

# Neuroplastic Transformation

Unravelling and Rebalancing

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## Objectives

- Discuss the four phases of pain treatment
- Discuss the principles of intentional brain change: M.I.R.R.O.R.
- Discuss the questions to ask to help patients unravel their persistent pain

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We Cannot  
Maintain  
Misery

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# Phases of Treatment

1. Rescue Phase—Help the person out of unbearable pain
2. Stabilization Phase—Stabilize patient in a multimodal treatment program
3. Restoration Phase—Rebalance and focus on function
4. Transformation Phase—Live a rich, full and pleasurable life

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# Rescue Phase

- Practitioner
  - Compassionate comprehensive evaluation
  - Determine contributors to pain and suffering
  - Convey a message of hope regarding treatment options
  - Initial treatment is unlikely to resemble end of treatment
- Patient
  - Often overwhelmed, fearful, anxious, disillusioned
  - Need hope, relief, nurturing, soothing
  - Need to know that help is here now
  - From the beginning establish model of phases of care

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# Stabilization Phase

- Practitioner
  - Trials of treatment modalities
  - Monitor response
  - Craft an individualized plan
  - Balance passive and active treatments
  - Encourage progress
  - Reiterate goal is to move beyond improvement to relief
- Patient
  - First step toward active participation in care
  - Maintain an open attitude to trying new approaches
  - Be attentive to response to treatments
  - Convey details of response
  - Perseverance

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# Restoration Phase

- Practitioner
  - Give patient more active role
  - Educate, educate, educate!
  - Present module based neuroplastic treatment
  - Reduce medications
  - Provide multitude of ways to counteract pain
- Patient
  - Take the active role
  - Return to functional life
  - Use pain to evoke neuroplastic counter stimulation
  - Gather treatment team
  - Gain perspective on pain to overcome fear based response

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# Transformation Phase

- Practitioner
  - Become consultant to the patient
  - Step-ladder approach to symptom management
  - Emphasize pursuit of pleasure and purpose
  - Promote healthy lifestyle
- Patient
  - Take charge of treatment team
  - Have and use multiple strategies
  - Take rightful place in the world
  - Have fun
  - Live, love, laugh
  - Do good things

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# Key principles of intentional brain change: MIRRORING

- Motivation- Stay motivated to change brain, even without immediate pain reduction
- Intention- Focus is on changing the brain to change the pain
- Relentlessness- no pain spike goes by without an attempt to reduce it: Develop 15- 20 strategies
- Reliability- Count on the brain to make positive changes
- Opportunity- Change pain from symptom to signal
- Restoration- The goals are disconnecting excessive pain circuits and returning pain to normal function as an alarm about danger

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# Motivation

- The driving force to get started and to succeed
- Required to present the brain body with repetitive stimuli to effect change
- Lasting change takes time and practice
- Persistent effort despite perceived lack of immediate results requires motivation
- Attention, dedication, focus, time and energy are essential elements of staying motivated
- Make the work a pleasure not a chore

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# Intention

- Performing a thoughtful action with goal-directed purpose
- The goal is changing the brain, decreasing the pain and restoring the person
- Use your personal strengths and skills to counteract pain and direct brain change (orderly, creative, humorous, empathetic, artistic, etc)
- Intention adds energy to action
- Self-directed loving intention is soothing and healing

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# Relentlessness

- Persistence, perseverance, tenacity, commitment
- Persistent pain signals relentlessly stimulate the brain, which in turn relentlessly stimulates the peripheral body
- Let persistent pain be the signal to relentlessly counter-stimulate the brain
- Oppose associated emotional symptoms just as relentlessly
- Do not accept pain-never give in

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# Reliability

- Never fear, your brain is here
- You can consciously direct autonomic brain function
- The brain is always trying to maintain balance to secure survival
- Every skill mastered uses brain-body memory to move from deliberate to automatic
- Early deliberate, repetitive effort will be rewarded by the brain taking over

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# Opportunity

- Change the pain from torment to opportunity
- Opportunity gives hope
- Chance to sense the pain in order to understand it to figure out what will relieve it
- Relief is pleasurable and pleasure releases neurotransmitters that are analgesic
- Your body begins to learn and remember pleasurable relief
- Practice makes perfect

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# Restoration

- Persistent pain makes pain unreliable to protect us from danger, limiting this basic survival mechanism
- The first thing restored is a sense of hope
- Diffuse pain contracts to anatomic area of injury
- Pain free periods occur, gradually becoming more common than painful experience
- Days without pain become common, with pain occurring for brief periods following activity increases exceeding physical limitations
- Cognitively changing cellular function leads to a cellular change of cognitive function

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# Checking and Balancing

- Assess the response to any strategy
- This should be done throughout the process
- Incorporate and combine strategies for brain and peripheral body
- Always practice self-soothing
- Make it your own

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# Self-Assessment

- How do you spend your days?
- Is most of your day spent managing your pain?
- Has anything changed for you to free yourself up for things other than managing your pain?
- What will you do to cope with your next pain episode?
- Do you think you need all the medication you are currently taking? Why or Why not?
- Are you ready to wean down or off of any medications?

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# Self-Assessment

- What are the current strategies you employ to counteract your pain?
- Do you feel anything has changed in your brain or peripheral body since you started this program?
- How do you maintain hope?
- Who loves you?
- Who do you love?
- Are you in charge of your own life?

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# Self-Assessment

- How do you keep yourself motivated?
- What are you doing to make life more pleasurable?
- How do you know when you need help?
- How can you help yourself?
- How can you use other professionals and non-professionals to help?
- Are there things that worked earlier, but you have forgotten?

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# Self-Assessment

- Are there things you tried earlier that were not helpful, but might help now?
- How creative have you been with these approaches?
- How much have your beliefs about pain changed?
- What gives you meaning?
- Have you lost your but?

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# The Hard Questions

- Can you stand the discomfort of asking yourself the hard questions?
- Are you using your pain as a crutch?
- What fear do you still have about your persistent pain or about being without your pain?
- Are there things you are still doing that contribute to your abnormal pain?
- Are you living your life in too narrow a range of activity?
- What part of your pain is your suffering?

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# Connecting

- Resetting homeostatic mechanism
- Forged in the fire of pain
- Releasing fear from pain
- Embrace entropy
- Use the neuroplastic processes that led to pain persistence to restore pain protection
- Poised to transform

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