



Patient To Person: 10 Steps To Regain Your Life

Pain Management & Injury Relief, November 6, 2012 (modified by Katherine Stenzel, Editor)

Being diagnosed with peripheral neuropathy is scary. You may feel like you are the only one with this condition, which can be isolating and lonely. You may not know who to turn to or where to go for help. What do you do? The American Chronic Pain Association (ACPA) found this same situation with their chronic pain sufferers and created the following 10 steps to help them look beyond themselves as simply a chronic pain patient. These steps are just as applicable to those of us suffering from peripheral neuropathy, whether we have pain or not. *(Editor - I have adjusted the wording slightly for us neuropathy patients. If you don't have pain, you can substitute that word with your particular symptoms or neuropathy in general.)*

STEP 1: Accept the Pain Spend time learning about your condition and gathering all the informational resources you can (*visit our website at pnhelp.org*). Accept that pain is a part of your life, and that there may be no cure for your condition.

STEP 2: Get Involved Speak with your physician about what you can do outside of the office to take an active role in treating your pain. Understand that being involved in your pain management plan increases its success.

STEP 3: Learn to Set Priorities Make a list of things that are most important to you outside of your pain condition. Making priorities will help you begin living the life you want.

STEP 4: Set Realistic Goals Set goals which are accomplishable, and then break those goals into smaller steps. Work with your physician to set pain goals that are manageable and realistic for you.

STEP 5: Know Your Basic Rights "We all have basic rights. Among these are the right to be treated with respect, to say no without guilt, to do less than humanly possible, to make mistakes, and to not need to justify your decisions, with words or pain," states the ACPA.

STEP 6: Recognize Emotions Understand that your mind and body are interconnected, and your emotions affect your physical well-being. Take the steps necessary to acknowledge your feelings and decrease your stress, which may in turn reduce your pain.

STEP 7: Learn to Relax "Pain increases in times of stress," states the ACPA. Learn some relaxation techniques such as deep breathing and visualization. By taking time to relax your mind and body, you will be better equipped to manage the pain.

STEP 8: Exercise While exercise can seem scary or impossible when you're in chronic pain, it can actually help to relieve your pain. Speak with your physician or therapist about implementing an exercise regimen that works for you and your lifestyle.

STEP 9: See the Total Picture Realize that pain does not need to control your life. By following the steps above, you can regain control over the pain you feel, and experience life the way you want to and the way you deserve it. The ACPA states, "You will grow stronger in your belief that you can live a normal life in spite of chronic pain."

STEP 10: Reach Out Over 100 million people suffer from chronic pain in the United States and over 20 million suffer from peripheral neuropathy. When you have taken control of your life and managed your symptoms, let those around you learn from the steps you have taken. Reach out to others through support groups sponsored by our organization, Western Neuropathy Association, and/or through the American Chronic Pain Association.