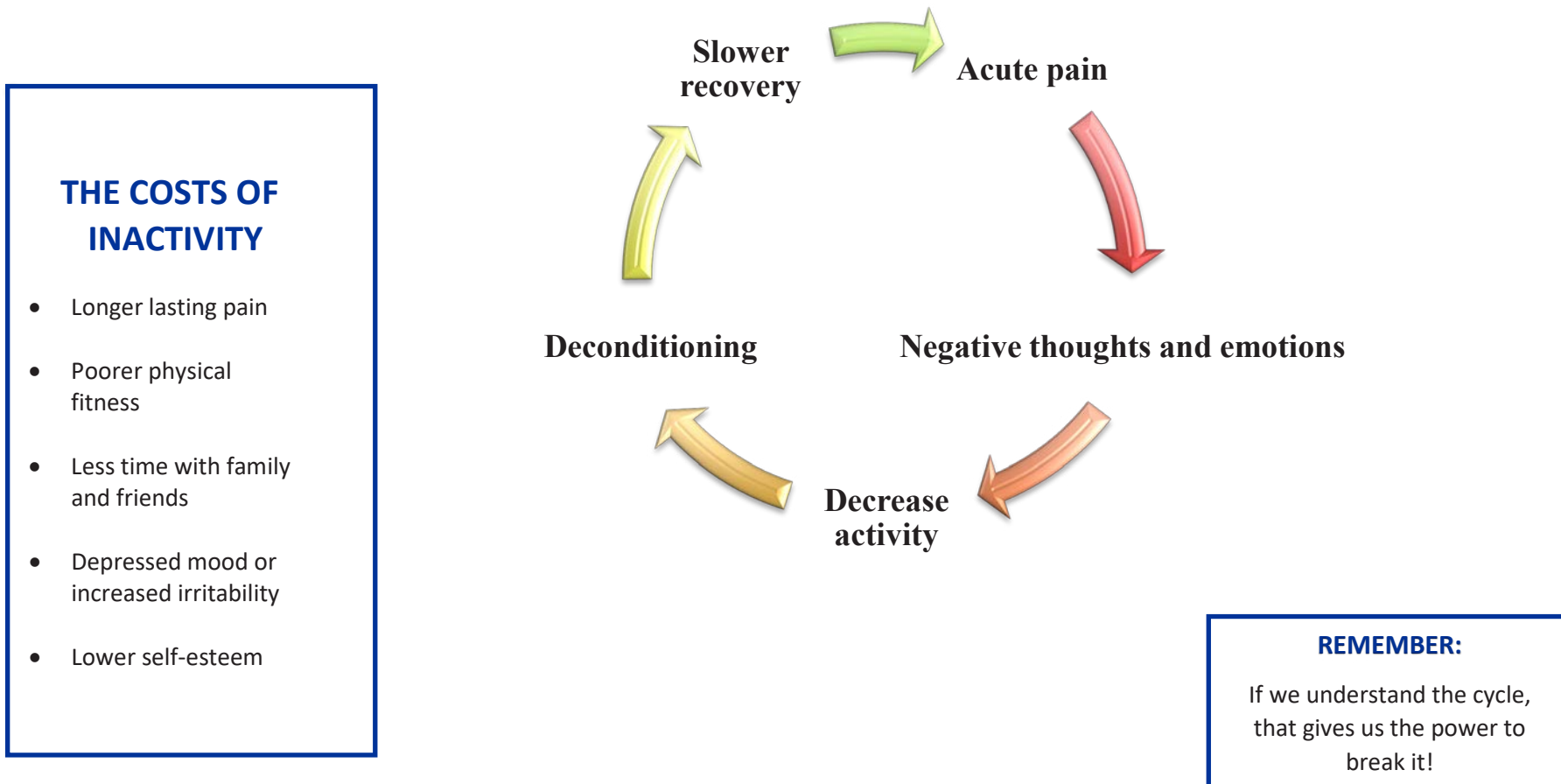


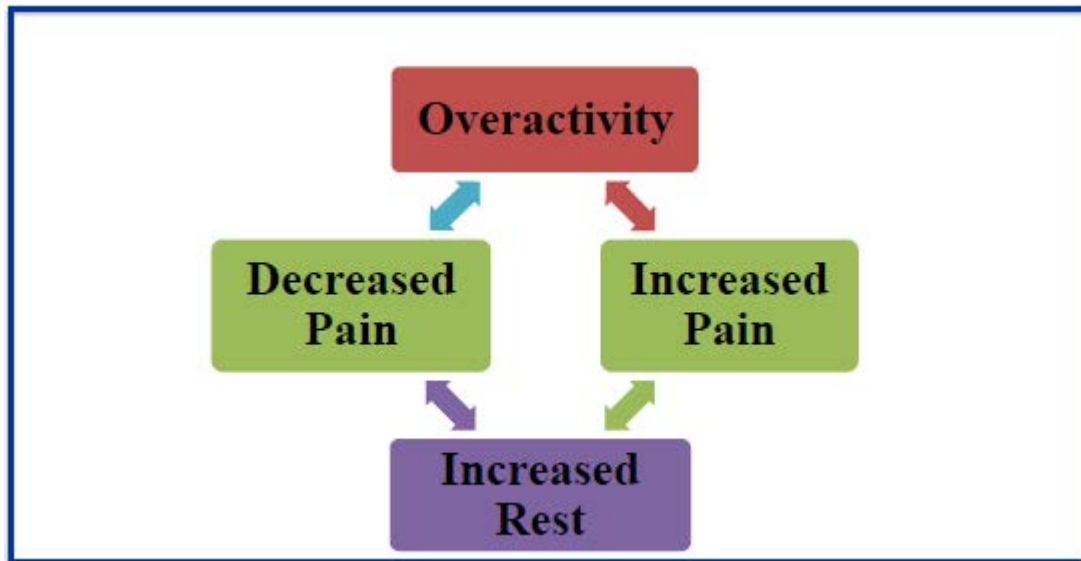
The Pain Cycle

In the short term, many injuries are appropriately treated with R-I-C-E (Rest, Ice, Compression, Elevation). However, extended periods of inactivity come with a cost, such as contributing to persistent or recurring pain. Many people with acute pain fear that movement will increase pain or cause physical damage/injury. This often leads to a decrease in activities, which leads to physical deconditioning (e.g., less strength and stamina), frustration, and sometimes depression. All of these factors contribute to increased avoidance of people and activities. While this cycle is understandable for those with pain, it is *not helpful!* In fact, it actually makes your pain and its effects worse over time. Now that we are aware of the cycle, we must learn how to break it.



Pacing Activities for Acute Pain

Some people are preoccupied with fears about harming themselves and avoid activity altogether. Other people are prone to overexerting themselves when they have a “good pain day.” The next day, they wake up with increased pain levels and are reluctant to resume physical activity. This cycle may happen on a recurring basis and can lead to negative consequences such as increased stress and anxiety, decreased efficiency, lowered self-esteem, and avoidance of any activity. The goal is to find a middle ground where you can strengthen your body through exercise without overexerting yourself.



Engaging in a moderate, safe level of activity on a regular basis helps avoid this cycle. Using the skill of pacing, where time is the guide for activity engagement, helps increase your activity level in a structured and safe manner. Pacing is about balancing activities, planning ahead, and working “smarter not harder.”

How To Pace

Estimate how long you can safely perform one of your regular activities (e.g., walking, yardwork, playing soccer) without causing a significant pain flare and set that minus one minute as your "active" goal time for the activity. Approximate the amount of "resting" time you will need in order to safely resume activity or continue your day. Increase the “active” time when it becomes comfortable to perform the activity.

Remember

- Make sure your plan is consistent with the recommendations given to you by your PCM and/or physical therapist

Module 2 Handout (Acute Pain)

- Approximated times may need to be adjusted after pacing begins
- Stick to time-based pacing goals whether you are having a 'good' or a 'bad' pain day to avoid the cycles of inactivity.
- Spread out activities during the week and be reasonable with the schedule so you can succeed. Moderation is the key!
- Use the table below to record how you pace activities this week. Use the sample as your guide, where each period of activity and rest equals one cycle. In the sample, 10 / 15 (1) indicates *working for 10 minutes, resting for 15 minutes for one cycle* of pacing.

	Sample	Activity 1	Activity 2	Activity 3
Activity	Swimming			
Active Goal	10 minutes			
Rest Goal	15 minutes			
Day 1	10 / 15 (1)			
Day 2	10 / 15 (2)			
Day 3	10 / 15 (3)			
Day 4	15 / 15 (1)			
Day 5	15 / 15 (2)			
Day 6	15 / 15 (3)			
Day 7	20 / 15 (2)			

Pleasant Activities List for Acute Pain

Try different activities to distract yourself from pain and improve your mood.

- Go fishing
- Get your hair cut or nails done
- Take a walk, exercise, or stretch
- Do yard work or gardening
- Read a book or magazine
- Participate in sports
- Go to the park
- Spend time with friends/family
- Woodwork
- Surf the internet
- Look into classes you'd like to take
- Plan a trip
- Draw or paint
- Walk your dog/play with your pet
- Listen to music
- Take or edit pictures

- Repair or fix something
 - Go to the pool or beach
 - Plan something nice for others
 - Go for a drive
 - Decorate or re-arrange your home
 - Knit or sew
 - Sing or play an instrument
 - Do hobbies (e.g., building models)
 - Enjoy a hot bath or shower
 - Chat with your neighbor
 - Write or journal
 - Play games or do puzzles
 - Go shopping
 - Meditate or pray
 - Other activities/ideas?
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Adapted with permission from K.M. Phillips, Ph.D.

