

Case Study

By Dr Louise Johnson

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The client was referred to Dr. Timothy Sharp & Associates for assistance with managing chronic pain, after sustaining an injury to his lower back whilst lifting a box during the course of his work duties as a storeman approximately 8 months ago. As with most of the chronic pain clients that we see, he was significantly disabled and distressed by his pain. He had not attempted to return to work since sustaining his injury, and he had stopped visiting friends and playing soccer, and his wife and children were doing most things for him including all of the housework.

His avoidance appeared to be due to his fear that he may sustain further damage to his back by engaging in even minor activities such as bending, lifting his arms above his head and driving. He even believed that he might end up in a wheelchair. These unhelpful beliefs appeared to be being reinforced by his GP.

Our intervention involved psychoeducation about the nature of chronic pain, and teaching him a range of active and helpful strategies such as goal setting, pacing, relaxation, problem solving, and challenging unhelpful thoughts. We also arranged a referral to an active exercise program, to assist him to improve his strength and flexibility and to reduce his fear of movement.

Throughout our program we also had several discussions with the client's GP, assisting the doctor to understand the gains that the client had made (both through using the strategies and in the gym) and the benefits to him in gradually returning to work. After some negotiation, the GP agreed to change his medical certificate and the client returned to part-time suitable duties.

Over time, he was able to return to full-time work, as well as resuming most of his social, recreational and household duties. It was a great outcome for the client, as he was able to achieve all of this **despite** ongoing pain!

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