

DEALING WITH OTHER STRESS

SESSION 13 OVERVIEW:

Chronic pain brings considerable changes such as decreased physical functioning, health uncertainty, increased medical treatments, loss of ability to work, financial difficulties, changes in relationships, and more. It can make planning for the future feel impossible. Normal life tasks become major stressors such as social gatherings, work, and honouring commitments. Chronic pain can plunge you into a state of helplessness. There are so many everyday aspects of life that you cannot control: life becomes like a survival situation. If you can accept the loss of control and long term planning, and focus on what you can control on a daily basis, this will reduce stress. Use prioritization if planning is necessary to allow the most important things to be in your forefront, rather than feeling overwhelmed by all pending tasks.

AT HOME PRACTICE:

Session 13 Assigned Exercise: Attentional Telescope Exercise (Mental Healing)



This week's exercise uses the cognitive strategy of changing your focus. Being in the midst of a stressful situation tends to trigger narrow attention, which focuses on the details and analyzes the situation for possible solutions. It becomes difficult to think outside the box which traps you where you only see your problems. In other words, your attention is focused on the problem itself, not ways to solve it. One way to refocus your attention is to imagine that your attention is like a telescope with the ability to zoom in and out. This allows you to zoom in and out on the highly stressful situation and see it from different perspectives, making it easier to find a solution. Use the Overcoming Pain App, your non-noise cancelling earbuds, and the Attentional Telescope track for a guided exercise to change your focus. Practice this daily and continue practicing other exercises that you have found to be beneficial throughout the course of the program.

Atreyi Mukherji, MD, ELM Medicine, 2021

Reference: Grant, M. (2020). *The New Change Your Brain Change Your Pain: A trauma-informed approach*. Trauma and Pain Management Services Pty Ltd.