

“Take Your Walk”

A Chronic Pain Course taught from the book, *Journey Through Pain: the Walk for Healing*

On May 5th, 2005, (05-05-05), Dennis Kinch set off on a Journey, walking from Boston to Washington, DC. He then decided to walk further, tackling Route 66 from Chicago to LA, to tell anyone he could about the newfound knowledge of “The Pain Cycle.”



“Walking in the hot sun” - Lynne LaMaster’s famous drive-by photo - 2006

P. E. A. R.

PEAR, an acronym for **P**atient **E**ngagement, **A**wareness and **R**e-invention, is dedicated to helping chronic pain patients learn how to tame the pain.



PEAR's mission is to change the way pain is treated in the United States through positive engagement.

There are over 100 million Americans living with pain.

PEAR believes each of us must learn about pain before we can truly change the pain.

The Pain Cycle and its subsequent teaching courses provide information to those suffering so they may become engaged and empowered. It is gathered from personal visits with thousands of professionals and patients, all of whom are stuck in the Pain Cycle.

Dennis Kinch believes there is a way out of the suffering. It may not be a 3,000-mile walk for everyone. Yet for a man who should not be walking at all, he found a way out of the Pain Cycle ... and he is here to help you.

From the book...”Journey through Pain...The Walk for Healing”

Welcome to **The Pain Cycle**. Your journey has begun. Here you will learn the phases you must conquer in order to “swing the curve.” If you find yourself still questioning or unsure of the journey, reread what you don't understand. Make sure your mind is open to possibility. Thinking negatively, even in a subtle way, can hinder your progress. However, my guess is you want out of this crazy cycle, out of the pain paradigm. *You'll get there.*

Chronic pain is pain that lasts over three months and is expected to be permanent. This, whether diagnosed or not, causes us to fall into an uncontrolled movement that begins a series of losses, eventually including the loss of self worth and even identity. Through a positive “can-do” attitude, and with the help of trained, understanding professionals, you can find the positive, reinvention side of the cycle. Thus you begin your journey out of the controlling effects of chronic pain.

It is important to remember that most likely the pain is not going away. Yet it can be tamed, as long as you have the attitude of wanting badly to control the pain, and the willingness to take on the journey through pain. This is something only you can do. “Swinging the curve” is your part of the journey. There are many people waiting to help you, but they can only help you after you have fully committed yourself to this journey. You must believe in your own power and work toward reinventing yourself to move past this life-altering interruption in your life. It's wanting to be happy and productive again, the longing to find the true spirit of who you used to be. All of this awaits you if you have the courage to take the journey.

I pulled a wheelbarrow over 3,000 miles to prove to you, but mostly to myself, that this works. It took a lot of time for me to evolve. Part of reinvention is adapting, which is an important survival technique. I worked closely with my doctors and therapists to learn to walk correctly, to learn not to hurt myself, to learn to “do what I can, when I can.”

My goal in these walks was to **become my** physical therapy. It was to adopt therapy into my lifestyle: to believe in my own ability and the power to “do it right.” My goal was to do what I could when I could. I walked across America in nine months wanting to end this trek in better condition than when I started, all while dealing with constant and sometimes disabling pain.

I am not proposing that everybody start walking thousands of miles. In fact, I suggest quite the opposite. Instead, I propose that you learn to adapt to your pain, to reinvent yourself around it and find your spirit again. Once you see the positive side of the cycle, it will be up to you, and you alone, to decide what “taking a walk” means. Patients who have been successful at this now perform a variety of tasks. They are achieving lofty goals such as starting businesses, becoming volunteers and organizing support groups and patient-taught classes at local pain clinics.

I cannot say what your “walk” will be – I only hope with the help of this information as well as with education, you will be energized and inspired to begin your journey to find yourself again. My wish is for each of you to find your spirit and be happy. If you are going to put pain in its place, *in the background*, you need to stand up to the anguish and take your place in this world. You need to learn to enjoy life again...despite the pain.

The more goals you reach, the more powerful you will feel. I validate your pain, and so does the pain community and others. Do not dwell on trying to prove yourself to anyone; free yourself of that heavy burden. Hopefully, by reading just this much, you are seeing you can let go of some of heartache. This alone has the ability to bring back part of your old spirit. Doesn't it feel good to be back in touch with your old self, like seeing a childhood friend you haven't seen in a long time? This is freedom. You now can see the power of belief and how it impacts you.

To repeat myself, when I say, “Take your walk,” I do not mean you must walk thousands of miles. It means you must find what works for you that makes you feel happy and whole. For me, walking was good because it made me feel better. It gave me freedom and a sense of control over my life. It allowed me to meet people, to help people and to understand myself. It allowed me to test my therapies and my resolve.

As it turned out, the walk only changed me ... and that is okay. Those who didn't believe my pain or me beforehand still don't believe. There are still no medical issues solved, and I kept being denied Social Security. It took thirteen years and over ten refusals before I finally was able to obtain Social Security. The cynics will always be cynical, the doubters will doubt, the nonbelievers cannot believe. Negative begets negative.

With all of this said, those who understood me, understand me even more now. Those who love me are very proud of me, and our love has grown stronger.

The walk was the most unbelievable experience. I still sometimes cannot believe I walked over 3,000 miles. I did it! I set mind to something, I said yes and I did it. After crossing the desert in July of 2006, I finished my nine-month ordeal. Not once did I have a cold or flu. I had no blisters and walked only in \$10 Wal-Mart sneakers. There were no muggings or car accidents. I did not encounter any snakes or angry dogs. I did not get bit or stung by animals or insects. While there were a handful of severe weather stories, there was not one major snowstorm. Out of the thousands of people I encountered, I only met amazing, supportive individuals. I truly am better than I have been in my life, and yet, my pain and condition have not changed. I beat the power and illusion of pain!

The idea of “the walk” originated when I began working with a new physical therapist. I initially started walking to test the theories of nerve and muscle stretching and strengthening. Basically, I wanted to see if physical therapy worked. Could I take this newfound therapy of walking and make it a part of my lifestyle?

I began being able to walk less than a mile but slowly built myself up to walking over seven miles a day. It was always in circles around Boston and my neighborhood on the edge of Massachusetts, near Providence, Rhode Island. I noticed that as I came near my seven-mile completion each day there was this feeling of sadness and disappointment. I felt so good yet I was ending my walk for the day. I just wanted to keep going.

Then one night as I approached my house, I decided to just keep going. I walked until 2 AM logging just over 15 miles! I was tired but still felt good. That is, until I stopped. Like a slingshot, the pain would return, intensified by the exercise. However, I felt better knowing I did it, and knowing I could do it again the next day.

My original plan for my “big walk” was to go from Boston to Colorado so I could be with my children in the summer. But I had a setback in February of that year and had to rebuild my walking ability. This time I knew how to quickly build myself up. I also had a change of heart in where I wanted to walk. Now it was Boston to Washington, D.C.

At that time in my life, I was very angry about the situation I was in. And I kept meeting people all the time who had stories of tragedy due to pain that were far worse than mine. I wanted to bring attention to their plight. I thought Washington, D.C., was within a reasonable distance to perform a big walk, while still within safe limits, so that if anything went wrong someone could come and get me.

You see how this works.

You have something you know you can do, and you take it to a far degree in your mind – as a dream or idea, even if it seems unreachable. You then back step the goal, finding small steps that are attainable.

In my case, I had to learn a lot about walking. When I first mentioned to my therapist that I was thinking of walking 400 miles to Washington, D.C., she reacted like most people, “Are you out of your mind?” Then I told her I was working with her theory. She always explained to me that if something is non-damaging pain, if I learned to do things the right way, if I took my time and did what I could when I could, I should be physically fine.

She had to agree that I was following her philosophy, but was adamant: “You take care of yourself. If there’s something you can’t do, don’t do it. If there’s something you’re doing that will cause damage, don’t do it. Don’t forget to relax more on your good days, and do just a little more than you think you can on your bad days. Always try to even out your curves.” *Do what you can when you can.* “If you do this, then yes, it should be okay.”

Once I had her and my doctor’s blessings, the dream seemed possible.

This is how to **“take your walk”**:

I can’t say what your “walk” will be. For me, it was something I was good at and was good for me. It seemed natural and necessary. It seemed like the way to combine everything I was learning, everything I needed to do as an effort to bring this to a higher level.

Once you learn to *surrender, forgive and believe* in yourself, you’re ready to tie it all together for a purpose. Take whatever it is that you’re good at, and “dream it” to a far extent. By now, you’ve learned to stay positive, to stop saying no, to believe in yourself and an idea that matters to you. For me,

chronic pain was an issue near and dear to my heart, so it seemed fitting to go for that purpose. It fit like a glove.

People tend to perceive the walk as a lump sum. Seeing only the end result, they say, “That’s impossible.” They don’t take into account the physical and mental training it took to reach this goal. Nor do they understand that I spent five years in the negative side of the pain cycle before finding my way through the pain to the positive. My illnesses have not changed; my pain and physical limits are exactly the same.

I took the steps you will soon read about and applied them to my life. Yet each step had to be seasoned with a new attitude. It started with me resigning to surrender. I finally said, “I’m sick and tired of being like this and I will no longer accept it. I want to be my old self. I do not want others constantly telling me what to do. I’m tired of being the victim. I need to change.”

Let me be clear. This is not the attitude that it took to conquer pain, but it was the attitude I needed to begin the journey. My attitude had to adapt and change with each of the different phases I entered and went through. For forgiveness, my attitude shifted to, “Nobody knows what I’m going through, but I do. It’s okay that they don’t, and I can always explain it to them later. Right now, I have a journey to go through, and if I have to, I’ll do it alone.”

The attitude it took for belief was twofold.

- “I know I can get through this. I’ve been in situations like this before, situations where I was in over my head, looking into the unknown, facing the fear. I did it then, and I’ll do it now.”
- “I need to stop doubting everything. I know I’m in my own way. I need the help of the medical system, but I’m not going to blindly accept what they say. I’m going to be able to believe in them because I’m going to study until I understand.”

The attitude for the rest of the journey was simple. All I kept saying to myself was, “Watch this!” By then, I was beginning to own my power, so my small seven-mile walks were feeling monotonous. I needed a grander challenge.

Preparing and tackling “the walk” presented me with the same thing to overcome. I had my large-scale

goal that I agreed upon due to changing my attitude. I set small attainable goals that I achieved by changing my attitude. I faced challenges reaching those goals that tested my attitude. I endured other hurdles and barriers that pushed me to work on my attitude even more.

I know a lot of people who don't understand pain say to change your attitude to make it better. You probably have heard others say things like, "they just have a bad attitude." Don't get me wrong, I know it's not that simple. What I want you to understand is that moving forward with "your walk" has a lot to do with attitude, but it's not everything.

I had to work on the constant attitude adjustment. In order to "take your walk," you must learn to constantly adapt. Adapt to the *bad day and good day* syndrome, adapt to your medications, adapt to doing what you can when you can: adapt to changes in your healing processes and your afflictions. This is survival, but it's also survival with style.

Life is meant to be more than just existing. It should bring with it joy and accomplishment. If you have to blend accomplishment with severe pain and depression, you won't accomplish much or be very happy. I would never recommend that you "take your walk" if you are not ready to do so. I've seen people who want so badly to be out of pain that they try to find the easy answer. They rush ahead of the program and skip steps only to find out later they slipped back into the negative: the defeated.

This can be devastating on many levels, especially because it takes so much inner strength to take a journey. If you fail, or if you fool yourself into thinking you're ready, most likely you will become bitter and won't try it again. Defeat can be paralyzing because it has the potential to conquer your belief system, spirit and your energy. The wind will be taken from your sails.

Before you decide to "take your walk," before you decide to take on any major challenges and set very high goals, make sure that you're ready. Make sure you've understood and completed each stage in the cycle. Ask yourself:

- Am I in surrender or resignation?
- Did I forgive or just repress?
- Is my belief in my own power real, or did I talk myself into it?

Remember, these things are felt in your heart, not your head. One way to be sure you've made it to the

positive side of the Pain Cycle is to complete a practice run. Unknowingly, I did this with my walk to D.C.

At that time, walking to Washington, D.C., was an extremely high goal for me. After all, it was 440 miles! As it turned out, thank God it was a practice run. I made a lot of mistakes yet learned many lessons from that walk that were extremely important for the second walk. In fact, it's the very reason the second "walk" was accomplished at all, and with relative ease.

I had nothing invested during the first walk. Nobody was counting on me, so if I didn't accomplish my goal I knew I could still go back and try again. However, on the second walk, it was completely different. The goal was much higher – walking the entire Route 66 – and so was the investment. There was a national organization involved, complete with a website, press attention, advertising and financial investments. It was a complete campaign. Many times I said to myself, "Thank God I did that first walk."

I share this because I don't want you to attempt your own "walk" until you really are ready. I want you to approach "taking your walk" slowly and cautiously. Just like the road, it can "do you in."

Another thing you must consider in planning your "walk" is what suits your needs. Everyone has different afflictions, abilities, ups-and-downs and therapies that work with his or her lifestyle. In order to "take your walk," you first must find what fits you. Then be supercharged! You must be at a point in your therapy where you're in a position for a major challenge. Like I said before, it totally defeats the purpose to go into this and get hurt. I don't want that for you and you don't want that for yourself. This large goal must be the natural evolution of your therapy.

Hopefully, you practice living the "physical therapy lifestyle" for a while. You must be a master of your *weapons of healing*. You must be beyond validation and resignation. This endeavor could chew you up and spit you out. You must be a master of positivity – a believer of it. You must have practiced its power and have learned some control over creating a positive environment. You must have learned to ward off the negative influences that will test you. If you've truly reached this point of mastery, you already understand the "tests" involved. You know that anytime you make a positive change in your life's course, you get tested.

You see, when I first set out on my trek to Washington, D.C., I was not as ready as I thought I was. I had the belief and the inspiration. However, the testing was only about to begin. I didn't know that going into the walk. I was naïve.

I learned a lot on that 440-mile walk. By the end of it, I didn't think I would be doing that again. I had accomplished a lot and met a lot of people, but as far as education and awareness of pain were concerned, *which was my original purpose*, I hadn't accomplished anything. While elated that I finished, I was frustrated that I hadn't made a difference. I didn't finish what I had started; however, I was becoming very adept at some important, learned skills.

1. I was in really good shape physically. Although my diseases and the pain associated with them hadn't changed, there was good news. They hadn't changed! Nothing worsened, and the rest of my body became very toned. In fact, my heart, lungs, blood pressure and general health seemed even better.
2. My belief in accomplishing a major feat was very powerful, real and tangible to me now. This led to the belief in the next phase: healing from it all.
3. Using what I knew about physical therapy, muscle groups, nerves, soft tissue and bones, I was becoming a **pro** at stretching and strengthening the correct way. I wasn't hurting myself anymore, and I knew how to heal quickly. It took three weeks to go from not walking at all, to walking 4.5 miles per day. I didn't think this was at all possible, but I had learned the major lesson ...
4. **I had stopped saying "No!"**

During my big "Walk" – *the 2,451-mile trek along Route 66* – I talked to many, many people: mostly people with pain. From that group, I was honored and privileged to meet some pain survivors. Some had gained confidence and inspiration from my speaking and from my "Walks"; some had found the answer on their own. When I talked to these people and asked them how they arrived at their answer, they all said the same thing:

It is exactly what you're saying about the Pain Cycle. It started with surrendering, then forgiving, and then belief just came over me. It was the belief that I could do it, that I could get past the pain.

I just could not believe I found validation from people I didn't know and who didn't know me! They understood and were on the same page as me. They were also "taking their walks" but in different

ways. They were accomplishing dreams that, not too long before, had seemed unattainable. This was exactly what I had hoped for: the proof was in the pudding.

While *taking your walk* meant the same to them as it did to me, we had different agendas. This is not to say mine was better or theirs were better. We all were reaching for **OUR** dream. Each of us had learned the power it takes to set goals and attain them.

One young woman was going back to school after 11 years of fighting a major nerve disease. She was going to study pain medicine and get her doctorate. She beamed with joy, and freedom, no longer burdened with negativity. She had gained her power over pain! She was unstoppable.

Another had taken up a fine art craft that she hadn't performed in many years. A craft she never thought she would be able to do again. That is before she learned to adapt to her disabilities. She told me the greatest thing she had learned however, was to believe in her power over pain. She was, *and is*, unstoppable. Today, she is holding fine-craft exhibits to sell her work and she gives the money to charity. Plus, she has become a major pain advocate in her hometown ... another leader in the army of proper pain treatment advocates!

Another man I met, a major pain sufferer, and his wife – also a person with pain – began walking every day. They started with one block, then a quarter-mile, then a mile. And believe me, for this couple this was a miracle! Not only was it a triumph to walk with pain but they also faced terrible financial news. Yet learning the power of being positive, they approached their current situation the attitude of, “I know we lost a car but we are here and we know we can walk where we need to go.”

Instead of fighting about financial matters, they take many walks together, which has made them an even stronger couple. They feel a renewed sense of love and friendship. Together, they are unstoppable ... and they also are an inspiration to me. Yes, God is truly magnificent!

Another man I met is the embodiment of adapting to a situation rather than falling into deep depression. After losing his legs to amputation and rehabilitating to his wheelchair, he became bored from monotony. He left his safe, secure Massachusetts existence and took his dog and some packs to traverse America in his wheelchair. His dream was to be with his dog on the road. He did this for himself – he had no support, no one to write about it and no one ever even knew about it. I was in awe of the

amazing power he had of just wanting to get out of the vicious cycle of disability! He did what made him feel powerful and happy.

Now, the opposite side of that coin is the paraplegic gentleman I met who was paralyzed from the waist down, who talked to me about how his life was without merit. He told me how pain was overwhelming him, how he was worthless and insignificant and stuck in his wheelchair. It was affecting the man and his family terribly.

Yet as I talked to him more, I learned the man had accomplished some amazing things in his life. He was heavily involved in volunteer efforts that set up national wheelchair sporting events. He owned his own business and was quite successful. Plus, he and his supportive wife were raising five children. The list went on and on.

He kept asking me for help, but all I thought was he was so far ahead of me in accomplishments. This just reiterated how, without the power of belief, a person can still be open to, *and victimized by*, the negative effects of pain. All this man needed was to be reminded of his true spirit and the amazing things he had accomplished. He had already learned the lessons, but was missing the confidence and positivity necessary to keep the bad side of pain out of his life and away from his family.

I never heard from this man again, which is a shame, because I will always wonder what happened to him. I wish him the best.

I tell this to you because I feel this story exemplifies why it's so important to actually "journey" through the Pain Cycle. The patients I've met, *who were successful over pain*, had learned to "swing the curve." They lived through surrender, forgiveness and belief. Even though their pain or their diseases were still present, *and in some cases worse*, their belief in the power over it was so strong, you could see they would never turn back. It was apparent that they had found peace.

Their faces showed a fighting spirit that is necessary to put pain in the background. This is exactly how I feel. While it may always be knocking at the back door, I refuse to let negativity take over again. This is a sign of winning the battle. You must have a feeling of accomplishment, of freedom, to "take your walk" the right way.

I am not saying you will not face challenges. It is still, and always will be, a learning experience ... even for me. I think that when you stop learning you stop living. You stop growing.

“Taking your Walk” implies that you have an open mind, a willing attitude and a goal. You understand to reach that goal you must take small attainable steps. You’ve also learned how to trust and let go of the past. You see you must believe in your own power. Most importantly, you are beginning to find happiness in life.

“Taking your Walk” is a way of bringing the system of winning up a notch. It’s way of setting very lofty goals and finding a way to reach that goal. It doesn’t matter what “Take your Walk” means to you. The only thing that matters is the avenue you will head down and the path that is right for you. There are many possibilities. Maybe it is volunteering for something or possibly taking your family or friends on a major adventure. Again, how can I say what that adventure is for you? *I only know what it was for me.*

You may even think just returning to life is enough ... and it is. Find a way to enjoy yourself again. Enjoy your work and your family, and the time now spent together. “Taking your Walk” could simply mean taking back your life, and what a tribute to conquering the war on your personal pain it would be to dedicate yourself to simply being happy. To not take anything good for granted.

I stress that it is a matter of figuring out what’s the best and most fitting path for you to take. Open your heart and look for the possibilities, for the puzzle pieces fitting together in just the right way.

All I can tell you is one thing: we need more stories about success over pain. We need more people who understand the process of putting pain in the background to stand up and be counted. This will help others get there too.

You, not pain, are truly in the driver’s seat now. Keep setting goals, keep attaining them and keep winning. Don’t stand in your own way anymore, and don’t allow anyone else to stand in your way either. You now have all the answers. Just remember: *the answer lies within you.*

The Pain Amplifier

The *pain amplifier* is like your home or car stereo. It has a volume button that ranges from one to ten, just like the pain scale used by most clinics and pain doctors. Now add to this a thing called a pre-amplifier, or “*boost-amp*,” a box that allows you to get much more power to the main stereo or radio, and a lot more volume. It’s sort of like when you hook up your television through your stereo at home. (see illustration)

If you set your main radio or stereo at the highest number, **ten**, and your pre-amp at the same **ten**, your speakers will be damaged, eventually causing destruction of the whole system. This is also true with the pain amplifier. If your original *pain scale pain* is **five or six**, and your **pain amplifier** is set on **eight**, the **five or six** you’re experiencing every day can be crippling.

As you travel through the pain cycle, on the **negative side**, you are turning up the volume on the pain amplifier, higher and higher as things get worse and worse. The more negative things that happen, the more this increases our sensitivity to **pain**. Thus, eventually surrounding our whole world with it. The **noise** from this pain becomes much too loud to concentrate on anything else.

People who are all the way down the negative side of the pain path are feeling pain so loud that they can become bedridden with a scale pain of two! As you swing the curve from **Surrender to Belief** and travel to the positive side of the pain path, you begin to turn the amplifier **volume down**.

Now, add in **education, treatments, and therapies** to your life and the amplifier volume goes further down. Eventually, the pain goes deep into the background and you can finally concentrate on more positive things in your life. This happens over time – whatever time it takes for an individual to complete **the journey**.

I can vouch for this, because in my case the scale pain hasn’t changed in five years. It had always been at an average of **six to seven**, with mornings being **eight to nine**. But my pain amplifier is now down to **two or three**. My pain is far in the background. When I walk more than 5 miles, it goes down to one, putting pain further and further back.

Two years ago I would be **bedridden with a six to seven**. I would have had an emergency room visit with an eight to nine, and be completely disabled with a ten. Now, a six to seven is mild, an eight to nine means I can still accomplish most tasks. Only a **ten** would put me into a bed-ridden state.

One of the keys in pain education, I believe, is to learn the difference between *damaging and non-damaging pain*. I learned, from a qualified **physical therapist**, that my posture – the way I was walking and standing – was causing constantly damaging pain. I have now learned to move the right way. Yet every day, I must stretch and move my body. While it is very painful, I know this pain is non-damaging and will quickly subside.

As I researched more about my disease and understood its physiology, I became educated. **Education** is the only non-invasive treatment that you can perform yourself, and see an immediate effect in turning down the volume of the pain amplifier.

Education led me to release the greatest part of damaging pain: **fear**.

You will learn through trial and error to listen to your body and do what it says. You will learn to stop the damaging actions, to understand all the things you are doing to cause it. You will learn to live through the non-damaging pain. Most important, you will begin to live by the motto “do what you can, when you can.”

Pain Amplifier Questionnaire

These are questions designed to help a person with pain determine where his or her Pain Amplifier is set.

- 1) Have you lost any of the following: your recreational activities (sports, hobbies, etc.) or your social life (meeting with friends)?
- 2) Have you become sad, depressed or gloomy? Do you have periods where you see no hope for the future?
- 3) Do you say to yourself, "I feel so bad because my pain is so bad. Today's going to be a bad day, I just can't do this."
- 4) Do you feel that there is no help for you, and that you are "*stuck with this?*"
- 5) Do you fight your pain, trying to be who you used to be, but attacking your work or home life because you cannot keep up?
- 6) Do you become easily agitated, especially at things not going right, such as when you try to button your shirt or you cannot find your keys?
- 7) Do you experience pain that causes you to be unsure of your future?
- 8) Do you feel that no one believes you, that people think you are lying, faking, being lazy or using your illness as a crutch?
- 9) Do you not know exactly what's causing your pain? Do you not know exactly what your medicines do or what the therapies you are using are trying to accomplish?
- 10) Do you blame God, *or yourself*, for your situation?

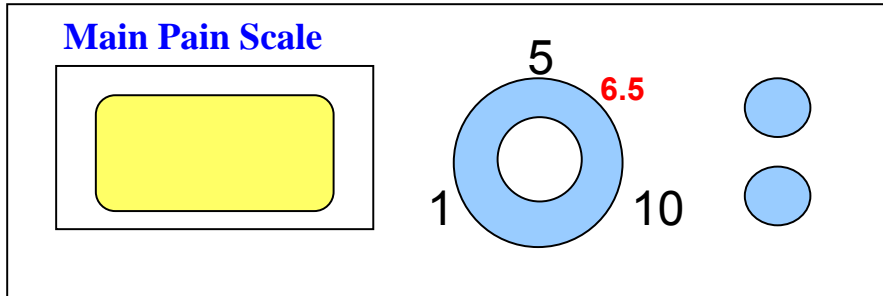
*If you answer yes, turn the volume **up**. If you answer no, turn it **down**. "UP" will increase the severity and intensity of the pain you feel. I want you to learn how to turn it "DOWN"!*

THE PAIN AMPLIFIER

Main Pain Scale

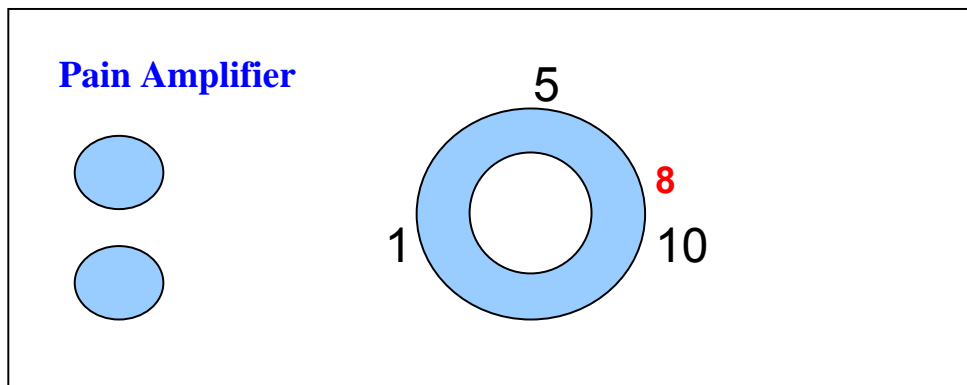
Here is an example.

Right now, your pain level is between **6/7**.



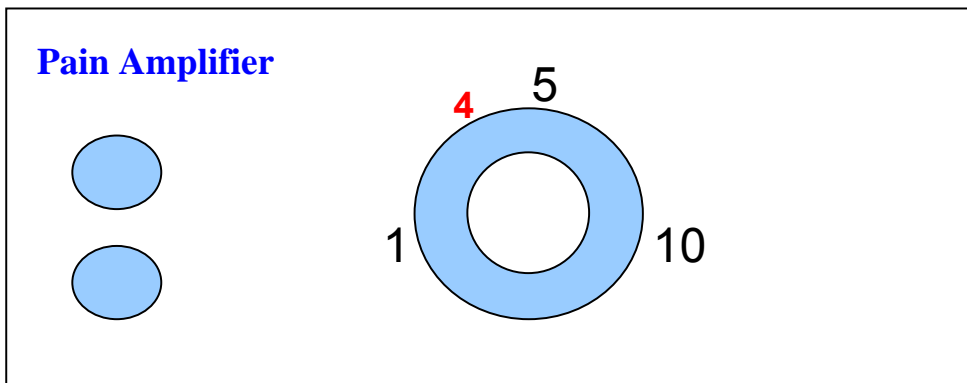
Remember to then add a **Pain Amplifier** to the main pain scale.

If conditions in your life right now are such that your **amplifier** is set to **8**, your original pain scale pain of **6/7** may be very painful, consuming and disabling. (see below)



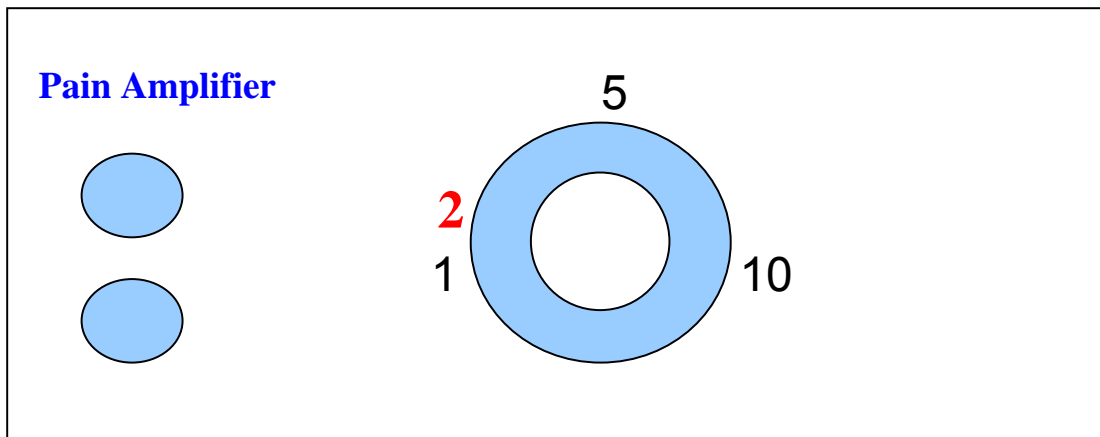
On the other hand, if you've learned how to turn the **amplifier** down through **education, treatments, medications, therapies and pain management tools** to possibly a **4**, your scale pain of **6/7** feels much more manageable.

Yes, it is still painful, but you can tolerate it better. (see below)



Then ... once you move to the positive side of the Pain Cycle, you will see you have the power to turn your **Amplifier** down even more. To continue with the example, I will say your **Amplifier** is now **2**.

You will see in the image below that while your pain scale is still set at **6/7**, the pain appears less. You have found a way through the pain to be more mobile, productive, and most importantly, **happy!**



The name of this game is to keep doing things that **turn the Amplifier down**. Work on lowering stress or letting go hurt since both of these make us unhappy, leading to immobility and heightened pain. Focus on learning relaxation techniques, proper stretching movements and educating yourself about pain and disease to release **fears**.

If you're serious about **taming the pain**, you've got to get serious about doing these things. Try to adapt them to your everyday life. Get in the habit of doing them. Make it a ritual, think of it as your personal healing routine.

This is the way to improve your life and gain power over your pain. It is hard, and the process does not happen overnight, but it is worth it. **Become your own coach. Don't allow yourself the option of saying no. Just do it!**

The Pain Cycle Chart

The information contained in the chart on the last page was acquired by talking to thousands of patients and professionals in clinics along the routes I walked in 2005 and 2006. It represents my conceptual understanding of what the Pain Cycle is, how we enter it, flow through it, *and many times*, end up stuck in it.

You will notice that this chart has three sides:

1. **The Negative**
2. **“Swinging the Curve”**
3. **The Positive**

The negative could also be called **“Falling in”** and the positive, **“Re-invention.”**

The Negative Side

The entrance to the Pain Cycle is the negative side. We tend to enter or “fall in,” and immediately start tumbling due to an injury or the onset of disease. Some injuries set off a chronic pain condition while other diseases have chronic pain as one of the symptoms.

The negative side is distinguished, and exacerbated, mostly by loss. If you look at the chart, you will notice how these losses are a natural effect of constant and chronic pain. Loss of social activities, loss of a job, finances, security, family and friends, and eventually, loss of self-identity and worth.

Loss is always naturally accompanied by grief. So it stands to reason that if we do nothing to deal with the grief, or to deal with the

stages of grief, we will forever be stuck in one of the damaging stages. Each stage of loss on the chart below has its own road – a road to despair, a milder road and then roads leading to deeper and deeper depressions, which can have tragic ends.

Being stuck in any of these stages leaves you in stagnation, and such stagnation can be an angry, bitter existence. If you're clever enough to put up with all the losses and have even accepted the loss of your identity, there's a chance that you've adopted the attitude:

“Oh well, I guess I'm stuck with this. I can't work. I can't be with my friends, and they don't want to be with me. My family doesn't believe me, my insurance dropped me and I have become my pain. Somehow I'll get by, but I will just have to live with pain and deal with all that is gone. It won't be a good thing or a happy life.”

Does this sound familiar?

You are resigned to your fate. You try to sound like you've accepted it, but in reality, you are running from it. You are now existing: you are not living. In essence, you found a way to survive but with no quality. If you do nothing to deal about with the grief of your many losses you probably will end up depressed, angry and bitter. You will never enjoy things again or ever be truly happy. This is **resignation**.

“Swinging the Curve”

“Swinging the curve” implies that you are not really dealing with the phases of loss and grief, but rather readying yourself to deal with them. Before any battle, a warrior must prepare mentally, physically and emotionally. It is the same for pain. Before you can tackle and win the war against your pain, you must prepare on all levels.

This is a battle like none you've ever fought before. Preparing yourself for this fight means giving up your old notions of how to fight. You need to learn new ways by thinking differently and being open to new ideas. You will need an open mind. I am going to repeat

myself because this is critical to breaking through the Pain Cycle: YOU WILL NEED AN OPEN MIND.

This will help prepare you for your first major attitude adjustment – surrendering.

Surrender

Do not look at surrendering as giving up. You must never give up. You should also not view it as accepting that it's okay bad things have happened to you. It's not okay. To surrender does not mean throwing in the towel and refusing to fight either.

Instead, it is the beginning of a different way of fighting – a new type of arsenal against the pain. You are, after all, a pain patient who is suffering. The last thing you need right now is to be fighting against the tide. Like swimming upstream, you expend a lot of energy and get nowhere. This will only wear you out and make you very tired, as if you're not tired enough.

Surrendering is learning to go with the flow. “Do what you can when you can.” It is accepting what you cannot change while also understanding that there is still so much you do not know. You have an upcoming battle to fight; it is the battle of your life. Don't rush into it. I promise you the fight will be there tomorrow and even next week. What you need to do first is gather your tools, or weapons in your arsenal, and adopt a new attitude. This attitude will be your war cry. Repeat it to yourself now.

I will do what I can when I can, and I will stop unintentionally hurting myself further.

Forgiveness

Being able to forgive is another important attitude to adopt. As with surrender, forgiveness does not mean naïvely thinking that what happened in the past is okay. It's not. Yet ignorance about pain, both physical and emotional, is far too common and sadly hinders your ability to continue forward.

Forgiveness is finding a way to let go of the charge you hold on the past. What happened has happened; what's done is done. Therefore, if you plan on marching forward to face this enemy called pain, you first have to move forward. And it starts with facing the demons from the past.

Learn from the past, forgive yourself and forgive others. Realize everyone is to blame in some capacity for what has occurred. You made decisions out of guilt, exasperation or misinformation. Family and friends made decisions out of fear of seeing you frail or weak or the inability to communicate concerns. Employers and the medical field made decisions out of lack of belief or healthcare politics.

As you see, we all have reasons, whether justified or not, for the way events were handled. Holding onto the anger is not going to change the past. Forgive. Forgive for your health.

Belief

A belief is the single strongest energy in the universe. No one can stop your belief except you.

Once you truly grasp how powerful your belief in something is, you're ready to begin the journey. You will become unstoppable. All that matters is your conviction and belief in a goal, an attitude shift, a therapy option, happiness, hope – life.

As long as you can tune out the external naysayers or white noise frequency, no one will ever again be able to dent your armor again. Your life will be yours, and you can focus on being happy and productive again. Your old self, your true spirit, appears. And, like me, **you will be ready to take your walk.**

Just think of the possibilities that exist for you. Maybe you will join me in becoming a pain warrior, teaching those suffering and doctors how to best help our community. You can bring awareness and education about chronic pain treatments to the forefront. You can work on legislative changes. Maybe you want to focus on renewing old friendships or enjoying your family. Maybe it is taking that trip you have been dreaming about for years. Maybe it is working and really loving every moment of it. Whatever your walk is, and wherever it takes you, is up to you. Just believe.

Believe you can move forward in life, happy and productive again, renewed and reinvented – simply enjoying your friends and family, your new work, your new strength and everything you had missed during those years of pain and negativity.

The Positive Side – Re-Invention

This part of the cycle is where all the rest of the cycle makes sense. It is the part where everything starts working together in unison.

Each therapy, medication, complementary treatment, educational experience and spiritual aspects of healing now can be more effective. You have done the work, so you are ready to reap the benefit of having a positive response. Don't get me wrong, though, you still must find the right "mix" that works for you. If I've learned anything from the two years of walking and visiting clinics around the country, it would be that we are all very unique and individual.

This is a lesson we all need to learn: medical professional, caregiver and patient alike. *We are all unique.* Therefore, each of us will have an individualized plan for obtaining relief. This is why, as patients, we must search to find what works for us. As long as a therapy causes non-damaging pain, we should be open to trying every avenue available to us. Just narrow it down to therapies you believe in. Because, as I already discussed and you know, **belief is paramount to success.** If you do not believe in it before trying, there is a high chance it will not be your answer.

We will always have to deal with the negatives as we traverse the medical system. It is unavoidable unless you've been blessed with an adept community of doctors and therapists. Unfortunately, great information is not readily available everywhere. While more in the medical community are seeing the severity of pain and medical conditions, there still seems to be a lack of overall knowledge in this field of medicine. I see change slowly happening, but until that day when doctors nationwide fully address and validate pain, we need to educate ourselves.

This is very important. Listen to your body. Read up on your condition and various treatment options. Communicate with those treating you. Join support groups. Become involved.

Do what you can, when you can.

You should feel pride in reaching the positive side of the Pain Cycle. There is a peace of mind that comes with surrendering, forgiveness, belief and "swinging the curve." You see that the pain may still be there, but you feel lighter and in control. You are you once again.

As you follow along this chart, remember some key things. The negative side is not your fault. I repeat: the negative side of the Pain Cycle is not your fault. We all start there, and it is a process to move beyond it. Furthermore, no one will believe or understand your pain, which is why *you* must. Finally, just keep telling yourself that you don't want to be stuck like this anymore. You don't want pain to control your life any longer.

*I will begin this journey of education and belief so I triumph over the pain to regain my life and my spirit. **I will do what I can, when I can.***

Pain Starts

LIFE PATH

Due to injury or disease

Loss of:

Social Activity

Job

Self- Worth

Finances

Family

Friends

Reach Your Goal

Re-Invent Yourself

Spirituality

Medicines

Treatments

Therapies

NEGATIVE

Series of Losses

A Natural path

Grief

POSITIVE

Education

Set **Attainable** Goals

Learn not to Hurt

Surrender

Not Giving Up, but Giving In

Acceptance of your situation

Stop swimming Upstream

Forgiveness

Putting the Past in the Past

Moving on with your Life

“Forgive them for they know not what they do.”

Belief

Believe in Your Power to:

Put Pain in its Place

Be Happy

Better than you were before Pain!