

INFORMATION SHEET FOR CLIENTS

Why have you been referred to a Clinical Psychologist?

You were referred because you may benefit from learning some pain management techniques that have been proven to be helpful for many other people experiencing persisting pain. This does not mean that the person that referred you believes you're crazy or that your pain is not real. In fact, if they have referred you here it is probably because they recognise the difficulties that persisting (or chronic) pain can cause and they want to help you to have a better life.

Clinical Psychologists are able to assist people who have a variety of medical problems, including diabetes, cancer and rheumatoid arthritis. Unfortunately medical science is still at a stage where it cannot cure many of the conditions that afflict people. Sometimes people experience pain that doctors aren't able to cure. You have probably received some medical treatments already, which may have caused additional problems (e.g. medication side-effects) or have not fully eliminated the pain. So, it's going to be important to learn how to improve your quality of life despite the pain, which will minimise the negative effects that it has had on your daily life, mood and relationships. Just as a diabetic can improve his or her quality of life by learning some simple techniques to manage the diabetes, so too can people with persisting pain benefit from learning some useful strategies to manage the pain. It is for this reason that you have been referred to us.

What will your treatment involve?

The type of treatment that we provide is called **Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT)**. This type of treatment involves examining and then changing unhelpful thoughts, beliefs and behaviours that may be affecting your ability to manage your pain. This treatment will not provide a cure for your pain, but a way of coping *despite* the pain, aimed at minimising its effect on your life.

The structure of the treatment sessions will vary according to your needs.

- The **first session** will involve a thorough assessment of the impact of the pain on your life and how you are currently coping with it. The Clinical Psychologist will be trying to understand the difficulties that you are having in managing your pain, as well as things that you might be doing that are helpful and what you think might help you to improve further.
- The content of **further sessions** will vary according to your specific needs, but will generally cover the following things:
 - giving you some information about the different types of pain
 - helping you to work out what you would like to achieve during the treatment programme (set goals), or things that you would like to change in your life
 - teaching you about ways that you can do your activities to minimise the number of flare-ups (or increases in pain) that you experience and helping you to manage better if flare-ups do occur.
 - Helping you replace distressing and unhelpful thoughts with more constructive and helpful ones

The Clinical Psychologist will provide guidance and will teach you some useful techniques, but the amount that you benefit will depend upon how much you practice the strategies in your every day life. This is

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similar to if you see a dietician: you would not lose weight (in this case: better manage pain) merely by going to the appointments. Instead, you would need to alter your eating habits (in this case: ways of responding to pain) in order to receive the benefits.

How many sessions will you need to attend?

The number of sessions required varies from person to person. It is partly dependent on how you are coping at the moment, what goals you are trying to achieve, and how quickly you begin to apply the strategies that we discuss during the sessions. Most people with persisting pain can gain significant benefits from attending as few as 10 sessions; however some people need a few more and some a few less. We will have a better idea of this after you start your programme.

What can we offer you that's different to other treatment providers?

Clinical Psychologists are different from Psychiatrists, Counsellors, Social Workers and even other types of Psychologists. We specialise in assessment, diagnosis and treatment of a range of problems, including persisting pain.

It is important that you understand that Clinical Psychologists do not prescribe medication, and we don't just provide counselling (or listening and talking to people). Our approach (CBT, as outlined above) is an active one that can help you to bring about real and lasting changes in your life, so that you can achieve your goals, both now and in the future.

If you'd like further information about the difference between Clinical Psychologists and Psychiatrists you could look at the Australian Psychological Society website, which is <http://www.psychology.org.au/psych/psychiatrist/default.asp>

Who will have access to information about you?

If you have a Worker's Compensation claim you probably have a number of professionals working together to assist you. This might include your treating doctor, rehabilitation provider, physiotherapist and insurance company.

It is important that all of these people work together so that you get the best treatment possible. In order for us to do that we will be communicating through reports (which will update the involved parties about your progress), as well as phone calls, and at times through face-to-face meetings.

Why have I been sent these questionnaires to complete?

The questionnaires have been carefully chosen to provide valuable information about how you are coping with the pain and how it has affected your life. Gathering information in this way allows us to better utilize the time we have face-to-face during the assessment session and will assist us in planning treatment (if deemed necessary). If you experience any difficulties in completing the questionnaires or have any questions please telephone prior to the assessment the Clinical Psychologist who will be assessing you.

Do you want to know more?

Your Clinical Psychologist will do their best to answer any other questions you might have. Also, please feel free to have a look at our website (www.makingchanges.com.au) which has a lot more information that you might find useful.