

SKILLS HELPFUL IN MANAGING PAIN

ACPA group members do not dwell on physical symptoms of pain. Instead we focus on becoming a person rather than being a patient.

- We recognize and talk freely about our feelings about pain and its control over our lives. We do not make judgments.
- We use relaxation audiotapes to help ease the tension that increases pain.
- We demonstrate mild stretching exercises and encourage you to do them daily, if your doctor approves.
- We set realistic goals which are evaluated weekly. This helps members to see that their goals can be reached, one step at a time.
- We become more assertive by recognizing our basic rights, including the right to make mistakes, the right to say no, and the right to ask questions.



TO LEARN MORE

About how you can begin to enjoy a better quality of life in spite of pain, visit our web site (www.theacpa.org) or contact the ACPA at **1-800-533-3231**.

We can help you find a group in your area or start a group with information and support from the national office.



American Chronic Pain Association

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THE AMERICAN CHRONIC PAIN ASSOCIATION

Help and hope for people and their families living with pain



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FOR NEARLY 25 YEARS, THE ACPA'S MISSION HAS BEEN:

- To facilitate peer support and education for individuals with chronic pain and their families so that these individuals may live more fully in spite of their pain; and
- To raise awareness among the health care community, policy makers, and the public at large about issues of living with chronic pain.



The American Chronic Pain Association is a nonprofit, self-help, mutual aid organization providing help and hope to those suffering from chronic pain (pain that lasts six months or longer).

We are nonprofessionals, so we do not provide therapy or medical treatment. The ACPA is an addition to, not a replacement for, the medical care you are receiving. While we do not provide a cure, we do provide positive and constructive methods of dealing with pain.

We offer education in pain management skills and recognize that we need the support of others who experience and understand chronic pain. Our goal is to help people with pain take an active role in the recovery process so that they can improve the quality of their lives and reduce their sense of suffering.

WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED

To improve the quality of your life in spite of your pain, you must give up the passive role of patient and reclaim your identity as a person. This means that you need to once again be an active participant on your health care team and in your personal life. To make the journey from patient to person takes time.

*Half the battle
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WE KNOW THAT:

- Recognizing emotions helps us to understand ourselves.
- Learning how to relax is essential. It helps prevent the tension that increases pain.
- It is important to chart realistic goals and record your progress toward them
- Working within the limits your body sets and pacing yourself is critical to better functioning.
- Chronic pain not only involves the person with pain, but the family as well.
- Hearing others talk of similar feelings and experiences caused by pain opens doors of understanding and validates the experience of a person with pain.
- There are no wrong feelings.

Half the battle is won when you take an active role and begin to help yourself.

ABOUT THE ACPA

The American Chronic Pain Association was founded in 1980 by Penney Cowan in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. After many years of living with chronic pain, Penney had taken part in the pain management program at the Cleveland Clinic and was eager to maintain the skills she had learned there when she returned to daily life.

Penney placed a notice in her church bulletin and soon found others whose lives were compromised by ongoing pain. They began meeting as the first ACPA support group. This one small group quickly became many. Unable to be personally involved with every group, Penney developed the first of the ACPA's manuals and other materials so that others could learn and maintain the skills that had been so important in her recovery.

Today ACPA support groups meet across the US and in Canada, Great Britain, and many other countries. The ACPA's unique materials are a primary resource for individuals seeking to improve the quality of their lives and for the professionals who help them.