

ART OF PAIN MANAGEMENT



American Chronic Pain Association

THE ART OF PAIN MANAGEMENT



*I found that I could say things with color and shapes
that I had no words for.*

~ Georgia O'Keefe

People with pain often comment that they find their experiences beyond expression. Talk therapy has been exhausted. There are no words to describe the journey they have taken.

"Art gives a face to the ambiguity of chronic pain. Drawing an injury or the source of the pain gives a visual expression to something that is often elusive," said Dr. Steve Feinberg and ACPA Board member. Imagery is one of medicine's oldest and most powerful tools used in healing rituals and ceremonies, the imagery of dreams, and visions for centuries. In addition, the creating of art can provide an escape and relief from physical suffering of pain, as well as emotions such as fear, loneliness, and depression.

NOT EVERYONE IS AN ARTIST, BUT EVERYONE CAN MAKE ART.

The idea behind these types of activity is that the stimulation of creative activities promotes the healing process and rehabilitation. Some people with chronic pain have said that making art helped take their mind off their pain and nausea. Some said that they never realized that they were creative and that while involved in the act of creating art they got lost in the process. Many people think this sort of thing is for children only and do not give themselves permission to create art. Art gives you permission to make mistakes, unleash emotions, and have fun. It is a judgment free zone!

Both drawing and painting are an effective way for people with pain to express their level of suffering or the type of pain they are experiencing. However, art is not limited to drawing and painting. One can sculpt, use objects to create collages, or even finger paint to express your emotions. Even cooking is an art!

Through the use of colors, shapes, and images, individuals may relay their current level of discomfort. Additionally, art allows individuals some measure of control over their surroundings and themselves. The project and media may vary, but it's the art process itself that affirms their sense of control.

ART SUPPLY IDEAS

Pen, pencil, paper
Cards/envelopes
Jewelry/beads
Clay Journals/sketch pads
Collage Paper pulp masks
Fancy papers
Paint
Feathers,
Finger paint
Felt
Foam shapes
Glitter glue
Glue sticks
Magazines



Stained glass sun catchers
Pipe cleaners
Stamps
Sequins
Wooden boxes
Tissue paper
Wooden frames
Yarn
Charcoal
Colored pencils
Pastel chalk
Pencils
Marker pens, oil crayons
Camera, Digital software

PROJECT SUGGESTIONS

MASK MAKING

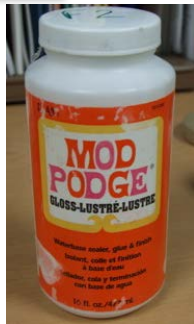
Mask making can help people with pain discover how they feel about their true selves compared to how they believe others see them. This activity is adaptable to all ages and abilities. For a basic activity, keep the supplies simple—a paper plate, glue, feathers, glitter, markers, and crayons. If you want to become more sophisticated, you may use magazine cutouts and newspaper clippings to represent a multitude of feelings and personas.

Art supply stores provide paper pulp masks. Buy them in bulk and add feathers, paint, mod podge, glitter glue, foam shapes, gems, or magazine pictures. Pick items that will best represent how you feel about yourself.



DECOUPAGE BOXES

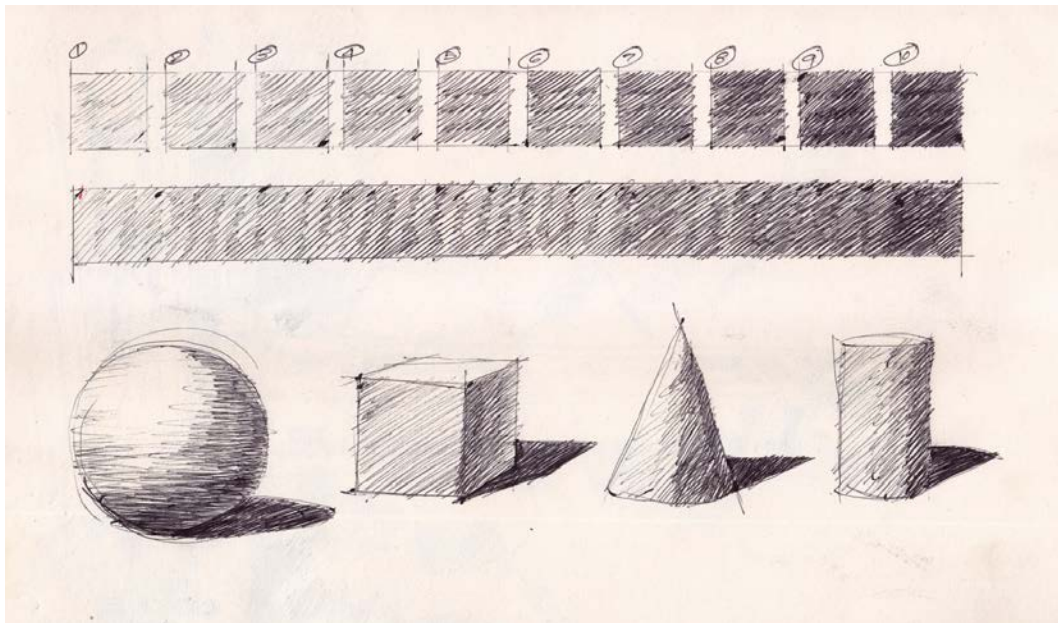
Find a box that has a lid and is sturdy. You will need a foam brush, tissue paper of various colors, and mod podge, a special medium to attach objects to the box. The supplies are available in any craft store. Begin by using colored tissue paper or magazine images and secure to the box using mod podge to hold the pieces in place. Tear the paper into different shapes and sizes and cover the box. Once all your pieces are in place and your box is covered, give box a final coat of mod podge. You can write positive messages to yourself to place inside the box. For help, refer to the ACPA *Reflections of You* daily messages which can be found at the bottom right hand corner of our web page www.theacpa.org.



PEN PENCIL OR PAPER

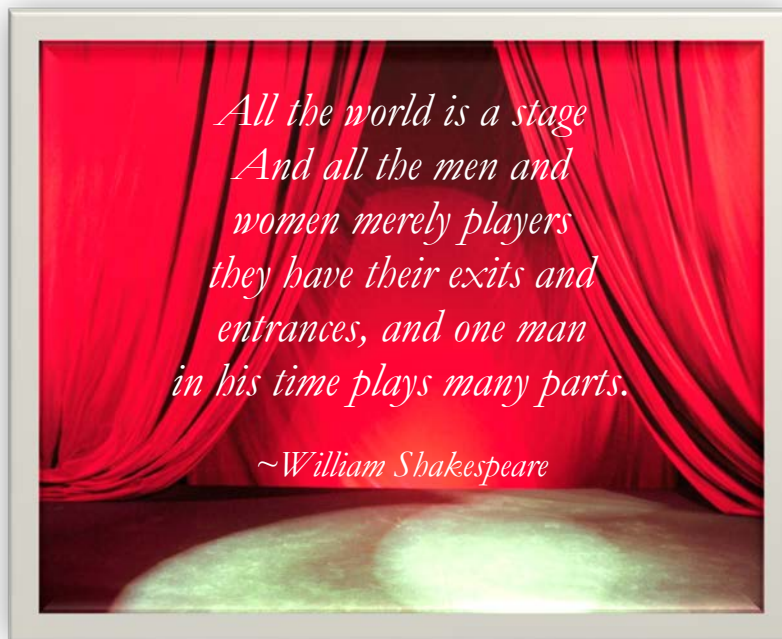
This is a wonderfully easy way to express yourself. Gather up some paper, pens, and pencils. Then just create what comes to your mind. See where the journey will take you. Another fun idea if you are working with a group of people, is to get a large roll of paper and cover a table. Think of a scene that you all want to create and start to draw. It will be interesting to see how the combination of thoughts and interpretations of the theme will evolve. Have fun with it!

If you want to try something a bit more challenging, you can try this shading exercise. Take a regular sheet of 8.5" x 11" paper and a pencil. Draw an egg. Pretend a light bulb is shining on one side of the egg. Shade it in from light to dark. Press as lightly as possible then gradually get harder then reverse the process. Now you know how to add value to a shape!



VISUAL POEM

Take a poem or a prayer and draw whatever images come to mind because of it. You can do it in pencil, crayon, or marker. The important thing is to allow yourself to be free and just create!



CARDS AND ENVELOPES

Send someone a greeting card to let them know you are thinking of them or thank them for something they have done. You can find the supplies at an art supply stores for this project. Start with a blank card and envelope. Embellish the front with color, patterns, stickers, feathers, yarn, or a picture. One option is to look through your favorite magazine and choose an image to glue on the front. Another option is to cut or roll pieces of paper and attach to the card to form a pattern or picture. Alternatively, you can create your own card and envelope. To do this, simply fold a piece of paper in half and make your own envelope by folding paper around it. Secure the homemade envelope with tape or stickers.



BEADING

There are so many options with beads! You should be able to find an array of beading and jewelry making supplies at the local craft store. To make a necklace or bracelet, use a thin fishing line or buy stretchy jewelry line. Tie one bead to the end or tape the end to the table or a clip board to ensure that the beads do not fall off as you are working. Add beads of your choice. You can follow a pattern or decide to be whimsical with your creation. Once you get started beading, it is easy to double or triple the length of a project it to make a more versatile piece. If you want to use a medium that is a bit sturdier when threading, try larger beads and a pipe cleaner. You can create butterflies, flowers, or other pieces of art. Once you've added all the beads, tie the ends together.



MODEL MAGIC OR HOMEMADE PLAY DOUGH

Model magic can be found at any craft store. It is soft, fun to work with, and comes in lots of colors.

Play dough is a fun clay-like substance that kids love. But it is fun for adults too! If you are feeling crafty, it is very easy to make homemade play dough and it provides hours of fun!

HOMEMADE PLAY DOUGH RECIPE:

- 1/2 cup salt
- 1/2 cup water
- 1 cup flour
- food dye (Pick any color...be creative!)

Mix together the salt & flour. Add the water and mix well. Add the food dye as desired. It only takes about 10 minutes to make. Once completely mixed, cover the surface you are going to work on with newspaper.



SCRATCH LITE

Scratch lite is a piece of plastic that is colored and coated with black film. To use the Scratch lite, take a wooden stick and scratch away the black film. The black top layer will be removed and underneath a stained glass effect will be revealed. You can try a design or scratch a letter or a poem.



CAMERA PHOTO

Take a digital photo of yourself. Print it out and paste on to a piece of paper or board. Add details to put yourself in a situation where you want to see yourself. Maybe it is doing an activity that you haven't had the time to do in awhile or visiting a place you remember fondly. You may be surprised where this activity can take you. Have fun with it!



YARN

Just three basic items can lead you to an easy, fun, and creative art project. All you need is yarn, glue, and paper. Start with a piece of yarn about 8-10 inches long. Dip the yarn in some craft glue. Let the yarn fall randomly onto a piece of paper to finish your creation. It is as easy as that! If you want to get a bit craftier, you can create a scene or write words with the yarn. Have fun with it and express yourself.



TORN PAPER PORTRAITS

With bits of paper you can create a portrait of you! Think of a feeling word that you want to express in your artwork. It might be happy, fear, anger, or relief. Choose a variety of colors of construction paper and tissue paper. Begin the project by tearing with your fingers or using scissors to shape the colored sheets into a head, eyes, and hair and other details. Paste down the shapes with craft glue to finish your portrait.



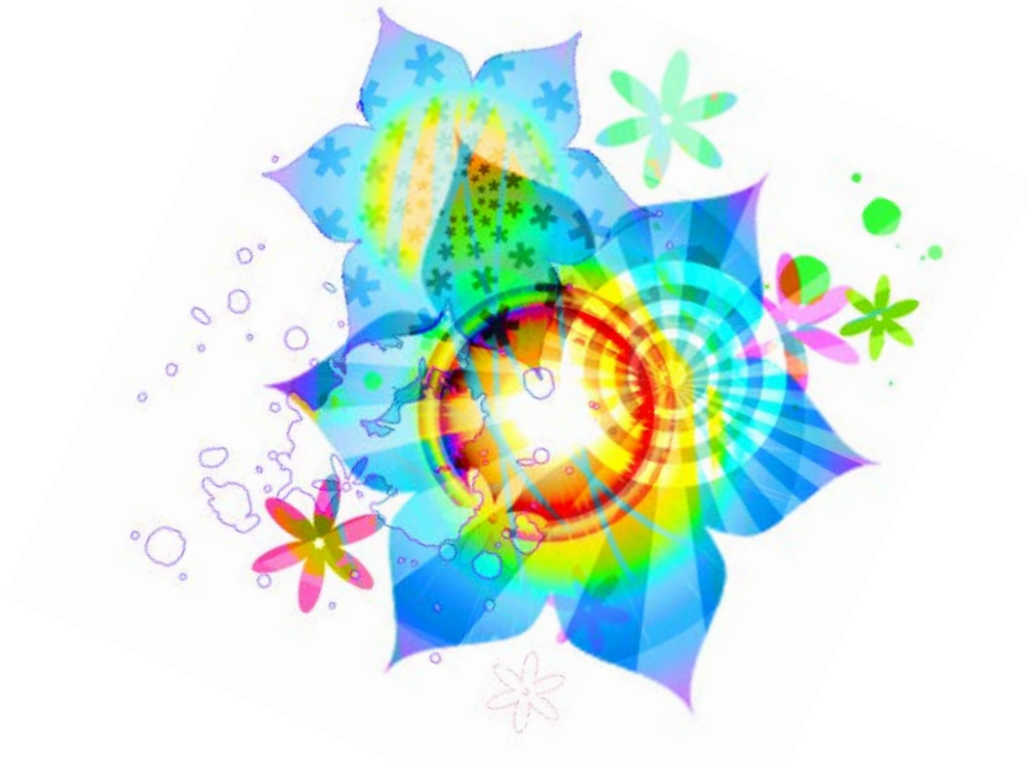
PASS THE PAINT

You may remember playing a version of this activity as a child. An image is created by passing a paper around and each person contributes to part of the final design. This project can be done with two people or a whole group! Start with a set of paints and a large piece of paper. The first person will begin the creation by painting something. It can be part of a scene or random lines. After a minute pass the paper to the next person who will add their own details to the first image. Continue until everyone feels the project is complete. This project is always fun and surprising in the end!



There really is an ART to and of pain management! (I find the double meaning of this statement interesting). As both a professional poet who leads a workshop in writing, and a professional lecturer/travelogue presenter who integrates photography into my presentation, this is literally my ART OF PAIN MANAGEMENT. It is one of my steps in freeing myself from the bondage of patient and emerging into the light of being a person; it is part of the other definition: By using my art as a weapon against my pain (keeping distracted, staying socially involved, elevating self esteem), I am able to manage my pain more effectively. Chronic pain closes so many doors, but if you have the courage, others ironically open that were never even conceived of when the physical body was betrayed!

Jerry Becker
ACPA Facilitator-New York City/Westchester County



In 1995 while placing a box in my car, I felt a sharp pain shoot down my left leg. I had a herniated disk in my lower back that stuck directly into the nerve root on the left side causing severe nerve pain. This was the beginning of my life with chronic pain.

Within a few months of the injury, I had back surgery. Unfortunately, it failed to provide adequate relief and I began to search for a physician to help me. For years I went from doctor to doctor seeking quality pain management but to no avail. The suffering became so intolerable that the only feasible solution I could envision was suicide.

During a suicidal episode, I created a piece of art that reflected what I was going through. The piece is entitled “Chronic Pain”. The act of making the art helped me get through the crisis safely by taking all the intense emotions from inside my mind and body and placing them on the outside into the art. It was a true catharsis.

After five long years of under treatment, I finally found a quality pain doctor who provided exceptional pain care. Unfortunately, after only a year of treatment he retired. I panicked. It had taken me many years to find a quality doctor and now he was gone. His practice was sold to another pain specialist and on my first visit to the new doctor, I brought in my piece “Chronic Pain” and showed it to her. I sat and watched as she looked at the art and read the poem about suicide. I saw tears well up in her eyes and at that moment, I knew she “got it.” No other words were required and my treatment remained consistent with the previous physician.

The same piece of art that helped me safely navigate through a suicidal episode was used again but this time to communicate where words alone were insufficient. I then realized the true power of art. Creating art about one’s pain can be cathartic and the art itself can serve as a superior communication tool. In addition, making art can help reduce stress.

I eventually created PainExhibit.com that is an educational, visual arts exhibit from artists with chronic pain with their art expressing some facet of the pain experience. The mission is to educate healthcare providers and the public about chronic pain through art and to give a voice to the many who suffer in abject silence.

Making art saved me from the potential ravages of chronic pain and I recommend that everyone with pain make an attempt at creating. Most individuals do not consider themselves artists and it is common to be afraid to make art. One strategy that has helped me overcome this fear is that I never worry about the end product but only focus on the process of creating. The truth is I often throw away my creations but it was the process that provided the greatest benefit and not the final outcome. I also know that I am making art for myself and no one else. This knowledge takes additional pressure off me and allows me to create more freely.

The most important thing is to try. Look through this booklet and work through the art exercises but do not put any pressure on yourself. I am certain you will find benefits beyond your wildest expectations. Go now and create!

Mark Collen
Sacramento, California



Artist Statement:

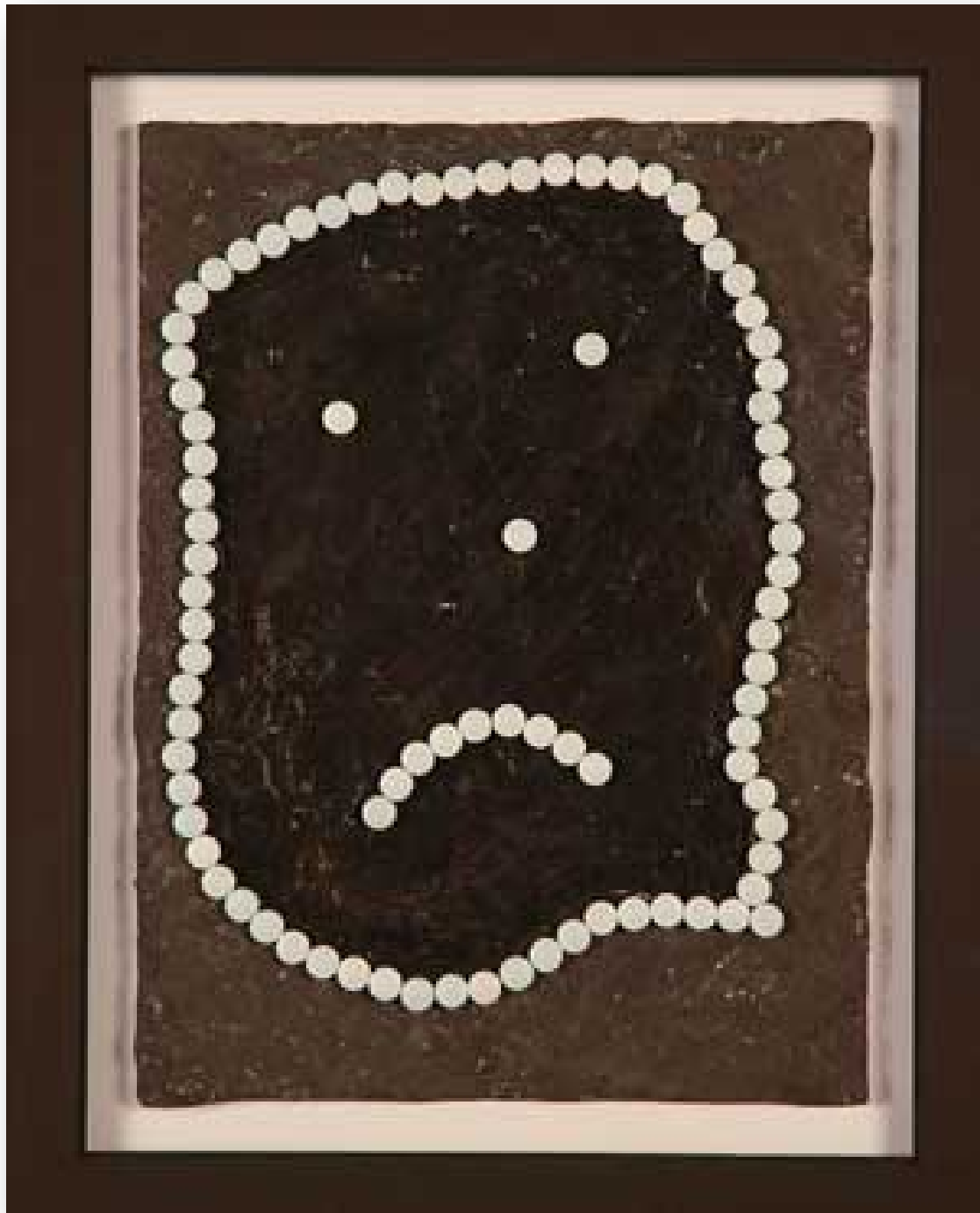
Chronic pain can be unpredictable, interfering with one's schedule. In the painting, the red lines represent society's agreed upon schedule, while the black (chronic pain) is crushing it.



Artist Statement:

This piece represents the frustration both on the part of the physician and patient in diagnosing and treating chronic pain. It is not unusual for doctors to order the same test over and over again in hopes of understanding the cause of chronic pain. It also exemplifies how the patient often puts the onus on the physician to find the problem and cure it. In reality, it should be a team effort and in many cases there is no cure.

Sacramento, California



Artist Statement:

It is all too common for pain specialists to prescribe anti-depressants to treat pain. In my case I was unable to tolerate the side effects from every anti-depressant and the piece of art reflects this reality.

Sacramento, California



Artist Statement:

Physicians often focus on pharmacotherapy in treating chronic pain. This can be effective but has its limits. Healthcare providers should take a more holistic approach to pain management considering the connection between mind, body, and spirit. I believe doctors can improve the quality of life for patients and decrease both the economic and human costs of chronic pain by using a holistic treatment model.

Sacramento, California

The Benefits of doing ART in terms of helping you with your pain.

By Yvonne Palermo

As a daily survivor with chronic pain for the past twenty years, the one thing that has always helped me cope with pain was not the medications given but the therapeutic use of creating art.

If you never have picked up a pencil to draw, a brush to paint with, a simple crayon, chalk, clay, it does not matter! Go to the art store if you can and if not send someone or order online. You do not have to know how to make art; the point is just begin creating.

Art therapy is practically non-existent in our society and it is one of the most worthy of treatments. One can express what they are experiencing through intense imagery and even bring in their art work to your doctor's facility to show them visually what you are trying to live with. I have on several occasions brought in my artwork, two specifically which are called "The Gift," and "Defeat". These pieces were such a crucial instrument in getting the care I needed. Most doctors in pain management hear the same thing, day after day. Words are just that, constant babble with the same outcome--I have pain. But, when you bring in your artwork, the visual highly outweighs the verbal and my work jolted an understanding to my doctors as to how I feel on a daily basis.

Not only did it help show the healthcare system what I was fighting with but it also helped me save myself from the dark depths of pain. Pain as we all know is maddening, and the daily armor one has to put on just to address the day most people cannot comprehend. My art is a biography of me, my will to live which with pain is a struggle, and it completely helps the mental state of mind just like going to a therapist.

When you find yourself alone creating, even in pain, and no matter how you create, there is NO wrong way, but every way is right. This confidence is lost as you are stripped of the person you once were before pain, and art brings you to the stages of grief and a better understanding of who you are now. I can flip through my sketch books and see literally through all my art the birth of who I am now.

Art never lets you down, doesn't judge you, you cannot do too much or create too little. The main thing is, it is your own private relationship that no one can condemn, and what you create may just surprise you in understanding your struggle with pain, and help define who you are now, along with managing techniques to get through the day.

We want to acknowledge the help of Meredith Snow MS, ATR-BC, LCAT of UCSF Department of Psychiatry and Telecare Corporation, for her guidance in this project. She is an artist, teacher, and therapist who has facilitated art sessions for individuals experiencing chronic pain.

Also the help and support of Mark Collen who has been one of the driving forces of the project. He is the creator and director of the Art Exhibit. <http://www.painexhibit.com>

THE ART OF PAIN MANAGEMENT & MUSIC TO SOOTH THE PAIN



LISTENING

There are two types of listening, **background** and **mindful**. **Background** listening is when you are not paying close attention to the music, it just seems to fill the quite void that often exist when you are working or relaxing. This type of listening is good for diversion and time-passing while doing things like reading, cooking, meditating, etc. It is important to listen to things that you enjoy hearing. Nothing is more painful to me literally, than something you hate to hear, physically or aesthetically.

Bad music or sounds can actually hurt. Be choosy about what you listen to, especially at times when your pain levels are high. Listen to what you love and enjoy the sounds. During times of increased pain levels try sitting or lying down and listening to soft instrumental music. Music without words can be much more relaxing.

The other type of listening is called **mindful**. This is listening for a specific purpose. A method that can be helpful for pain control is to imagine swallowing the music and pushing it into yourself. This is listening with each cell and pore. This may work best when listening to instrumental music.

"Music helps all types of people to remain forever young." He noted that Congress had never before "directly addressed the question of music" as preventive medicine and as "a therapeutic tool for those suffering from Alzheimer's disease and related dementias, strokes, and depression."

~ *Sen. Harry Reid*: SUPERIOR, WI Telegram,
Aug. 14, 1991.

Here are some of the questions that to ask yourself as you listen to the music:

- What instrument do I hear?
- Does this music help create a mood?
- Does the music take me out of myself to faraway places?
- Does the music help me see colors, people, serenity, or peace?

Choose music that will set the tone for taking your thoughts away from the pain and on to other, more pleasant things.

When choosing the music that you will listen to consider:

- The amount of time the music will play.
- The tempo, fast, slow, or somewhere in between.
- The kind of music you are in the mood to listen to.

Sometimes mindful music is when you want to sing along. It can be oldies, show tunes, or jazz, just try to match your mood. Singing along can make you feel powerful enough to block out your pain, especially on days when your pain spikes. If you listen to instrumental music you can hum along. You may even find that there are times when you make up your own sounds or words to the music. This can be a great way to distract yourself from the pain.

Another way to use music to help manage pain is called **toning**. That is when the music moves you. You find yourself humming without any music and a tone that resonates in different parts of your body. High tones may resonate in the head, a way to help headaches and jaw pain. It can be nasal or guttural, focused in the throat. Middle range tones produce chest or heart sounds which can be very pleasing and relaxing. The lowest of the low range sends sounds down into the stomach and into lower back and tail bone areas. Imagine when toning in these areas blue or green light getting in there, easing, and healing the pain. Try these techniques to help bring down pain levels.

MUSIC AS THERAPY

The following was written by ACPA Facilitator Mariann Farrell who used music therapy to see if it would help her group to manage their pain.

When I was 5 years old, my parents gave me my greatest gift—piano lessons. Over the past 61 years, I have been a music educator, choir director, assistant organist, and piano teacher. In fact, my whole childhood and adult life was always interwoven with music.

About 29 years ago, I was involved in two serious auto accidents. My life, as I knew it, was gone and terrible pain took over. After many physicians, physical therapy, three pain management programs, meditation, massage, acupuncture, etc, the realization that chronic pain was going to be with me forever was devastating. These modalities really helped me in so many facets of my pain management, but I realized more was needed to get me through this quagmire of constant pain.

So, through trial and error, I had to teach myself how my musical knowledge could be utilized in my quest for greater pain management. After two leaves of absence from my teaching job, it became apparent that I would have to give up my career. Soon after that, I heard about the ACPA and luckily there was a chapter close to where I lived. This group became my life line and before long, the opportunity to become a facilitator presented itself.

During that time, I was listening to music every day for pain management as well as stress and anxiety relief. This is just as important and common for me as eating and sleeping.

Last fall (2012), I wanted to use music therapy with my support group to see if they were willing to listen to certain music every day for about 20 minutes and chart if they were getting some of the same benefits that I did. All of them were willing to give it a try. I made a listening chart and instructions for the group.

For the relaxation response to be achieved 20 minutes of the same music is highly recommended. The music should be instrumental as lyrics can be very distracting to the listener. The suggestion to sit upright or if necessary to recline in bed was also given. For rapid relaxation, pain and stress relief to happen, every day's routine should be exactly the same. Eyes are closed and a quiet place is a must.

My suggestion was to use quiet classical music, or if not possible, "easy to listen to" or "new age music" were also good. The length of every day's music should be about 20 minutes, uninterrupted by pause or speech. This time frame is very important so that the mind-body connection can happen. My husband provided original music and made several CDs for our use. There were different segments, each lasting for about 15-20 minutes and members were asked to listen to all of them, then choose one to use for their pain/relaxation daily routine. All agreed to try this for two weeks, chart the results, and we'd discuss the effects at our next group meeting.

It was very interesting at that next meeting to hear and see their reactions. Pain, stress, and relaxation results were varied. All agreed to continue listening for two additional weeks to really give our experiment a good month to chart each member's progress.

At month's end, I sent the results and reflections to Penney Cowan. We were delighted with the group's findings.

The group facilitator should choose the music for his/her group and using public radio selections, Pandora, or his/her own, or a member's own CD will be beneficial for successful listening, always remember that 20 minutes is the best time for this exercise. Most of my group said they planned on listening to music for pain relief, stress and anxiety relief in the future.

Music Listening Project Results

- ❖ Goal was to feel less stressed
- ❖ Listened from 15-20 minutes once a day April and May 2012
- ❖ Tempo of music was slow to medium

Most liked selected music
Few preferred music with word and switched to that format
80% felt good, calm and reduced sense of stress
30% felt muscle tension reduction
20% liked to meditate while listening
20% listened after taking pain meds
60% experienced less pain

