

## Understanding pain

### With knowledge comes power

#### Did you know?

- **There's a lot you can do to ease your pain.**
- **When people understand their pain, it decreases.**
- **All pain comes from your brain.** That doesn't mean it's "all in your head." It means the brain puts together information and creates a pain response.
- **Pain doesn't always equal harm.** Your brain may have become so good at producing pain that it doesn't stop — even when you've recovered from an injury or illness. In a situation like this, don't avoid movement. Inactivity can make your pain worse.
- **Stress and pain are closely related.** Focus on reducing stress, and change the way you respond to stress.

#### Your relationship with pain

No one wants to feel pain. Whether you stub your toe or bang your finger with a hammer, that short burst of red-hot sensation isn't pleasant. Even more troubling, though, is long-term, chronic pain – also known as persistent pain. This is pain that won't go away, no matter what you try.

Persistent pain can have a profound affect on daily life. It can disrupt your ability to work, exercise, sleep, and enjoy activities and hobbies.

#### Acute pain versus persistent pain

Acute pain occurs as a direct result of an injury. The brain sends a signal that something is wrong and produces pain so we know to be careful. This is a very useful response.

Persistent pain exists after the danger has past. The danger signal gets "stuck" in the brain and it's no longer useful.

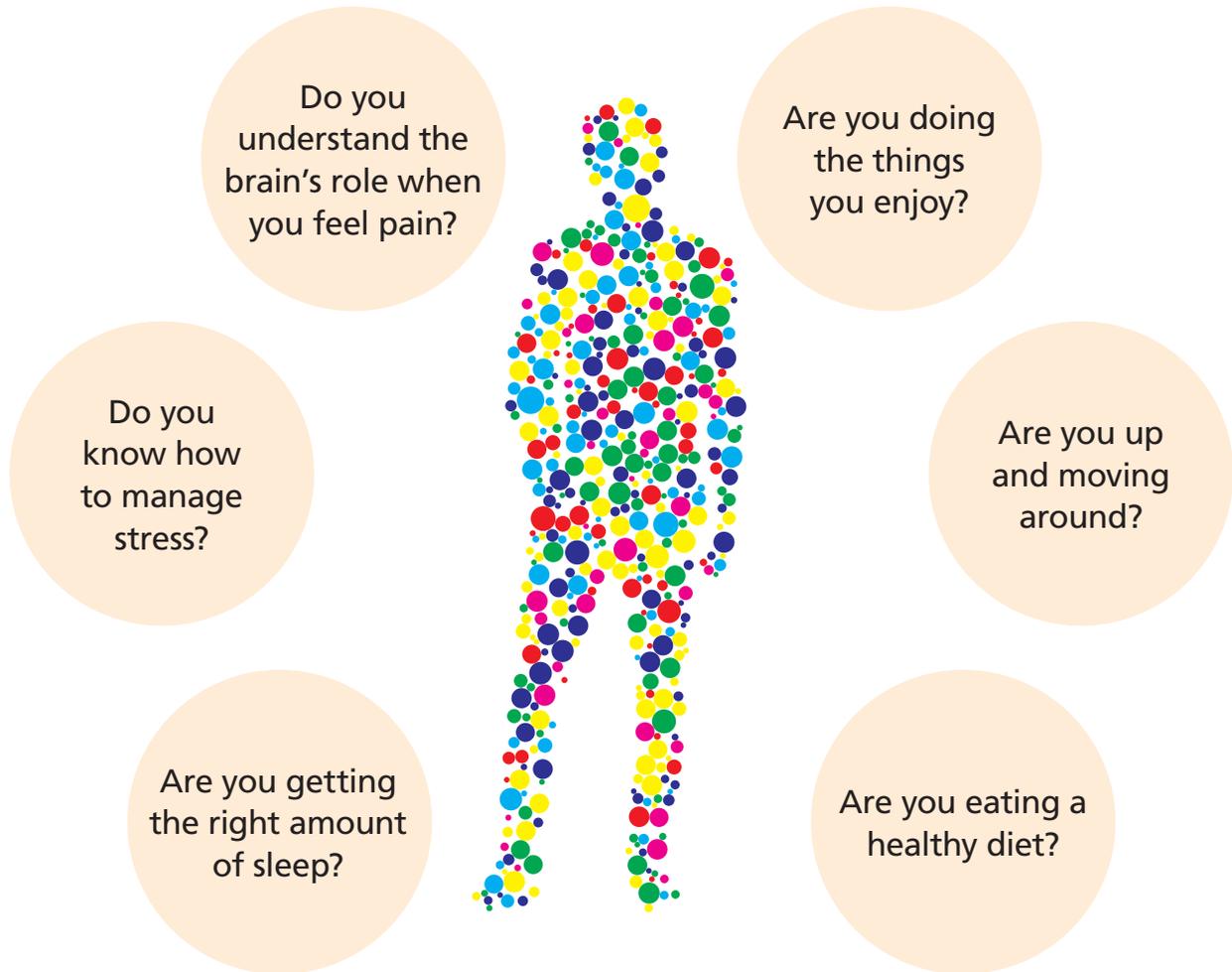
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## Brain signals can change your pain

Scientists now know that our thoughts and actions affect how well we recover from pain.

Here's how:



## Dial down your pain

Here are some key strategies for retraining your brain and body's pain response:

- Get moving again. Start slowly and keep it up.
- Eat healthfully.
- Learn relaxation techniques and practice them daily. Learn how to reduce stress.
- Connect with others, and be around other people.
- Engage in hobbies you enjoy.
- Get enough sleep, but not too much.

Change can be hard, but you can slowly turn down the volume on pain.