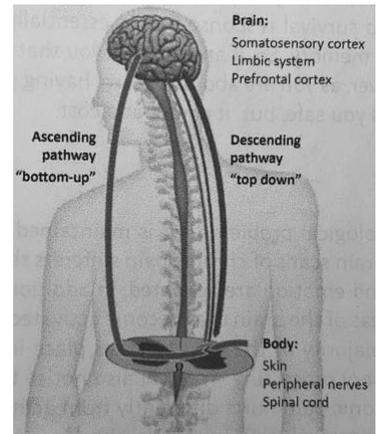


UNDERSTANDING YOUR BRAIN CAN HELP OVERCOME PAIN

SESSION 2 OVERVIEW:

There are two pain pathways between the body and the brain: ascending and descending. The ascending pain pathway is sensory driven where the body sends signals to the brain (bottom-up). The descending pain pathway is knowledge driven where the brain sends signals to the body (top-down). Acute pain is processed in the bottom-up direction: sensations → feelings → thoughts; chronic pain is processed in the top-down direction: thoughts/expectations → sensations → feelings. Chronic pain is generated by interactions between different areas of the brain involved in sensing, feeling, and thinking. As chronic pain becomes more severe, higher areas of the brain such as the prefrontal cortex become involved. These areas are not directly involved in the sensory processing of pain but have a huge impact on it. Due to the multitude of brain areas involved in chronic pain, there is no one cure. Finding the physical cause of the pain almost never overcomes the problem due to the powerful emotional influence.



AT HOME PRACTICE:

Session 2 Assigned Exercise: Heat Pack (Sensory Healing)

This exercise requires the use of hot or cold stimuli to aid in pain relief. Heat has been used to stimulate relaxation and comfort in pain sufferers for a long time. Heat is reassuring, and reassurance is analgesic, both neurologically and psychologically. Heat is most effective for alleviating pain in specific areas related to osteoarthritis, muscle knots, trigger points, cramping, spasms, restless leg syndrome, fibromyalgia, and rheumatic pain. Cold packs can be used as an alternative exercise, particularly for patients struggling with inflammation, burns, or in a flare up of osteoarthritis. Use the guided listening tool daily. Be sure to use your non-noise cancelling earbuds!