

A man wearing a red jacket and a dark beanie is working on the mast of a sailboat. He is using a yellow tool to adjust a component on the mast. The background shows a cloudy sky and a cityscape in the distance.

# 'SAVVY SAILOR'

## TOP 5 WAYS TO RAMP UP YOUR CHRONIC PAIN CARE PLAN

PAIN 2 POSSIBILITIES

## 1) COMING OUT OF THE TRENCHES AND INTO A BIRDS EYE VIEW

Constantly chasing appointments and remedies to help you narrow in on your pain can make you feel like you are living in the trenches. It does however, hopefully mean that you are finding what works and what does not. By broadening your perspective we can take more of a birds eye view of your pain journey to assess if you are capturing a more robust view and take advantage of a few different pain management models which includes understanding and addressing your pain through:

- 👉 the Psychological lens
- 👉 the sociological lens
- 👉 the Acceptance and Commitment lens
- 👉 lifestyle options such as nutrition, movement and stress management

## 2) JOURNALING

Journalling is not meant to be a make-work project but instead it is a great exercise in overall awareness of your pain response, your inner pain voice and the new behaviours you choose to undertake and how they all come together. By journaling you can start to see patterns emerge when we connect the new skills you are learning and practicing to how your pain is being impacted. When we can start to see how skills that you have learned and are putting into practice are influencing your pain positivity then naturally, you will want to continue and you will do so with more confidence.

It is also a great way for the brain to be productive and distracted when pain is bringing you down. Thinking about something other than pain can reduce the brain's hyper vigilance.

### 3) FILLING THE HOLES IN THE ROOF

You may have heard the analogy before where you know you have a leaky roof and that there are likely lots of holes to fill. The question becomes, which holes are most important to fill and in what order? As you have some experience in your pain management journey, you have likely already been through much of this. I mention this approach simply to take away some of the overwhelm when it comes to making decisions around your self care. By getting strategic and prioritizing which holes to fill based on what has the biggest impact makes the decision making much easier. This is also a gentle reminder that you do not have to fill in all the holes right away, just the ones that actually leak (so to speak).

### 4) GET STRATEGIC

I already hinted in this in number 3 but it begs to be repeated. The more strategic we can get when making decisions around your pain management plan the better. Not only is a strategy important in moving the needle slowly forward, it is also key when the pain becomes unbearable. Having a *pain flair* strategy along with a *pain care* strategy is like being prepared for any natural disaster. They are the steps you will take to help turn your pain dial down. So how do you get more strategic in your approach?

First step is to get clear and write it down. For example start brainstorming ideas of how you can self soothe when the pain begins to swell. Write down as many examples that you can think of that will help you in that moment. Then begin to identify what might create a spike in your pain. If you are able to articulate what creates more pain then we can counterbalance it with something that will help dial down the pain. For example, if you know that having a conversation with your Mother-in-law usually creates a spike of pain then plan ahead and put some time aside after the phone call to have a warm bath to help soothe the mind and relax the nervous system.

# 5) DARE TO DREAM

One of the best parts of being a 'Savvy Sailor' or one who has learned to weather the pain storms is that you have your 'bag of tricks' (skills that you know to work) that you can call upon whenever you need them. This likely means that you are having some success when it comes to turning down the pain dial. Which also means that it is time to start thinking about what comes next. It is an opportunity to start visualizing what life can be like alongside the pain, to, dare I say, dream about what you would like to experience next (and all within your newfound abilities). This is an opportunity psychologically, neurologically, spiritually (whatever you want to call it) to influence the brain positively by steering away from the constant thought of pain and pain management and steering towards (even if just for short periods at a time) next adventures.

There is a fine line to be crossed here as we want to be realistic in our approach as to what we dream about. When I visualize what is next or what I would like to achieve, chances are pretty good they will not include winning 25 million dollars or climbing Mount Everest as these are not realistic for me. Thinking outside of the proverbial pain box can be a healthy exercise when done properly and if you are confidently managing your pain...now is the time!