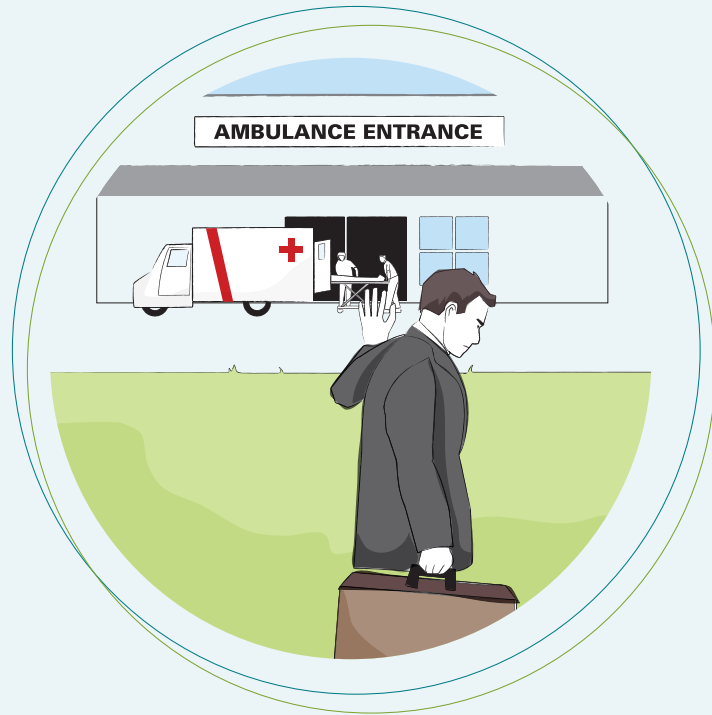


Managing Depressive Thinking:

Alex's Story



Alex was a married man in his mid-30s with two children, 10 and 14. He was employed as an assistant bank manager. He had ulcerative colitis, diagnosed when he was 18 years old. This health condition caused him to experience frequent nausea and gut pain. He managed the condition well until his late 20s, but one day, he suddenly became ill and was rushed to the emergency room. He needed surgery, followed by a two-week hospital stay. When Alex left hospital, he blanked the whole experience from his mind and went back to his life. But the illness was going to be more difficult to handle.

Over the next ten years, Alex had three more of these crisis situations, and each time was rushed to hospital for emergency surgery. He found these hospitalizations frightening and depressing. After each one, he put the experience out of his mind so he could focus on his job and family. Between episodes, he would ignore symptoms, telling himself that it would be “weak” to let symptoms limit his activities.

After his fourth hospitalization, Alex’s physician referred him to a self-management group and gave him a copy of this workbook. As he read through the book, he realized two things. First, when he was very stressed at work, the health condition worsened. Second, he was ignoring the *early warning signs* that the illness was becoming worse. When symptoms intensified, he would plunge into his job, telling himself that it would be weak and cowardly to let the health condition run his life. But as a result, he wasn’t taking early action to manage the illness before it worsened. Other

> *continued*

> Managing Depressive Thinking: Alex's Story

people in the self-management group showed him that if he recognized early warning signs, he could temporarily increase the medication or reduce stress and maybe prevent hospitalization.

He identified one particular Depressive Thought that often repeated and made it difficult to deal with the symptoms: *"You just can't handle the pressure, you want people to take care of you."* This thought made him feel guilty whenever he had to take a rest from his job because of symptoms – he would force himself to get right back to work.

Alex used Managing Depressive Thinking to change the way he was thinking about his health condition.

Situation: I have a flare-up of my colitis symptoms, pain and nausea. I have to take a break.

Depressive Thoughts	Fair & Realistic Thoughts
<i>You just can't handle the pressure.</i> <i>You want people to take care of you.</i> (Perfectionism; Labeling)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I've never expected others to take care of me, but sometimes I need support and that's fair.• Speaking to myself in this harsh way leaves me feeling more tense and discouraged; it doesn't help me deal with the illness.• If I keep ignoring my symptoms, the illness will get worse until I have to go back into hospital – that will really affect my work and family.• I have the right to take care of my health – if I notice early warning signs and take action, it's more likely that I can stay out of hospital, which is good for my job and family.

Then, Alex set up a prevention plan. This involved writing down:

1. Early warning signs

2. Steps to take when I notice these signs

- His doctor helped him to work out a medication plan
- He practiced the Relaxation skill to better handle job stress

3. Who to call for help

- His wife, parents, physician and in certain situations his boss.

As he applied this prevention plan, Alex was happy to find that it gave him a greater sense of control. He still had to manage the pain and symptoms, but it was years before he saw the inside of a hospital again.

Managing Anger

“When I snap, I turn around immediately and apologize.

*I have sometimes warned someone by e-mail that I can be irritable from the pain.”**

Why Is this Important?

The stress of having a health condition can make you more irritable and impatient. Symptoms, pain and limitations can make you edgy and less able to deal with frustration. Of course, sometimes it's appropriate to be angry, because it helps you deal with an unfair situation. Anger can motivate you to take action. For example, if you feel pressured to carry out household duties that are not recommended for your health condition, you might feel angry and tell your family members the limits of what you can safely do.

But if you are experiencing *too much anger*, then anger may stop being helpful and instead, cause harm. You may then be experiencing what we call Anger Thoughts. Your anger is too much, if:

- Your anger is harming relationships
- You are becoming verbally or physically aggressive
- You always feel like you're ready to snap if someone says the wrong thing.

Excessive anger, anger that is too intense or too frequent, can have negative effects on your life. These effects include:

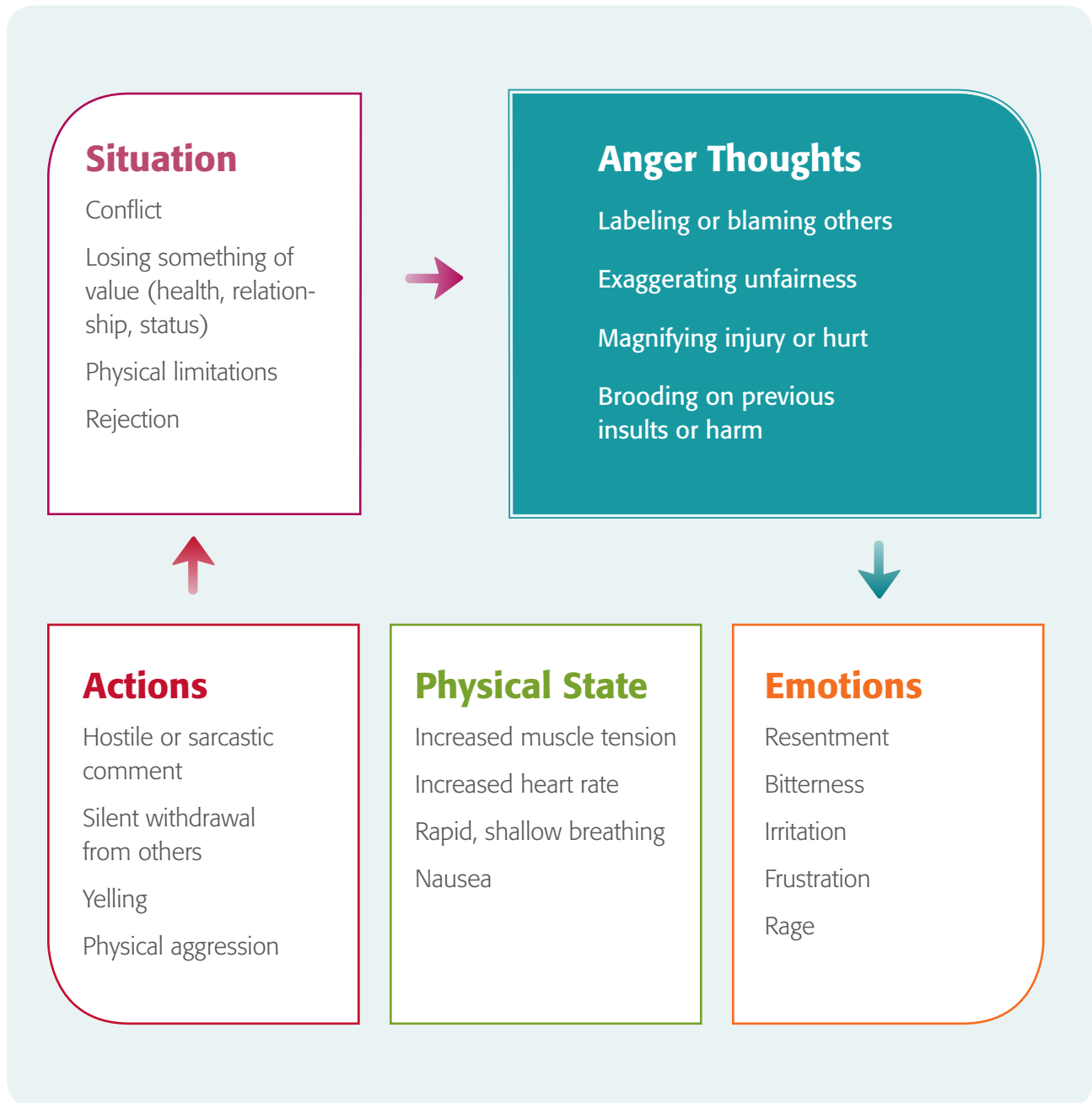
- **Offending or upsetting friends, family members or treatment providers** whose emotional and practical support you need.
- **Triggering or intensifying symptoms** of your health condition. Anger is associated with increased muscle tension, accelerated heart rate, increased blood pressure, reduced function of your digestive system, rapid breathing, and other changes. These effects might worsen your symptoms. *Even when your anger seems justified*, it may still trigger physical symptoms. Research has shown that being easily angered or feeling angry much of the time is generally bad for your physical health and, in particular, bad for your heart health.
- **Feeling emotionally worse.** For most people, excessive anger feels miserable. Having a health condition feels bad enough, without adding another source of emotional suffering.

You should be aware that certain health conditions can directly (physically) cause increased irritability. For example, if your blood sugar drops to a low level, you might experience an episode of sudden rage, because your brain has been temporarily affected by your physical state. Sometimes the medications used to treat health conditions make you irritable. If you're noticing unusual emotional reactions possibly related to your health condition or its treatment, please check with your physician.

* Quote from a member of a chronic illness support group.

The Positive Coping Skills

Here is a diagram that shows how what we call Anger Thoughts affect your emotions, physical state and actions. Anger Thoughts are ways of thinking about your situation that increase feelings of anger.



How Can I Become Less Angry?

We're going to discuss Anger Thoughts and learn to replace them with calming and helpful thoughts.

The steps toward Managing Anger are:

1. Select an anger situation
2. Identify Anger Thoughts
3. Recognize how your Anger Thoughts trigger angry mood
4. Challenge these Anger Thoughts
5. Replace Anger Thoughts with calming and helpful ones
6. Practice calming and helpful thinking

1 Select an Anger Situation

Think of a situation where you felt too angry – either it's your opinion that you were too angry or a person you respect told you that you were too angry. Maybe someone made a comment you saw as hurtful or did something you believed was thoughtless. Maybe an event happened that seemed unfair or someone didn't support you the way you believed they should have.

Example: *Geneviève always had a bit of an anger problem, becoming irritable and moody when she was under stress. But this anger*



problem became much worse after she was diagnosed with coronary heart disease at the age of 65, shortly following retirement. She brooded on the unfairness of developing a serious health condition just when she was finally able to retire. She became more irritable with her family. Her husband often found her to be withdrawn but obviously angry. He started to avoid spending time with her, finding activities that took him out of the house. Geneviève's children also began to visit less often. Geneviève felt increasingly cut off and lonely and this made her more resentful – she couldn't get over how unfair it all was. At her next appointment with the heart specialist, Geneviève talked about her situation and how upset she was. The physician gave her a copy of this workbook. Geneviève recognized herself in the description of irritability as a stress symptom.

Here is the anger situation she chose:

Driving home from the hardware store, the traffic was heavy and there was a lot of bad driving. That made me angry. When I got home my husband was cleaning up a mess; he'd broken a dish. I felt really irritated with him. I didn't say anything but he knew that I was mad.

Now write down an anger situation **you** have experienced.



Anger Situation:

2

Identify Anger Thoughts

Anger Thoughts are thoughts that are unrealistic or unfair about your situation – they cause you to be angrier than is necessary or helpful.

Types of Anger Thoughts

Filtering

In this kind of angry thinking, you only look at the bad side of the situation, never the good. Since all you see is the negative side of other people's comments or actions, these people seem totally inconsiderate or against you. **Realistic thinking considers positive and negative aspects of other people's actions equally.**

Labeling

You think about other people in a harsh way, calling them names like "idiot," "selfish," or whatever the worst insults are for you. Often

these kinds of labels go along with blaming the other person for a stressful situation. These kinds of blaming labels have been described as "hot thoughts" because they trigger strong reactions. **Realistic thinking rarely uses blaming labels – these labels are usually not realistic or fair, and they can be so infuriating that it becomes difficult to think about the situation in a calm way.**

Magnifying

You magnify the amount of harm done to you by an event or person. You see a small disappointment as though it were a disaster, a single thoughtless comment as though it were a total rejection, etc. You might say things to yourself like *"I can't stand this"* or *"this is too much."* For example, a family member is late to pick you up at the clinic, making you wait for twenty minutes. You tell yourself, *"Now I can't do anything I planned, the afternoon is ruined,*

I'm always waiting for her to come, I can't stand this." Instead of feeling mildly frustrated and asking if she could be a bit more punctual in the future, you feel outraged and tell her off for being so inconsiderate. But the next time you need a lift, maybe she'll be busy – which would only reinforce your belief that she doesn't care and make you feel angrier. **Realistic thinking tries to keep events in perspective, not exaggerating the importance of an event or magnifying the "badness" of other people.**

Perfectionism

You set very high standards for other people and then you're indignant when they don't meet these standards. For example, you expect to be given treatment that will take away all symptoms and bring you back to exactly how you were before the health condition. When you realize that you still have symptoms after treatment, you feel betrayed, like the health system failed you. **Realistic thinking gives credit for what has been accomplished, even if the result is less than perfect. Few of us achieve perfect outcomes, but our achievements are meaningful.**

Mind-Reading

You feel as though you know what others are thinking about you, and it's always negative. As a result, you react angrily to what you imagine they think, without checking. For example, you tell yourself that family members think of you as "a burden," and you resent their attitude – but you don't ask them what they really think. **Realistic thinking recognizes that guessing what others think is likely to be inaccurate, especially when your mood is down or you are already feeling irritable.**

Shoulds

You think that you know how the world *should* be, and it isn't like what you expect. You know how other people *should* behave, and they don't. As a result, you're frequently angry. For example, you tell yourself that your specialist *should* set aside at least half an hour for each visit, but you actually get only ten minutes – so you feel infuriated. **Realistic thinking understands the limitations of the world – trying for improvement but also accepting how things are. The world isn't always going to be fair and just.**

There are other types of Anger Thoughts, but these are common ones. When you catch yourself thinking in an angry way, it can be useful to look at this list to see if you are using one of them. Most thinking is so quick and automatic that we don't even realize we're doing it. We must learn to become aware of anger thinking as it occurs. An excellent strategy is to notice thoughts you are having when you experience increased anger – it can be very helpful to write these thoughts down.



The Positive Coping Skills

Here is what Geneviève from our example wrote:

Situation: Driving home from the hardware store, the traffic was heavy and there was a lot of bad driving. That made me angry. When I got home my husband was cleaning up a mess; he'd broken a dish. I felt really irritated by his carelessness.

Anger Thought	What Type of Anger Thought is this?
So many stupid incompetent drivers, getting in my way. They should be taken off the road.	Labeling Magnifying
Why can't he pay attention? He's always breaking things. He better face up to what it's like on a fixed income with big medicine costs.	Filtering Magnifying

Now write down some of your anger thoughts.



Situation:

Anger Thought	What Type of Anger Thought is it? (choose from list on pages 70 & 71)

3 Recognize How Your Anger Thoughts Trigger Angry Mood

Most thinking is so quick and automatic that we don't even realize we're doing it. We must learn to become aware of anger thinking as it occurs. An excellent strategy is to carry around a pencil and paper for a week. Every time you feel irritated, ask yourself this important question:

"What was going through my mind just then?"

What were you thinking about? What were you reacting to?

Keep recording your thoughts until you notice that the same kinds of Anger Thoughts come up again and again. You might find yourself placing a checkmark beside some of the thoughts you wrote down previously. *"Oh, that one again."* When this happens, you have probably identified your most common kinds of anger thinking. Then what? Some of your Anger Thoughts may seem obviously distorted. *"Nobody promised that treatment would take away all my symptoms, so why did I expect that?"* It can sometimes be enough just to know that your mind generates anger thinking in certain kinds of situations.

Try to become aware of the anger thinking as it happens and remind yourself where it comes from. *"I think this way because I feel stressed and frustrated."* You may find that you take the Anger Thoughts less seriously once you know where they come from.

4 Challenge These Anger Thoughts

Challenging angry thoughts involves deliberately rethinking the situations or events that contribute to angry mood. You can use a strategy called **Challenging Anger Thoughts**.

Think of a situation where you were feeling really angry. First, make a brief note about the situation. Next, write down any thoughts that made you feel angry. You might try to describe the type of Anger Thoughts you were having, by using the *Types of Anger Thoughts* list above. Finally, take a good look at each of these Anger Thoughts and challenge it. Challenging Anger Thoughts means that you figure out how these thoughts are unfair or unhelpful and then come up with more calming and helpful ways of thinking. In order to help you come up with calm and helpful thoughts, work through these Reality Questions:

? Reality Questions

CAN I GET MORE EVIDENCE, MAYBE BY ASKING SOMEONE ABOUT THE SITUATION?

It's often helpful to get another person's opinion about a situation where you've been feeling angry. For example, you tell a friend that you've been really angry at a family member who treats you like you can't do anything for yourself. Your friend helps you see that the family member is well-intentioned but needs information about how she can be most helpful.

WOULD MOST PEOPLE AGREE WITH THIS THOUGHT? IF NOT, WHAT WOULD MOST PEOPLE THINK?

Just by imagining how most people would react to a certain Anger Thought, you might be able to come up with a more reasonable and calm way of thinking. When you step outside yourself and examine your thinking from another viewpoint, it's easier to see how your thoughts may be distorted.

WHAT WOULD I SAY TO A FRIEND, IF MY FRIEND WERE IN A SIMILAR SITUATION?

If a good friend talked about feeling very angry in a situation like yours, what would you say? You might be able to help your friend think more fairly, to look at the situation in a balanced way. You might find it easier to think fairly and realistically for a friend than for yourself!

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF I CONTINUE TO THINK THIS WAY?

It's important to consider what will happen if you continue thinking in an angry way. What will be the results for you and others if you continue to feel and act in an angry way?

WHAT IS A MORE CALMING OR HELPFUL WAY OF THINKING?

Can you come up with another thought that would have better results for you and others? Is there a way of thinking that would be more encouraging and helpful in improving the situation?

Example

This is how Geneviève, from our example, answered the Reality Questions:

CAN I GET MORE EVIDENCE, MAYBE BY ASKING SOMEONE ABOUT THE SITUATION?

My oldest daughter was visiting and told me I was being too hard on my husband. She reminded me that he has been taking medication that makes him drowsy, and he might drop things because of that, so it's not his fault. And my son told me I often seem to be angry.

WOULD MOST PEOPLE AGREE WITH THIS THOUGHT? IF NOT, WHAT WOULD MOST PEOPLE THINK?

I guess that most people would think I should take it easy on him.

WHAT WOULD I SAY TO A FRIEND, IF MY FRIEND WERE IN A SIMILAR SITUATION?

When my best friend is having a disagreement with her husband, I usually stay out of it. But I might remind her that she always says how bad she feels when they're arguing – so maybe she should take a breath and give him the benefit of the doubt.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF I CONTINUE TO THINK THIS WAY?

If I keep on being so mad at my husband, I'm worried that he'll avoid me more. I miss spending time with him – he's my best friend.

WHAT IS A MORE CALMING OR HELPFUL WAY OF THINKING?

I can remind myself that he does his best, the same as me, and I'm certainly not perfect. When I get irritated with him, I should take some time by myself to calm down, then come back. I can also remind myself that he is a kind person who deserves to be treated with kindness. Anyway, it's not true that he always breaks things.

Now do this worksheet for one of the Anger Thoughts that have been affecting you.



Anger Thought:

•> Can I get more evidence, maybe by asking someone about the situation?

•> Would most people agree with this thought? If not, what would most people think?

•> What would I say to a friend, if my friend were in a similar situation?

•> What will happen if I continue to think this way?

•> What is a more calming or helpful way of thinking?

5 Replace Anger Thoughts with Calming and Helpful Ones

Pick a situation in which you were feeling too angry. *First*, make a brief note about the situation. *Next*, write down any Anger Thoughts that seem related to how you felt. *Finally*, use the Reality Questions to come up with more calming and helpful thoughts.

Here's what Geneviève did with this worksheet:

Situation: Driving home from the hardware store, the traffic was heavy and there was a lot of bad driving. It made me angry. When I got home my husband was cleaning up a mess; he'd dropped a plate. I felt really irritated by his carelessness.

Anger Thought	Calming and Helpful Thought
So many stupid incompetent drivers, getting in my way. They should be taken off the road. (Labeling; Magnifying)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some of these drivers are going slowly because they're elderly and it wouldn't be safe to drive faster – if they are all taken off the road, that will happen to me too when I reach that age, and it's not so far away! When I get so mad I start driving in a riskier way, cutting off other drivers. Maybe I become a bad driver too, and I could cause a serious accident – I don't want to die to prove a point. So breathe slowly and remind myself that a few minutes delay won't do any harm. I bring my road rage home with me, and it's not fair to my husband.
Why can't he pay attention? He's always breaking things. He better face up to what it's like on a fixed income with big medicine costs. (Filtering; Magnifying).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> That's not fair; he's careful with money and really doesn't spend much. I'm exaggerating the importance of such a small event. He's under a lot of stress. I know that his medication makes him tired and shaky. I don't want to take my anger out on him.

Now fill out this worksheet for the situation **you** choose.



Situation:

[illegible]

6 Practice Calming and Helpful Thinking

It's not enough to come up with a calming and helpful thought just once. Angry thinking gets repeated over and over, sometimes for years, until it becomes automatic. More balanced thinking will help you feel better, but it won't be automatic – at least not for a while. The good news is that changing anger thinking doesn't take years. In fact, people with angry mood often notice a difference after a few weeks of practicing calming thinking.

Try to think of a few situations where you often have Anger Thoughts. What are these situations?



Situations:

[illegible]

When you find yourself in these stressful situations, deliberately practice calming and helpful thinking. Don't assume that it will happen on its own. You have to tell yourself how to look at the situation, just as you might give advice or encouragement to a friend. Talk back to the anger thinking. Don't allow anger thinking to happen without replying to it. Every time you talk back, you make the anger thinking weaker and the calming thinking stronger – it takes time, but calming and helpful thoughts will eventually have more influence over you than angry ones.

You will probably find that in the beginning the calming thinking seems false to you. If your thinking has been distorted for some time, it can be difficult to see the truth. Imagine that you've been thinking in an angry way about your health condition, telling yourself, *"If I don't get back to exactly the way I was before this health condition, then these stupid doctors don't know what they're talking about."* Having this thought regularly may cause you to feel bitter and angry. You realize that this is unfair thinking and come up with a calming and helpful thought like *"It's not realistic to expect total recovery – significant improvement is pretty good."* At first, this realistic thought may seem false, as though you're just fooling yourself. Only with time and repetition does calming thinking begin to feel true to you. Eventually, you'll be able to accept calming and helpful thoughts.

THESE SKILLS ARE ALSO HELPFUL FOR MANAGING ANGER:

Solving Problems

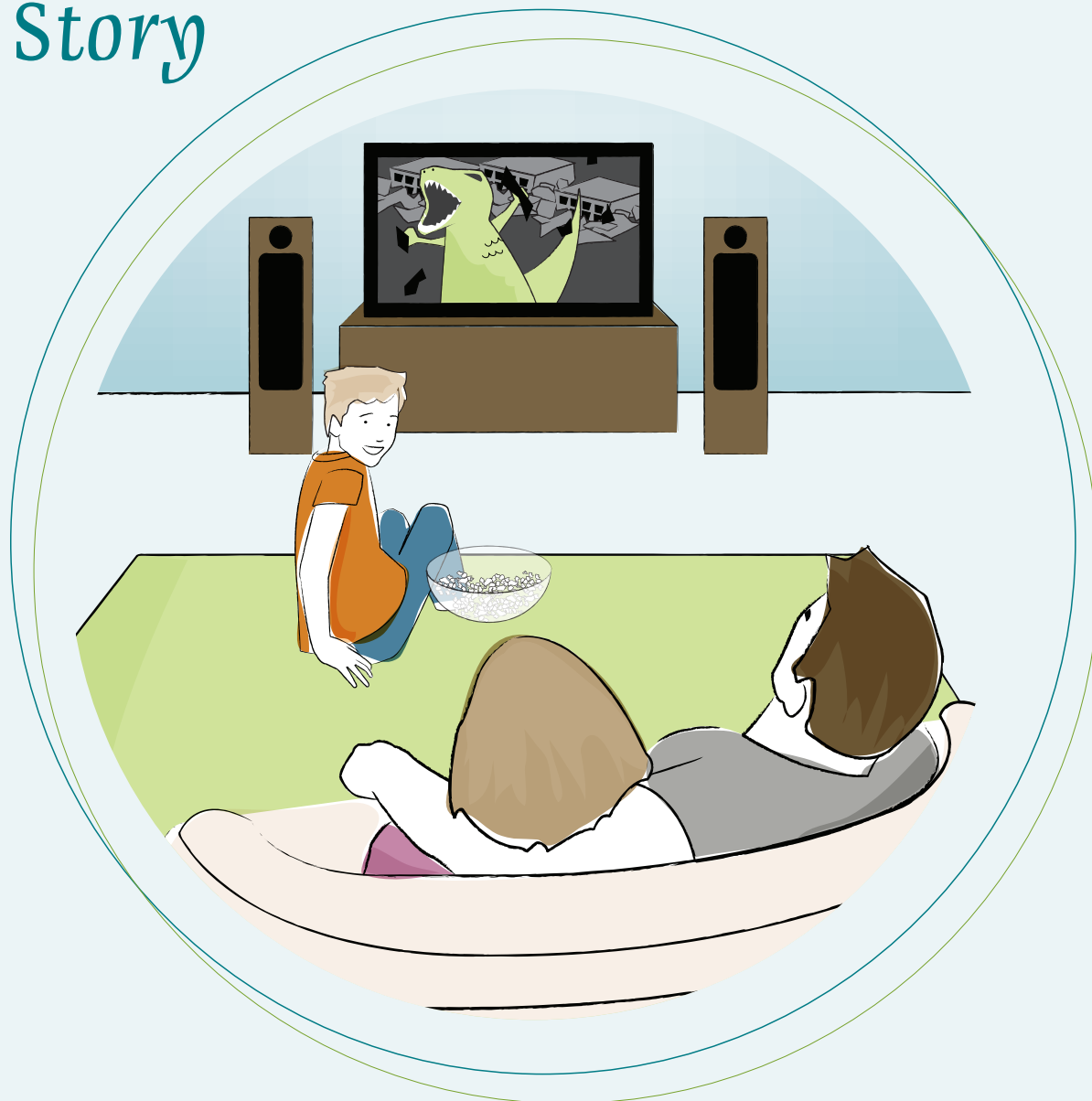
Often there's a real problem that is causing conflict or frustration. Becoming angry may alert you to the problem, but it won't solve it. To solve the problem, it's helpful to use the Solving Problems skill in this workbook. This skill can help you figure out a solution, or at least part of a solution. When you've been in a situation where you became angry, ask yourself, *"What exactly was the problem?"* Then use Solving Problems to find a more useful way of dealing with the problem. After all, you don't become angry because you enjoy being angry (most people find it pretty unpleasant), but because there's some kind of problem. Beginning to solve the problem could reduce your anger.

Relaxation

When you're angry, your body becomes agitated and you will likely experience tense muscles, rapid breathing or flushed face. But being agitated or tense can make it difficult to think clearly or act in a way that will improve the situation. You can use the Relaxation skill in this workbook, along with the Relaxation CD. This skill will help you to settle down your body when you're physically angry. Practice with the Relaxation CD, especially the Slow Breathing method, until it feels pretty natural. Then you'll be able to use this method to help calm yourself in an angry situation. Sometimes it's a good idea to leave the anger situation for a little while ("time out") so you can calm yourself before returning to the situation. Using a relaxation method will help you think more clearly and act more effectively.

Managing Anger:

John's Story



John, 43 years old, worked his way up in the construction industry until he was an assistant project manager. He liked his work. But over the years, he had more and more trouble with his back – all those years of shifting heavy loads seemed to have caught up with him. One day, while helping to unload some machinery, he felt excruciating pain in his back. He had to go home that day, and when he woke in the morning the pain was still there. There was no way he could concentrate. His family physician sent him for x-rays – although these were inconclusive, his physician recommended several months off work in order to recover. John was given some pain medication.

However, the pain did not improve over a three-month work absence. In fact, John became more disabled by pain over the next two years, despite using prescribed medication and visiting a physiotherapist. He ended up on long-term disability with Chronic Pain Syndrome as his diagnosis. He experienced constant pain, which worsened when he carried out physical activity.

At the end of his second year off work, John was referred to a pain specialist, who spotted a problem. John was trying to avoid using the medication as long as possible, only taking it when he found the pain unbearable and then using the entire daily amount, even some meant for the next day. He would then again resist taking medication, until he had to take a large amount – and the cycle repeated itself. The specialist recommended that John take pain medication at regular intervals throughout the day in order to *prevent* pain from building up.

The specialist gave John a copy of this workbook, encouraging him to decide which parts were most relevant. John took the *Stress Symptoms Test* and decided that he was having problems with irritability. His wife had told him that he was angrily raising his voice more frequently – his children were staying away from him. He loved his family and felt hurt that they were avoiding him. John decided to use the Managing Anger skill to get on top of this problem – it was hard enough dealing with pain without also having to deal with loneliness.

He identified a recent situation at home where he became quite angry with his 13-year-old son. His son had been playing video games with a friend and making a lot of noise, and John had yelled at his son to keep the noise down or else he would take away the game. As he went through the workbook exercise and thought about the situation, John identified his Anger Thoughts. *"He's old enough to know that I can't take noise. What's wrong with him? Doesn't anyone here care about what I'm going through?"* John examined these thoughts using the Reality Questions.

> *continued*

> Managing Anger: John's Story

Anger Thought: He's old enough to know that I can't take noise.
What's wrong with him? Doesn't anyone here care about what I'm going through?

CAN I GET MORE EVIDENCE, MAYBE BY ASKING SOMEONE ABOUT THE SITUATION?

Actually, my wife has been telling me that I'm getting too angry with the kids, and I think she's right.

WOULD MOST PEOPLE AGREE WITH THIS THOUGHT? IF NOT, WHAT WOULD MOST PEOPLE THINK?

When I hear other people talk about their teenagers, I realize that this is a pretty common problem. I think other people might think I'm being a bit too hard on him.

WHAT WOULD I SAY TO A FRIEND, IF MY FRIEND WERE IN A SIMILAR SITUATION?

I'd tell a friend to sit down with his son and let him know how he can be helpful – for example, keeping the video game volume lower.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF I CONTINUE TO THINK THIS WAY?

If I keep snapping at my son and others in my family, they'll keep avoiding me and it could hurt our relationship. I never want that to happen.

WHAT IS A MORE CALMING OR HELPFUL WAY OF THINKING?

*When I'm feeling angry about a situation, before speaking to my son or other family members, I should take a walk and remind myself that I'm really angry because of the pain; they probably don't mean any harm; I really want them to feel comfortable with me; and I don't want to hurt them. Then it will be easier to speak to them in a calm way. I can also use Slow Breathing (**Relaxation** skill) to calm myself before I deal with the problem.*

John practiced these ways of changing his anger. When he noticed himself becoming angry, he would take a short break from the situation, returning when he felt calmer. He used the Slow Breathing method and practiced calming thoughts like *"I want my family to like being with me, they don't mean harm, they don't know how my pain feels."* With determined practice, John was able to change his way of handling anger. He still had to deal with pain, but he felt more supported by his family and that was a big improvement.

Relationship Building

"I don't talk about the illness too much with my family. They're helpful but I don't want them to feel bad by looking at me."

*"I want to talk to people who've got the same thing I do. I can find out what they are doing and what they've been able to do."**

When you're dealing with a health condition, relationships with family, friends and healthcare providers take on extra importance. The practical and emotional support you get is extremely valuable.

Some people have few connections to other people or maybe have relationships that are not very close. For them, relationship-building skills may help to form new connections or repair strained relationships. Others have close connections to family and friends, but find that their health condition places extra pressure on these relationships. For example, you may require assistance from family or friends with medical appointments, self-care activities or household chores. You may need more emotional support as you deal with the stress of your condition. We will show you

two ways to build your connections to others: *Increasing Social Contact and Improving Your Relationships.*

Increasing Social Contact

Why Is this Important?

It's more difficult to deal with a health condition when you're cut off from other people. This can happen because you had few relationships at the time you developed the health condition, or because the stress of being ill caused you to withdraw from others. In either case, tension, irritability or low mood make it more difficult to make connections or maintain your existing connections to other people.

Increasing social involvement is helpful because:

- It is encouraging to feel connected to others
- It gives others the chance to provide emotional or practical support
- It distracts you from worrying about your health condition

How Can I Increase Social Contact?

The most effective approach to increasing social contact is to use the skill we've called Activating Your Life, with a focus on social activities. Here's how to use this skill to increase social contact:

The steps toward Increasing Social Contact are:

1. Identify social activities to increase
2. Set realistic social goals
3. Carry out your goals
4. Review your goals

* Quotes from members of a chronic illness support group.



Think of one or two social activities that you might try to increase. Write them here.



Social Activities:

1 Identify Social Activities to Increase

One way to increase social contact is to re-engage with social activities you used to enjoy but have stopped doing. This might include attending family events you've been avoiding or calling up friends and acquaintances you've lost touch with. Another way is to sign up for continuing education classes or volunteer organizations. Yet another way is to participate in disease management support groups, which may be provided through local health agencies. Nonprofit societies focused on chronic illnesses such as diabetes, arthritis, COPD or coronary heart disease often sponsor this kind of support group and they are available in many communities. Check with your family physician or other healthcare provider regarding availability of disease management groups in your community.

2 Set Realistic Social Goals

For each of the social activities you have chosen, set a manageable goal for the coming week. Keep in mind that health conditions or mood problems make it difficult to get moving. As a result, you may need to set your goals *lower* than you ordinarily would. For example, if you want to contact friends you've lost touch with, your first goal might be to talk to one friend on the telephone for five minutes.

Try setting a social activity goal that would be *realistic* to do this week. Decide how often and for how long you will do the activity, and when exactly you'll do it. Make sure the goal is scheduled: write it into your calendar or diary and then check it off once you've done it. It can be helpful to think of things you used to enjoy doing, before you developed your health condition. You might also look again at the list of activities on page 35.



Social Activity Goals:

Activity	How Often?	When Exactly?

3 Carry Out Your Goals

It’s important to realize that you often won’t “feel like” doing your social activity goals. Dealing with symptoms or fatigue, especially if you’re feeling discouraged, can reduce your motivation. But if you wait until you feel like it, most likely nothing will happen. Do the activity because *you set a goal for yourself* and because *it will help you get better*. After you’ve done and checked off each goal, you’ll see what you’ve accomplished.

If you’ve been avoiding people because of low mood, you might not get much enjoyment from social contact, at first. But as you continue to work on increasing social involvement, you’ll find yourself learning to enjoy other people again. Be patient – it may take weeks or months before you start feeling like yourself socially again.

When you complete a social activity goal, be sure to congratulate yourself. Every small victory is important and worth recognizing, especially when you’re dealing with the stress of a health condition.

If you didn’t succeed at your social activity goal, what got in the way? What can you do to make the goal easier? Perhaps your goal was too ambitious and you should try a smaller one over the next week or two. Scale back to something you’re sure you can do, even if you feel no better this week than you did last week. Allow yourself to get started slowly, gradually building more social contact into your life.

4 Review Your Goals

After a few weeks of doing your social activity goals, review the situation. Are there any goals that were not getting done? What got in the way? Do you need to reduce or change the goal?

If your goals were accomplished, do you want to increase them slightly or keep them at the same level until it feels natural? It's your choice. You might want to add another goal.

Continue to set your ongoing goals, and consider adding additional goals as your energy permits. If you complete a task (for example, if you have now finished gathering information about recreational activities in your community), then move on to a new goal. Keep using the procedure:

- Set your 1-2 goals.
- Write them in your schedule.
- Check off each goal as you do it.
- Praise yourself each time.

Improving Your Relationships

Why Is this Important?

Dealing with a health condition can place a strain on relationships. Pain and other physical symptoms can make it hard to be with others. You might withdraw into yourself. Dealing with a

health condition can negatively affect the quality of your relationships. But having rewarding and positive relationships makes it easier to live with a health condition. So it makes sense to improve your relationships, to make them as positive and supportive as possible.

How Can I Improve My Relationships?

We're going to show you an effective way to help improve your relationships. It uses a method developed by a researcher who has studied this area for the last couple of decades, Dr. John Gottman.* Dr. Gottman has discovered that relationships are built up from:

Connection bids

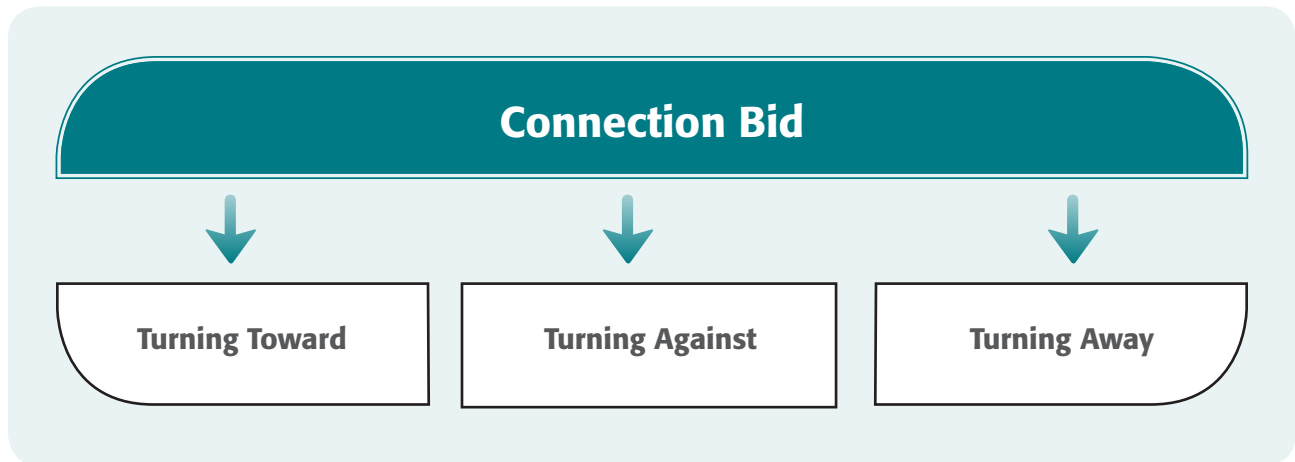
A connection bid happens when one person reaches out to another for contact. A bid could involve an expression of interest or affection, a request for information, a humorous comment or offer of assistance – all the ways people reach out to each other. For example, *"Would you like to see a movie with me?"* is a connection bid.

Responses to these connection bids

When someone reaches out to you, you can respond in three different ways:

- 1. Turning Toward:** You respond to the bid in an accepting, warm, encouraging or interested manner. *"Yes, I'd like to see a movie with you. Do you know any good ones playing now?"* OR *"I won't have any free time in the next couple of weeks, but I'd like to see a movie with you sometime after that. Could I call you then?"*

* John Gottman (2002), *The Relationship Cure*. (New York: Three Rivers Press)



2. Turning Against: You respond to the bid in a rejecting, hostile, irritable or dismissive way. *"You know perfectly well I can't go out to a movie. I'm exhausted."* OR *"How come you never want to see a movie when I suggest it?"*

3. Turning Away: You respond to the bid in an uninterested, ignoring way – maybe you don't even notice the bid. *"I haven't felt much like seeing movies lately."* OR *"I should go check my blood sugar now."*

Dr. Gottman's studies show that people who respond more often to connection bids with a Turning Toward style tend to have stronger relationships.

Here's what Dr. Gottman wrote about Turning Toward responses:

"If you want to build a deeper emotional connection with somebody, turn toward that person as often as you can...in general, if you can turn toward any significant person in

your life – even when you're angry, frustrated, complaining, or sad – your relationship will grow stronger. Then, if you face a time when turning toward one another is impossible, the goodwill you've accumulated will be enough to see you through to better times." *

Now that you're familiar with these basic ideas, you can use them to improve the quality of your relationships.

The steps toward Improving Your Relationships are:

1. Recognize connection bids
2. Notice how you respond to connection bids
3. Make more connection bids
4. Keep practicing connection bids
5. Make more Turning Toward responses

* John Gottman, *The Relationship Cure*. (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2002), 43.

1 Recognize Connection Bids

A connection bid may involve:

- Asking for information
- Expressing caring or support
- Offering assistance
- Making a humorous comment
- Showing interest in a person's opinion or preferences

There are other ways of seeking contact, but these are the ones we'll focus upon.

So the first step is to identify bids for connection. We'll start with your own connection bids. By learning more about your own bids, you will also get better at recognizing bids by others. It's

easier to identify your own bids – after all, you know what you're trying to communicate.

As you go through your day, make a mental note each time you make one of the types of bids described in the list above. Then, when you get the chance, write a few notes about your bids. Of course, you'll only be able to recall some of the bids you make, but it should give you a sense of your own way of connecting to other people. For each of the bids you notice, write down what you said or did and what kind of response the other person made – was it Turning Toward, Turning Against or Turning Away?

Here's an example of writing down connection bids. Patricia is a woman of 63 who was diagnosed with coronary heart disease five years ago. This is what she wrote:

My Connection Bid	How the other person responded (check the one that applies) ✓			Comment
	Turning Toward	Turning Against	Turning Away	
Asked my nephew Tom about his recent holiday.	✓			
Complimented my next-door neighbour on her garden.	✓			
Asked my sister whether she had decided about selling her house.			✓	She ignored my question. It must be a touchy subject.



Now it's your turn:

My Connection Bid	How the other person responded (check the one that applies) ✓			Comment
	Turning Toward	Turning Against	Turning Away	

2 Notice How You Respond to Connection Bids

Over the next week, notice when somebody makes a connection bid to you and **how you respond**: was your response Turning Toward, Turning Against or Turning Away? Make a mental note when you experience one of these bids, and later, when you get a chance, write down what happened. Use the form on next page.

The Positive Coping Skills

Here's an example of writing down responses to connection bids. This is what Patricia, from our example, wrote:

Other Person's Connection Bid	How I responded (check the one that applies) ✓			Comment
	Turning Toward	Turning Against	Turning Away	
My friend June asked how things are going with my new medication.	✓			
My husband said he doesn't think I should do housework anymore because of my health condition.		✓		He makes me mad when he treats me like I can't do anything.
Several people in my self-management group said supportive things when I talked about fear of having another heart attack.	✓			
A newly-hired staff person asked my advice about how to solve a work problem.	✓			



Now it's your turn:

Other Person's Connection Bid	How I responded (check the one that applies) ✓			Comment
	Turning Toward	Turning Against	Turning Away	

3 **Make More Connection Bids**

Since connection bids are so important for relationships, it makes sense to make these bids often. Perhaps you already make a lot of connection bids, but many people find that they don't make as many bids as they would like. Furthermore, having a health condition may cause a person to be so preoccupied with pain and symptoms that they make few connection bids.

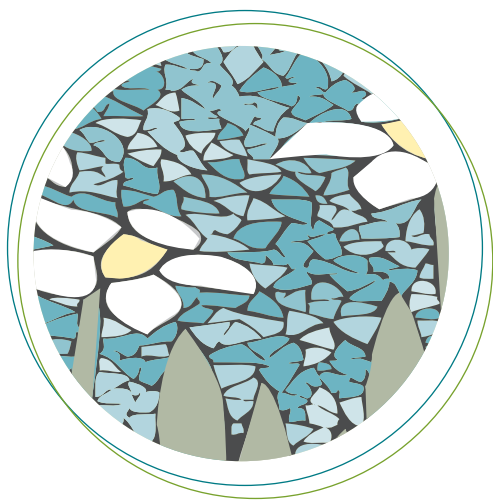
We'd like you to deliberately make two or three connection bids during the next week. You might

ask someone a question about a hobby or their job, make a caring or supportive comment, offer some kind of assistance or make a gently humorous comment, etc. We're not talking about connection bids that are profound or risky – just the kind of connection bids that happen in everyday conversation about small things. Then, when you get a chance, write down what you said or did, and how the other person responded.

Try to identify at least three of your bids and write down the results.

You can use the form below:

My Connection Bid	How the other person responded (check the one that applies) ✓			Comment
	Turning Toward	Turning Against	Turning Away	



Practicing this exercise will give you a better understanding of bids and the kind of responses they get. As you do the exercise, notice how it feels when somebody responds to your bid by **Turning Toward**, **Turning Against** or **Turning Away**.

4 Keep Practicing Connection Bids

If you want to achieve a lasting improvement in your connecting behaviour, set yourself the ongoing goal of making several connection bids each week and writing down what happens. Over time, you will become more skilled at making connection bids and this will help build your relationships, especially when you combine it with the next step.

5 Make More Turning Toward Responses

Since **Turning Toward** responses have a positive effect on relationships, it makes sense to respond this way often. Of course, there are situations where Turning Toward responses don't make sense – we'll leave that up to you to decide. Also, we can't tell you how many Turning Toward responses to make in the next week – that depends on how many bids other people make to you.

When someone makes a connection bid during the next week, *try* to make a Turning Toward response. Remember, a Turning Toward response is one where you respond positively to that person's bid, indicating that you are pleased by it and interested in further contact with that person. Even when you don't agree with that person's opinion or don't want to do something they suggest, still try to respond in a way that shows interest in connecting.

It's not always easy to express a Turning Toward response. Sometimes you're feeling resentful of the other person or preoccupied by pain or too low to care much about contact. But it's worth the effort to try this kind of responding to another person's bid for connection. The stronger your connections are to other people, the more you'll be able to get support with the burden of your health condition. It's a long journey – sharing the journey with others makes it a lot easier.

Relationship Building:

Mei-Yin's Story



Mei-Yin, age 65, had retired from her career as a librarian. She had been married for 30 years, but she and her husband Peter had grown less close over time – they didn't talk much and Mei-Yin didn't feel as connected to him. And without social contact at the workplace, she felt lonelier. This feeling of loneliness made it more difficult to deal with the stress of her diabetes. During a checkup visit, Mei-Yin's family doctor asked how she was coping with retirement and she opened up about her sense of isolation and stress. Her family doctor recommended she get a copy of this workbook and pay special attention to the section on Relationship Building.

Mei-Yin downloaded a copy and read through the introduction, then focused on the Relationship Building skill. Reading it helped her to realize that she missed her co-workers – and missed feeling close to her husband. She missed the way they used to talk about books or go out to different restaurants or movies. They'd gotten out of the habit of doing things together. She decided this had to change.

> *continued*

The Positive Coping Skills

> Building Relationships: Mei-Yin's Story

She showed the workbook to Peter and asked if he'd be willing to use the Positive Coping ideas. He agreed, although a bit doubtfully. He read through the sections she suggested, and promised he would give it a try.

Mei-Yin and Peter set a specific goal together, focusing on increasing their shared activity:

Activity	How often?	When exactly?
We will see a film or go out to dinner.	Once per week	Thursday night

After a month of doing this goal, which went pretty well, Mei-Yin began to pay close attention to how she responded to Connection bids, especially Peter's. For example:

Other's Person Connection Bid	How I responded (check the one that applies) ✓			Comment
	Turning Toward	Turning Against	Turning Away	
Peter said, "You should read this newspaper article about the sub-prime mortgage scandal."			✓	I didn't feel very interested so I didn't bother looking at the article.
Peter was going out for a walk, and he asked me to come along.			✓	I just said, "I'm too tired, I'm going to curl up with a book." I didn't show I was pleased that he'd asked me or suggest going for a walk another day.

Mei-Yin noticed that she and Peter both used a lot of Turning Away responses. This was a bad habit. She also noticed that she wasn't making many Connection bids – asking about his day, expressing interest in what he said, making suggestions to do something together, etc.

She decided to set two new goals: *I will make a Connection bid almost every day, no matter how Peter responds*; and *If Peter makes a Connection bid, I will try to respond with Turning Toward*. She asked Peter to work on this as well. So they were both deliberately making more Connection bids and Turning Toward responses. It felt a bit unnatural at first, but they kept on with it, reminding themselves that improving their relationship would be a huge accomplishment.

Over the next few months, they began to see changes in the relationship. They were doing more things together and talking more. Sometimes they laughed about their whole Connection bid project, but it actually helped. For Mei-Yin, feeling more supported in her relationship made it easier to handle her diabetes. They planned meals together, and it worked out great, because the foods she needed to eat for diabetes control were also good for Peter's health. Overall, they felt emotionally closer. They continued to make an effort to notice Connection bids and Turning Toward responses, so they wouldn't fall back into old habits.

“That’s the beauty of feeling emotionally connected to others. Whatever you’re facing – serious illness, divorce, job loss, grief over the death of a loved one – you don’t have to face it alone. Sharing your experience with other people who express understanding and sympathy may be helpful in ways we’re only beginning to understand.”

John Gottman, *The Relationship Cure*



Applying The Positive Coping Skills

In this section, we give ideas for applying the Positive Coping Skills to some key challenges that arise for people with health conditions. The challenges we will discuss are:

Life Changes | Pain | Sleep | Physical Activity | Nutrition

For each challenge, we'll show how Positive Coping Skills might be applied, and we'll give tips for handling the challenge more effectively.

Life Changes

Having a health condition means adjusting to important changes in your life:

- Changes in physical activities
- Changes in symptoms or pain
- Changes in how you depend on other people

These changes can be challenging and very stressful. The way you handle these changes will make a big difference in how you feel. If you view life changes in a discouraging way, stop doing activities without finding new ones, or become overwhelmed by anger, then you're likely to suffer more and miss opportunities for new experiences.

Positive Coping Skills help you deal with change in a more effective way. Using these skills can reduce the negative impact of health conditions and help you find new ways of dealing with change that improve your life. Below, we describe ways you can use Positive Coping Skills to handle change caused by your health condition.

Managing Depressive Thinking

The way you think about change has a big impact on how you feel. Here are some of the common forms of distorted thinking about life changes:

- *Catastrophizing.* You magnify the risk or suffering associated with the health condition. You tell yourself that your condition will result

in the *worst possible* outcome. This makes the change extremely discouraging and leaves you feeling helpless or overwhelmed. But when you think *realistically* about the changes instead, you look at them in a balanced way, using the best information to decide how difficult your situation will be and to spot opportunities for positive changes. This is more encouraging – it leaves you feeling more hopeful and ready to take positive action.

- *Shoulds.* You focus on the unfairness of the change: *"I shouldn't have to deal with this, I shouldn't have to change my life."* If you think this way, you might refuse to make adjustments in your activities and then suffer serious consequences (increased symptoms, more pain, etc.). But if you think about change *realistically*, accepting the reality of the situation, you can make adjustments that reduce the impact of your health condition and open up new possibilities.
- *Labeling.* You label yourself in unfair ways, maybe telling yourself *"Having this health condition means I'm just disabled, I can't do anything"* or *"I brought this on myself, so I should just take my punishment."* Thinking in these unfairly self-critical ways can leave you feeling so discouraged that you don't do self-care or follow treatment recommendations. But if you think fairly about yourself, you'll feel encouraged to take care of your own health and participate actively in treatment or recovery.

The section on [Managing Depressive Thinking](#) takes you through the steps of applying this skill.

Activating Your Life

This Positive Coping Skill helps you to reduce your activities as needed while finding rewarding new activities that are OK with your health condition. The Activating Your Life section takes you through the steps of choosing activities that are as rewarding as possible, while making adjustments for your health condition. The aim is to find new kinds of physical or social activities to replace ones that are no longer possible.

Relaxation and Managing Worry

The changes caused by a health condition can make you feel anxious and tense. Your body might be tensing up against pain or you might be extremely worried. Relaxation and Managing Worry are two skills that help you to *stay calm and relaxed while things are changing*. Staying calm and relaxed will make it easier to take in information from your healthcare providers, to manage pain or symptoms, to make plans



for dealing with your health and to sleep well through the changes. The Relaxation and Managing Worry sections take you through the steps of learning and trying these skills.

Pain

Health conditions are often accompanied by physical pain. This can take the form of acute pain (directly tied to physical injury and lasting minutes to a few days) or chronic pain (persisting in the absence of immediate injury, and lasting for months or years). When we speak about applying Positive Coping Skills to pain, we are thinking mainly of skills for dealing with chronic pain.

The Positive Coping Skills can help you better manage the experience of pain so that it interferes less with your life and causes you less suffering.

Activating Your Life

This skill provides a step-by-step guide to becoming active. This means increasing your involvement in rewarding activities in a gradual and realistic way. It is particularly relevant to pain management, because individuals suffering from chronic pain often reduce their level of activity. Individuals with chronic pain reduce activity because they:

- Feel they do not have enough energy to be active,
- Feel that others would not want to be around them while they're suffering,

- Fear that physical or social activities might increase pain,
- Believe that staying inactive prevents further injury or aggravation of their health condition.

However, decades of experience with pain patients has made it clear that staying active, within appropriate limits, is a very important part of dealing with pain.

Physical inactivity reduces overall fitness, leads to muscle weakening, causes increased physical tension, and contributes to increased pain.

Social inactivity lowers mood and increases your attention to the pain, both of which tend to worsen pain experience. Although people who become inactive feel like they're protecting themselves, they are actually reducing the chance of improvement.

But before you begin to work on re-activating your life, here are some important tips about increasing your activity level when you're suffering from chronic pain.

Know Your Limits

Speak to your doctor to figure out which activities are **medically contraindicated** – meaning *activities that would result in tissue injury or damage*. Remember, that's not the same thing as *activities that might cause pain*. Some activities might be high risk in terms of worsening your health condition, but not cause significant pain; while other activities might cause pain but actually represent a very low risk of worsening the health condition. In fact, some activities that help to *improve* your health condition, like a program of gentle exercise, also might cause some pain, especially when you



first begin. We call this the difference between *Activities that Hurt* and *Activities that Harm*. It's important to know the difference so you can avoid activities that would actually harm you. On the next page is a form you might want to complete with your healthcare provider. Completing this form can help you identify activities that are safe for you to do, as well as help guide the pacing of activity.

In the first column, list activities you do that cause increased pain. In the second column, check off activities that might harm you. In the third column, check off activities that might hurt but aren't likely to be harmful. For almost all people, walking four blocks is very unlikely to cause physical harm, even if it causes some pain (*Hurt yes, Harm no*). But for many individuals with health conditions, lifting heavy weights would carry a significant risk of physical harm as well as pain (*Hurt yes, Harm yes*).



Hurt-Harm Sheet

Activities that Increase Pain	Harm Significant risk of physical injury or worsened condition (✓ Check below)	Hurt only Increase pain, but low risk for physical injury or worsened condition (✓ Check below)

Pace Your Activity

*“One of the most important things to remember when you have chronic pain is to not over-do when you are feeling well, and to not under-do when you are feeling unwell.” **

The old saying “slow and steady wins the race” is very true when you’re working to reduce pain. It is important to keep a consistent and steady pace of activity. The aim is to set a realistic activity level, one that avoids physical harm and

is within your capacity *even on a bad day*. After all, your experience of pain may change from day to day. Set your activity goals low enough so that you can realistically reach those goals every single day. If you find it difficult to keep up with an activity goal because it causes too much pain, then the goal is too high and should be lowered. If you’re finding most or all activities too painful, you may want to ask your doctor for suggestions.

* Quote from a pain management specialist.

Solving Problems

An important problem is how to consistently follow recommended schedules of medication and self-care activities. Consistency in following recommendations is known as *adherence*. The way you adhere to medical recommendations will help determine whether your health condition improves or worsens.

Medications for the relief of chronic pain help to reduce suffering. However, there are risks to the use of pain medications: side effects like nausea or constipation; fear of becoming addicted; and possible reduced medication effect. So, decisions about medication use can get pretty complicated.

For example, you might use the medication whenever you notice pain and take enough so that you don't feel any discomfort – even if you exceed your dosage. But, this may cause you to run out of medication early and have to return to your physician; it increases the risk of addiction; and it's not very effective for reducing overall pain levels. Or, you might avoid using the pain medication as long as possible. Individuals taking this approach hold off on taking medication, choosing instead to live with the pain until it feels *unbearable*, and then use medication. These people may feel like they are avoiding the risk of becoming dependent

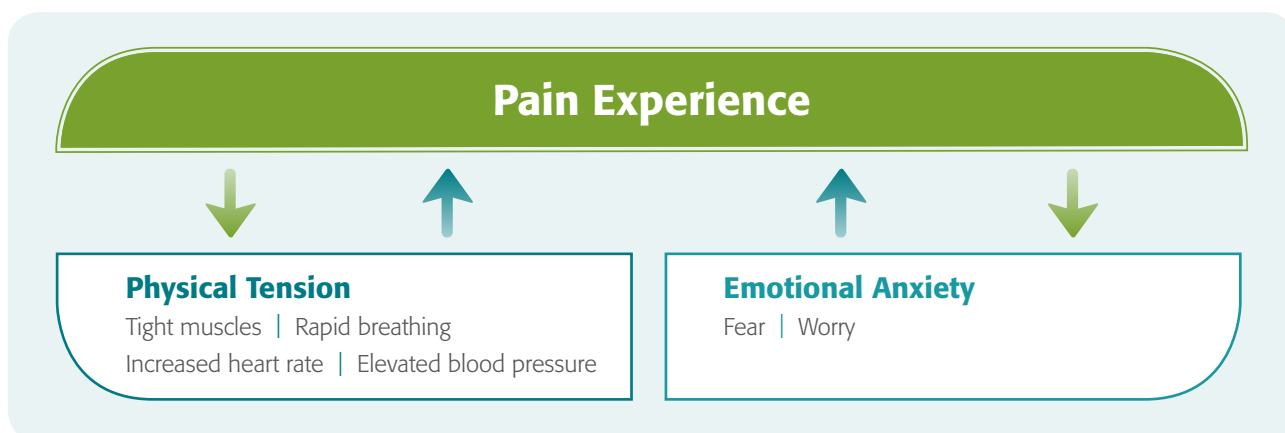
on the medication. But this way of using pain medication has been found to gradually increase pain experience and medication dependence.

Which brings us to the way that works best: take pain medication according to a *fixed schedule* that spreads the pain relief throughout your day. This way, you apply the medication most effectively, before the pain has intensified, so you can often prevent intense pain from developing in the first place. Also, this way of handling pain medication is *least likely* to cause addiction!

Scheduling your pain medication means that you will talk to your healthcare provider about taking your medication at regular times spaced throughout the day. Then you can use medication pillboxes that show which medications have been taken, reminder devices that signal that it's time for medication, or the Remembering Self-Care method on page 50 in this workbook.

Relaxation

Another skill important for pain control is that of Relaxation. Pain researchers have shown that there is a two-way connection between pain and tension: pain increases physical tension and emotional anxiety – while tension and anxiety worsen the pain. It's a vicious cycle of suffering.



Learning to reduce physical tension and emotional anxiety using Relaxation will help you get better control over your pain. Of course, it won't be easy to focus on learning relaxation while you're experiencing pain – but keep slowly working at it. Many individuals with pain problems have used relaxation methods to help control their pain experience and reduce suffering.

Sleep

Health conditions can have a number of negative impacts on sleep. Sleep can be disrupted by physical symptoms and pain. Worrying about your condition can cause difficulty falling asleep or can wake you up in the middle of the night. Depressed mood can make it more difficult to fall asleep or get enough sleep. Depression can also make your sleep less restorative, so you wake up feeling fatigue. Excessive anger can make it difficult to relax enough for proper sleep.

Sleep disruptions can have a negative impact on your health condition. Fatigue due to inadequate sleep can worsen symptoms. When you are feeling exhausted, it can be more difficult to motivate yourself to do self-care. Improved sleep can help our bodies recover from physical health conditions. So, learning to manage your sleep well is an important part of coping with your health condition.

Solving Problems

Identifying the contributors to poor sleep – that is, describing the problem in detail – helps

solutions begin to emerge. Here are some problem-solving actions that have been effective for many people with sleep problems.

Set a Regular Sleep/Wake Schedule

Having regular hours for getting up and going to bed can help set your “internal clock.” Most people are unaware of the importance of having a fixed wake-up time, to “jump-start” their internal clock. It is more important to establish a fixed wake-up time than bedtime: we can control what time we wake up, but we can't make ourselves fall asleep! If you're having problems falling asleep, don't go to bed too early – you shouldn't get into bed until you're sleepy. Also, it's a good idea to eliminate daytime naps. Short daytime naps – although of benefit for individuals who don't have sleeping problems – can make sleep problems worse. Napping during the day decreases the restorative value – or quality – of your sleep at night. Your goal is to increase the quality of sleep you receive at night, and one main way to do this is to condense all sleep to nighttime hours.

Reduce Sleep-Interfering Activities

There are some common activities that disrupt sleep. Things to reduce are:

Caffeine, alcohol and tobacco. It's particularly important to avoid these in the few hours before sleep, or if you wake during the night.

Exercise before sleep. Regular exercise can help your body get ready for sleep at night. However, strenuous exercise in the few hours before sleep may have the opposite effect.

Watching TV or reading in bed. If you read, keep the lights dim.

Make Your Bedroom Sleep-Inducing

It can be helpful to create a pleasant environment for sleep. Use blinds or heavy curtains to create a dark room. Turn off phone ringers.

Make “Going to Bed” a Soothing Experience

Do not get into bed unless you are sleepy. If you are having trouble sleeping – or wake up and cannot go back to sleep – stay out of bed until you feel sleepy.

Create a pre-sleep routine that you follow each night, which helps you get ready for bed. A routine signals to your brain and body that it's time to quiet down. This may include some form of meditation or relaxation, a warm bath or herbal teas. Get yourself ready for the next day, dim the lights and then mentally “put away” any ongoing problems or upcoming tasks.

Practicing Relaxation may help soothe you when going to bed. Try listening to the Relaxation CD that comes with this workbook.

Get Out of Bed if You Can't Sleep.

Remember: do not do anything stimulating while awake. Do not eat, drink alcohol, or use tobacco. Try not to watch TV.

Managing Worry

If you find that worry makes it hard to fall asleep or wakes you up during the night, you might find it useful to apply the Managing Worry skill in this workbook. The last page in that section talks about protecting your sleep from excessive worry.

Physical Activity

Increasing physical activity is good for most people's health. Being physically active can improve your health in a number of ways – giving you more energy, relieving stress, maintaining a healthy body weight and even preventing common health conditions (diabetes, heart disease, arthritis, cancer and others). If you have a health condition, thinking about how you might increase your level of physical activity is especially important.

While physical activity is beneficial for all health conditions, there may be certain kinds of physical activity that should be avoided. If you follow a physical activity program that is carefully planned with your healthcare providers, one that is gentle and enjoyable, you are likely to gain health benefits and a sense of wellbeing. There's a lot about health conditions that you can't control, but increasing physical activity is one thing you *can* control.

“Regular exercise benefits everyone, especially people with chronic health problems. Regular exercise improves levels of strength, energy, and self-confidence, and lessens anxiety and depression. Exercise can help maintain a good weight, which takes stress off weight-bearing joints and improves blood pressure, blood sugar, and blood fat levels.”

Dr. Kate Lorig, *Living a Healthy Life with Chronic Conditions* (2006).

Activating Your Life

The Positive Coping Skill most helpful for increasing physical activity is Activating Your Life. That skill involves setting realistic goals and making a specific plan to reach these goals. Here are some things to keep in mind when you start a program to increase your physical activity:

Know Your Limits

As with any goal you set, it is important to be realistic when setting your physical activity goal. If you have a health condition, you should first check with your family physician or specialist to find out what kinds of activity goals are appropriate and safe given your situation. Your physician may ask you to do an exercise test to determine at what level you can safely be physically active. Use the Hurt-Harm Sheet (page 100). Find out from your physician the symptoms during physical activity that tell you that you are pushing too hard, or that you need to check with your physician. These kinds of symptoms are warning signs – by paying attention to them, you can be confident that you are not doing anything to negatively affect your health. Certain health conditions may require that you monitor signs and symptoms before, during or after physical activity (such as measuring blood sugar before and after, in those with diabetes). Make sure to ask your physician if this is needed for you. Remember to ask your healthcare provider to describe the warning signs and any additional monitoring you need to do, write them down and keep them in a notebook or folder where they won't be misplaced.

Set a Realistic Activity Goal

Experts who have studied the effects of physical activity on health tell us that we should aim for at least 30-60 minutes of moderate physical activity on most days of the week. But that doesn't mean that your first goal for the next two weeks should be 30-60 minutes of activity every day! Remember, the best way to make change in your physical activity is to *begin with small changes*. So, if you have been doing very little physical activity most days, then start with a modest change – for example, you might begin with the goal of doing a brisk 10-minute walk three times a week. If this physical activity goal becomes comfortable for you and you're able to maintain it for a month or two, then you might want to increase the goal – maybe you'll start walking for 10-15 minutes most days of the week. Eventually, by slowly increasing your goals, you will reach the recommended level. And remember to check with your physician to make sure that your activity goals are safe.

Something else to remember is that you don't have to do 30-60 minutes of activity in one burst – you can add up your minutes of activity over the course of a day, maybe achieving 30 minutes of activity by taking three 10-minute walks. Being able to add up your minutes of activity makes it easier to reach the goal.

Choose the Most Comfortable Kind of Physical Activity

There are three main kinds of physical activity to choose from: *Endurance*, *Flexibility* or *Strength and Balance*. According to a physical activity guide published by Health Canada, these types of activity each have certain benefits:

ENDURANCE

- Continuous activities that make you feel warm and breathe deeply
 - Increase your energy
 - Improve your heart, lungs and circulatory system

FLEXIBILITY

- Gentle reaching, bending and stretching
 - Keep your muscles relaxed and joints mobile
 - Move more easily and be more agile

STRENGTH AND BALANCE

- Lift weights, do resistance activities
 - Improve balance and posture
 - Keep muscles and bones strong
 - Prevent bone loss

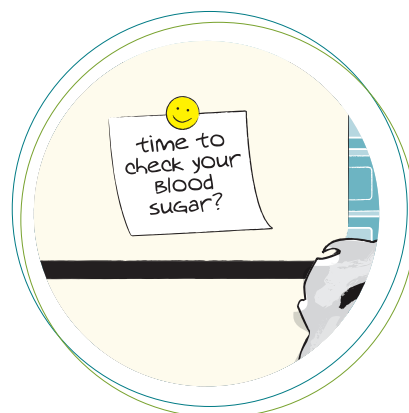
Adapted from Canada's Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living (<http://www.paguide.com>)

Experts recommend that you try to include physical activities from each of these categories. But if you can't do that, do what you can – activate your life as much as you can, within realistic limits. Try to find activities that fit into your daily routine – maybe walking to a local store instead of driving, taking the stairs instead of the elevator, moving around more inside your own home, getting in the habit of doing a gentle exercise routine at a certain time each

day, or participating in exercise classes offered on television or on a DVD. Doing exercise with a friend or family member makes it easier to keep up your exercise habit – and helps you meet two goals at once: increasing physical fitness and social activity!

Nutrition

Many people facing health challenges have been given recommendations from their family physician, dietitian, or other healthcare providers about helpful changes in eating. For example, a person with diabetes may be advised to follow a specific diet, one that's low in sugar and fat. For many people, this kind of diet is a considerable change from their usual eating habits. After all, a high proportion of North Americans consume more calorie-rich foods than is recommended – and many people try to lose weight by following diets, often with considerable difficulty. We all know that diets are hard to follow, as they are often restrictive and quite different from our usual eating pattern. The Solving Problems Skill can help.



Solving Problems

Problem: My family doctor says I have to shift to a carbohydrate-reduced diet.

Action	Advantages	Disadvantages
Shift to a low-carb diet starting next week.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I'll be following my doctor's orders. It's good for my health condition. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I tried to start this kind of diet twice before, and it didn't work out. It was really discouraging when I found myself back to my old diet after a few weeks. Not to eat my wife's cooking is like an insult to her.
Keep eating the same way I always have.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I really enjoy my wife's cooking, she makes food that's rich and delicious. Everyone in my family eats this way, why should I be different? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The doctor says that the way I eat now is dangerous for my diabetes. I don't like to disappoint my doctor – she's pretty frustrated with me. I don't like to feel like I can't control my eating.
Make a small change to start with – maybe cut out dessert after dinner.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least I'll be making a good change. My doctor says "every journey begins with a small step". If I keep it up, then I can try other small changes – maybe drink a bit less alcohol, begin taking a walk with my wife in the evening, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It's not going to fix the whole problem. I keep thinking that I should just be able to change my diet.

The key to success is making *gradual* changes to your diet, since changing eating habits can be difficult. This change needs to be done carefully and with some planning. The steps of Activating Your Life will help you make this change. It's important to set goals that are **Specific, Realistic** and **Scheduled**.

Being **Specific** means that you are clear about what you want to accomplish – just stating that you want to *eat healthier* is not specific enough. The more specific your goal is, the easier it is to determine your success. Remember – it's all about setting goals that you can accomplish and feel good about doing. Nobody likes setting a goal and not being able to follow through. We've all been there and done that. A more specific goal for eating healthier might be to *cut back on eating rich desserts every day*. Having a specific goal will make it easier to measure your progress. When you measure your progress, you stay on track, reach your target dates and experience the satisfaction that helps you to work towards your goal. To determine if your goal is specific, ask questions such as... *How much? How many? How will I know when it is accomplished?* So, if we continue with the example of cutting back on rich desserts, the question to ask is, *"How many times a week will I cut back on dessert?"* Let's try: *Monday to Saturday I will skip dessert but Sunday I can have a rich dessert.*

Being **Realistic** means that the goal is easy enough to be achievable even if you feel low in mood and energy. On a scale of 1 to 10 (with 1 being not confident at all and 10 being as confident as possible), how confident are you that you will be able to accomplish your goal?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
▲ Not confident at all As confident as possible ▲

If you rate below 7, you need to review your goal and possibly modify it. This is where you can look at possible barriers and come up with some solutions to overcome them. Maybe allowing yourself to have dessert Saturday as well will seem more "do-able." Once you get to a goal that you think is at least at 7, then give it a try. By starting with a modest goal, you can experience what it feels like to succeed with a diet change and gradually build on this success.

Being **Scheduled** means that you have a clear plan to accomplish your goal, an action plan. This is the "How To" part. *How am I going to reach my goal? What supports do I need? When will I do it?* If you want to eat healthier, just cutting back on desserts "someday" won't work. But if you put it in a time frame, say *by May 1st* or *by the end of two weeks*, then you've set yourself in motion to reach the goal.

Example: *I will have a small bowl of fruit salad every night from Monday to Friday. On Saturday and Sunday, I can have one serving of a rich dessert. I will go to the local produce store on Sunday to buy enough fruit to make up a tasty fruit salad for the week. I will get the family to work together to make up the salad.*

You get the picture. The more detailed you can be about your action plan, the more likely you will be able to follow through. Write down your goal – make a contract with yourself. If possible, have someone you respect sign off on the contract as well. They can be a "cheerleader" for you.

At the end of the time frame that you've chosen, review your goal. How did it go? Did you succeed all of the time, most of the time or not much of the time?

If you didn't reach your goal, think about what got in the way and what you might do differently (for example, making sure that family members know what you're trying to change and *why it's important*). This is a very important step in achieving success with goal setting. When goals are difficult to achieve, you need to figure out what got in the way of your change – then make a plan for getting around these barriers.

If you succeeded at your goal, recognize your success and praise yourself generously for what you've accomplished. Try to reward yourself with non-food rewards. Plan to continue this goal and set another goal to further improve your diet. Maybe you can look at increasing the amount of fruits and vegetables you eat. By continuing in this gradual, self-encouraging and realistic way, you'll be surprised at how much you can change.

Health Conditions List

The Positive Coping Skills in this workbook are effective in addressing a long list of "health conditions." Various illnesses and health problems that people encounter present different challenges and require people to adapt

in unique ways. Some conditions might require a particular ability to manage pain or discomfort; some will require marked adaptations in mobility or physical activity; some will require the use of medications, physical or mechanical aids, or assistance from others in undertaking day-to-day activities.

Here is a list of some health conditions for which Positive Coping Skills can be developed using the skills taught in this workbook:

- Diabetes
- Heart problems
- Arthritis, and other problems of bones, muscles or joints
- Respiratory problems and illnesses, such as asthma, emphysema, COPD, cystic fibrosis
- Kidney problems
- Liver problems, including forms of hepatitis
- Neural diseases or damage, including multiple sclerosis, spinal cord injury
- Gastrointestinal problems such as colitis, Crohn's disease, irritable bowel syndrome
- HIV-related illnesses
- Cancer
- Lymphoma, leukemia and other illnesses related to blood and lymph tissues
- Immune system disorders, including lupus
- Sensory diseases or damage, including visual impairment, hearing loss
- Chronic fatigue syndrome
- Chronic pain disorders, including fibromyalgia

Medication Name			Medication Name	
Date prescribed			Date prescribed	
Prescribing doctor			Prescribing doctor	
Why do I need it?			Why do I need it?	
When should I take it?			When should I take it?	
How much should I take each time?			How much should I take each time?	
How long do I keep taking it?			How long do I keep taking it?	
What should I avoid while using it?			What should I avoid while using it?	
What side effects should I report if they happen?			What side effects should I report if they happen?	
What should I do if I miss a dose?			What should I do if I miss a dose?	
How will I know if the medication is helping?			How will I know if the medication is helping?	

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