

Psychological Impact of Chronic Pain or 'It is all in your head'

Dr Glenda Wallace

Clinical Neuro Psychologist and EMDR Therapist

Dunedin



Definition



- ▶ Pain is caused by changes or damage to
 - Nerves
 - Muscles
 - Bones
 - Tissues
 - Emotional status
 - Sensory feedback



So what is pain?

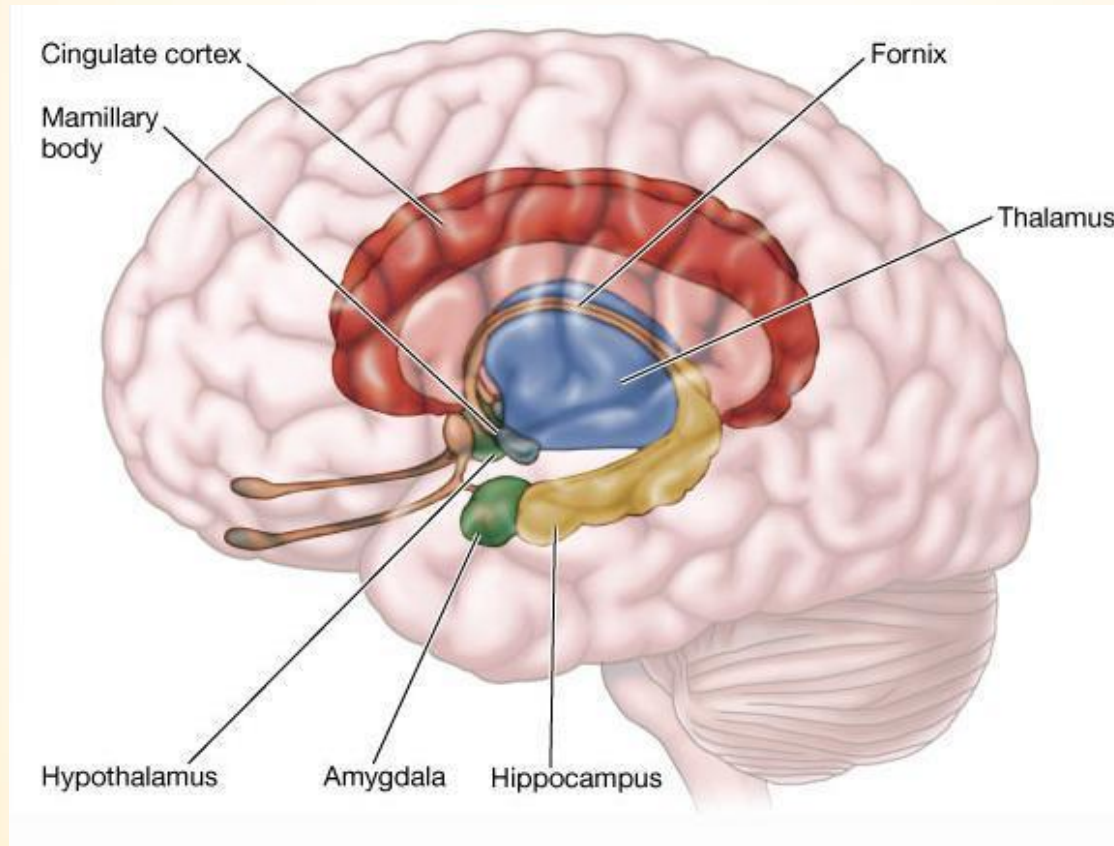
- ▶ Is it helpful to see pain as physical or emotional?
- ▶ All experiences that involve our
 - Thoughts
 - Emotions
 - Memories
 - Context
 - Tissues
 - Muscles
 - Nerves
 - Bones




What does this mean?

- Generally see pain as acute- **Danger. Stop!!**
- Or chronic - **the damage is done** 😞
- Yet pain is not a simple cause and effect process
- To understand your pain experience you need to have a wide range of information. Including what is meant by 'It is in your head'

How we process life experiences




Nerve impulses – touch, temperature, sound, smell, taste, thoughts, beliefs and images




Development of emotions- Foetal to birth

- ▶ 24 weeks to birth – react to sound, light and mothers cortisol levels.
- ▶ Directly effects the Limbic system.
- ▶ Children born with high levels of cortisol in their limbic system and brain stem experience difficulties with
 - ▶ Sleeping
 - ▶ Feeding
 - ▶ Attachment
 - ▶ Attention
 - ▶ Being held




Development of emotions- Birth to three years

- ▶ From birth to three years of age the neural development expanding throughout the brain.
- ▶ All experiences are processed via the limbic system i.e.
 - ▶ Discomfort
 - ▶ Hunger
 - ▶ Pain
 - ▶ Lonely
- ▶ We understand and retain the experiences as body sensations/experiences



Development of emotions- three to eight years

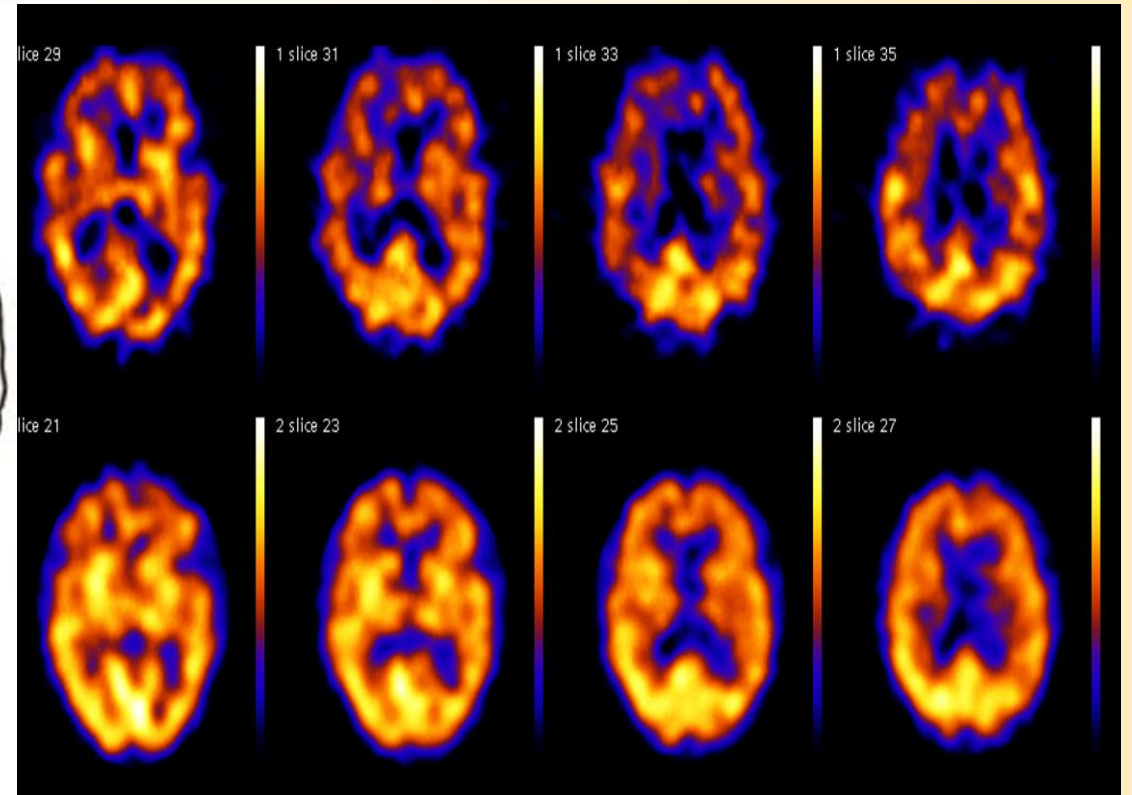
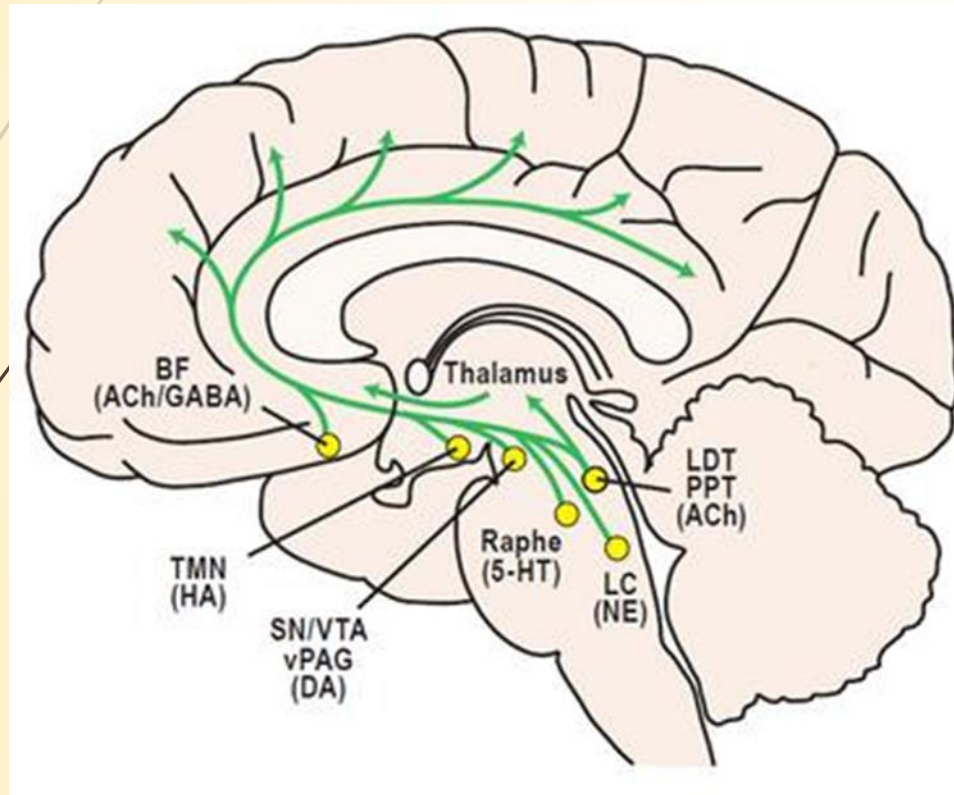
- ▶ Although we are developing language before three years of age the frontal lobes begin to process experiences from this age.
- ▶ Now we have experiences with language and meaning (although ego centred due to neural development) on a basis on body memory
 - ▶ Glasses in school – humiliation
 - ▶ Neglect by care giver – “I am not worthy”
 - ▶ Emotional or physical hurt – ‘ It is my fault’



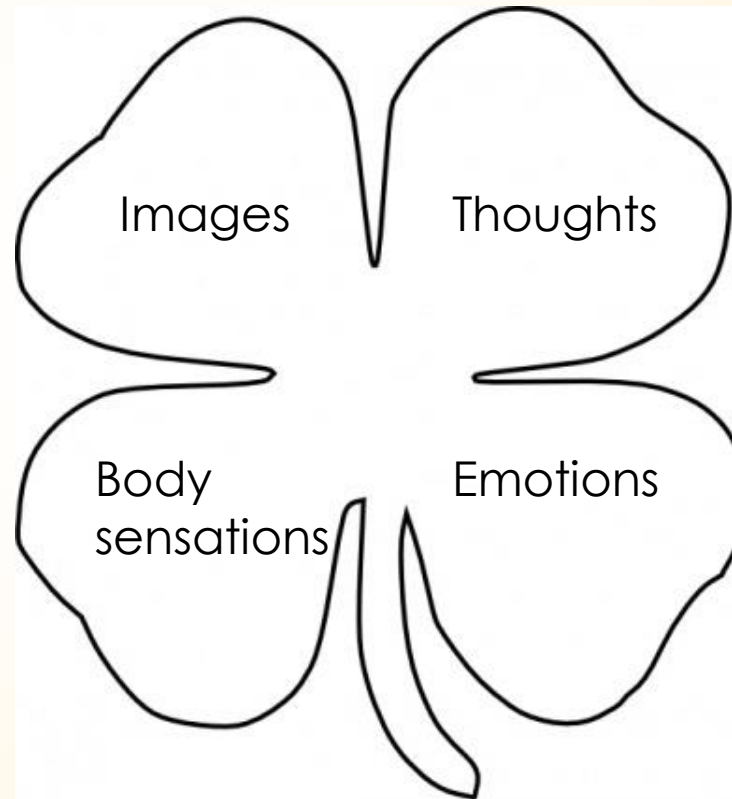
Development of emotions- eight years onwards

- ▶ Between three and fifteen years our neural networks are not developed enough for us to have a world view and we therefore experience life events as being about us (ego state) - My fault
- ▶ We develop a set of beliefs about the world (schema, scripts) that enable us to interpret the world from then on. The past is in the present.
- ▶ The rest of our life we have these beliefs confirmed and therefore held to be true or they are challenged. We do and can change our beliefs however they do appear to be hardwired from this early stage of development

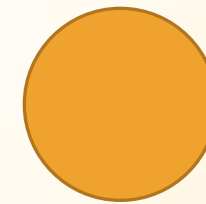
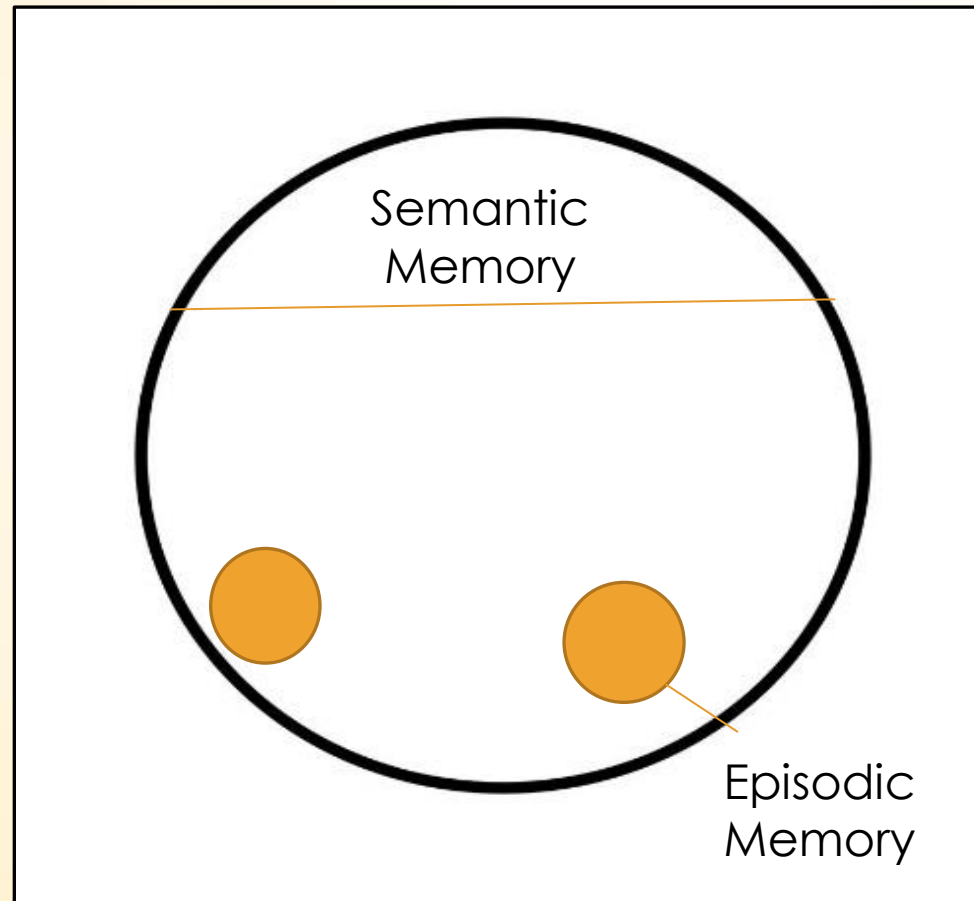
Anxiety/threat – natural responses of your Brain



All experiences i.e. memories



How emotions are attached to memories



Emotional part
developed in
early trauma
time



Triggers



- Tension in body
- Smell
- Sound
- Image
- Taste
- Tactile
- Person
- Situation
- Other health issue
- Sensitive alarm system



Questions



- ▶ Handouts available
- ▶ ***Books used with clients***
- ▶ Explaining Pain 2nd edition 2013- David Butler, Lorimer Moseley and Sunyata
- ▶ EMDR and pain 5th Edition 2015 – Mark Grant
- ▶ Take Control of Pain 2013 - Editor Helen Bateman
- ▶ Overcoming Chronic Pain 2005 – Frances Cole et al

Living with pain

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Living with pain



- ▶ This is probably the area in which most sufferers get stuck. Why?
- ▶ Pain is hard to define, explain and understand. As a pain sufferer how do you explain your experience when it differs within you over time and the yard stick used by health professionals is a 1-10 intensity scale or a scale of emotional faces.
- ▶ PF “After 30 years of living with pain just the education made a difference. Why has no one explained this before!”



Education first



- ▶ First step is education. All my clients receive the information and more that was presented before lunch.
 - Education leads to understanding.
 - Education leads to a shared language.
 - Education provides some semblance of control.
 - Education leads to a reduction in the threat value of pain.



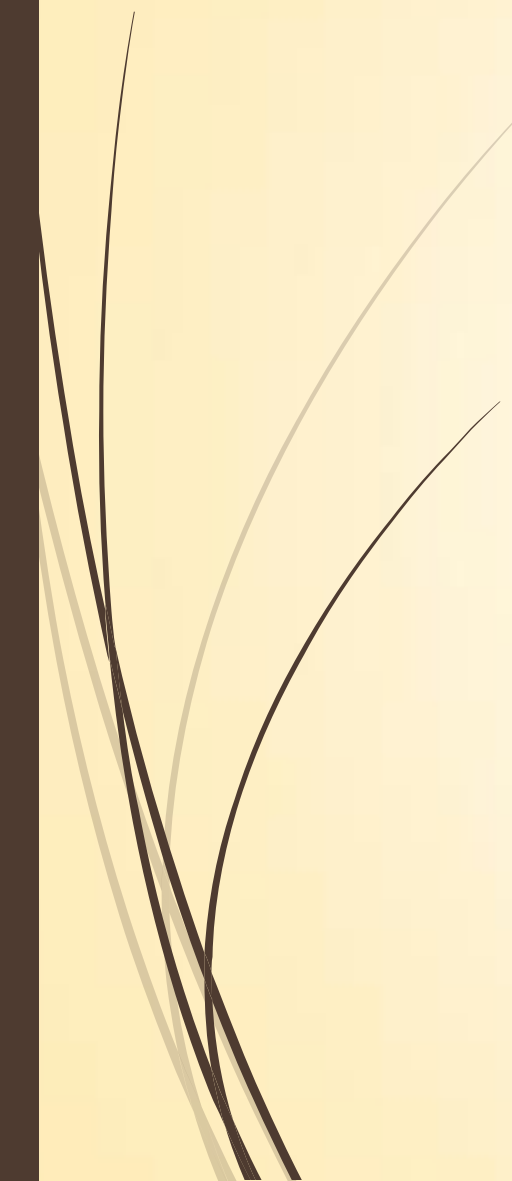
Normalise



- ▶ All pain experiences are a normal response to what your brain thinks is a threat.
- ▶ Find examples of pain experienced in self, others, TV, film, books.
- ▶ This is normal for all of us.
- ▶ Different expressions by different people.
- ▶ Cultural differences.
- ▶ Expectations.
- ▶ Life stressors.




First steps to more control

- ▶ How can the word pain express all experiences.
 - ▶ Consider the language used.
 - ▶ Laddering of expressions – words, images, tactile
 - ▶ ***Be your own researcher***
 - ▶ Develop your own baseline so you can measure change – what is your experience?
 - ▶ Pain- Type, times, how, when, how much does it bother you, etc
 - ▶ Less or no pain –sensations, times, how, when, etc
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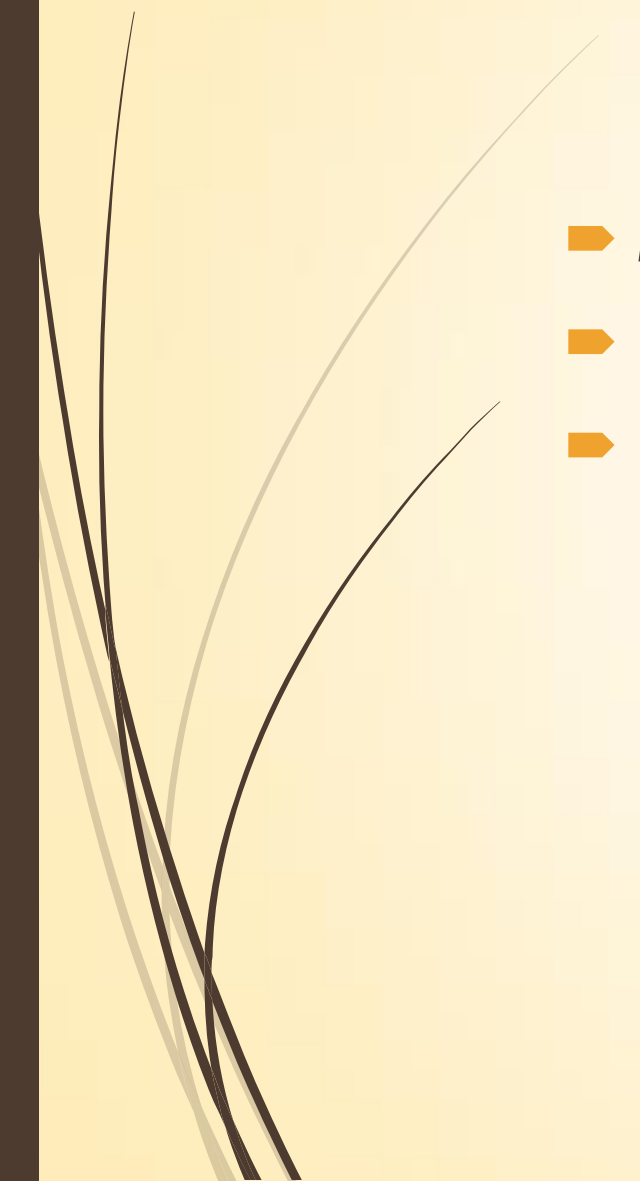


Relaxation techniques

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- ▶ Progressive muscular
 - ▶ Swimming
 - ▶ Stretches
 - ▶ Gentle pacing of movement
 - ▶ Meditation
 - ▶ Visualisation in the shower



We are a good design

- ▶ Mirror neurons – yawning, disgust, intention of movement
 - ▶ Bereitschaftspotential – readiness potential
 - ▶ Kinaesthetic body
- 



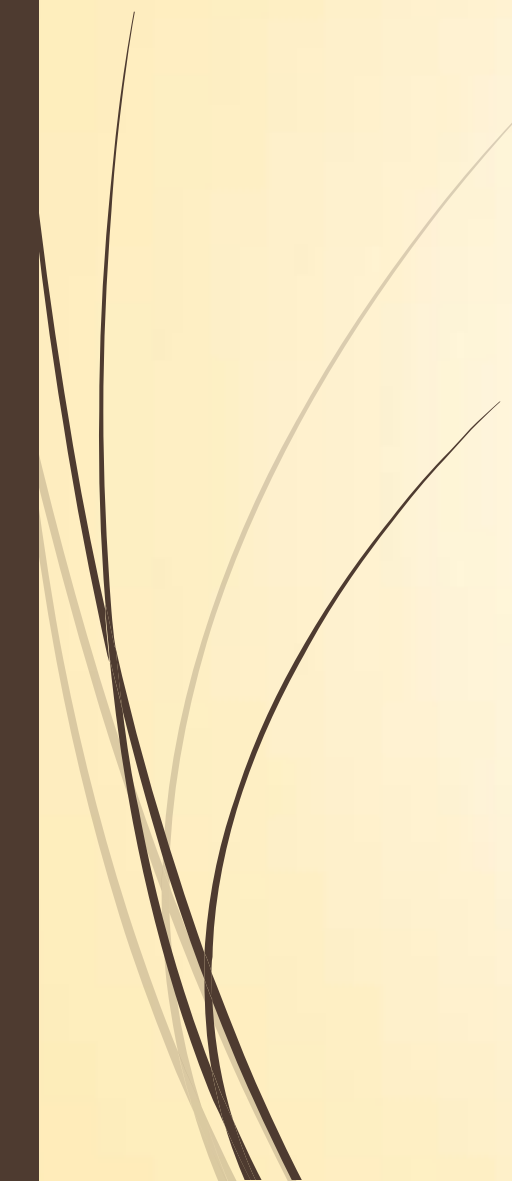
Visualisation example



- Imagine the movement before you move
- Imagine the smoothness of the movement, the ligaments and tissues stretching like silk
- Imagine your body gracefully extending itself upright
- As you breath out slowly stand
- Notice your standing
- Take a beat
- and repeat for next movement



Anxiety management

- ▶ Understanding the biology and alarm system
 - ▶ Diaphragmatic breathing
 - ▶ ABC
 - ▶ Imagery
 - ▶ Mindfulness
- 



Patients experience- PF

- ▶ Not listened to
- ▶ Health professional fatigue with the experience of pain
- ▶ In your head – mental health therefore not real
- ▶ Not understood by anyone- depression
- ▶ There is nothing we can do to help you?- suicidal thoughts

Results in-

- ▶ Increase in pain experience, anticipation of pain, sleep deprivation, other health and mental health issues



Patients experience - PF

- ▶ Someone believed in me
- ▶ Education on biology of sensations
- ▶ Normalising pain processes and meaning to me
- ▶ Education on readiness potential, mirror neurons and breathing
- ▶ Practise of strategies
- ▶ Books to read
- ▶ Being your own researcher and controller
- ▶ “I am still f**king alive!!”

Thank you

