

HELP FOR THOSE LIVING WITH CHRONIC ILLNESS OR PAIN

FAITH COMMUNITY INSTITUTE FALL 2020

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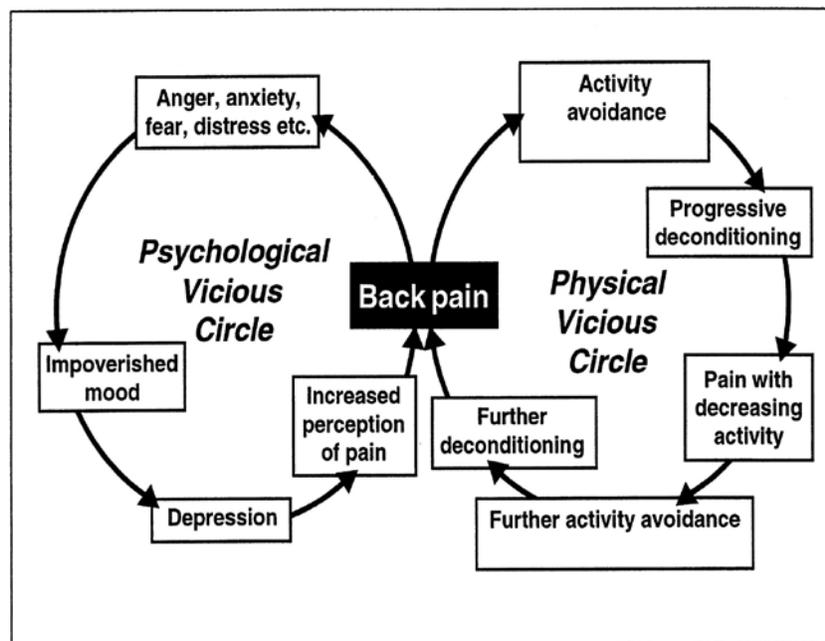
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Goal: To provide practical and Biblical help for those enduring the pain and suffering of chronic illness, or those who wish to minister to others who are living with chronic illness.

CLASS 1 & 2 – Overview of Chronic Illness and Pain

I. What is the Frequency of Chronic Illness?

1. 1 in 2 American adults have some form of chronic illness.
2. In ~25%, this illness impairs daily activities.
3. Degenerative diseases (such as multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's, Arthritis, Lupus) are those that cause a progressive, and usually irreversible, deterioration of health and loss of function
4. For many, this results in pain, fatigue, immobility, or other physiological problems that lead to long-term suffering.
5. Estimates suggest 25 to 50 million Americans live with chronic pain.
6. Cause of most chronic pain is unknown
7. Chronic pain is very different from acute pain – it usually vacillates in severity
8. Chronic pain has broad effects on health



Source: *Rheumatology* 42:1133–1137, 2003: <https://doi.org/10.1093/rheumatology/keg313>

Most who suffer from chronic illness have a disabling condition that is invisible to those with whom they live life.

II. How Does Chronic Illness Differ from Acute Illness?

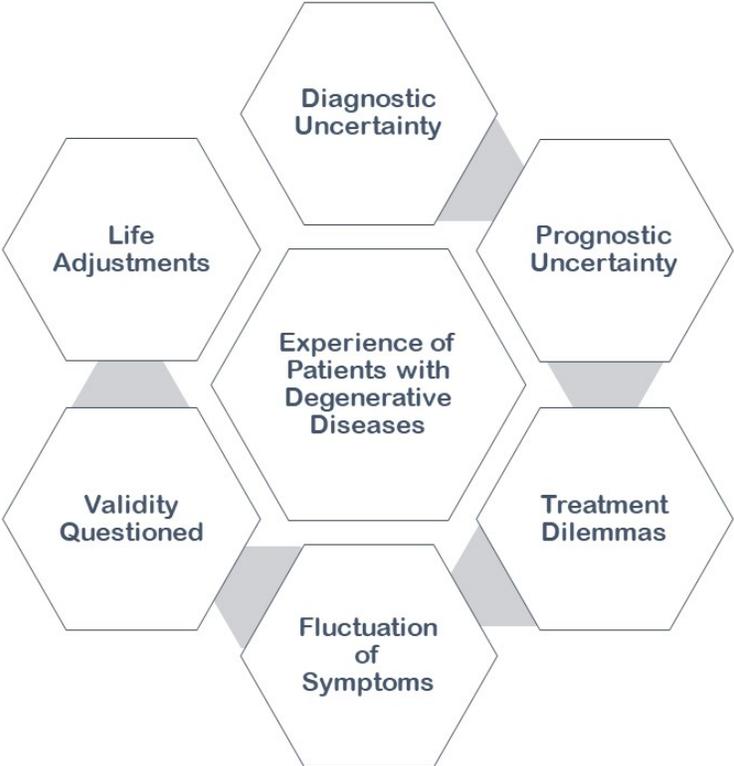
Since most people have only experienced acute illness, it is imperative to gain an understanding of how chronic illnesses differ from acute illnesses. A common source of misunderstanding is when people export personal experience of acute illness into how people likely experience chronic illness!

	Acute	Chronic
Onset	Rapid	Gradual, up and down
Duration	Limited	Indefinite
Cause	Singular	Multiple or unknown
Diagnosis	Accurate	Difficult
Prognosis	Precise	Unknown
Treatment	Effective	Marginal

*Acute illness threatens your health.
Chronic illness threatens your self.*

The primary locus of suffering for those with chronic illness is not their body but their person.

III. What are the Challenges of Living with Chronic Illness/Pain?



IV. Recognize the Dangerous Ditches on the Path of Life with Chronic Illness/Pain

A key to thriving while living with the pain and suffering of chronic illness is to avoid the ditches on either side of the path: obsession and surrender.

Navigating the challenges of chronic illness and pain requires:

- An intentional approach
- Honest self-reflection
- Open communication
- Wisdom/discernment
- Eternal perspective

V. Helpful resources

Ministries:

Chronic Joy: Chronic Illness Ministry - <https://chronic-joy.org/>

Joni&Friends - <https://www.joniandfriends.org/>

Books:

Timothy Keller. *Walking with God Through Pain and Suffering*, Dutton, 2013. One of the very best books to help you develop a Biblical perspective on pain and suffering.

Kelly Kopic. *Embodied Hope: A Theological Meditation on Pain and Suffering*. IVP Academic, 2017. A thoughtful reflection that helps readers dispel common misconceptions about God and suffering.

CS Lewis. *The Problem of Pain – How Human Suffering Raises Almost Intolerable Intellectual Problems*, MacMillan, 1962. No one has wrestled with the difficult questions suffering raises with as much clarity and perception as CS Lewis.

Craig Svensson. *When There Is No Cure: How to Thrive While Living with the Pain and Suffering of Chronic Illness*, Consilium Publishing, 2019. A practical guide to help patients navigate the various challenges living with the pain and suffering of chronic illness brings. Directed to a general audience, the final chapter includes the author's personal testimony of how the Christian faith impacts his response to chronic illness.