Understanding Chronic Pain

Chronic pain is best understood as an interaction of numerous factors. Many aspects of these factors can be addressed to help manage chronic pain conditions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>What you can do to improve pain management</th>
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| Physical | • Keep muscles toned through physical activity.  
            • Take prescribed pain medication.  
            • Use relaxation techniques to relax muscles and control the stress response. |
| Emotional| • Use relaxation to control anxiety.  
            • Stay involved with relationships and enjoyable activities to protect against depression and other negative moods. |
| Cognitive| • Recognize unhealthy thinking patterns that interfere with adaptive coping with pain.  
            • Challenge faulty thinking and replace it with healthy thoughts. |
| Behavior | • Stay physically active.  
            • Pace your activities; avoid a cycle of overactivity and underactivity.  
            • Adhere to medical recommendations (including medications and physical therapy). |
| Social   | • Discuss what you find helpful and not helpful with family and others who are close to you.  
            • Stay socially involved. |

Reference