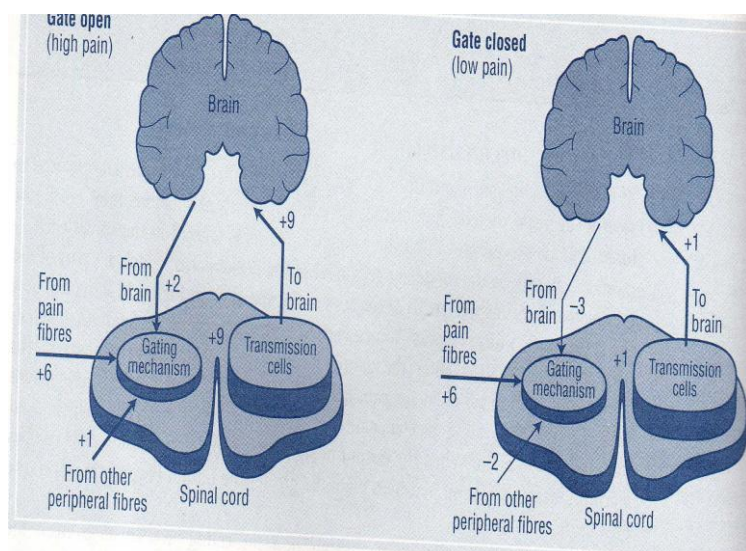
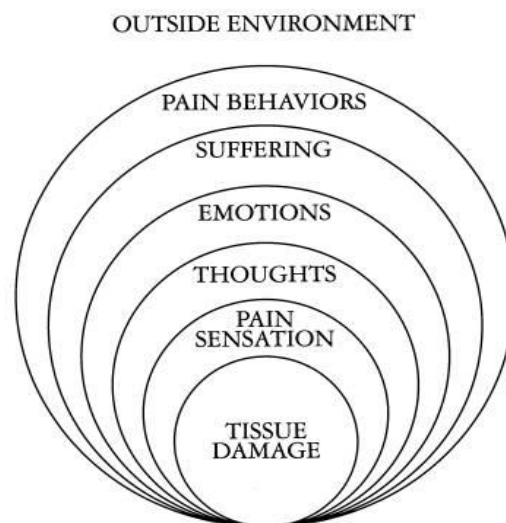


Managing Your Pain

The experience of pain is altered by pain “gates” in the nervous system:



And by thoughts, feelings and behaviours:



From Deardorff, W. W. (2004) The Psychological Management of Chronic Pain.

Ways which open pain gates and increase your experience of pain:

- ❖ Being tense, stressed, anxious or depressed
- ❖ Expecting negative outcomes
- ❖ Secondary gain – getting off work, being looked after, financial compensation
- ❖ Having negative thoughts and feelings about pain, eg “Poor me”, “It’s unfair”, “I can’t bear it”
- ❖ Feeling out of control.

Ways to close pain gates and reduce your experience of pain:

Physiological ways:

- ❖ Hot/cold packs
- ❖ Massage / acupuncture / physiotherapy
- ❖ Medications used in a recommended manner
- ❖ Exercise, yoga – this releases endorphins which is the body’s pleasure hormone
- ❖ Addressing underlying causes of pain
- ❖ Pacing yourself, not overdoing it when you feel better and causing damage
- ❖ TENS machines – electrical stimulation to tissues.

Psychological ways:

- ❖ Pain management counselling to reduce feelings of stress, anxiety or depression
- ❖ Relaxation and biofeedback
- ❖ Meditation and living mindfully
- ❖ Expecting a positive outcome
- ❖ Accepting the situation and taking steps to manage it
- ❖ Hypnosis
- ❖ Feelings of having choice or being in control
- ❖ Sending other messages to the brain to reduce intensity of pain experience
- ❖ Belief in beneficial effects of the treatment
- ❖ Distracting yourself with other thoughts / activities; dissociating from the pain

- ❖ Focussing on the sensation and relabelling it, eg tight or tingling feelings
- ❖ Managing negative thoughts and feelings about your pain
- ❖ Motivation to do things which lessen your experience of pain
- ❖ Focus on what you can do, not what you can't do at this time.

Social ways:

- ❖ Doing pleasurable activities
- ❖ Social support.

Helpful Approaches to Living with Pain:

- ❖ Keep a Pain Diary – to see when the pain is less or more, to see the effects of medication, to identify triggers and consequences
- ❖ Pace yourself – if you are feeling better don't accidentally overdo it trying to catch up, this can lead to a cycle of feeling better, overdoing it and causing damage, worsening pain and being restricted again; then feeling better, overdoing it...
- ❖ Reinforcing wellness behaviour – this might include exercising, relaxation, working through thoughts and feelings, biofeedback
- ❖ Keeping to a medication regime that helps reduce pain
- ❖ Use different approaches for acute pain and chronic pain
- ❖ Increasing mindfulness and acceptance.

The Body "Humunculus"

The proportion of brain which is allocated to each part of the body, the larger the part, the more sensitive it is due to higher numbers of nerve cells.

