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Chronic Pain Management Clinical Practice Workbook

A clinically branded, function-preserving edition retaining the original exercises, psychoeducation, checklists, logs, planning tools, and response space.

DSM-5-TR · ICD-11 CLINICAL ALIGNMENT

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2 · Things That Make Your Pain Increase/Decrease

3 · Identify Negative Beliefs

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How to use this workbook

- Use this workbook selectively and collaboratively; it is educational and does not replace individualized assessment, diagnosis, treatment, medical care, or crisis services.
- Skip, pause, or modify any activity that increases distress, danger, shame, or loss of functioning. Adapt language for culture, disability, neurodivergence, health, resources, and lived context.
- Ratings in this workbook are reflection tools unless a named, validated measure and interpretation are explicitly provided.

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The Impact of Pain

The following statements are designed to help you assess the impact of chronic pain on your activities, thoughts, and feelings. Rate each statement on a scale from 1-5 (1 being “strongly disagree” and 5 being “strongly agree”):

Statement	Rate (1-5)
1. “I struggle to engage in physical activities or hobbies that I used to enjoy due to my chronic pain.”	1-2-3-4-5
2. “My chronic pain makes it challenging for me to maintain consistent attendance at work or social events.”	1-2-3-4-5
3. “I find myself avoiding certain activities or tasks because I fear they will exacerbate my pain.”	1-2-3-4-5
4. “My chronic pain often consumes my thoughts, making it difficult to focus on anything else.”	1-2-3-4-5
5. “I frequently worry about how my pain will impact future plans or commitments.”	1-2-3-4-5
6. “I struggle with feelings of frustration and hopelessness when my pain prevents me from accomplishing daily tasks.”	1-2-3-4-5
7. “I feel isolated and misunderstood because others can't fully grasp the extent of my chronic pain.”	1-2-3-4-5
8. “My self-esteem has been affected by the limitations my chronic pain imposes on me.”	1-2-3-4-5
9. “I experience a mix of anger, sadness, and anxiety as a result of living with chronic pain.”	1-2-3-4-5

Score: _____/45

The score reflects the severity and impact of chronic pain.

Things That Make Your Pain Increase/Decrease

Identify the specific triggers or factors that exacerbate your chronic pain.

1. Physical Triggers:

Physical activities or movements that may...

worsen your pain	reduce your pain

Specific postures or positions that may...

worsen your pain	reduce your pain

Weather conditions, such as cold/hot temperatures or changes in barometric pressure, that may...

worsen your pain	reduce your pain

2. Emotional and Psychological Triggers:

Stressors or emotional triggers that may...

worsen your pain	reduce your pain

Thoughts or worries that may...

worsen your pain	reduce your pain

3. Environmental Triggers:

Environmental factors, such as noise levels or lighting, that may...

worsen your pain	reduce your pain

Specific locations or settings that may...

worsen your pain	reduce your pain

4. Dietary Triggers:

Certain foods or beverages that may...

worsen your pain	reduce your pain

Specific nutritional deficiencies like dehydration or vitamins that may...

worsen your pain	reduce your pain

5. Behavioral Triggers:

Sleep patterns or quality of rest that may...

worsen your pain	reduce your pain

Certain medications or substances that may...

worsen your pain	reduce your pain

Identify Negative Beliefs

1. Identify the Negative Beliefs:

Write down any beliefs or thoughts you have about your chronic pain that are discouraging or disempowering. The following are some common example. Check off the ones you relate to or add more to the list:

- ☐ I will never be pain-free.
- ☐ I'll never find a treatment that works for me.
- ☐ I'm just being dramatic or exaggerating my pain.
- ☐ I'm a burden to my family and friends because of my pain.
- ☐ I am weak for not being able to handle the pain.
- ☐ The pain will only get worse over time.
- ☐ I should be able to tough it out and not complain.
- ☐ My pain is punishment for something I've done.
- ☐ I'm too old to improve or recover from this pain.
- ☐ Nothing I do will ever make a difference.
- ☐ I can't trust healthcare professionals to help me manage my pain.
- ☐ I'm just unlucky and destined to have this pain forever.
- ☐ I'll never be able to work or enjoy hobbies again.
- ☐ I'll never have a fulfilling romantic relationship because of my pain.
- ☐ My pain prevents me from being a good parent or partner.
- ☐ I'm afraid to hope for better days because I might be disappointed.
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

2. Examine the Origin of the Beliefs:

Consider the cultural and social messages you've received about pain and illness. How have societal attitudes and beliefs about pain shaped your own perceptions?

Reflect on your experiences with healthcare providers and medical treatments. Have these experiences impacted your beliefs about pain management and recovery?

Consider your self-perception and how it relates to your beliefs about pain. Do you view yourself as resilient, vulnerable, strong, or weak in the context of your pain?

Challenge Negative Beliefs

1. Identify the Negative Belief:

Write down a specific negative belief related to your chronic pain.

Example: "I will never experience relief from this pain."

2. Evidence For/Against the Negative Belief:

List any experiences or thoughts that validate/challenge this negative belief.

Evidence for	Evidence against
<i>e.g. "I have tried multiple treatments without success."</i>	<i>"I can recall moments when I experienced periods of relief from my pain, even if they were temporary."</i>

3. Alternative Perspectives:

Generate alternative explanations or interpretations that contradict the negative belief. For instance, "While some treatments have not provided relief, I have not exhausted all available options," or "There have been periods when the pain was less intense, showing that it is possible to experience relief."

4. Balanced Conclusion:

- Consider the evidence for and against the negative belief, as well as the alternative perspectives. Formulate a more balanced and realistic conclusion that acknowledges the challenges of chronic pain while also recognizing possibilities for improvement and coping strategies.

Example Balanced Conclusion: "While it's true that I've faced persistent pain, there have been moments of relief even if they were temporary. This demonstrates that while chronic pain presents significant challenges, there are opportunities for improvement and effective coping."

Breathing Practice

Deep breathing exercises activate the body's relaxation response, leading to reduced cortisol (stress hormone) levels and promoting a sense of calm. Additionally, deep breathing stimulates the vagus nerve, which plays a role in regulating pain sensitivity and dampening inflammatory responses.

1. Deep Belly Breathing

Place one hand on your abdomen and the other on your chest.

Breathe in slowly through your nose, letting your abdomen rise as you fill your lungs with air. Your chest should move very little.

As you breathe out through pursed lips, feel the hand on your abdomen lower. Aim for a slow, steady breath.

2. The 4-4-4-4 breathing technique

Inhale for a count of 4, hold the breath for a count of 4, exhale for a count of 4, and then hold the breath out for another count of 4 before repeating the cycle.

The consistent rhythm and equal duration of each phase encourage slow, deep breathing and a deliberate focus on the breath.

3. Guided Imagery Breathing

Close your eyes and imagine a place or situation that brings you peace or comfort.

While maintaining deep, steady breaths, immerse yourself in this imagery.

Focus on the sensory details of the scene – what you see, hear, smell, and feel.

4. Breath Counting

Inhale deeply, then exhale while silently counting "1" to yourself.

Inhale again, then exhale while counting "2."

Continue this pattern up to a count of 10, and then start over at 1.

If your mind wanders, simply bring your focus back to the count.

5. Breathing Practice Log

[illegible]

Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR)

Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR) is a technique that involves tensing and then relaxing different muscle groups to reduce physical tension and promote relaxation. When it comes to chronic pain, PMR can be a valuable tool for managing discomfort and improving overall well-being.

Here's a script for Progressive Muscle Relaxation that you can follow:

1. Find a comfortable and quiet place where you won't be disturbed.
2. Take a few deep breaths, inhaling through your nose and exhaling through your mouth, allowing your body to relax with each exhale.
3. Begin by tensing the muscles in your forehead and hold the tension for a few seconds before releasing the tension and allowing your forehead to relax.
4. Move to your eyes and cheeks, tensing them and then releasing the tension, allowing your face to relax.
5. Continue to move down your body, tensing and releasing your neck and shoulders, arms and hands, chest and abdomen, buttocks, thighs, calves, and feet.
6. As you tense each muscle group, focus on the sensation of tension and then release it, feeling the relaxation spreading throughout your body.
7. Once you have completed the entire body, take a few deep breaths, and allow your body to continue to feel relaxed.
8. You can repeat this exercise several times a day or as needed when you feel tense or stressed.

Tips:

1. Practice Regularly: Set aside time each day to engage in PMR exercises. Consistent practice can lead to long-term benefits by reducing muscle tension and increasing your overall sense of relaxation.

2. Start with a Guide: Initially, it may be helpful to use guided PMR recordings or videos to learn the technique and become familiar with the sequence of muscle groups to target. This can help you master the process and ensure you're effectively engaging each muscle group.

3. Focus on Breathing: Incorporate deep, diaphragmatic breathing into your PMR practice. Pairing deep breathing with muscle relaxation can enhance the overall relaxation response and help alleviate associated stress and anxiety.

4. Customize the Sequence: Once you're comfortable with the technique, consider customizing the muscle groups you focus on based on your specific areas of chronic pain. Tailoring the sequence to address your individual needs can improve the effectiveness of PMR for pain management.

5. Progressive Muscle Relaxation Practice Log

Date	Pain Level Before (1-10)	Duration	Pain Level After (1-10)	Notes
<i>e.g. Monday</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>10 minutes</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>Found it challenging to concentrate at first, but as the practice continued, felt more relaxed and experienced a decrease in pain.</i>

Date	Pain Level Before (1-10)	Duration	Pain Level After (1-10)	Notes

Visual Imagery

Visual imagery, also known as guided imagery or visualization, is a technique that involves using your imagination to create vivid mental images that promote relaxation and reduce pain perception. When it comes to chronic pain, visual imagery can be a powerful tool for managing discomfort.

- 1. Choose a Calming Setting:** Imagine yourself in a peaceful and serene environment that brings you a sense of comfort and tranquility. It could be a beach, a forest, or any place that helps you feel relaxed.
- 2. Engage Your Senses:** Make the visual imagery experience more immersive by incorporating other sensory details. Imagine the warmth of the sun, the sound of gentle waves, the smell of fresh flowers, or the feeling of soft grass beneath your feet. By engaging multiple senses, you enhance the overall sense of relaxation.
- 3. Focus on Pain-Free Moments:** Visualize yourself engaging in activities or moments where you are free from pain. Imagine yourself participating in enjoyable activities that you may have had to limit due to chronic pain. This can help shift your attention away from pain and towards positive experiences.
- 4. Practice Mindfulness:** Be attentive to your thoughts and emotions during visual imagery exercises. Notice any changes in pain levels, muscle tension, or overall well-being. Being aware of these shifts can help you better understand the impact of visual imagery on your pain management journey.

5. Visual imagery Practice Log

Date	Pain Level Before (1-10)	Duration	Pain Level After (1-10)	Notes
e.g. Monday	7	15 minutes	4	Found it easier to focus when combining imagery with gentle music. Experienced significant relief from muscle tension.

Activity Pacing

Activity pacing is a behavioral strategy that involves breaking down daily activities into manageable tasks and finding a balance between rest and activity to avoid exacerbating pain.

Example:

Activity: Walking

Current baseline: Can walk for 5 minutes before pain increases

Goal: To be able to walk for 10 minutes without exacerbating pain

Date	Time spent walking	Pain level during (1-10)	Pain level after (1-10)	Notes
Monday	5 min	5	6	Increased pain after 5 minutes, took a rest and pain decreased to 4
Tuesday	7 min	4	5	Managed to walk for longer before pain increased.
Wednesday	8 min	3	4	Pain remained manageable throughout.
Thursday	10 min	6	7	Found a good balance between activity and rest.

Activity: _____

Current baseline: _____

Goal: _____

Date	Time spent active	Pain level during (1-10)	Pain level after (1-10)	Notes

Scheduling Pleasant Activity

Engaging in enjoyable activities has been shown to improve mood and decrease the perception of pain.

1. List activities that you enjoy or used to enjoy but haven't done in a while. The following are some common examples. Check off the ones you relate to or add more to the list:

- ☐ Listening to your favorite music
- ☐ Reading a book or magazine
- ☐ Watching a movie or TV show
- ☐ Going for a leisurely walk
- ☐ Doing a puzzle or playing a game
- ☐ Engaging in a hobby such as knitting, drawing, or gardening
- ☐ Writing in a journal or blog
- ☐ Cooking or baking a new recipe
- ☐ Having a phone or video call with a friend or family member
- ☐ Taking a relaxing bath or shower
- ☐ Spending time with a pet, if you have one
- ☐ Volunteering for a cause you care about, even if it's from home
- ☐ Exploring nature, such as going to a park or beach
- ☐ Attending a virtual class or workshop on a topic of interest
- ☐ Doing gentle yoga or stretching exercises
- ☐ Listening to a motivational or inspirational podcast
- ☐ Engaging in a DIY project or home improvement task
- ☐ Enjoying a favorite hot beverage at a cozy cafe or at home
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

2. Use a scale of 1-10 to rate how difficult or challenging each activity is for you right now. For example, walking may be a 2, whereas going to a social event may be an 8.

Activity:				
Rating:				

3. Decide how many times per week or per month you would like to engage in each activity. Be realistic and don't expect too much of yourself.

Activity:				
Goal:				

4. Look at your calendar and find a time to schedule each activity in the upcoming week.

5. Reflect on your experiences: After you complete each activity, take some time to reflect on how it went. Use this information to adjust your plan as needed for the following week.

Activity	Pain Level Before (1-10)	Duration	Pain Level After (1-10)	Notes
<i>e.g. Spending Time with Pet</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>15 minutes</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>My cat's presence provided me with a sense of calm and comfort</i>

Activity	Pain Level Before (1-10)	Duration	Pain Level After (1-10)	Notes

Flare-Up Planning

1. Identify Triggers:

List potential triggers that commonly lead to flare-ups of your chronic pain. These could include physical activities, emotional stressors, specific foods, weather changes, or lack of sleep.

2. Early Warning Signs:

Describe the physical and emotional signs that signal an impending flare-up. This may include increased pain intensity, stiffness, fatigue, anxiety, or irritability.

3. Coping Strategies:

Outline effective coping strategies that have helped you in the past. This could include relaxation techniques, distraction methods, specific exercises, or utilizing support from loved ones.

4. Support System:

List the names and contact information for individuals in your support system who can assist you during a flare-up. This could include family members, friends, healthcare providers, or support group contacts.

5. Communication Plan:

Define how you will communicate your needs to others during a flare-up. This may involve expressing your limitations, delegating tasks, or seeking assistance.

6. Post-Flare-Up Reflection:

After the flare-up subsides, jot down any insights or adjustments you might make for future flare-up planning.

Practice Gratitude

The act of regularly practicing gratitude can gradually shift your focus away from the limitations of chronic pain and towards the positive aspects of your life.

1. List Three Things You Are Grateful for Today:

Write down three specific things that you are grateful for, no matter how small or seemingly insignificant.

For example:

- *I am grateful for the warmth of the sun on my face today.*
- *I am grateful for the support of my loved ones during difficult moments.*
- *I am grateful for the ability to enjoy my favorite book or music despite my pain.*

2. Recognize Your Body's Strengths:

Acknowledge and appreciate the functions and abilities of your body that are not impacted by your chronic pain. These could include your senses, mobility, or any physical activities you can still engage in.

For example:

- I am grateful for the way my body can still carry out daily tasks and provide me with comfort.

3. Express Appreciation for Supportive Individuals:

Take a moment to express gratitude for the people who offer you emotional, physical, or practical support in managing your chronic pain. This may include friends, family members, healthcare providers, or support group members.

For example:

- I am grateful for the understanding and empathy shown by my friends and family.

- I am grateful for the healthcare professionals who listen to my concerns and work with me to alleviate my pain.

4. Reflect on Personal Growth Through Adversity:

Consider the ways in which your experiences with chronic pain have fostered personal growth, resilience, or empathy towards others.

For example:

- *I am grateful for the perspective and wisdom gained from enduring chronic pain.*
- *I am grateful for the opportunities to connect with and support others who face similar challenges.*
- *I am grateful for the strength and patience that I continue to develop as I navigate my chronic pain journey.*

Be Compassionate to Yourself

In this exercise, you will write a compassionate letter to yourself, acknowledging the challenges of living with chronic pain and offering yourself kindness and understanding.

1. Find a quiet, comfortable space where you can reflect on your experience with chronic pain.
2. Begin by addressing yourself in a warm and caring manner.
3. Acknowledge the pain you're experiencing. Be specific about the challenges you face and how they impact your daily life.

Example: I understand that living with chronic pain is a daily struggle. It's exhausting to always feel this pain, and it can make even simple tasks feel overwhelming.

4. Express kindness and understanding to yourself. Provide reassurance and validation that what you're going through is difficult and that it's okay to prioritize your own self-care.

Example: Despite everything, you're doing your very best to manage the pain. Remember that it's okay to take time to rest and seek out help when needed. You don't have to do this alone.

5. Validate your efforts to manage your pain. Recognize that it takes strength and courage to navigate this experience, and commend yourself for continuing to push through.

Example: It takes a lot of resilience to manage chronic pain, yet here you are, working hard to find solutions and ways to cope. Your bravery in the face of this adversity is inspiring.

6. Finally, offer words of encouragement to yourself. Remind yourself that you are deserving of love and empathy, especially from yourself.

Example: Keep going, even on the toughest days. Remember that you are worthy of compassion and care, especially in moments of pain and distress. You are capable of finding moments of peace and joy amidst the pain.

7. Close the letter with a warm, compassionate message to yourself.

Example: You are not alone in this journey. Remember that you are deserving of kindness and empathy, especially from yourself.

2026 Clinical Alignment

DSM-5-TR (including Sept. 2025 update) · ICD-11 CDDR / 2026 MMS

Classification status

- DSM-5-TR: No standalone DSM-5-TR diagnosis under the workbook title · educational/contextual topic unless a separately assessed disorder applies
- ICD-11 CDDR: No dedicated ICD-11 CDDR mental-disorder code under the workbook title · educational/contextual topic unless another coded condition is established
- This workbook is non-diagnostic. A title, checklist, or completed activity never establishes a diagnosis.

Pages requiring the updated interpretation

- The audit identified source pages 2, 4, 8, 9, 11, 12, 15, 17, 21, 22, 24. The statements below supersede incompatible diagnostic, scoring, safety, or resource wording on those pages.

Diagnostic and differential limits

- Use Chronic Pain Management material to support assessment or intervention planning, not to assign a diagnosis. Evaluate duration, severity, clinically significant distress or impairment, developmental and cultural context, medical/substance causes, exclusions, and relevant differentials.

Document-specific corrections

- Keep Chronic Pain Management explicitly non-diagnostic; its exercises organize experience and goals but do not establish a mental disorder or causal explanation.
- Supersede diagnostic-sounding scoring on pages [2, 4, 22]: disclose whether each tool is validated or author-created, remove unsupported thresholds, and separate symptom monitoring from diagnosis.
- Clinically review medical or treatment statements on pages [12]; remove prescriptive medication advice, clarify coordination with licensed medical care, and update contraindications or urgent warning signs for the specific topic.
- Replace crisis wording on pages [2] with the current U.S. 988 call/text/chat pathway, 911 or nearest emergency department for immediate danger/medical emergency, and a direction to use verified local services outside the United States.

Measures, scoring, and permissions

- Pages [2, 4, 22] contain named, implied, or author-created screening/rating content . These scores are not diagnostic unless the exact instrument, version, validation population, administration, and interpretation are established. Identify provenance for every item set and scoring rule. Obtain publisher permission/license when required; otherwise remove cutoffs and label it as a nonvalidated reflection checklist, or replace it with a properly licensed measure without altering its wording/scoring.

Intervention scope and contraindications

- Use Chronic Pain Management material only as psychosocial support alongside medical care. New symptoms, treatment effects, medication questions, and functional deterioration require the treating medical team; avoid implying that psychological skills cure disease or pain.

Crisis and current resources

- For Chronic Pain Management, use: · If there is immediate danger or a medical emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department. In the U.S., call or text 988 or use 988lifeline.org for 24/7 crisis support. Outside the U.S., use verified local emergency and crisis services. · Verify all topic-specific agencies and links at publication.

Authoritative references

- <https://www.psychiatry.org/psychiatrists/practice/dsm/updates-to-dsm/updates-to-dsm-5-tr-criteria-text>
- <https://www.psychiatry.org/getmedia/b68a5776-f88c-45c7-9535-fd219d7aa5cb/APA-DSM5TR-Update-September-2025.pdf>
- <https://icd.who.int/browse/2026-01/mms/en>
- <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240077263>
- <https://www.samhsa.gov/mental-health/988>

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- <https://www.samhsa.gov/mental-health/national-behavioral-health-crisis-care>
- <https://988lifeline.org/>