

Chronic Pain Self-Management — Workbook

This workbook is your hands-on companion to the Chronic Pain Self-Management course. Use it to apply each concept to your own situation, track your progress, and build a personalised toolkit you can share with your care team. Always work alongside your healthcare providers — this workbook is an educational tool, not a substitute for professional assessment or treatment.

Understanding Your Pain

Translate pain neuroscience concepts into a personalised map of your own biopsychosocial pain drivers.

Exercise: Build Your Biopsychosocial Pain Map

Using the three-domain model from the course, brainstorm factors currently influencing your pain experience. Be honest and specific — there are no wrong answers. This map is for you and your care team, not for judgment.

- List 2-3 biological factors you believe are contributing to your pain right now (e.g., sleep quality, inflammation, physical deconditioning, nerve sensitisation).

- List 2-3 psychological factors (e.g., fear of movement, low mood, frustration, catastrophising thoughts like "this will never get better").

- List 2-3 social or environmental factors (e.g., work demands, lack of support, financial stress, healthcare access).

- Circle the one factor across all three domains that you feel you have the most influence over right now. Why did you choose it?

Worksheet: My Central Sensitisation Profile

Rate each item on a scale of 0 (not at all) to 10 (very much). Use this to track change over time and to prompt conversation with your care team.

My pain spreads beyond where the original problem started (0-10)

Light touch or clothing contact sometimes causes pain (0-10)

Noise, bright light, or stress reliably worsens my pain (0-10)

My pain is noticeably worse after poor sleep (0-10)

I am more pain-sensitive throughout my body, not just in one spot (0-10)

Date completed

One question I want to ask my healthcare provider based on this profile

Checklist: Pain Science Education — Key Concepts Absorbed

- I can explain in my own words why pain intensity does not always equal tissue damage
- I understand that my nervous system can become sensitised over time
- I can name at least two factors in each biopsychosocial domain that affect my pain
- I know that central sensitisation is a real physiological state — not "in my head"
- I can explain why understanding pain science is itself part of the treatment
- I have shared (or plan to share) my pain map with at least one member of my care team

Pacing Strategies

Apply the baseline-setting method and develop a written pacing plan for your most challenging daily activities.

Exercise: Identify Your Boom-Bust Patterns

Look back over the past 2-3 weeks. Identify at least 2 examples of the boom-bust cycle in your own life. Be specific about the activity, the overdo, and the resulting flare. This exercise builds self-awareness without self-blame.

- Describe a recent example where you did significantly more than usual on a good day. What were you doing, and why did you push?

• What happened in the 24-48 hours after that activity spike? How did your pain, energy, and mood change?

• What was the trigger that made you decide to push on that good day (e.g., guilt about not contributing, fear of future limitation, external pressure)?

• If you could advise a friend in the same situation, what would you suggest they do differently — and can you apply that advice to yourself?

Worksheet: My Activity Baseline Tracker

Choose one activity to baseline this week. Record your performance over 3 days, calculate your average, take 80% of that as your starting quota, and track your daily completion for 2 weeks.

Activity being baselined (e.g., walking, standing, gardening)

Day 1 — duration or distance before stopping

Day 2 — duration or distance before stopping

Day 3 — duration or distance before stopping

3-day average

Starting quota (average x 0.8)

Week 1 Day 1 — completed quota? (Yes / Partial / No — notes)

Week 1 Day 2 — completed quota? (Yes / Partial / No — notes)

Week 1 Day 3 — completed quota? (Yes / Partial / No — notes)

Week 1 Day 4 — completed quota? (Yes / Partial / No — notes)

Week 1 Day 5 — completed quota? (Yes / Partial / No — notes)

Week 2 quota (increase by 5-10% if week 1 stable)

Notes for care team review

Checklist: Whole-Person Pacing — Weekly Actions

- I have written down my current quota for at least one physical activity
- I am doing my baseline quota every day regardless of pain level — no more on good days
- I have identified at least one cognitive task I need to pace (e.g., screen time, focused reading)
- I have planned at least one social activity at a level I can sustain, not at full pre-pain level
- I am breaking longer tasks into smaller bouts with rest breaks built in
- I have scheduled at least one valued activity this week regardless of pain level

Graded Activity and Exposure

Build a personalised graded activity schedule and a fear-avoidance exposure hierarchy in preparation to share with your physiotherapist or pain team.

Exercise: Create Your Graded Exposure Hierarchy

List activities you currently avoid or limit because of pain or fear of pain. Rate each on a 0-10 fear scale (0=no fear, 10=maximum fear). This hierarchy is a starting point to bring to your physiotherapist or psychologist — do not attempt high-rated items alone without clinical guidance.

- List 8-10 activities you currently avoid or significantly limit because of pain or fear of worsening pain.
- Rate each activity from 0-10 based on how much fear or anxiety the idea of doing it produces (not pain level — fear). Rank your list lowest to highest.
- For your lowest-rated item (2-3 range), what is your fear prediction — what do you think will happen if you attempt it? How could you test this prediction safely?
- Which item on your hierarchy would most improve your quality of life if you regained it? Bring this to your next appointment with your physio or pain specialist.

Worksheet: Graded Activity Programme — 4-Week Planner

Use this worksheet to plan a 4-week graded activity programme for one target activity. Set your starting level conservatively, then plan weekly 10% increments. Track completion — not pain level.

Target activity

Week 1 planned level (duration, reps, or distance)

Week 1 — did you complete the plan? Notes

Week 2 planned level (+10% from week 1)

Week 2 — did you complete the plan? Notes

Week 3 planned level (+10% from week 2)

Week 3 — did you complete the plan? Notes

Week 4 planned level (+10% from week 3)

Week 4 — did you complete the plan? Notes

Observations to share with physiotherapist

Checklist: Movement Confidence — Mindset Shifts

- I can distinguish between pain that signals tissue damage and pain that reflects nervous system sensitivity
- I have shared my fear-avoidance hierarchy with my physiotherapist or care team
- I am tracking activity completion rather than pain levels as my primary success measure
- I have attempted at least one item from the low end of my exposure hierarchy this week
- I recorded my prediction before the exposure and compared it to what actually happened
- I am celebrating completion regardless of pain outcome

Mind-Body Tools and Flare Planning

Practice and personalise the core mind-body strategies from the course, and complete your written flare management plan.

Exercise: Mind-Body Practice Log — 2 Weeks

Choose 1-2 mind-body practices from the course to trial over 2 weeks. Record what you practised, for how long, and your brief observation. This log is for your own insight — there is no right answer.

- Which practices from the course feel most accessible to you right now: body scan, breath awareness, progressive muscle relaxation, or cognitive shuffling before sleep? Why?
- After your first week of daily practice, what have you noticed — about your pain, your sleep, your reactivity, or your mood? Be specific rather than general.
- Did any practice feel unhelpful or activating rather than calming? Describe what happened — this is valuable information for a psychologist or pain counsellor.
- What is the smallest daily practice you could realistically sustain for the next month? Name the time of day, duration, and practice.

Worksheet: My Personal Flare Management Plan

Complete every field below during a calm period. Keep a copy accessible — in your phone, wallet, or shared with a trusted person. Review with your care team every 3-6 months.

My early warning signs that a flare is building (list 3-5 personal signals)

My immediate 24-hour response plan

Activities I will reduce but maintain during a flare

Activities I will stop completely during a flare

Who I will contact and what I will tell them (name + brief script)

My self-compassion reminder (write one sentence to yourself for flare days)

How I know I am returning to baseline (3 personal markers)

Post-flare review question: what will I note after each flare resolves?

Date this plan was last reviewed

Next scheduled review date

Checklist: My Chronic Pain Self-Management Toolkit — Complete

- I have a written biopsychosocial pain map to share with my care team
- I have at least one paced activity with a written quota I follow daily
- I have a graded activity programme for one target activity
- I have a graded exposure hierarchy I have shared with my physiotherapist
- I am practising a mind-body technique at least 5 days per week
- I have a written flare management plan stored somewhere accessible
- I have shared my self-management goals with at least one healthcare provider
- I have identified 3 valued activities I am taking steps toward regardless of pain level
- I know the difference between a flare and a new injury requiring medical attention
- I have scheduled a follow-up with my care team to review progress

Your Action Plan

1. This week: Complete your biopsychosocial pain map and share it at your next appointment
2. This week: Baseline one physical activity using the 3-day tracking method
3. Week 2: Set your 80% quota and begin consistent daily practice — do not exceed it on good days
4. Week 2: List your feared activities and rate them on the 0-10 fear scale for your exposure hierarchy
5. Week 3: Begin a 4-week graded activity programme for one target activity with your physiotherapist's input
6. Week 3: Choose one mind-body practice and commit to 10 minutes daily for two weeks
7. Week 4: Write your personalised flare management plan and store it somewhere accessible
8. Ongoing: Increase activity quotas by 5-10% every 1-2 weeks as you reach consistency
9. Monthly: Review your pain map and update your flare plan with your care team
10. Ongoing: Celebrate consistency — tracking completion rather than pain is your new measure of success

