



# Chronic Pain 101

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# LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to acknowledge that I work and live on the traditional, unceded, and ancestral territories of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations.

# DISCLOSURES



Employee of Pain BC



Many of Pain BC's programs and initiatives are funded, in whole or in part, by the Government of British Columbia

# ABOUT PAIN BC

## VISION

A future where no one is alone with pain.

## MISSION

To enhance the well-being of all people living with pain through empowerment, care, education and innovation.

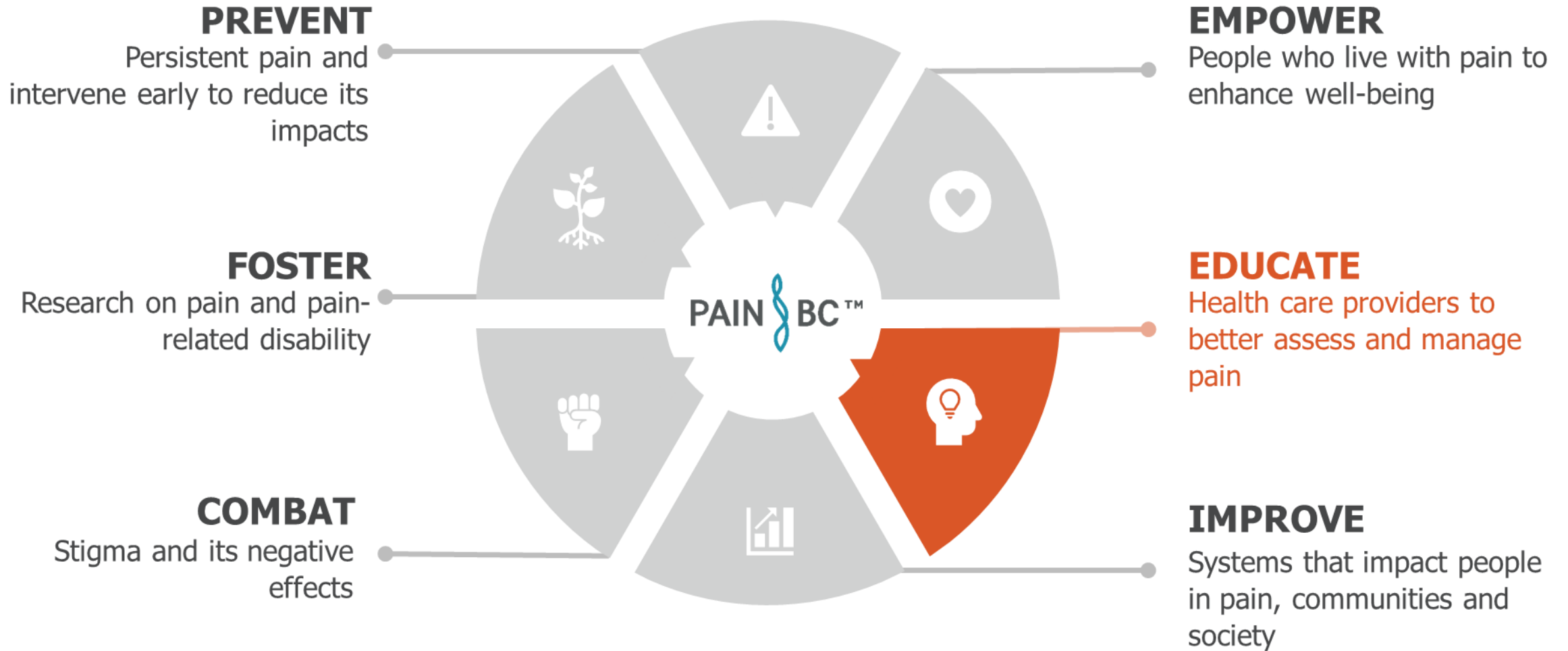
Collective impact model

Co-building with, and co-  
led by, people with  
pain

Registered charity with  
diverse funding sources

BC-based with national  
and international reach

# WHAT WE DO



# TODAY...

- Identify acute vs. chronic pain
- Identify the impacts of living with chronic pain
- Identify the connection between work-related injuries and chronic pain
- Highlight the programs and services available at Pain BC



# CHRONIC PAIN & ITS IMPACTS

# CHRONIC OR PERSISTENT PAIN



# WHAT IS CHRONIC PAIN?

The International Association for the Study of Pain defines pain as:

***"An unpleasant sensory and emotional experience associated with, or resembling that associated with, actual or potential tissue damage."***

- The World Health Organization (WHO) in its 11th revision of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11) **includes chronic pain as a diagnosis in its own right.**
- Chronic pain occurs **after three months of continued pain** and is deeply personal.



# HOW TO KNOW IF IT IS CHRONIC PAIN?

*"In the past 3 months how often do you have pain?"*

- If the answer is Most days or Every day, then this is CHRONIC PAIN.

*"In the past 3 months, how often has pain limited your life or work activities?"*

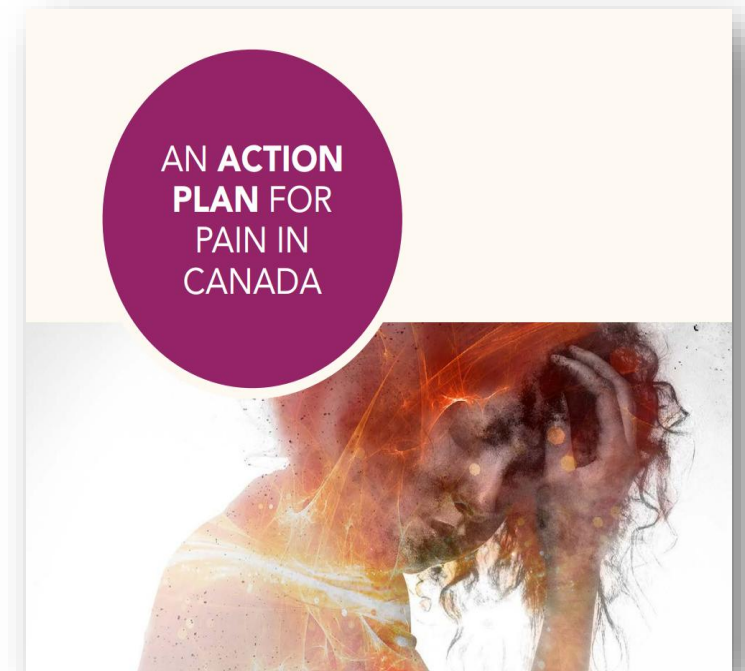
- If the answer is "most days" or "every day" this is very likely "high impact chronic pain."

<https://painimprovement.com>



# THE BURDEN OF CHRONIC PAIN IN CANADA

- In Canada, **one in five people live with chronic pain**, representing nearly 9,000,000 people (CPTF, 2021)
- Disproportionately affects populations affected by **social inequities** and driver of **inequality in healthcare**
- Pain is **number one driver of disability** in Canada
- **Most common types of disability** for adults aged 25-65 were pain related (63%), mental health (46%)
  - For seniors 65+ pain related (68%), mobility (63%)
- An action plan for Pain in Canada (CPTF, 2019)



# WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF PAIN?

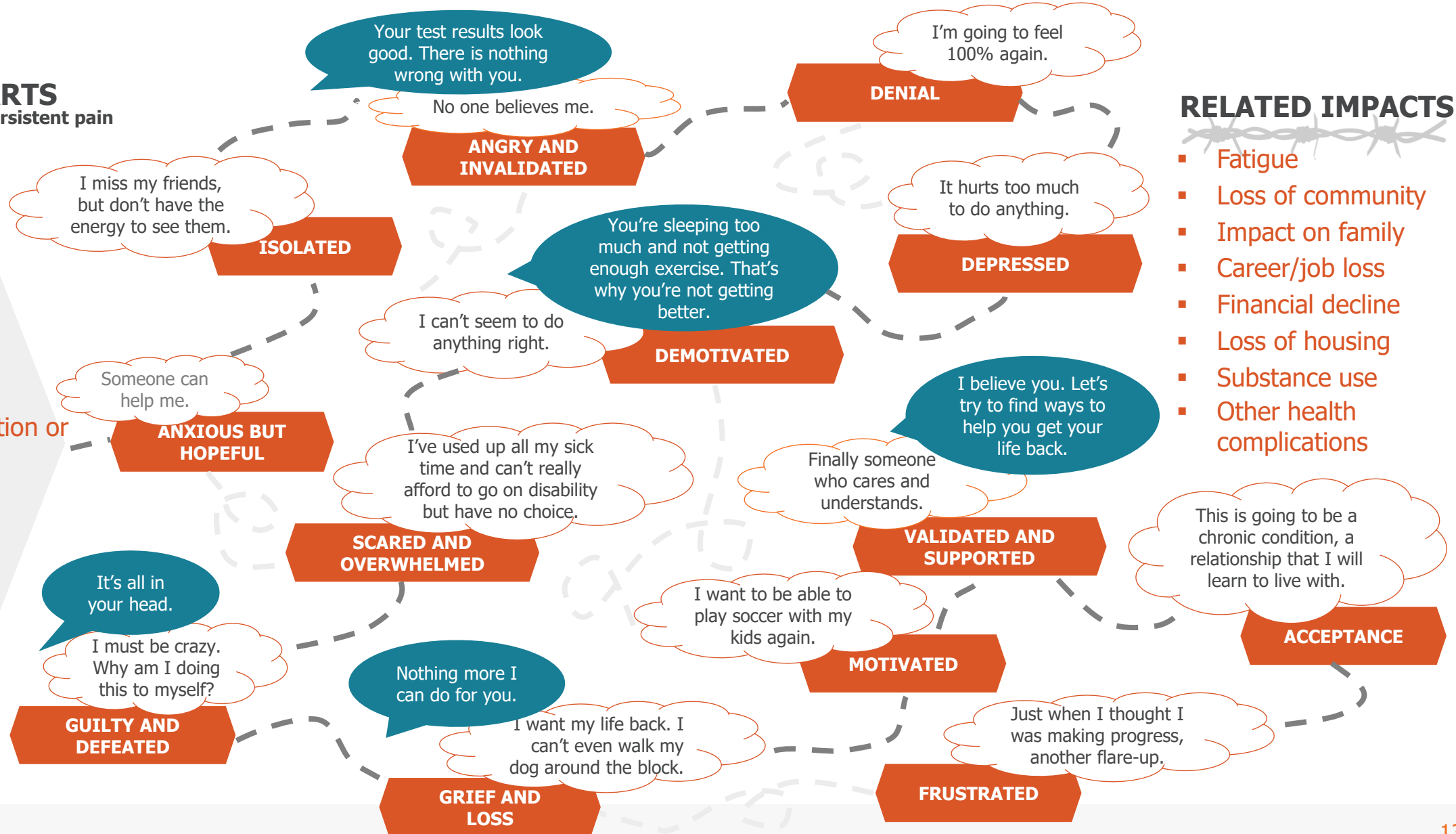
- Think of a **fire alarm** - a ringing fire alarm warns us of fire, smoke, and danger
- When the fire alarm goes off, we think about getting ourselves to safety
- For example, if you touch a hot stove, it hurts, so you pull your hand away
- When it comes to chronic pain, it can be confusing because your internal fire alarm is going off, but you can't just pull your hand away
- What we can do is work on turning down the volume of the fire alarm



# THE COMPLEX EMOTIONAL & MENTAL JOURNEY OF LIVING WITH CHRONIC PAIN

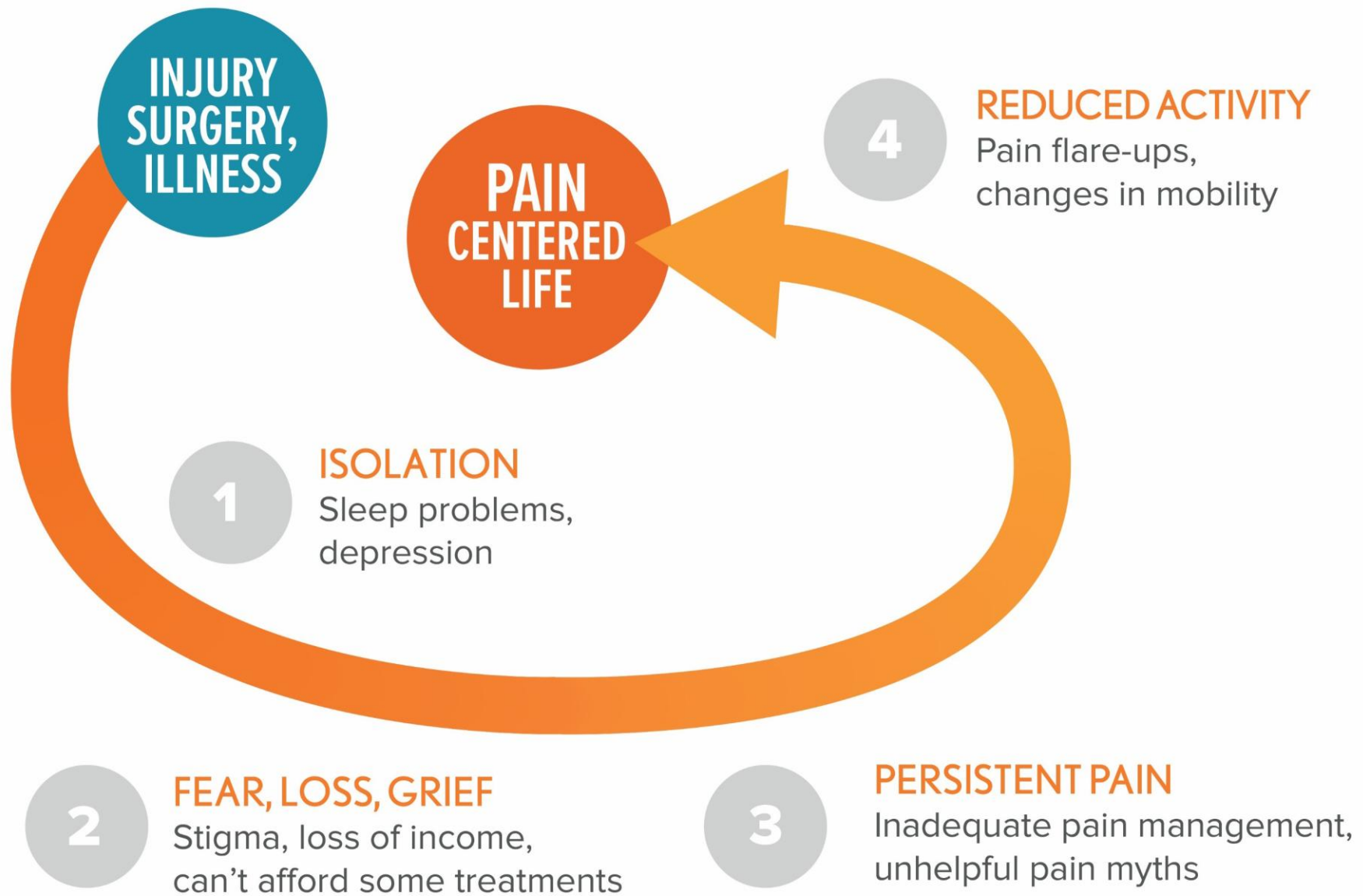
## HOW IT STARTS

> 3-6 months of persistent pain



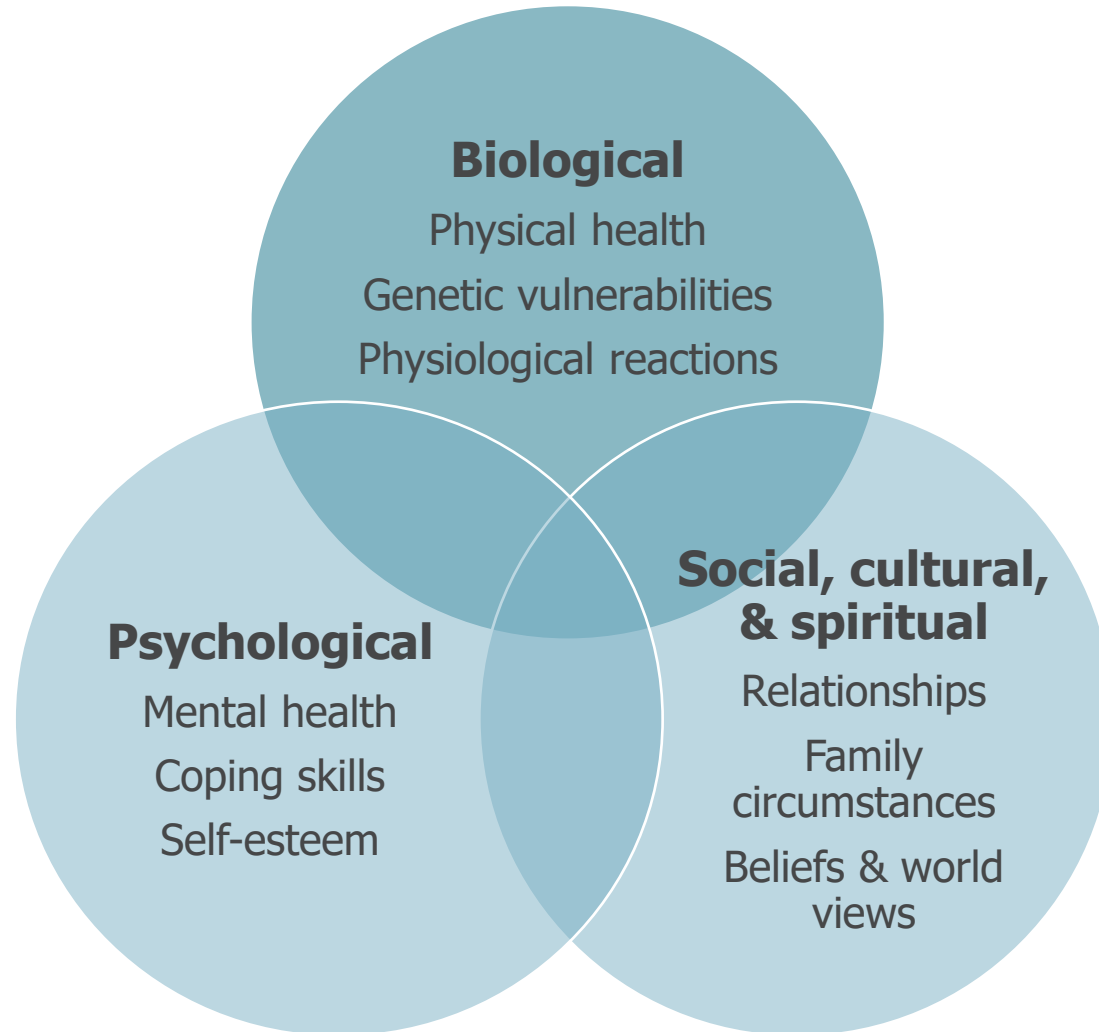
## RELATED IMPACTS

- Fatigue
- Loss of community
- Impact on family
- Career/job loss
- Financial decline
- Loss of housing
- Substance use
- Other health complications



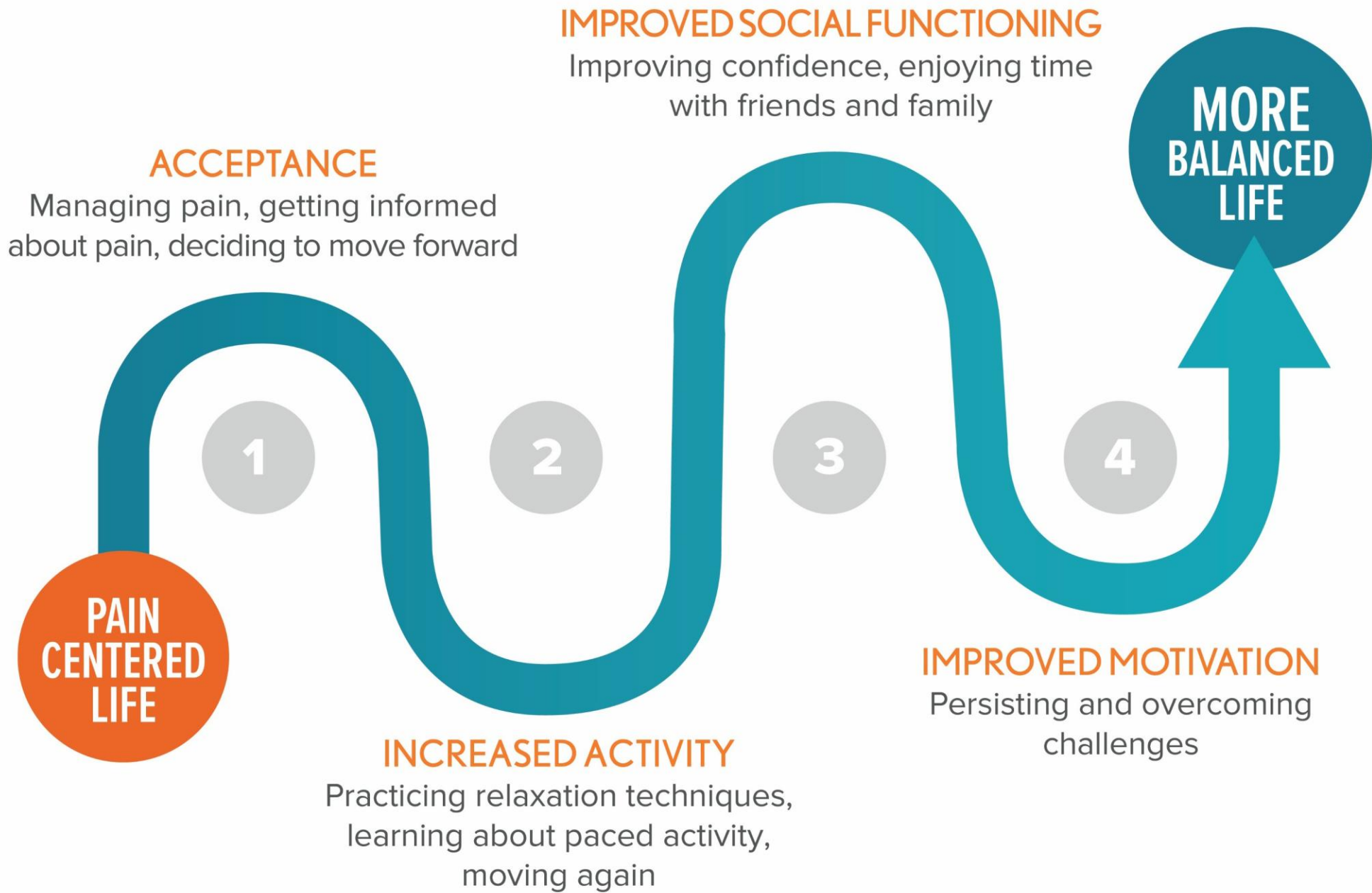
# APPROACHES TO CARE

# BIOPSYCHOSOCIAL APPROACH



# THE BIOPSYCHOSOCIAL MODEL OF CHRONIC PAIN

Biological changes	Psychological changes	Social changes
Flare-ups and decreased mobility	Grief	Change in income or loss of work
Chronic inflammation	Depression	Social isolation and feeling dismissed
Increased sensitivity from nervous system changes	Anxiety	Stress in relationships
Overactive pain signals from brain changes	Coping with trauma	More interactions with healthcare
Decrease in motor control	Increased negative bias	Loss of interest in hobbies
Difficulty sleeping	Low self-efficacy	Feeling alone in your pain



# PREVENTION

- Managing sleep
- Movement and physical therapy
- Social connection
- Healthy diet
- Reduce or eliminate excessive alcohol use and smoking
- Work and rest in a variety of postures
- Seek counselling for low mood
- Appropriate care after an injury or surgery
- Learning about managing and preventing chronic pain



*Reference: International Association for the Study of Pain, 2021*

# WHAT CAN WE DO ON A SYSTEM LEVEL?

- Improve awareness about chronic pain and management across systems
- Increase integration of care – **we all have a role**



# WORK RELATED INJURIES AND PAIN

# WORK RELATED INJURIES AND PAIN

- Work related injuries can result in long-term health impacts and chronic conditions including mental health, physical health and pain issues.
- Research on injured workers in Ontario found that chronic pain experienced 18 months after a disabling work-related injury was associated with higher rates of chronic conditions including arthritis and back pain, mood disorders and migraine.
- Institute for Work and Health indicates back and neck pain is leading cause of work absence in Canada.



## REFERENCES:

- [Association of persistent pain with the incidence of chronic conditions following a disabling work-related injury – PMC](#)
- [Pain and work](#)

Early pain management, mental health support and tailored return to work programs with pain literacy for injured workers is essential.



# WORKERS COMPENSATION POLICIES

# MCMMASTER HEALTH FORUM

- Chronic pain is common and growing and workers' compensation claims related to chronic pain are high and rising.
- Support is inconsistent across Canada: injured workers with chronic pain often navigate multiple systems, and workers' compensation policies and benefit models vary across provinces and territories.
- Key opportunity: better-aligned definitions, stronger support programs, and more coordinated policies could improve health, social, and economic outcomes for injured workers.



[Examining the features and impacts of workers' compensation policies for chronic pain on health, social, and economic outcomes](#)

[Enhancing programs and policies for injured workers with chronic pain in Canada](#)

# MCMMASTER HEALTH FORUM

Figure 2: Workers' compensation boards in Canada with chronic-pain-specific policies

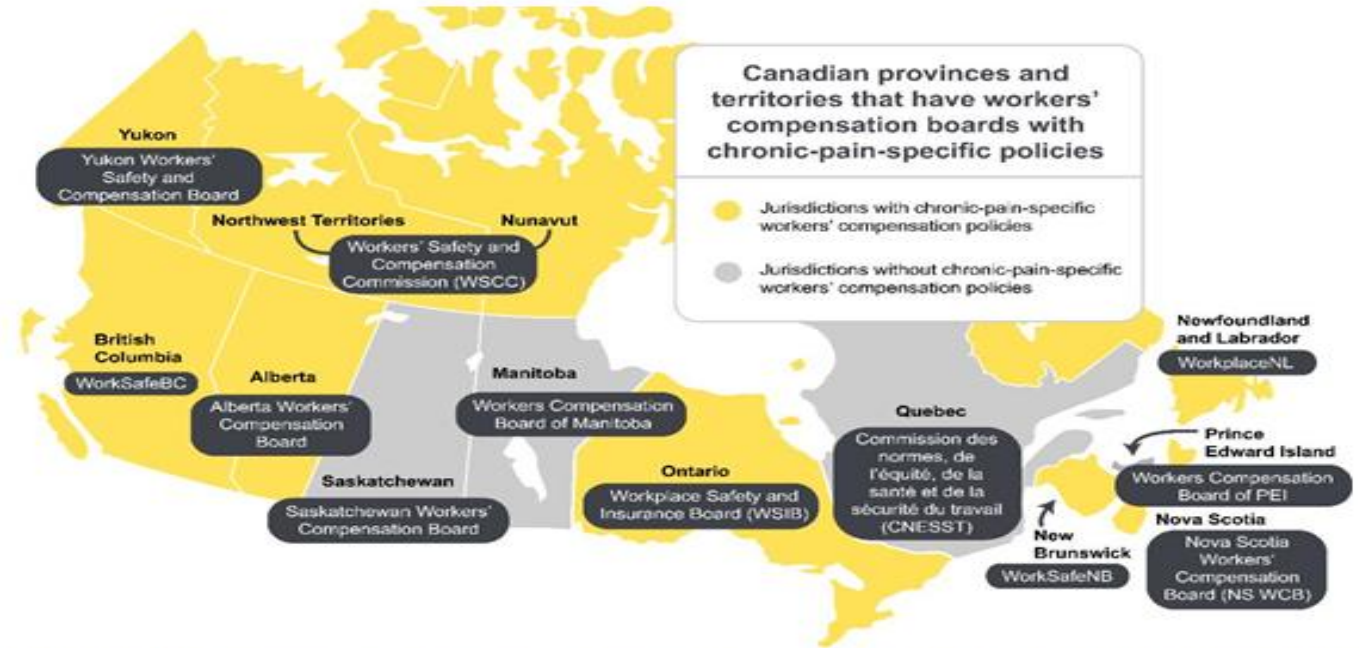
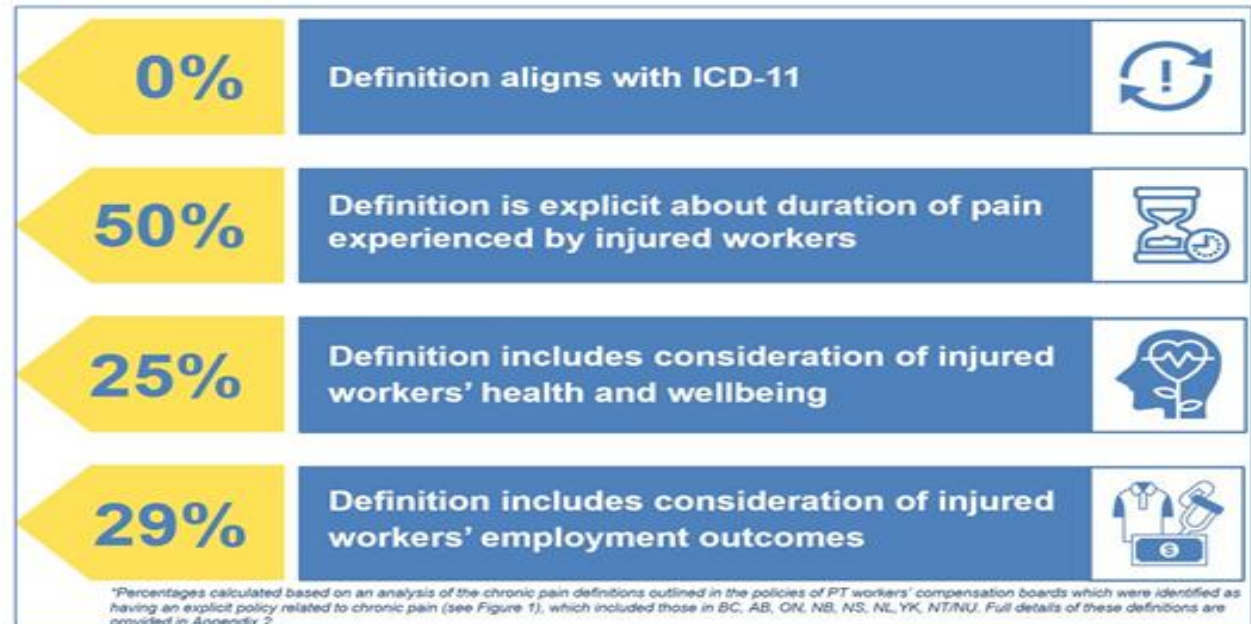


Figure 3: Features of definitions among workers' compensation boards in Canada with a chronic pain policy



[Evidence brief: Enhancing policies and programs to support injured workers with chronic pain in Canada](#)

# MCMMASTER HEALTH FORUM

## Elements of a potentially comprehensive approach for addressing the problem

Three elements of a potentially comprehensive approach to address the problem were developed and refined through consultation with the Steering Committee and key informants who we interviewed during the development of this evidence brief.



[Evidence brief: Enhancing policies and programs to support injured workers with chronic pain in Canada](#)

# PAIN BC PROGRAMS

# EMPOWER AND EDUCATE HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS

level 2

## INCREASE COMPLEXITY

BC ECHO for Pain

BC Adaptive Mentorship Network for Pain, MH & SU

level 1

## IMPROVE BASELINE KNOWLEDGE

Pain Foundations online course, Moving Through Pain

### IMPACT:



- Knowledge transfer
- Practice change
- Improved patient care
- Fewer specialist referrals
- Resourcefulness & **Hope**

# SUPPORTS FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH CHRONIC PAIN




# PAIN SUPPORT LINE




A safe space to talk about pain and its impacts

Information on pain and pain management



Help navigating systems and finding community resources

Help finding health care providers who specialize in pain



2025  
557 clients

[painbc.ca/supportline](https://painbc.ca/supportline)

# WHY DO PEOPLE CONTACT THE PAIN SUPPORT LINE?

## MOST COMMON NEEDS



Pain clinics and specialists  
Emotional support  
Finding a GP  
Counsellors / mental health services  
Support groups

Pain education  
Health care navigation  
Income supports

53%

## OTHER FREQUENT HELP REQUESTS



Employment  
Housing  
Supporting a loved one in pain  
Family supports  
Caregiver support  
Housekeeping services



Medication  
Home care  
Finding a physiotherapist  
Finding a massage therapist  
Interventional treatments



Legal/advocacy supports  
Social support  
Alternative therapies  
Food security  
Meal delivery services  
Recreation

# COACHING FOR HEALTH

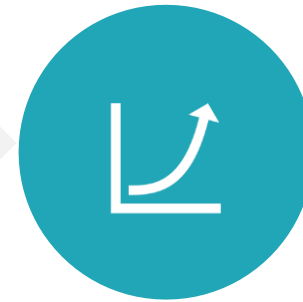
One-on-one sessions with a volunteer coach for 12 weeks to...



Learn about  
self-management



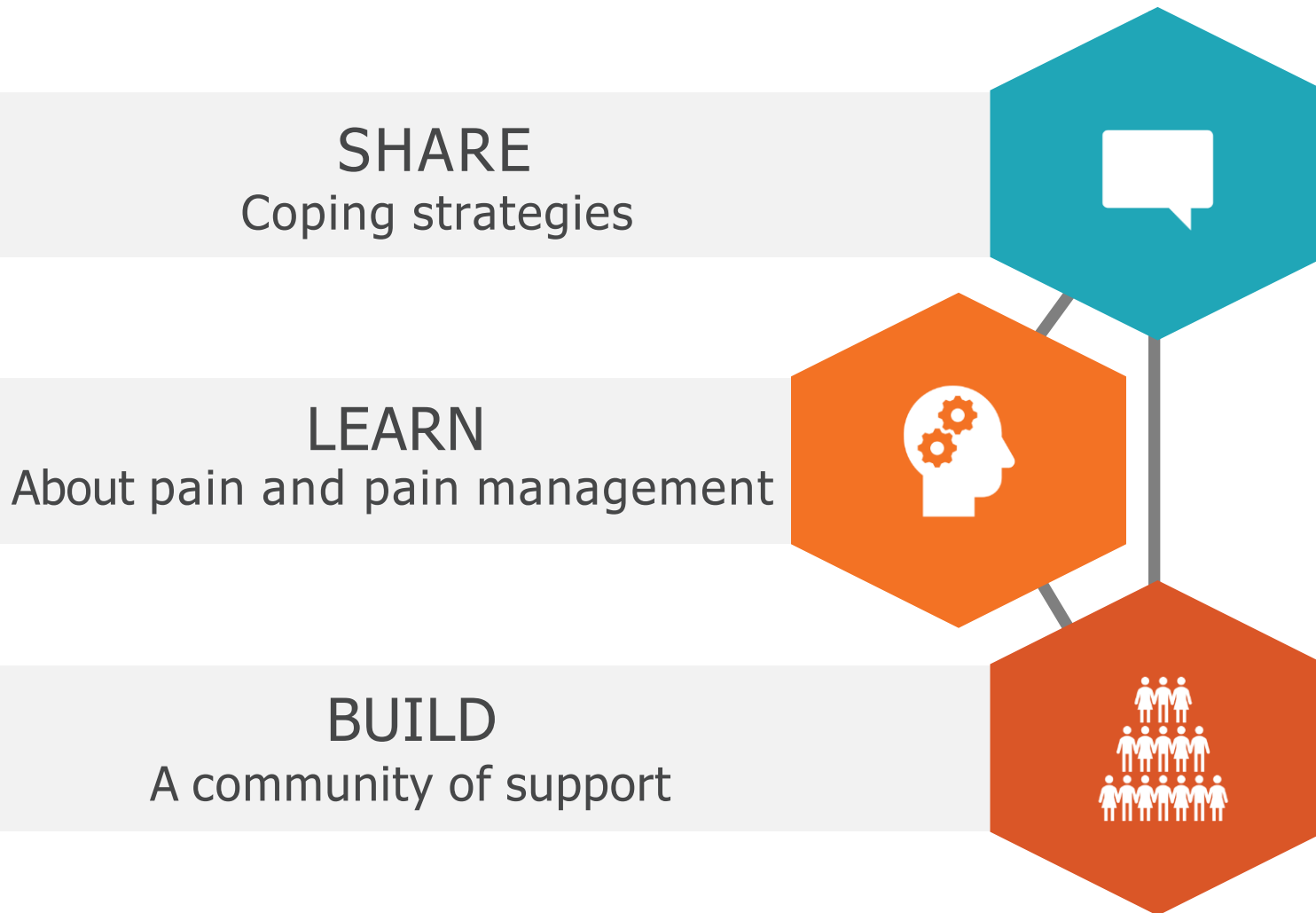
Regain  
function



Improve  
well-being

[painbc.ca/coaching](https://painbc.ca/coaching)

# PAIN SUPPORT & WELLNESS GROUPS

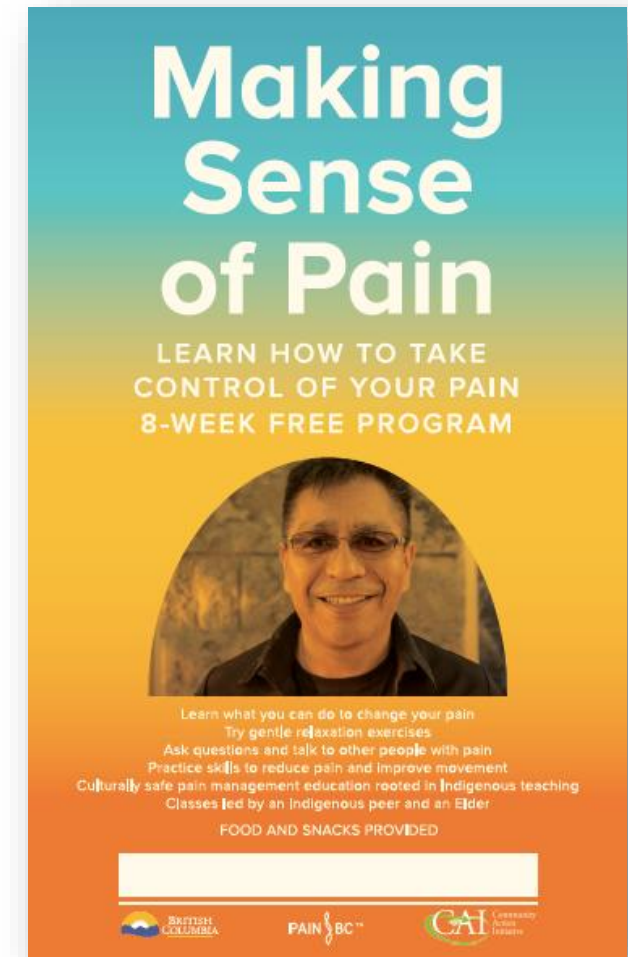


- Groups are peer led
- Run by region and demographic groups: BIPOC, LGBTQ2S+, young adults
- 33 different topics for peers to draw upon

[painbc.ca/supportgroups](https://painbc.ca/supportgroups)

# MAKING SENSE OF PAIN: ONLINE

- 10-week, online program from Pain BC designed to empower you to improve your quality of life and well-being.
- Uses a combination of teaching, discussion and practice activities, each week
- Developed and designed for people who experience social inequities- 'train the trainer' program that many community organizations deliver such as mental health and substance use programs
- Pain BC offers an 'online' version



[painbc.ca/making-sense-of-pain](http://painbc.ca/making-sense-of-pain)

# SUGGESTED PROGRAM SCHEDULE

- **Session 1:** Biopsychosocial model of pain & overview of course
- **Session 2:** Pain science
- **Session 3:** Stress management
- **Session 4:** Movement and pacing
- **Session 5:** Sleep and mood
  - *Two-week break for participants to integrate learning and try out their small changes*
- **Session 6:** Social support and connection
- **Session 7:** Nutrition
- **Session 8:** Grief and loss
- **Session 9:** Self-compassion and self-talk
- **Session 10:** Course wrap-up and recap

# TRADES AND PAIN

- Chronic pain disproportionately impacts people working in the trades.
- Over 50% of workers in the construction industry experience chronic pain putting them at significantly increased risk for substance use, mental health issues and overdose.
- There is a lack of awareness about prevention and management of chronic pain in the trades.
- Half of the people who died of overdose sought treatment for pain (2018 BC coroners report), many of these people are from the trades.
- 2023–2024 Joint ministerial working group on mental health, substance use and pain in the trades convened by BC Ministers of Labour and Mental Health and Addictions.

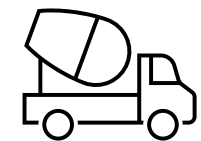


# TRADES AND PAIN PROGRAM

Pain BC's Trades and Pain project (TAP) develops education and support programs to help prevent and manage chronic pain for people working in the trades. 3-year Pain BC project Oct 2024-December 31, 2027.

## **The TAP project has the following goals:**

- Create a text support line to connect people in the trades with tailored pain management/support resources.
- Create a peer support program for people in the trades who live with pain (in progress)
- Develop education programs and awareness campaigns to help workers in the trades better understand chronic pain and how to access support.
- Inform policymaking and reduce stigma to improve the lives of people in the trades through prevention and management of pain.



# LivePlanBe & LivePlanBe+

Free, online, educational resources to learn how to manage your pain.

**LivePlanBe** is for you, if:

- you want to browse our library at your own pace
- there are specific topics which interest you

**LivePlanBe+** is for you, if:

- you are interested in a guided pain education program
- you would like an interactive learning experience



[liveplanbe.ca](https://liveplanbe.ca)

# EMPOWERED RELIEF®

- Learn about pain and what you can do to help yourself.
- Gain pain relief skills you can use right away.
- Receive a free binaural relaxation audiofile.
- Create a personal plan for pain relief.
- Monthly sessions on Wednesdays or Fridays.
- This **virtual 2-hour** evidence-based, skills-based webinar requires only **ONE VISIT!**



[paincanada.ca/resources/empowered-relief](http://paincanada.ca/resources/empowered-relief)

# RESOURCES AVAILABLE IN DIFFERENT LANGUAGES

- **Translated information sheets in Punjabi, Arabic, Cantonese, Mandarin, and French** that address a variety of topics such as communicating with loved ones, caregiving, income supports, stress etc. all designed to support people who live with pain.
- Making Sense of Pain sites (Punjabi, Arabic, Cantonese, Mandarin & French).

[painbc.ca/find-help](https://painbc.ca/find-help)

Thank you!



[www.painbc.ca](http://www.painbc.ca)



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