Pace Thy Self
Listening to Our Bodies

by Penney Cowan, Executive Director, ACPA

Chronic pain can consume a person’s life. It can take away your ability to function and to take part in your usual activities. The guilt, frustration, and anger that builds up inside you as you lose your ability to take part in your own life is overwhelming. Sometimes it’s worse than the pain.

You see, many people measure their self-worth by their ability to take part in daily life, pulling their own weight, doing their job, contributing to the family, or just being there when someone is in need.

What is interesting about chronic pain is that there are actually days when the pain, for whatever reason, may be less intense. It can be so much less that we get ambitious and think about tackling the tasks we’ve been avoiding because of the pain.

So, a good day comes along and without thinking, we jump into it with big plans. After about an hour, we feel that first “ouch.” That is our bodies’ way of telling us to stop.

But the guilt and frustration are so strong that we push forward. We don't listen to our bodies. Instead we keep going past the second, third, and perhaps the fourth “ouch.” It isn’t until our bodies are screaming at us that we realize it is time to stop. We finally stop, even though there is still so much to do. We think, “Perhaps tomorrow will be a good day as well and I can pick up where I left off.”

Morning comes and the pain is worse than it has been in a long time. Yesterday’s activity actually made the pain increase. Immediately, fear takes over and we promise that we will never do any of those activities again. The pain we are enduring now is not worth it. This is the way that fear gains a strong foothold.

The problem is, we set ourselves up for failure. We were so excited about feeling good, and so full of negative feelings about ourselves, that we pushed too hard.
Prioritization is a learned skill—one that enables us to evaluate tasks and determine which require the most attention, energy, and time. For individuals living with chronic pain, prioritization means letting their bodies be their guide, as these three ACPA facilitators describe.

**Mind Over Matter**

Having spent more than 20 years in the U.S. Army as a paratrooper, Arthur Barham of Atlanta, Georgia, acquired a typical soldier’s mentality—continue pushing forward no matter what obstacles you encounter. However, for Barham, that worked only for a short while. His years of jumping out of planes wreaked havoc on knees and ankles, and serving in a war zone ignited Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Eventually, his body forced him to hang up his parachute.

“I’ve always been somewhat of a private person; meaning, that I was a person who had chronic pain. There was nothing anyone could do about it and I let it control my life,” Barham said. “When I was in pain, I wasn’t very nice to my family and others. They continually offered support, but I saw it as nagging. Looking back, they knew what I needed before I did.”

Ultimately Barham became more aware of how his pain was affecting his daily life. This became especially evident when doctors recommended he have a double knee replacement.

That dose of reality, and his participation in a local Veterans Affairs pain management program, initiated his commitment to setting priorities.

“Although I had days when I could barely function because of the pain, I began figuring out that if I focused on only the essential things that could help improve quality of life—such as a walk through my neighborhood—then that is what I did,” Barham said. “If that meant a one-mile walk around my neighborhood instead of a three-mile walk, then I still felt like I had accomplished something for the day. It really took a lot of practice. My mentality initially was that I was an old vet, and that I should just push through the pain and cope. But I wasn’t really dealing with it. With my new approach, I could distract myself from the pain, and my activities helped re-energize me.”

**New Priorities, New Blessings**

Although chronic pain forced Barham to give up jumping out of planes, camping, and hiking, it has also opened new doors. He and his wife, Lucy, love spending time with their five adult kids, 14 grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren (with one more on the way), attending their nephew’s jazz performances, and dancing. Although he does not work professionally anymore, Barham stays mentally sharp through other activities. He volunteers at his church and with local political groups, is active on social media, and teaches a life coaching class to
For individuals living with chronic pain, prioritization means letting their bodies be their guide.

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young adults that involves resume writing and skill development.

“Changing my priorities was not easy, especially giving up jumping,” Barham said. “But I knew deep down that I couldn’t continue doing it because every jump exacerbated my pain to the point I couldn’t do anything for the next week. But then I realized that I could still be involved—just in a different capacity. I hang out at the local jump club, help rig the shoots, and advise some of the newer participants. And I get just as much joy being out there in that way.”

Taking Ownership
Barham says prioritizing has also played a key role in reducing his stress levels, which is important to avoid chronic pain flare-ups. Barham pays great attention to his pain levels and triggers, and knows instinctively when to dial back his activities. And by focusing on activities that challenge his brain—and allow his body to rest—he has allowed his physical self to adjust.

“I don’t want to feel like I’m a victim to my pain,” Barham said. “I understand that I enjoyed everything in my life up until the pain arrived, and now it’s my job to learn how to improve the quality of my life without focusing just on the pain.”

Appreciating Today
Each morning when Donna Erickson enters her home office, her eyes are drawn to a sign on her bulletin board that says, “What do I GET to do today?” It’s a gentle reminder that each day is a gift. Though she can’t always choose her circumstances, she always has the choice of how to respond.

Erickson, 73, of Twin Falls, Idaho, is very much a proponent of value-based goals. Having lived with chronic pain for her entire adult life, she has learned to keep her days simple and not over-plan. But she still needs written reminders in her daily planner to keep her on track.

“I’ve read many books on goal setting and prioritizing,” Erickson said, “but I’m still not as effective in time management as I might be. It is altogether too easy to check email the first thing and get sidetracked from more important activities. For me, the hardest thing to remember is setting valid priorities and sticking to them. I try to set weekly and monthly goals, both for my health and our business. I review my plans for the next day each evening. I intermingle work with pleasurable activities daily, usually planning one social activity (perhaps inviting a friend over), so I know I have something to look forward to the next day.”

Structured but Flexible
Erickson says that because of her constant back and hip pain, she has learned that her first priority is taking care of her own health—physical, spiritual, mental, and emotional. Upon awakening, she plays with her cat, Scamper, gets dressed, and then heads downstairs for breakfast. Afterward, she spends about 10 minutes doing balance and stretching exercises, then lies down for her morning devotions.

Once she completes her morning ritual, Erickson moves on to her part-time job—sales and marketing for her family’s home-based kitchen remodeling business. She’ll start her workday by completing at least one lead-generating activity, and then follows up with frequent, short, rest periods. These are activities when she can move around, washing dishes, watering houseplants, or some other light task. Once Erickson comes back to her work, she refers to her planner, which contains a list of tasks numbered by priority.

As far as possible, she tries to schedule only one away-from-home activity a day, usually in the morning when her pain level is lower. She might accompany her son Steven on sales calls, head to the city pool to do therapy exercises with friends, or walk her standard poodle, Daisy.

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“Making my days structured but flexible helps prevent me from feeling frustrated and overwhelmed,” she said. “Pain is always going to be a part of my life, so I have to plan around it. I’ve learned to overlook a cluttered office and dusty furniture. To ease my back and hips, I have to spend a large part of my afternoons and evenings lying down. But I make good use of that time. I call friends, especially those who need encouragement. I make business calls, read, listen to excellent books on my Talking Books machine, or play Word Hero or another mentally stimulating game on my computer tablet. For 40 minutes a day, I practice deep relaxation while listening to a CD from the excellent Life Flow program.”

But some over-scheduled days are unavoidable. Recently, she and Steven went to a kitchen remodeling appointment in another town 45 minutes away. “We left home at 8:45 that morning and didn’t get back until 1 p.m.,” she said. “I was exhilarated from the sale, but in considerable pain by the time we arrived home. Fortunately, my husband Noel had a delicious dinner prepared for us, and I then took the rest of the day off.”

**A Strong Support Network**

Despite chronic pain, Erickson continues to lead a full life. She is active in her church, serves as vice president of public relations for her weekly Toastmasters Club, and facilitates a monthly ACPA pain support group that she formed more than two years ago.

Erickson says she is blessed with church members and other friends who are quick to pitch in and help when she needs assistance. “If I am scheduled to give a speech at Toastmasters, but can’t stand up much that day, they are okay with me sitting down while I speak,” she says. “A friend will drive me in my own car so that I can ride in the backseat on my mattress.” Fortunately, many of the meeting rooms have a sofa so she can lie down.

Her husband and son are very supportive. They do most of the cooking and take care of the house and yard, with the occasional help of a housekeeper. “Although some projects I want done get postponed for months, I do my best to forgive and let go of the irritation. It’s best to show gratitude and not play the blame game,” she said.

**Accepting a Life Change**

For most of the 1990s, Diane Kennelly of Mesa, Arizona, was living the life she had always dreamed of having: an exciting career as a marketing director for a healthcare organization, a beautiful family, and great friends.

But at the end of the 1990s, life began to turn. In 1999, she was involved in two rear-end collisions. Just one year later, she began experiencing symptoms of fibromyalgia and chronic fatigue. The life change was devastating.

“I was so very proud of the life I had. I was a good mom who wanted to do it all,” Kennelly said. “Then chronic pain hit, and it knocked me down a peg or two. I was fired from my marketing position because the pain and fatigue interfered.
I was forgetting about meetings and tours I had set up, and I couldn’t get there on time. I had to give up my dream house because I couldn’t handle the stairs anymore. I couldn’t be the person I wanted to be for my husband, kids, and myself. I was very angry and in mourning.”

After processing the chain of events that had changed her life, and eventually accepting that she couldn’t return to the life she had, Kennelly realized she had to create a new journey for herself.

“After about five years, I slowly came to realize that my old life was gone,” Kennelly said, “and I needed to find a new approach; create a new life. And it was hard. I used to be strong and completely independent, and chronic pain took that away. However, as I started practicing mindfulness, positive thinking, and alternatives to medicine, my thinking began to change. I realized I needed to shift my focus. There was no medicine, juice, or treatment out there that was going to make me feel better. I was going to have to learn to live with fibro, fatigue, and fibro fog. I needed to focus on what I can do, and not what I can’t do.”

Managing her Days
Little by little, Kennelly came up with a system of priorities that enables her to “do, rest, do, rest.” Each day, she creates a wish list of four to five tasks that she’d like to get done for the day (including exercise and occasional massages)—with rest time interspersed throughout. If she has to do anything outside the house, she limits the outing to two activities. If she completes those activities and is still feeling energetic, then she might tackle a few more. For a day that she knows will be full, such as when she watches her three grandsons or goes grocery shopping, she’ll add more rest time into the mix.

But as simple as that formula sounds, Kennelly said it can also work against her. “There are days when that To-Do list seems overwhelming and causes me stress. Then I get angry at myself for not being able to accomplish all of them, especially if I’m having a hard time motivating myself,” she said.

Sharing Lessons Learned
Along with the support from her husband Robert and three grown children, one of Kennelly’s saving graces has been her activity in an ACPA fibromyalgia support group, which meets more than 12 times per month. Kennelly has been both a member and a facilitator.

Over the years, she has met many new friends—friends who “get it.” These friends won’t desert her because they understand the chronic pain and forgetfulness that’s associated with fibromyalgia. She’s been able to give—and receive—and the experience has been very therapeutic.

“I love offering my help and sharing the lessons I’ve learned with my friends here,” Kennelly said. “And I get wonderful feedback on how our discussions have helped them in many ways. I’ve always worked in the service industry in healthcare, and I’ve always loved to help people. And here, I can help make a difference for them, and they are making a difference for me.”

Often at these meetings, the topic of prioritization will come up. So what advice does Kennelly give?

“I tell them that taking care of themselves is not a selfish thing,” Kennelly said. “You have to take care of yourself the best way you know how. Individuals living with chronic pain only have so much to give during any given day, so you pick and choose. If you can’t do it today, then let it wait until tomorrow. If you know that a big activity is coming up, then make yourself rest during the day to save your energy.

“I share with the individuals who are new to the chronic pain journey that they might go through a mourning period — just as we would when we lose someone we love. We’re mourning our old selves and all the things we used to do. But with trial and error, you can learn what techniques and treatments work for you to accomplish what you need to. You may end up finding new things that you love doing. A positive attitude works wonders.”
Setting priorities can help bring order into the chaos of modern life—which is especially important for those who live with chronic pain.

Without priorities, you may spend your precious “good days” on busywork and have no sense of accomplishing something important. If instead you focus what is most meaningful to you—and not do more than your body can take—you will feel rewarded by less pain and more positive steps forward.

Setting priorities identifies the goals. Pacing is the process that breaks them into small steps. Together, they help people with pain live a fuller life.

What do you Miss the Most?
Dr. April Hazard Vallerand conducts research into how different people deal with chronic pain. She is a professor in the College of Nursing at Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan. Vallerand is currently principal investigator on a study, Improving Functional Status in African Americans with Cancer Pain, which is funded by the National Cancer Institute (NCI).

“So some people with pain live full lives, while others just don’t get up and move at all,” she said. “I want to know what makes some of us function well and why others become incapacitated by their pain.”

Dr. Vallerand works with many people with pain and their caregivers, some of whom are not getting good chronic pain management. When she interviews them, one of her most productive questions is not on her functional questionnaire.

“I like to ask, ‘What does the pain keep you from doing? What do you miss the most?’” she said.

The answers are sometimes surprising, but always meaningful. People miss spending time with the grandchildren, being able to hike in the woods, or participate in a swim group. “This is a way to help them identify the priorities in their lives. These are the activities that are worth pursuing, in spite of the pain,” Vallerand said.

Once a priority is identified, she works with people to find a way to bring it back into their lives. “Pacing is part of it. Maybe a woman can’t tolerate a full day with her grandson, but she can meet him for ice cream for an hour,” she said. If a hiker can no longer tromp for miles, he can try a slower walk for a shorter time, and still take part in his favorite activity.
Plan for the Pain Episodes
She has found that people who feel like they have some control over their pain are better able to cope. “That’s one of the secrets: knowing what to do when the pain gets bad. If you have the tools, you aren’t as afraid of going out. You aren’t living in fear of what could happen,” she said.

Vallerand suggests people break down their to-do list this way:

TO DO LIST

Group A: Really needs to be done
Group B: Things to get to later
Group C: Do if you have the chance

“If you understand your limits, and don’t push too hard, you might not get to the point where you need it,” she said.

In small steps and over time, setting priorities and pacing permits you to do those things that are most important to you. If gardening is pleasurable, doing a few minutes a day can lift your spirits. For some people, having a clean house is important, and accomplishing that goal in small stages is worthwhile. Others would rather hire a cleaning service.

Setting priorities identifies the goals. Pacing is the process that breaks them into small steps. Together, they help people with pain live a fuller life.

Regaining Control
People with pain often have a priority to regain control of their lives. It begins by acknowledging what we value and what we can reasonably accomplish.

“People who accept that their pain is going to be there and not go away, can then move forward. They have gained some control over the pain,” she said.

Vallerand suggested setting realistic goals and evaluating them weekly. “People may be avoiding a task because they think it is a painful activity. But it is the fear of the pain that is keeping them from doing it. They think, ‘If I don’t move it won’t hurt.’ But not moving is not living your life.

“You may not be able to do all the things you used to do. But there is more than one way to do anything. You just have to discover what it is,” she said.

April Hazard Vallerand, PhD, RN, FAAN is currently the Interim Associate Dean for Research and the Interim Director of the PhD Program at Wayne State University College of Nursing in Detroit, Michigan. She holds the College of Nursing Alumni Endowed Professorship and is a Fellow in the American Academy of Nursing. Her research focuses on improving and maintaining functional status in patients with chronic pain and the identification and reduction of pain-related disparities. She is also the author of Davis’s Drug Guide for Nurses, which is in its 13th edition.
PACE Yourself to Complete Your Goals

When you focus on priorities, you spend more time on the things that are most important in your life. But how do we conquer the many steps that lead to accomplishing our goals?

We need to listen to our bodies and PACE ourselves.

Ask yourself which task is the most important for you to complete first. If you have a sense of the things you want to complete and know which ones are the most important, it will provide you with a feeling of control over your life.

Your actions have a direct impact on how you manage your pain from day to day. You must make sure that your actions are within your limits. And, before engaging in any physical activity, it is a good idea to do a few warm-up stretches to guard against injury. When a task is daunting, break it down into smaller pieces. Tackling a messy closet? Organize one shelf today. Planning a party? Start by researching menus, or writing a guest list. Don’t try to do it all in one day.

Be sure your body and mind are comfortable with your plan of action. Is this task within your limits to complete? Is it something that you can do by yourself or will you need help? Have you allowed enough time, or should you break it down into two days? Even if it seems a small thing, it will take much longer to complete if you have to spend time recuperating from the pain that overdoing it can cause.

You need to ask yourself if the task you have decided on is one you enjoy. No one enjoys sweeping out the garage, but will the end result make you happy? Don’t do it because others expect it of you, or if it won’t enhance your life.

Some work is no fun, but simply needs to be done, and we do it because it is part of our job. But if there are tasks that are no longer within your ability, consider if they will really enhance your life. Can you find someone else to do them? If not, just place them at the end of the list, or eliminate them altogether.
Helpful Tips on Recognizing Your Priorities

What are the most important things in your life?

This may be harder to answer than you think. To decide, you might ask yourself what you would do if these were the last years of your life. What accomplishment would you want to be remembered for?

For many people, faith, family, and friends are top priorities. For others, it’s a career, fitness regimen, or college degree.

Having chronic pain may change your priorities. To find a refuge from the pain, some seek creative outlets and challenging mental activities. Many people with pain devote their time to helping others through support groups.

Here are 10 ways to help you recognize your priorities and set meaningful goals:

1. Make a list of the important things. Include what may seem like small things or unusual ones.
2. Be flexible. Let your priorities change from time to time.
3. Develop both short- and long-term priorities.
4. For the long term, consider your dreams, hopes, and plans from the past. Include them if appropriate. You may need to change them to accommodate a life with chronic pain.
5. Use your priority diary or calendar as a daily activity guide.
6. Review your goals and priorities every Monday, and again every morning to identify what needs to be done each day.
7. Setting a plan of action to reach them is as important as determining your priorities.
8. Have one of your goals involve another person in at least one activity each day. Don’t let chronic pain be a barrier in connecting socially. Go beyond email to visit with people in person and on the phone.
9. Don’t judge yourself harshly if you do not stick to your priorities or immediately accomplish your goals. The objective is to build your confidence and move your life in the right direction.
10. Remember, you have the right to do less than humanly possible. You have the right to make mistakes and learn from them.

We all walk before we run. Set goals that are within your power to accomplish or break a larger goal down into manageable steps. And take time to enjoy your successes.
Board Member Profile: JR Lam

This is part of a series of articles intended to give readers more insight into the interests and contributions of ACPA board members.

JR Lam is a technologist by trade. As a member of the ACPA board, he is working to simplify how the ACPA uses technology, now and in the future.

“I provide a different perspective,” said Lam. “The ACPA leadership can consult me on IT issues. I look at the organization’s needs and give them a technology roadmap so they know where they are going.”

Lam graduated from the University of California, Davis in 2006. In 2008 he was working for the Geek Squad in Sacramento, California. He made house calls on small businesses that needed computer help, including the ACPA. “I liked working with Penney and the people in the office. So I kept helping them out, even after I moved on to other jobs. It was my way of giving back,” he said.

He was invited to join the Board of Directors in 2010. “When I saw what great work they were doing, I knew that I was helping the right group of people,” he said.

After the Geek Squad, he continued to work in computer and information technology, doing technical support, support desk analysis, and team management for companies such as Pacific Business Centers, Packard Foundation, and Salesforce.com. Since December 2013, he has been Senior IT Support Engineer for Twitter in the San Francisco Bay Area.

He helps the ACPA track and modernize its technology needs and assess offers that come from vendors. He will soon be chairing a committee to discuss how the ACPA is using social media.

Lam described the ACPA website and social media sites as ways to go beyond a one-on-one conversation with a person with pain.

“Social media is a way to reach a large audience around the globe. It helps us attract the attention of sponsors and donors,” he said. “Our website has some pretty amazing interactive tools that help people with pain.

“With social media you can reach many more people, but you need to respond rapidly, to keep up your end of the conversation. If not, they lose interest. We need to explore this more as we move forward.”

When not “fooling around” with computers, Lam attends yoga classes or gets outside on his bicycle and enjoys California’s natural beauty.

“When I learned how much the ACPA does with such a small group, it surprised me. We have such a huge reach, but we need to determine how it will grow,” he said. “The mission is clear, but we need to set up a mechanism to store the tribal knowledge so it continues into the future.”

Pace Thy Self

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Setting a Slow Pace
Just imagine what might have happened if, after we heard the first “ouch,” we stopped and rested. After 30 or 40 minutes of rest, our pain would have subsided. We could return to the task for another 30 minutes. After working half the day, we could then relax, spend time with children, go to a movie, visit with friends, read a book, or just take a walk. Amazingly, we might actually feel pretty good the next day. When we push too hard, usually for the wrong reasons, we pay dearly.

When living with pain, we have to listen to our bodies.

We have to know when to take breaks. Pacing is so important, it is the path to self-managing our lives. Because if we do not pace ourselves, no one will.

No one else can experience your pain. You are the only one who knows when it is time to slow down or take a break. The key to pacing your activities is to listen to your body. It usually knows what you need.

In this issue of the ACPA Chronicle, we will look at how to set priorities so you use your good days wisely. We’ll also discuss how to use pacing to accomplish those priorities. Our goal is to gain a feeling of satisfaction for a job well done, with a minimum of pain, and a life well lived.
Support Group in Alaska Joins in Fur Rondy

In Anchorage, Alaska, the Fur Rendezvous winter festival—known locally as Fur Rondy—is a significant part of the city's history. It started in 1935 and featured skiing, hockey, basketball, boxing, and a children's sled dog race. Nearly the entire population of Anchorage turned out for the bonfire and torchlight parade.

The Fur Rendezvous continues with visitors from throughout the world attending the 10-day festival each February.

Members of the Anchorage ACPA support group, shown above, participated in the event in 2013. This year, in March 2014, support group facilitator Mary Ellen O'Brien saw KYUR-TV (ABC affiliate) filming the dog sled races near the hotel she lives in.

“I spoke to them about ACPA and shared our brochures,” she said. Shortly after, she was contacted by the TV station manager. They set a time the next day for the group to appear on the live show.

“He was impressed with the scope of ACPA and the fact we were going to hobble at the end of the race for the second year.”

“The next day I marshaled the members and we came in our outfits. We were going for the 'just rolled out of bed' look with our monkeys (on our backs) and Pain Sucks signs. We were interviewed as a group and got all the information out,” she said.

“They told us they expected some somber group that looked half dead. But of course, we are not. We laugh a lot and have fun together. Despite our unrelenting pain, we divert ourselves with fun activities that we can relive. And we like each other!” O'Brien said.

O’Brien showed off the “patient to person” brochures. She told the interviewers how following the steps leads people with pain to live for today and enjoy life in the moment.

“We had a great day,” she said. They encountered problems in actually being part of the race, with members experiencing illnesses and minor accidents. But as O’Brien said, “We lived through that day too. We watched the race instead.”

Veterans in Pain Events

The ACPA is hosting many events for Veterans in Pain (VIP) at VA facilities in 2014. All veterans and staff members are welcome to attend at no charge.

These programs focus on pain management, starting and maintaining peer-led groups for people with pain, and how to maintain wellness. We will explore the impact that pain has on people with pain, their families, healthcare professionals, and the public. Participants will learn about the ACPA's Ten Steps from Patient to Person, and how to apply them to daily life.

The ACPA thanks Endo, Teva Pharmaceuticals, Mallinckrodt Pharmaceuticals, and Purdue for their support in funding these VIP events.

Visit www.vetsinpain.org for the most current schedule of events. If there is not a VIP event scheduled in your area, contact the ACPA for a copy of the VIP DVD. Call 1-800-533-3231 or acpa@theacpa.org.

Growing Pains

The second phase of the Growing Pains website is ready to help youngsters and teenagers who live with pain find others who share their experiences. They can start a private journal, join a discussion, and learn ways to manage pain. It’s a lively, interactive environment just for young people at www.growingpains.org.
Book Review

The Meditation Sourcebook: Meditation for Mortals
written by Holly Sumner, PhD

Review by Tara White, RN

This book is for those readers interested in a comprehensive look at meditation and other modalities for coping with pain. Stressing that anyone can do it, Dr. Holly Sumner teaches you how to produce the meditative state upon demand. Meditation is a state of mind that your brain produces naturally, using brain wave patterns that you produce many times throughout the day and night. Therefore, meditation is simply bringing yourself to that brain wave pattern on purpose.

She also addresses many myths about meditation, such as: “I can't empty my mind so I’ll never be able to meditate.” Meditation doesn’t require an empty mind. It is our busy lives and chronic pain that cause us to be easily distracted and have difficulty concentrating. She offers several tips on how to calm down and relax prior to and during your meditation practice. In addition to the physiology of brain waves, she covers passive and active meditation, yoga, daily meditations, affirmations, and many guided imagery meditations. She claims that meditation can aid in everything from stress management, health and well-being, memory improvement, better sleep, creative problem solving, self-confidence, smoking cessation, weight loss, fears and phobias, and pain management. With a list like this, it is easy to see how meditation can be a very useful tool for anyone.

The author acknowledges that it would be unethical to suggest that all pain can be eradicated simply by using meditation. When you are in extreme pain, the pain captures all your attention. But if you can learn to go into a deep meditative level, it can be a tremendous help.

One guided imagery meditation technique is called Peeling Away Pain. In this technique, you imagine your pain to be like an onion. Just as an onion has layers to it, pain has several levels or layers. The idea is to peel away layer after layer to where you are feeling less and less pain. You just keep removing layers until your pain is at a tolerable level.

Another technique can be used before pain becomes too intense. It involves focusing, not on the pain itself, but rather on bodily sensations, first becoming cold to touch and then warm.

Another technique coaches you to go deeper and deeper into relaxation—a deeper level of relaxation than you have ever felt before.

I am going to add this book to my own personal library so that I have all the guided imagery meditations. You just never know when you might need one for other life events. The meditation for dealing with the death of a loved one has been especially helpful to me at this time in my life. Dr. Sumner reminds us to think of the mind and body as separate entities. When we do this it is possible to think of our pain not as part of us, but just belonging to us or next to us. In summary, this very comprehensive book has much to offer.

“What is the far greater journey? To the stars and beyond.... Or the mind and within?”
A Life in Balance: Nourishing the Four Roots of True Happiness
written by Dr. Kathleen Hall

Review by Tara White, RN

There are many, many self-help books out there to choose from, all claiming to be the answer to whatever ails us. Frankly, this one stands out from the crowd.

Dr. Kathleen Hall has genuine compassion for those in chronic pain, having spent years with Lyme disease. She also has a doctorate in spirituality as an ordained minister, and has spent considerable time counseling the poor. Her specialty is mind-body medicine.

Her life in the fast-paced world of finance caused her to experience panic attacks from living only “forward and upward.” She reviewed the Journal of Henry David Thoreau—about living a very basic life—and had an important realization.

Was a life of financial success worth the exhaustion? Was the so-called happiness of amassing many possessions worth missing important family functions and the toll it took on mental and physical health? Was this life of constantly being on the go what she really wanted? She realized the answer was a resounding NO! Clearly, our lives could be similarly out of balance.

She states, “It is time to stop being the victim of our lives and make choices that will create an intentional life of happiness.” True happiness really lies “inward and downward” into our authentic selves. So, she quit her job and bought a home in the country. She enjoyed the passion and excitement of her new home and used that energy to redirect her life in a new direction.

Dr. Hall lets an oak tree from her childhood home represent why we must have a rooted system to ground us. This is the successful beginning that nature requires. Hence, this book is about nourishing the four roots of true happiness: Serenity, Exercise, Love, and Food. With the acronym SELF, she helps us appreciate that we must take care of ourselves before we can properly take care of anything else.

I love the way she intertwines the symbolism of the great oak tree throughout the book, reminding us of what is really important in our crazy lives. To maintain balance, we must have strong roots.

“Opportunities of balance, true happiness, and strength exist in every minute of the day, but most of us have lost the ability to recognize the happiness waiting to be discovered in the simple moments of our lives. We have lost sight of our guiding star on a sea of distractions.”

Serenity is the lifeblood of our mind, body, and soul. We must slow down, truly slow down, take deep breaths, meditate on joyful thoughts, and be grateful for the abundance life has to offer. Dr. Hall states that gratitude is one of the most transformational powers in the universe. Practicing gratitude can start a “cascade effect” of spiritual growth.

Exercise, the second root, is equally important. A balanced and aligned body enables the energy to flow efficiently through our system, and exercise is the primary way to achieve alignment.

“The is critical—literally for the length and quality of your life.”

The third root, love or intimacy, is a basic human need, like food and shelter. “It is an act of great courage to intentionally want to see who you really are. When you give yourself permission to see into yourself, you descend into a deeper, more profound connection with yourself, and with others.”

Food is the fourth root. “Food in our culture is understood as organic material that goes into our mouths to sustain our bodies.” But in mind-body medicine, “nourishment is all sustenance taken in through our senses into our bodies—your mouth, ears, eyes, nose, and sense of touch—and it affects your physical and mental health and subsequent happiness.”

Dr. Hall stresses that, “trees have taught me much about the human soul. It is not whether suffering, loss, disappointment, and disease come into our lives, it is when they show up.” She has found that we all have the capacity to weather the storms of our lives when we are deeply rooted and can emerge transformed. “These four roots have created hope, health, and new lives for my innumerable patients and clients.” Despite our chronic pain, there is no reason why we, too, can’t also be grateful for our abilities and achieve a much more vibrant and rooted life following these principles. It truly is possible.

http://www.amazon.com/Life-Balance-Nourishing-Roots-Happiness/dp/0814473342
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In Honor of Barbara Craft Sussman
Given by Ned, Brian and Andrew Daugherty Love to you Patricia, your family, Barb’s family and all those who suffer

In Honor of Martha Searles
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In Honor of Janelle Riche
Given by Sam and Ann Happy Mother’s Day! Love you Mom! – Sam and Ann