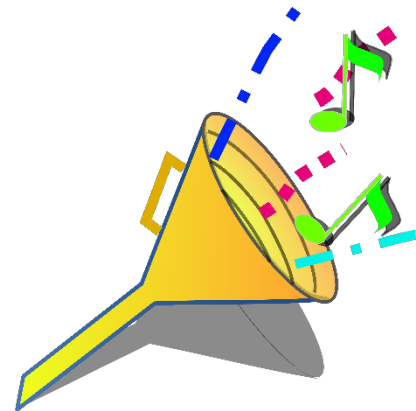
Colour

- What colour is your pain?
- Can it change to a happier colour?



Sound

- What noise does your pain make?
- Is it a musical instrument?
- Can you make it louder or quieter?



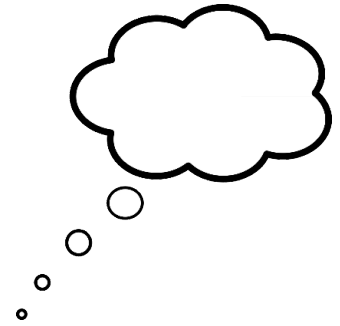
Touch

- Imagine your body filling up with cool blue water all the way from your feet to your head.
- Now imagine the water swooping up your pain and draining it out of your body, back through your feet.



Relaxing imagery

- Close your eyes and imagine a place where you can feel calm, peaceful and safe
- It can be a place you've been to before or somewhere new
- Focus on the colours in your peaceful safe place
- Notice the sounds that are around you
- Can you smell this place?
- Can you feel anything here? Is the sun hot on your skin or the wind cold in the air?
- Does this imaginary place of yours have a name?
- You can choose to relax in this space for awhile
- You can leave whenever you want to, just by opening your eyes and coming back to reality!



Relaxation diary

Keeping a relaxation diary can help us see which relaxation strategy we like best!

If we rate each exercise before and after we try it, we can see how relaxed we feel afterwards.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Least relaxed → Most relaxed

Day	Relaxation level before	Technique used	Relaxation level after
	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10		0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10		0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10		0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10		0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10		0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10		0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10		0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

4 Helpful thoughts

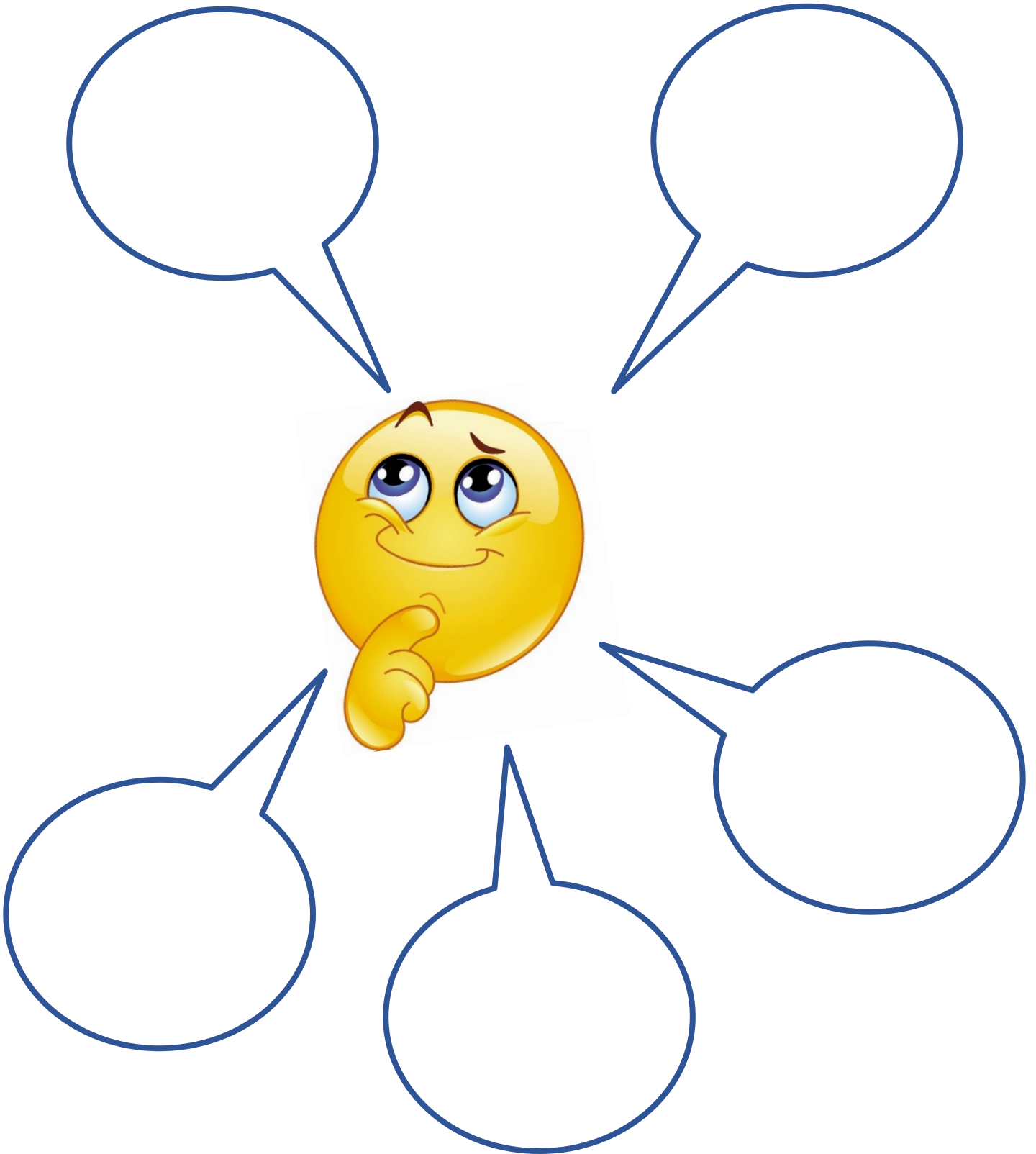
Sometimes our pain can make us have worrying thoughts.

When we are worried a lot this can open our pain gates and make us feel more pain.

Using helpful thoughts can help close the gates again and push the worrying thoughts out of our mind!



My helpful thoughts



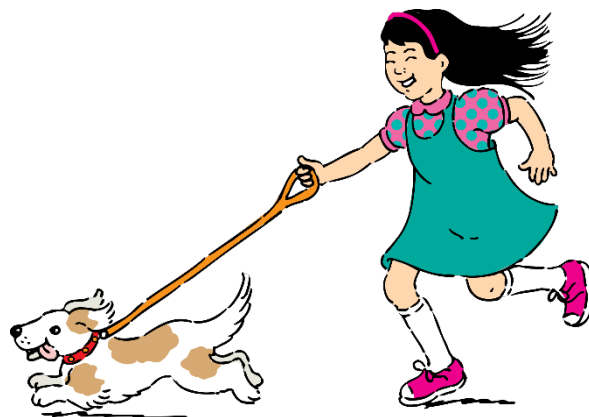
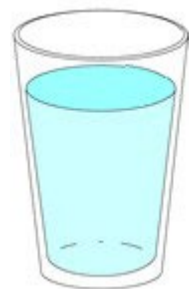
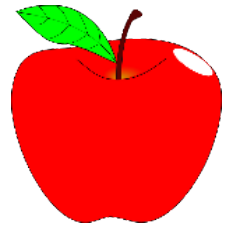
5 Managing energy

When we have pain, it can be hard to eat healthy food, move our body and get enough sleep.

Here are some tips to help with this!

Food and exercise:

- Eating breakfast, lunch and dinner every day is important as it keeps our body balanced throughout the day.
- Remember to drink lots of water!
- Try to avoid fizzy drinks or snacks after 4pm
- Move your body with easy exercises (go for a walk or a swim)
- Try not to move too much before bed, so that we can give our body time to wind-down



Sleep

- Go to bed and wake up at the same time.
- Try not to nap during the day.
- Make sure your bedroom is dark enough and not too hot or cold.
- Avoid playing on your phone or watching TV in your bedroom or before bed. The bright light can keep our brain awake!
- Try and create a relaxing bedtime routine. You could use this time to practice the relaxation exercises from this booklet!



Pacing

Some days our pain may be a bit better, so we might want to do lots of things to catch up on fun activities.

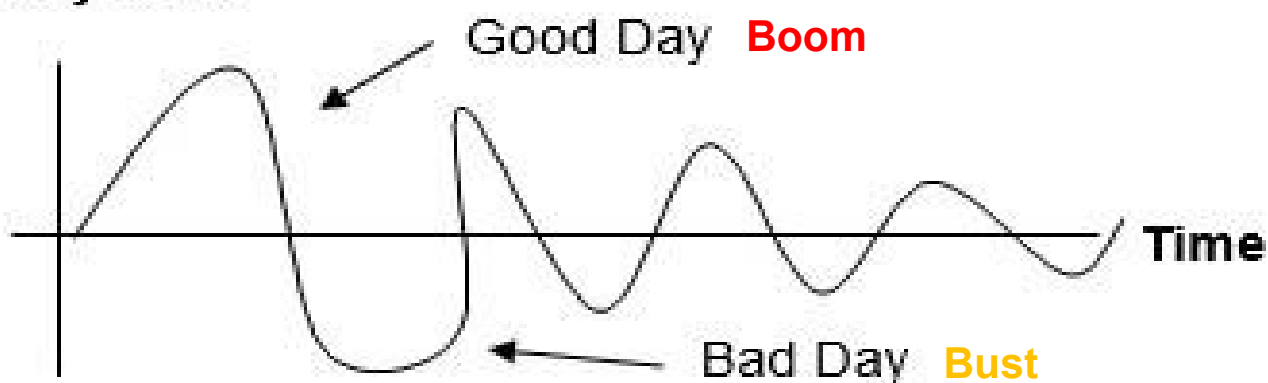
Other days when our pain is worse, we might worry that exercising can make our pain worse. We might do very little or stay in bed all day.

What happens when we do this?

If some days we move too much and some days we move too little, our energy levels can go up and down.

We call this a “**Boom and Bust**”.

Activity level



A **Boom** is when we have lots of energy.

A **Bust** is when we have no energy.

This can be very exhausting for our body to have this up and down pattern and it can make your pain feel worse.

Making changes

There are things we can do to help us manage the “**Boom and Bust**”.

For some activities we need lots of energy:



For other activities we need little energy:

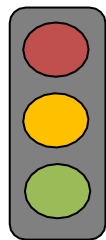


If we know our energy levels for our activities, then we can plan our day to take breaks. This way we are not exhausted at the end of the day.

Traffic light pacing

Complete the activity diary on the next page to track your activity over the next week.

You can colour each activity, using the traffic light below.



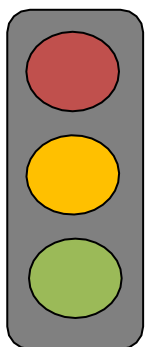
Red = needs a lot of energy.

Orange = needs a bit of energy.

Green = needs very little energy.

This can help you spot times you need to slow down and take more breaks!

Here are some examples:



Red – Exercise, playing games, schoolwork, worrying

Orange – Talking with friends, reading a magazine

Green – Eating a meal or snack, resting, taking a break

Activity diary

	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			
Sunday			

What is your pain plan?

What is your favourite exercise to manage your pain?

Can you think of a new exercise you want to try this week?

Write your thoughts down here:

