

Chronic Pain and Physical Activity

Presented by: James McDonald

Physical Activity Specialist

My career in pain.

Training and career history

- **Degree in sports Therapy 2002**
- **Sports injury clinic and rehab centre** Launched and ran - (2003-2012)
- **Fitness manager Lordswood Leisure Centre**, (2012-2020)
- Gained qualifications in and teach **Pilates, Kettlebells, Spin, Circuits (hit, bootcamp)** (2003-2015)
- Gained level 4 qualifications in **Exercise referral, Cardiac Rehab, Pulmonary Rehab, Can rehab, Mental Health and exercise, Escape pain facilitator.** (2015-2021)
- **Body Coaches Medway** Launched to with my wife with the aim to bring affordable classes, treatment and PA to our community. (2018-present)
- **Physical Activity Specialist-** Joined Public health at Medway Council- 2 years with Medway Prehab team, 3 years with Active referral team. (2020-present)

Personal History

- **Karate-** Gained senior Black Belt at 16 and began to teaching alongside sensei took on own class at 18
- **Basketball-**from school to adult life played for the wizards (Walderslade not Washington) winning division 2 south east league.
- **Korfball-** played national league for 20 years inc 5 premier league titles, 2 Bronze European cup medals, 8 national and 10 Kent cups.
 - Represented GB at under 19, 23 and senior level for 16 years. Inc participating in 2 World Games Events.
 - Coached national league team for 8 years.

- ▶ Pain can be described as Acute and Chronic, depending on its duration.
- ▶ Acute pain is of short duration and normally resolves when the body heals itself, for instance after injuries or operations
- ▶ “Unpleasant sensory and emotional experience associated with actual or potential tissue damage”
- ▶ Pain occurs when the body and brain perceives damage in the body or potential for damage.
- ▶ Pain can vary and be very individual to the person experiencing it.
- ▶ Often, we think that pain is due to damage in our tissues - and if we have lots of pain there must be lots of damage in our body.
- ▶ However, this is very rarely the case. Lots of people experience pain with no tissue damage at all.



What is Chronic Pain?

- ▶ An unpleasant sensory and emotional experience associated with, or resembling that associated with, actual or potential tissue damage.
- ▶ Pain that persists or recurs for more than 3 months.
- ▶ Pain in one or more anatomical regions that is characterized by significant emotional distress (anxiety, anger/frustration, or depressed mood) or functional disability (interference in daily life activities and reduced participation in social roles).
- ▶ Multifactorial — biological, psychological, and social factors contribute to the pain syndrome.

(WHO 2024)

Prevalence of Chronic Pain

- ▶ Across Europe, approximately 18% of the population are currently affected by moderate to severe chronic pain [[SIGN, 2019](#)]
- ▶ The prevalence of chronic pain amongst adults in the UK was 34%, more common in women (38%) than in men (30%). [[NHS Digital, 2019](#)]
- ▶ Arthritis (osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis) is one of the most common chronic pain disorders, diagnosed in 8-16% of the population in Europe and the US. [[BMJ Best Practice, 2024](#)]

Prevalence of Osteoarthritis in the UK.

Osteoarthritis is the most common cause of chronic joint pain.

Affects around 10 million people in the UK (6million M, 4 million F)

Knee joint causes the most functional issues (approx. 5.4million)
Also common in hips, (3.2 million) back and hands

Estimated 350,000 people diagnosed each year (approx. 1000pd)

The median age of symptom onset is 55 years.

Costs are estimated (for Osteo and Rheumatoid Arthritis) to be around
£118.6 Billion to the NHS by 2028

There is No cure, but

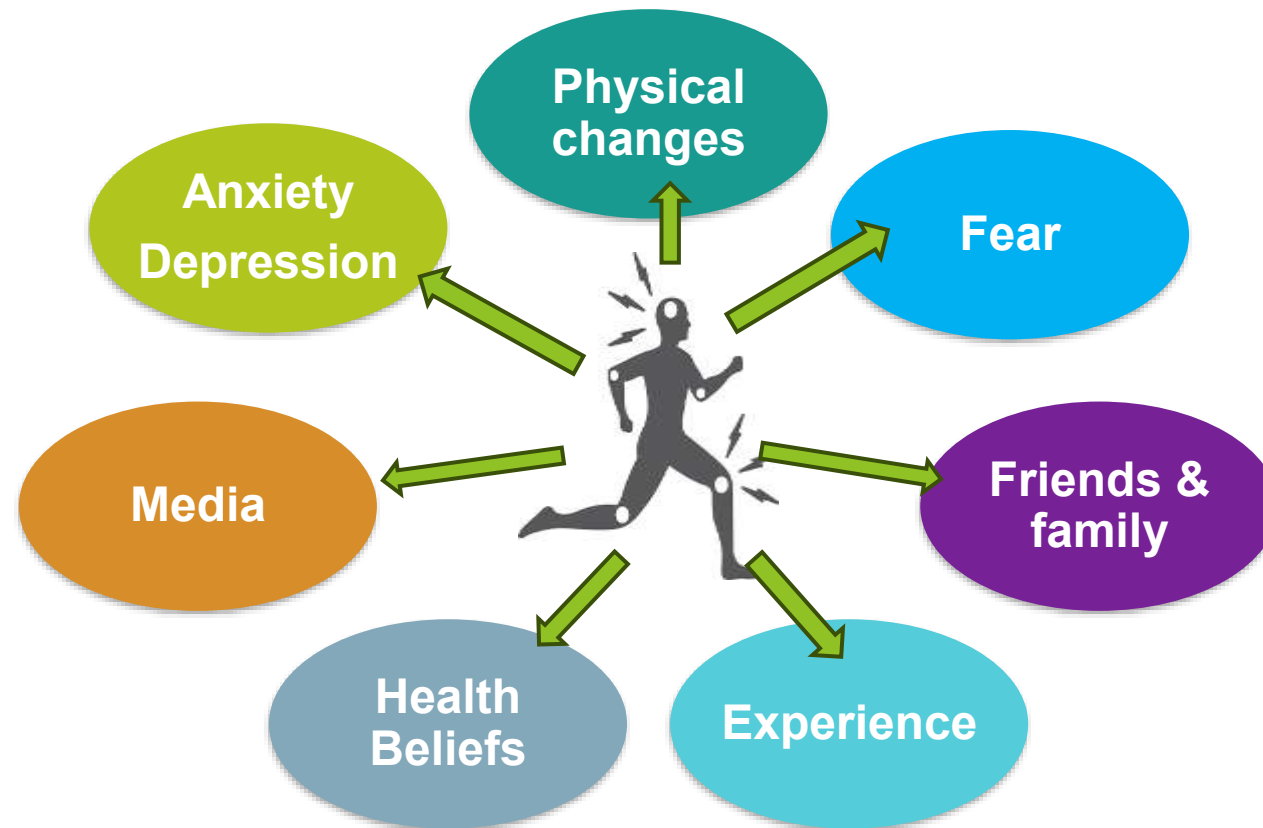
We know that remaining active can make a significant positive difference

[Versus Arthritis, 2023] [Arthritis Research UK, 2013] [NHS.UK]

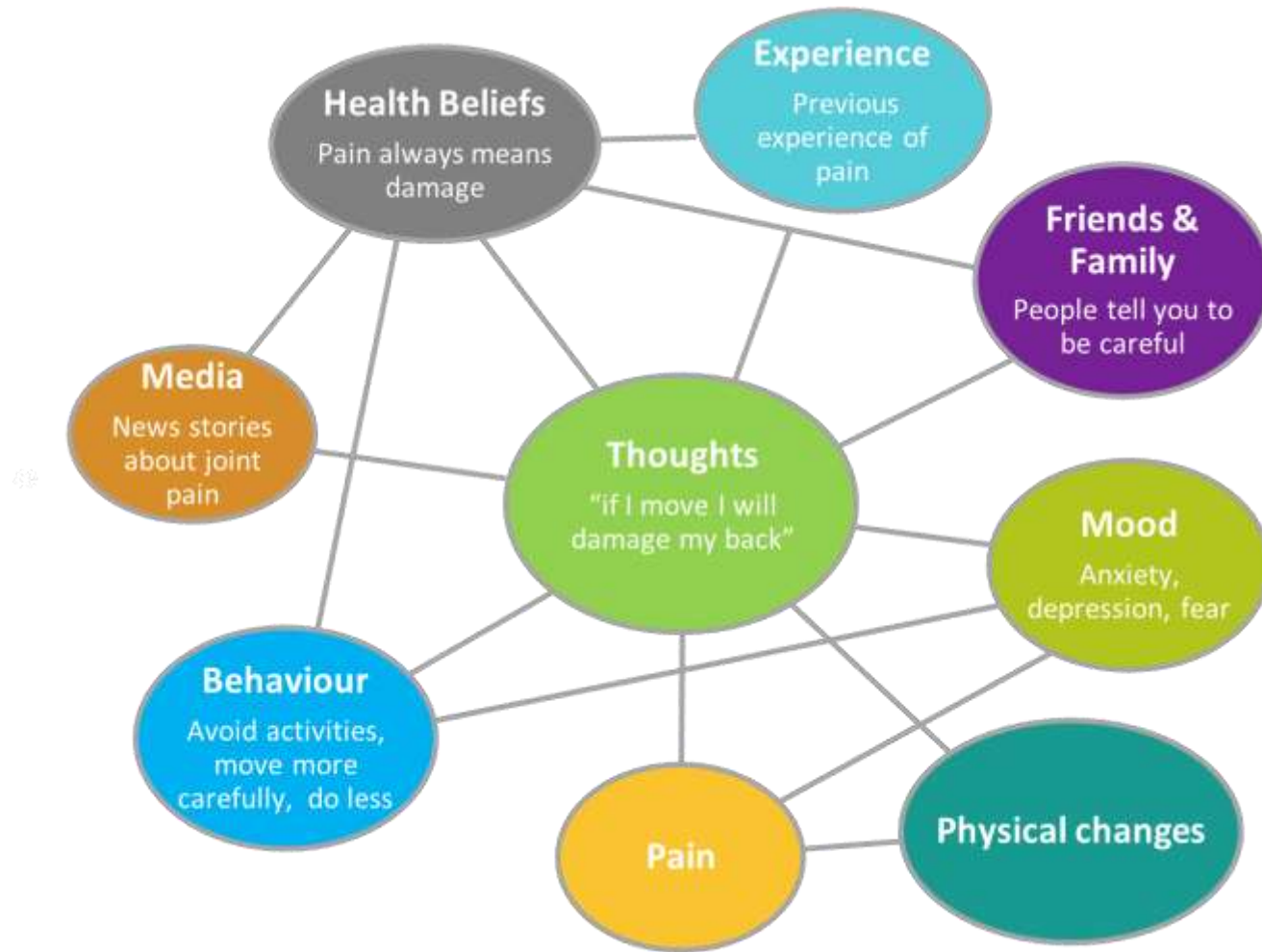
Chronic Pain Key Points

- ▶ Tissue healing normally takes around 3 months
- ▶ Persistent or **chronic pain is related to over sensitivity of the nervous system, not on-going damage in our tissues**
- ▶ Importantly: **pain does not equal damage**
- ▶ Over time the nervous system can continue to become more 'sensitive':
- ▶ Having an **MRI scan or x-ray may not be very helpful** in finding the cause of pain or change how the condition is managed
- ▶ Understanding **pain does not equal damage** can help us to **feel confident about moving our backs or joints and returning to activities** we did before
- ▶ The most effective treatment is to try to get the back or joint moving normally, building fitness and returning to normal activities again

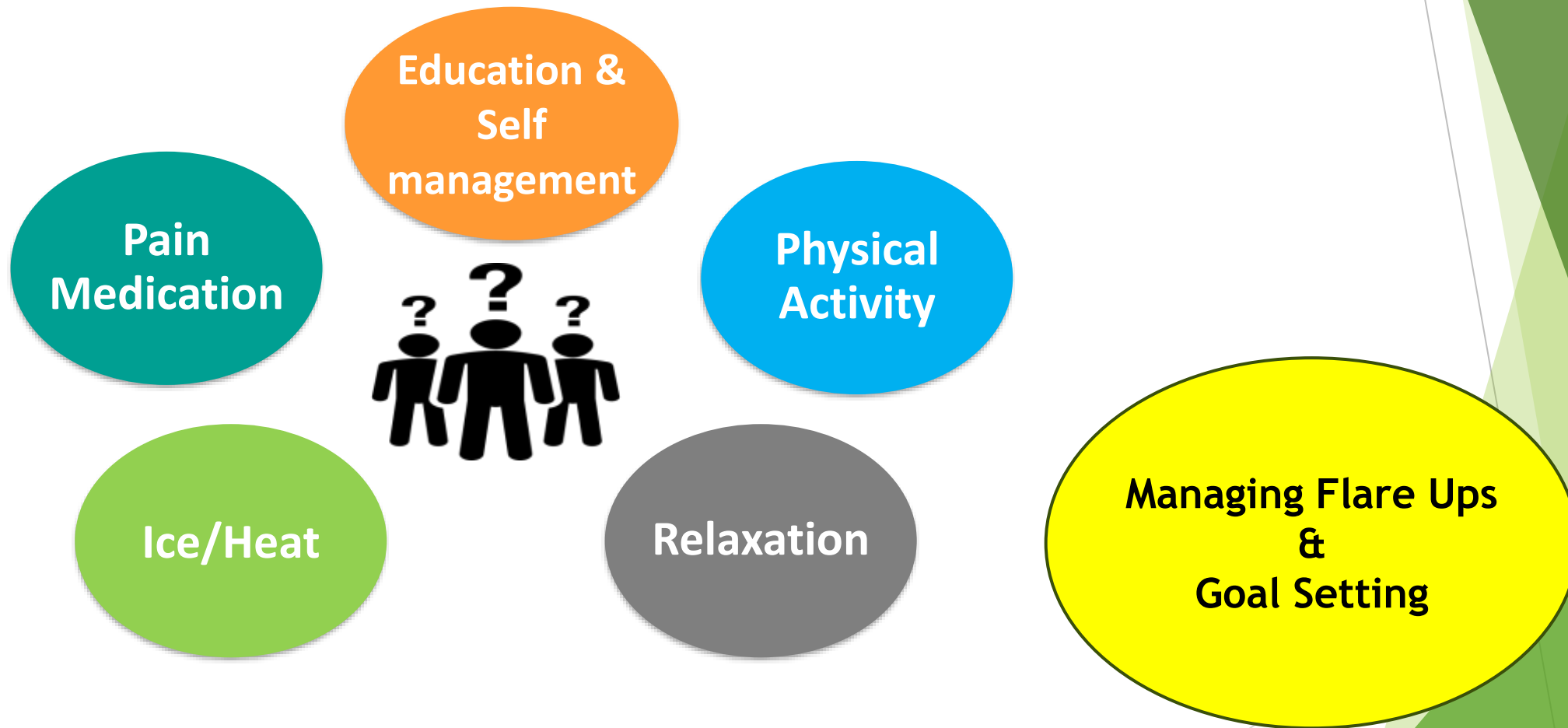
Factors Influencing Pain



Interconnected Factors



Managing Pain



Benefits of physical activity

Physical

- Strength
- Flexibility
- Fitness
- Weight control
- Reduced disease risk
- Balance
- Function
- Reduce and control high blood pressure

Social

- Independence
- Meet people
- Fun!

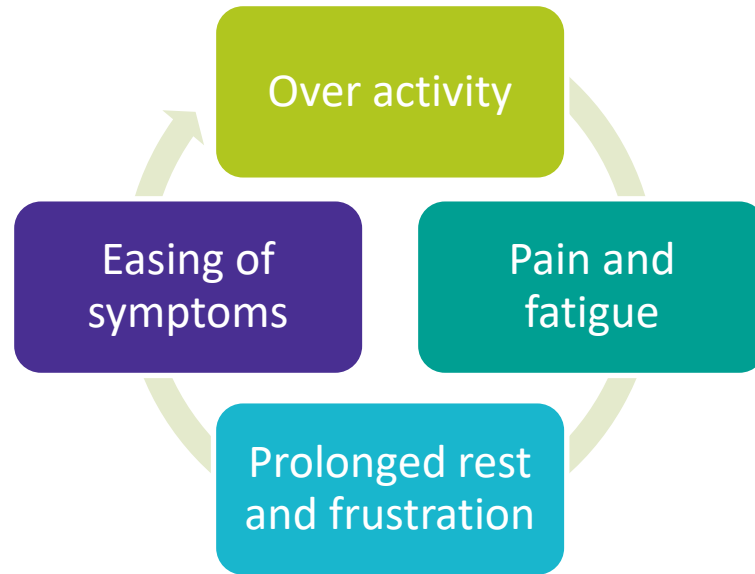
Psychological

- Mood
- Confidence
- Clear thinking
- Improved sleep

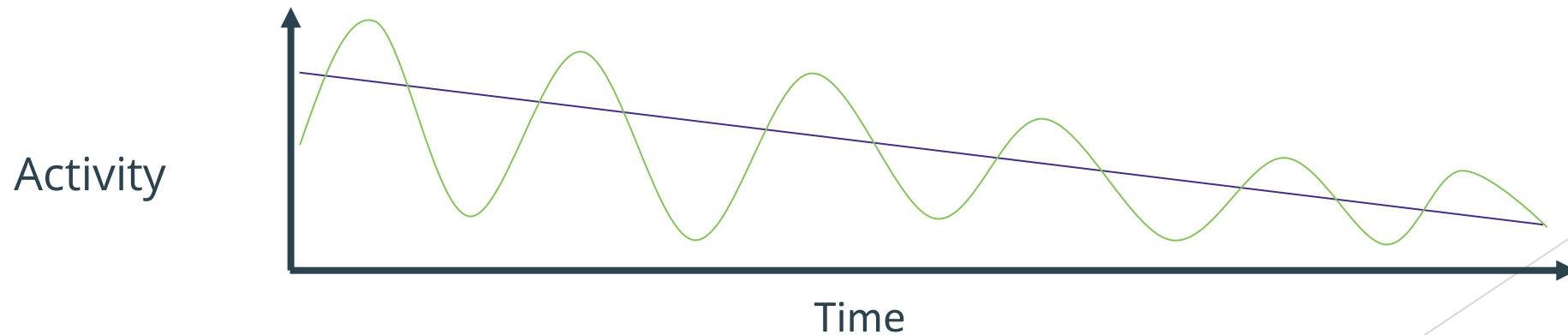
Side Effects of Physical Activity

There are **NO** negative side effects to **SUITABLE** physical activity.

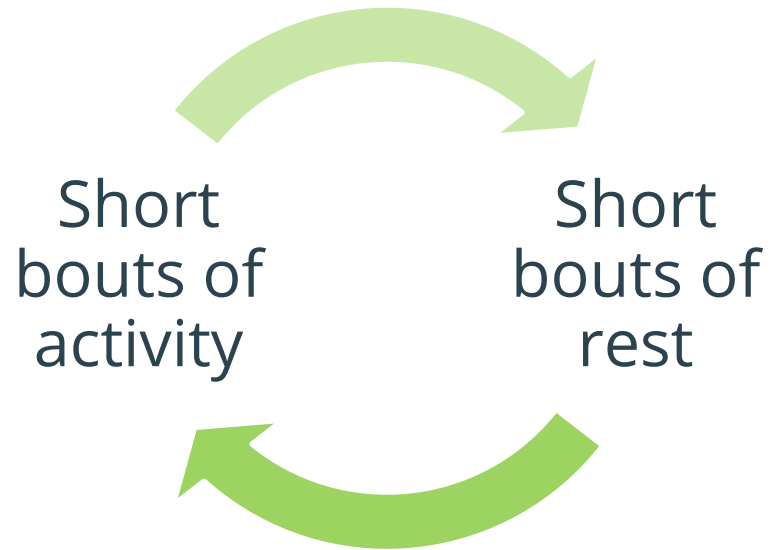
The Vicious Cycle, Boom or Bust



Over/under Activity



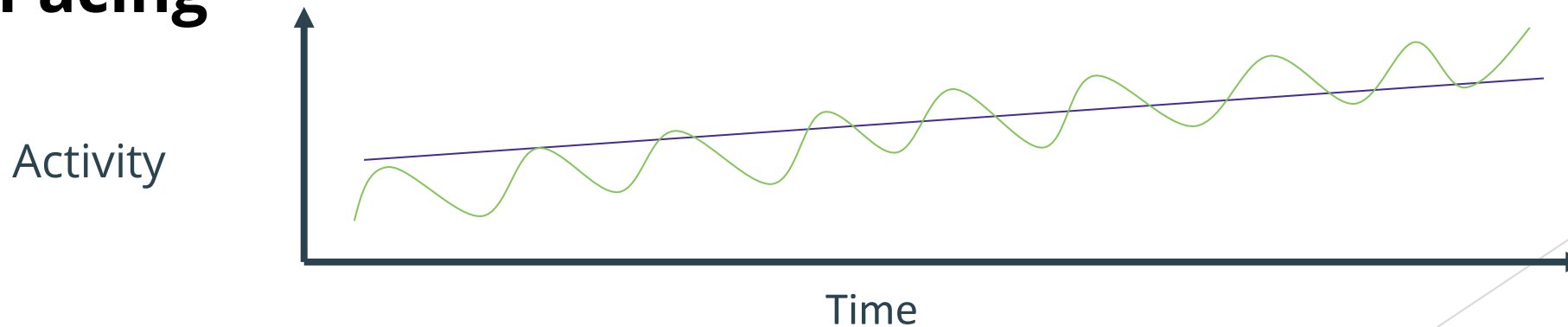
How to Start Pacing



Top tips:

Find your baseline
You will have good days and bad days
Do not rest for prolonged periods.

Pacing



Want to find out more?

[Brainman YouTube channel](#) has a video titled 'understanding pain in less than five minutes' in various languages/ subtitles that can be used to help explain pain to participants.

[The Pain Toolkit](#) is a great resource for professionals as well as for those living with persistent pain.

[Moving Medicine](#) is a great resource for helping health care professionals have conversations about encouraging clients to become more active.

[Tame the Beast](#); a 5-minute video explaining the concept of persistent pain. .

[TEDxAdelaide](#), a 15-minute Ted Talk explaining '[Why Things Hurt](#)' by Lorimer Moseley.

[Flippin Pain](#); a website with info on chronic pain and links to various resources to help both healthcare professionals and members of the public.

['Recovery strategies – Pain guidebook'](#) is a workbook for healthcare professionals and members of the public.

[Pain Revolution](#) is a website with fact sheets about pain that are available in different languages.

['Understanding persistent pain'](#) is a booklet explaining persistent pain for members of the public.

[Live Well with Pain](#), a resource for participants and those that support them, living with chronic pain.

[Useful links: Joint Pain](#), compilation of external resources to help those living with chronic joint pain.

[The ESCAPE-pain website](#) contains a wealth of information and resources for providers and those living with joint pain. The website also has information on the ESCAPE-pain for backs programme and more information on support tools (app and ESCAPE-pain online).

Some of What we offer in Medway



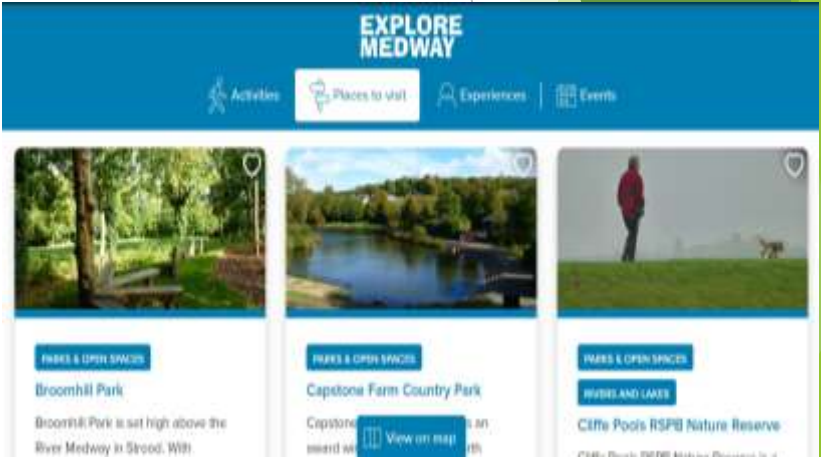
Active Referral



Women's Health



Pelvic Floor Training



Thank You for Listening