Pacing

Managing activity levels is a big challenge

- Managing activity levels is a challenge for anyone whose health has been disrupted by pain and/or fatigue
- Some people slide into a “take it easy trap” through fear of doing further damage or through feeling hopeless and despairing
- Many people “activity cycle”, where they go through bursts of activity; sometimes overdoing things so that they end up in much increased pain or fatigue and therefore unable to anything very much for a few days until they recover sufficiently to overdo things again. This can lead to increasing frustration, hopelessness and a sense that the health problem is controlling your every action
- Another form of overdoing things is to carry on an activity for longer than is wise, i.e. waiting until the pain or fatigue kicks in so intensely that there is no alternative but to stop
- Overdoing things and activity cycling is a normal response to a difficult situation, particularly where the person has been used to being active prior to the health problem
- Although a normal response, it is not necessarily the most useful response!

So what can be done to change the situation?

- Be honest with yourself rather than deluded/in denial
- Acceptance is the key; a lot of physical and emotional energy can be used up in battling things that we have little control over
- Direct your energies and attention to those things that you can influence
- Find ways of pacing yourself well over time; avoid unnecessary activity cycling
- Pace yourself well within activities; consider taking breaks before the pain or fatigue forces you to rest. This may allow you to return to the activity more quickly
• Prioritise; consider what’s worth doing despite the pain/fatigue and what’s not worth doing because of the pain/fatigue

• Effective pacing is a way of taking back some control over the situation

So what are the key messages?

• Keep active
• Face up to the realities of your situation whatever they are
• Achieve self-discipline
• Learn from times when things don’t turn out the way you expected
• Make sure that your energy is used to make the most of your life

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