

UNCOVERING THE MEANING OF YOUR PAIN

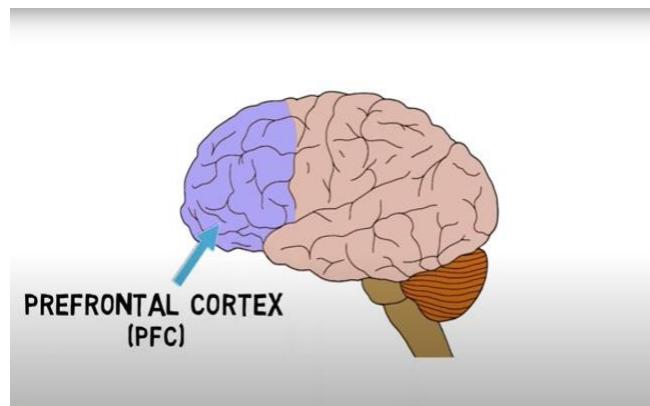
SESSION 12 OVERVIEW:

Your sense of self is a product of the interaction between your emotional brain and the prefrontal cortex. No two people will have the same answers to what they enjoy, whom they love, or what interests them; you cannot force yourself into these things, either. The prefrontal cortex is responsible for interpreting sensory-emotional information, then translating it into stable attitudes and beliefs that coalesce into our sense of self. It is also responsible for being aware of what is happening in the body and allows us to think conceptually, set goals, remember things, and make decisions. The medial prefrontal cortex links the body and the brain, and is responsible for the sustained emotional suffering chronic pain sufferers experience. The medial prefrontal cortex is very active in chronic pain sufferers, even when they are supposedly resting. Overcoming pain requires becoming aware of its personal significance, and once you have learned to manage pain and negative feelings effectively, you must develop new, more adaptive self-beliefs. As you learn to control pain and negative feelings, and adopt new ways of functioning, you should begin to experience less negative emotions in favour of more positive ones. It is important to keep in mind that this can take weeks to months.

AT HOME PRACTICE:

Session 12 Assigned Exercises:

- My Negative Self Beliefs Exercise (page 2)
- My Positive Self Beliefs Exercise (page 3)
- Continue previous exercises on the Overcoming Pain App that you have found to be most beneficial on a daily basis. Use your non-noise cancelling earbuds.



Continue onto the next 2 pages to find the negative and positive self-beliefs exercises.

My Negative Self Beliefs Exercise:

Core negative self-beliefs are unconscious, and formed from experiences throughout our life. The foundation of negative self-beliefs are typically feelings of shame, or knowing we are not okay. Those with negative core beliefs typically have a sense of self that is less secure and more dependent upon outside influences or circumstances.

Exercise: Read through the list below and identify which statements, if any, resonate with how you felt *before* the development of chronic pain. If there is another statement that is not listed but feel it is a core negative self-belief, you may use it. Subsequently, reflect on how you have coped with this negative self-belief. This exercise requires emotional awareness and self-reflection. It can only be done away from the day-to-day life, in a place where you feel safe and calm. Please do not attempt this exercise without the appropriate circumstances.

Statements:

“I’m worthless/useless”

“I’m unlovable”

“I’m stupid”

“I’m not good enough”

“I’m weak”

“I’m a failure”

“I’m trapped”

“I’m helpless”

“I’m out of control”

My core negative self-belief: _____

How I coped:

My Positive Self Beliefs Exercise:

Developing healthy, or positive self-beliefs increases confidence in yourself about your ability to control feelings and achieve your goals. This will allow for the belief that you are worthy, lovable, strong, and more. It is possible to develop positive self-beliefs despite still experiencing pain and/or disability. Maintaining positive self-beliefs has many benefits, such as decreased stress, helping us to feel safe and secure, aiding the body in healing itself, and increase optimism.

Exercise: Notice or reflect on how you feel in your body when you are feeling well, calm, or relaxed. Also reflect on what emotions are present when you have, for example, achieved something, and analyze what those feelings say about you. Use these reflections to help generate your own personal positive self-belief. Your positive self-belief must be based on real felt emotions, not wishful thinking. It will become the basis for your post-pain identity. Below is a list of examples of positive beliefs that may help you identify your own:

Statements:

- “I’m okay/I’m all right”
- “I will survive, regardless”
- “I can manage, regardless”
- “I can have some control”
- “I can still be useful”
- “I can cope, regardless”
- “I can control my pain”
- “I am lovable, regardless”
- “I am worthwhile, regardless”
- “I am still a good person”

Reflection notes:

Positive coping self-belief: _____