

Energy Conservation and Pain Dr. Peper's Summer Newsletter

Energy conservation is a hot topic these days. As the weather heats up and air conditioning season starts, you may become more interested in learning new ways to reduce waste and cut costs. If your air conditioning system is older, you may consider replacing it with a newer, more energy efficient model. Identifying energy-wasting habits and replacing them with more economical alternatives can also help the bottom line.

Energy conservation is also a very important part of effective pain management. Chronic pain is a physical challenge that drains your energy and wears you out. Chronic pain also challenges you emotionally and can result in feeling more easily stressed, frustrated and overloaded. If asked, you could probably list the ways you are treating the physical aspect of your pain.

But what are you doing to treat the emotional energy lost due to your pain? You may be surprised to find out that the emotional drain caused by chronic pain can have just as much negative impact on your life as the physical drain. The following information will help you better estimate if you are wasting unnecessary emotional energy. Read the examples and see which ones apply to you.

Biggest Emotional Energy Wasters:

Judging yourself for not handling your chronic pain better (I'm not trying hard enough)
Comparing yourself to the past (I used to be able to..., or I can't even do...anymore)
Putting on a happy face (acting like you aren't in pain)
Denial (continuing to do things that cause you pain or refusing to acknowledge your pain)
Fighting your pain (waiting too long to take your medication, refusing to talk about it)
Feeling like a burden (I'm not contributing, I don't have anything to offer)
Having unrealistic expectations of yourself (overestimating what you can do)

The Cost of Emotional Energy Wasters:

Increased pain
Poor concentration and/or memory
Irritability, snapping at others
Feeling depressed, hopeless and emotionally overwhelmed
Loss of friends, feeling alone and isolated
Feeling like a failure, like you are letting everyone down
Feeling like your medication isn't working
Wondering if this life is worth living, existing instead of living

(con't on the back)

If any of the previous information applies to you, it can be helpful to know that there are ways to learn to conserve the energy that is wasted on chronic pain and make you more energy efficient. Research results have shown that patients participating in both medical treatment and pain management treatment have the best outcomes. Participating in pain management treatment can help you develop customized, innovative alternatives that will improve your energy conservation. Below is a summary that will give you an idea of what pain management treatment is about.

Biggest Energy Saving Strategies:

- Learning to work with your pain instead of fighting it
- Defining success-oriented, realistic goals for yourself
- Setting realistic expectations for yourself/applying them to your relationships with others
- Maximizing the benefits of your pain medication
- Identifying problem areas that waste your energy and developing energy-saving responses
- Using alternative energy sources (i.e., accepting emotional support from loved ones)
- Focusing on moving forward rather than looking back

Benefits of Energy Conservation/Pain Management Treatment:

- Learning to use your energy toward improving your quality of life
- Eliminating self-blame and self-critical thinking
- Learning to be comfortable talking about your pain with others
- Improved mood, concentration and memory
- Improved relationships with others
- Living a life that isn't consumed by chronic pain
- Making peace with your prescribed pain medications
- Being able to focus on the future rather than being trapped by the past

When energy is wasted in your home it costs you dollars. When chronic pain results in wasted emotional energy it costs you your quality of life and you may feel you have lost the person you were before the pain began. Emotional energy is a precious natural resource that is often overlooked. Yet wasting emotional energy can have devastating consequences on your life. It is important to take the time to think about the ways in which you can conserve this energy. If you are interested in pain management treatment, your pain management physician can refer you to Dr. Peper.