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# Back pain management programme

## Goal setting

Having chronic back pain can lead to a reduction in the activities carried out as they can increase the pain, or you may anticipate that the activity will increase your pain. Previous attempts to increase activity on good days may have led to a worsening of back pain later. Goal setting is identifying what you would like to be able to do and working towards managing it.

### Aims or long term goals

First identify what you like to be able to do, for example:

- Return to work.
- Enjoy going to the cinema.
- Get the weekly shopping at the supermarket.

If your goals seem general, such as improving walking and/or your social life, try to form them into more specific goals. For example, 'Walk to friends house', 'Meet up with friends at least once a week'. These goals then need to be broken down into smaller achievable steps. Each step needs to be achieved before moving on to the next one.

### Short term goals

Short-term goals are your route to achieving your aims. Keep putting in little steps until they are achievable. Try to make the goals:

- **Specific** – clearly set what is going to happen.
- **Measurable** – Will you easily be able to say if it was achieved?
- **Achievable** – Are you able to do the task you set yourself?
- **Realistic** - Are you going to do it? Do you have the time to do this?
- with a **Time frame** – Give yourself a time limit. This will make goals easier to measure and will stop them dragging on for a long time, which can reduce your motivation.

## An example of goal setting

- **Aim** – To walk to a friend's house.
- **First short term goal**  
Establish a baseline for walking, using guidelines given, by the weekend.
- **Second short term goal**  
Walk for the baseline time (10 minutes) outside twice this week.  
After completing these you can add in further steps to get to the main aim.

The next step might be:

- Increase the length of time walking by two minutes each fortnight.  
Or
- Walk for a total of 20 minutes with a break of five minutes sitting down in the middle.

## Further hints for goal setting

- Consider areas that **you** want to change or improve.
- Try not to set your goals beyond your capabilities, but on the other hand don't underestimate your ability.
- Try not to make your goals dependent on too many things (people, weather etc) – they may let you down and then you will not have succeeded in your goal.
- Try to think positively. Use the skills you learn on this programme to help you.
- Plan your goals carefully
- Write them down. It will help you to remember and you can tick it off when you have achieved your goal.
- You can set yourself more than one goal and in lots of different areas.
- Don't panic if you don't achieve your goal. Think about why. It may be that you need to add in an extra step/short goal or lengthen the time for which you carry out the previous step.
- Reward yourself when you achieve a goal.

## Remember

By goal setting you can:

- Improve your self-esteem, confidence and mood.
- Gain more control over your life.
- Improve the quality of your life.
- Give yourself a sense of purpose.