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# Psychological Implications of Chronic Illness

Barbara A. Brawley, Care Coordination

Pulmonary Strong Wellness  
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# *Realities of Chronic Pain/Illness*

Bring many changes to life

- Sometimes negative effects on quality of life and well-being

Ability to function as before chronic pain/illness

Challenge the ways of coping with situation

- New ways of coping or adjusting activities
- Maintain a sense of balance in life

Depression/Anxiety are normal until they interfere with life and enjoyment

- Consuming
- Outweighs joy and happiness



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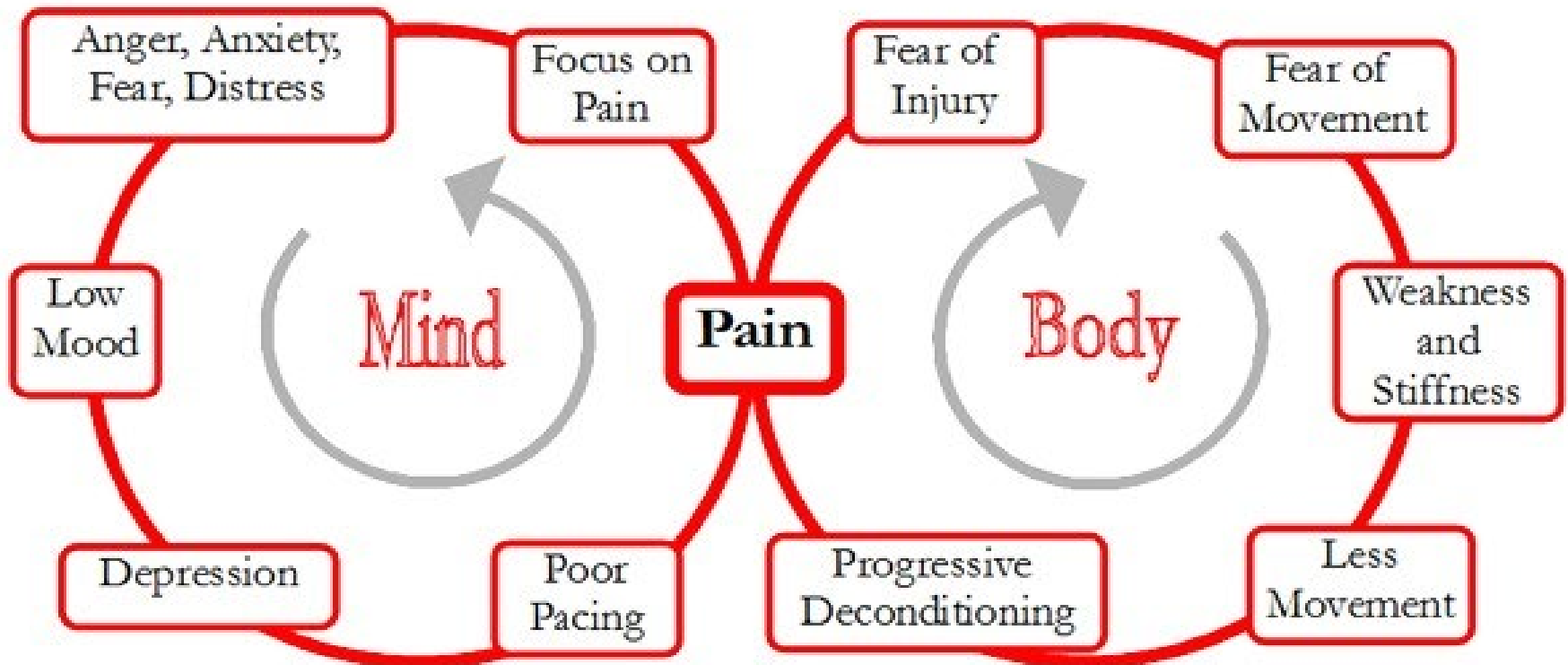
# *The Chronic Cycle of Pain/Illness*



# *Coping Models*

- Cognitive adaption: emphasizes illness acceptance and perceptions of control over illness
- Personality Model: role of personality factors in adjustment (optimism vs. negativity)
- **Stress and Coping Model: strategies used by patients to deal with adaptive tasks imposed by disease-**
  - **Acknowledges that chronic illness consists of several challenges, but appraises and finds ways to cope with chronic illness**
  - **Self regulation which leads to dealing more proactively with pain/illness**
  - **More active role in adjusting to challenges posed by pain/illness**

# *Pain Affects Body and Mind*



# *Chronic Pain/Illness Affects on Family*

- Balance of family changes
- Changes family roles, responsibilities and boundaries
- Spouses face challenge of:
  - Balancing needs of person with chronic pain/illness and their own needs
  - Tired; emotionally drained
  - Feelings of powerlessness
  - May need to restructure family roles and responsibilities

# *How Families Can Cope*

## ○“Relationship - Focused Coping”

- “focusing on maintaining the quality of the relationship as part of the coping process.”
  - Balance between self and other with the goal of maintaining the integrity of the relationship above either spouse’s needs.



# *Suggested Strategies*

- **View illness/pain as a couple/family**
  - Discuss relationship implications
    - Better able to anticipate how relationship may change and prepare for any difficulties
    - “in this together”
- **Use similar or complementary coping strategies**
  - Understand and talk about each other’s coping method
    - Promotes better understanding and respect for coping style
    - Compromise, communicate about feelings to each other, provide some alone time, remember to say “I love you.”
  - Communicate with each other
    - Communicate constructively
    - Be empathetic, talk openly



# *Suggested Strategies (cont.)*

## **Support each other**

- What will be supportive to your partner? To you?
- Don't be hesitant to ask for help
  - Important both for patient, spouse, family
- Social support

## **Integrate tasks of illness/pain into family routine**

- Helps develop a coordinated, cooperative approach to dealing with illness/pain

## **Take care of each other's physical and psychological health**

- Important for every family member
  - Learn relaxation or meditation techniques
  - Exercise
  - Alone time
  - Have fun

## **Define your new normal**

# *Resources*

- De Ridder, Denise, Geenen Rinie, Kuijer Roeline, van Middendorp Henriët. Psychological adjustments to chronic illness. *The Lancet*, vol. 372, 2008, pp. 246-255.
- Lawrence, Erika. IG Living! *The Impact of Chronic Illness on the Family*. 2012, pp. 20-25