

How to manage setbacks

For people who live with persistent pain



Most people living with persistent pain experience setbacks. So being confident to deal with them is a 'must have' skill for an easier time. This booklet shows you how to deal with setbacks effectively.

What is a setback?

A setback is a period when living with your pain becomes even more challenging than usual. It can last for a few days or several weeks. A setback stops or limits many activities. It can make you feel down, disappointed or frustrated.

What triggers setbacks?

A setback can be caused by many factors. There may be a physical cause directly related to pain, such as overdoing exercise or chores. It may be the result of a viral infection. Or it may be that life itself triggers a setback - think of how you can be affected by a family crisis with a child or elderly relative, by having to work overtime, worry over debts or any other kind of worries.

Sometimes it all comes at once

Often setbacks are triggered by a combination of factors. For example, imagine all these things happening at once:

- My tooth pain with infection
- My brother, John keeps getting angry with me
- Sleep problems, waking hourly
- Fallen out with the neighbours
- I haven't enough money to pay the phone bill

When we have lots to contend with, it's no wonder we experience setbacks. So what can we do about them?

There will always be setbacks

Sadly setbacks are inevitable. However the good news is that learning how to plan for setbacks will make a real difference to:

- The impact that they have on your day to day life
- The length of time that they last
- How often they happen

Learn your triggers

Think of any issues in your life likely to cause you a setback

These are your 'triggers'. Write them down and try rating them on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 as a very low risk, and 5 very high risk.

Look at your last or current setback

Write down what may have contributed to your latest setback. On a scale of 1 to 5, rate how likely it is to happen again.

When a setback happens

When a setback strikes... don't panic!

Try to remember that it's only a short term problem – so don't stop everything. On the next page we've got some ideas to try.

Remember – you don't have to wait for a setback before making your plan. Try writing down a list of the ideas that you expect to be most helpful and keep them for when a setback hits. You can always update them in the light of experience.

Make a setback plan

A setback plan is really just a list of things to do that you know will help. In the middle of a difficult time it's easy to forget the things that help us get through it. Your list will remind you what works best for you.

So have a look at the ideas on the facing page. Try the ones that you think will work for you, or come up with your own. And if they work – add them to your setback plan!

Don't forget those triggers

Remember your list of triggers that are likely to cause a setback?

Why not add these to your plan too, so you can think ahead and try to avoid the things you know are 'high risk' for you.

Make a plan together

Lots of people find it easier to make a setback plan when there's someone else they can talk it through with. Ask your doctor, healthcare practitioner or whoever is supporting you. They will be able help you with your setback plan, so you'll be ready for when setbacks come along and be able to manage them more confidently.

Ideas to try during a setback

- Stay active. If you are forced to rest keep this to a minimum. The longer you rest the more difficult it is to get going again
- Keep doing your exercises, but reduce by half your normal level for a few days
- Cut your standing and walking time limits in half
- Use heat or ice packs
- Increase your relaxation time
- Use your pacing skills
- Set yourself some SMART short term goals
- Plan how you are gradually going to increase your exercises and activities
- Keep a diary of what is helping you to manage the setback this time
- Let family and friends know what they can do to help
- Review (don't dwell on) recent activities that may have caused the setback, what can you learn from this?
- If you need medication then take it regularly 'by the clock,' and reduce gradually as the setback improves
- Remember where you were before this setback. Focus on your achievements and not the setback

My setback plan

My triggers Things that trigger a setback for me	How high is the risk of this happening? 1 = very low risk 5 = very high risk
	1 2 3 4 5
	1 2 3 4 5
	1 2 3 4 5
	1 2 3 4 5
	1 2 3 4 5

My most recent setback What were the things that contributed to it happening?	How likely is it that these things will happen again? 1 = very unlikely 5 = very likely
	1 2 3 4 5
	1 2 3 4 5
	1 2 3 4 5
	1 2 3 4 5
	1 2 3 4 5

The things that help me get through setbacks Add as many ideas as you like (if you need inspiration, look at the list on the previous page or talk it through with someone who knows you – a friend, family members, doctor or other practitioner)

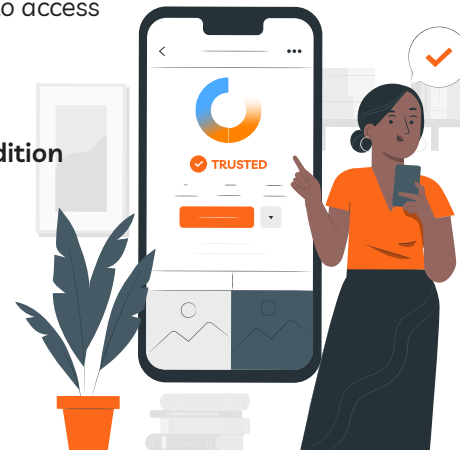
You may find it useful to share this setback plan with the GP or other health practitioner who is supporting you to manage your pain.



For more tips and ideas about how to self manage your persistent pain why not visit the *Live Well with Pain* website?

Live Well with Pain is dedicated to providing easy-to-use self management resources that are used and trusted by many thousands of people living with pain – and the clinicians who support them. Everything is free to access and the site covers topics like:

- understanding pain and the brain
- accepting pain as a long term condition
- setting goals for yourself – and achieving them
- learning how to pace yourself, so you can do more
- relaxation and mindfulness skills
- getting a good night's sleep
- relationships and pain
- pain medicines and their side effects
- planning for setbacks – and overcoming them



Visit [livewellwithpain.co.uk](https://www.livewellwithpain.co.uk)

and start your self management journey today.

