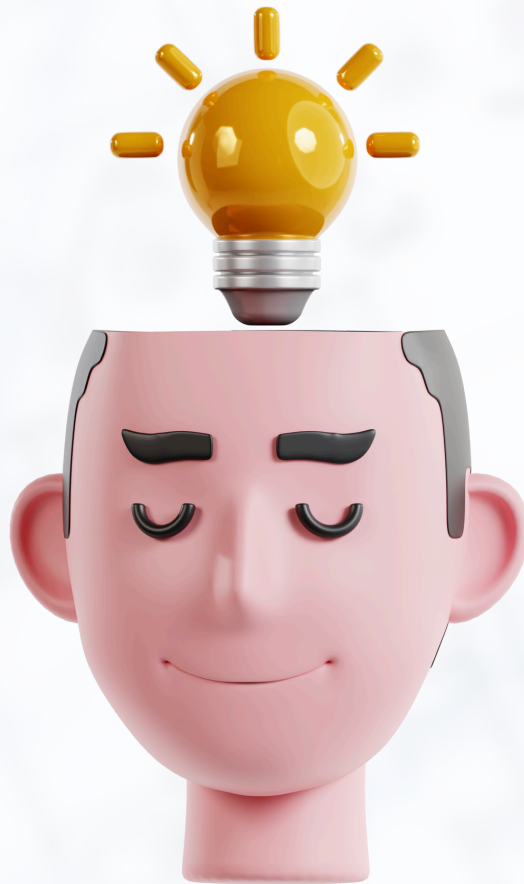


Strathcona

JOINT THRIVE METHOD

Pain Control Booklet



IAIN HARRINGTON, DC

BUILDING YOUR PAIN CONTROL TOOLKIT

I understand that when people bring up the topics of the mind-body connection, mindfulness, and meditation, it can sometimes come across as vague and impractical, like some kind of "hippy-dippy" nonsense with no real relevance in healthcare or pain management. After all, pain seems like a straightforward physical problem requiring a physical solution. But as you've discovered, that's not necessarily the whole story when it comes to your joint pain.

Below is a series of quotes from someone living with knee osteoarthritis before & after practicing these skills

"I can't expect improvement, I wouldn't expect improvement I'd expect further deterioration and probably further pain - I'd like to think the reverse but I'm trying to be a realist."

it's sad when you can't play with the kids and grandkids. Also, at work... you can't say 'I don't want to do that because it's going to hurt my knee' ... it's scary and is making me sort of think about my future....

"I've stopped doing all the things I love. I avoid stuff now because that's the only way to control pain"

"I'm not getting anywhere with my recovery and improving my joint health. There's no point to keep trying."



Thought



Feeling



Action



Result



"Many things influence my pain. Including my attitude towards it. And, Now I know stress can cause problems in your body."



"Some of the things I can do now, I couldn't do before. It still hurts at times but I don't worry about it anymore; I am confident it is ok and that I can keep going. Personally I think it's now up to me, to keep doing what I'm doing."



"When I slow my thoughts down, focus on my breathes & relax myself, the tension in my body dissolves. It allows me to control my joint pain. "



"Understanding it is not all about damage helped a lot, and enabled me to use my joint more, do more exercise, walk and even play tennis... It started with changing my outlook & tools to relax my mind"

There's a growing community of individuals who are effectively using mindfulness-based pain control strategies to manage their discomfort. Surprisingly, our experience of pain, or any unpleasant sensation, is significantly influenced by our mental state. Strangely enough, it often becomes more intense when we resist it. Regular mindfulness practice has been proven to help people not only cope but also lead richer lives despite dealing with joint pain.

Now, let's be crystal clear: there's no magic cure for osteoarthritis, and battling it head-on can sometimes worsen the situation. To truly live with osteoarthritis means developing pain control strategies that involve addressing our thoughts and emotions. How we perceive something directly impacts how we experience it. Our thoughts and emotions are the driving forces behind our actions, decisions, and ultimately, our outcomes, especially in terms of how much pain affects our daily lives.

That's precisely why I've included these invaluable tools in the Joint Thrive Challenge. The most successful individuals who've graduated from our program are the ones who wholeheartedly embraced these tools and gained complete control over their pain. Are they completely pain-free? No, but they've regained control over their futures and are pursuing the things they want, rather than letting pain hold them back. Embracing these tools is like giving yourself the best possible chance – there's nothing to lose and everything to gain by giving them a try.

So, let's dive in by focusing on your "big three." In the accompanying Pain Control Toolkit booklet, you'll find summaries of eleven tools. Your task is to select three that resonate most with you, the ones you're eager to begin practicing. From there, we'll explore these chosen tools in-depth and provide you with the resources needed to learn, practice, and master them. If one tool doesn't seem to be hitting the mark, we'll simply move on to another. Your journey toward a more pain-controlled, fulfilling life starts now.

My Starting Big 3:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

MINDFULNESS

Tool 1

Mindfulness means being fully present in the moment. It's not always easy, but it's about training your mind to stay focused on the here and now. We often experience these moments of awareness, like when we're absorbed in a beautiful sunset or savoring a delicious meal. However, these moments are fleeting as our minds tend to wander into distractions, like planning or daydreaming.

Mindfulness meditation involves extending these present-focused moments by repeatedly bringing your attention back to the current moment. It's like shifting from "doing" mode to "being" mode, getting out of autopilot. Initially, you choose something to focus on, like your breath or body sensations, and gently guide your attention back when distractions arise. This practice helps you engage more fully with the unfolding moment.

For those dealing with chronic pain, mindfulness meditation can be a valuable tool. It helps reduce worries and frustrations associated with pain, allowing you to ride the waves of pain, anxiety, stress, and fatigue. With practice, it builds confidence and helps you navigate positive experiences.

While mindfulness isn't a quick fix, it has life-changing benefits for millions of people, from pain management to improved relationships, creativity, focus, and peace of mind.

Research supports its effectiveness, showing moderate pain reduction and improvements in various aspects of life. It even helps people tolerate more acute pain. Neuroimaging studies indicate that meditation alters brain mechanisms to make pain less bothersome.

To start practicing mindfulness meditation for pain:

Step 1: Go to Youtube

Step 2: Type in the search bar



Reset: Decompress Your Body and Mind

Step 3: Follow along to the 10 min video in a comfortable, quiet space

The goal is to be able to get so good at this you can take it anywhere with you.

to be able to control your thoughts and emotions despite the pain. Not letting it have control over you.



PRIORITIZING YOU & FUN

Tool 2

Living with pain or illness can mean giving up things you love, like favorite hobbies and activities. But this only makes you feel worse, because you experience less pleasure. When you have pain, it's even more important to schedule activities that give you joy! Every minute you're engaged in a pleasurable activity is a minute you're less stressed, sad, and focused on pain. Moreover, pleasurable activities can increase levels of chemicals like serotonin (regulates mood), endorphins (natural painkillers), and dopamine (regulates feelings of reward and pleasure). These chemicals can then turn down your pain dial.

What are some activities that give you pleasure?

Add pleasurable activities into daily life so that you make sure to do something enjoyable every single day. This is especially important on days you have pain. Schedule one pleasurable activity every day this week. Make sure to specify time and place.

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

Sunday

BELLY BREATHING

Tool 3

Relaxation techniques often begin with a simple method called diaphragmatic or belly breathing. Your diaphragm, a muscle located just below your ribcage, plays a vital role in breathing. Many of us tend to breathe shallowly from our chest, especially when we're stressed, unwell, or in pain. You can check if you're chest breathing by placing a hand on your chest and observing if it rises when you inhale.

In contrast, relaxed diaphragmatic breathing engages your diaphragm and stomach muscles. When you practice belly breathing, you're training your breath to go deeper and slower. This has several benefits, including increasing your blood oxygen levels, improving circulation for healing, reducing stress hormones like cortisol and adrenaline, and helping lower your perception of pain.

Throughout the day, take a moment to assess your breathing. Notice whether you're stressed and shallow breathing or if you're relaxed and employing diaphragmatic breathing. When you catch yourself chest breathing, you have the power to make a positive change. By consciously switching to deeper and slower breathing, you can alter your body's chemistry, deactivate your stress response, and decrease your perception of pain.

Here's how to do it in just five minutes:

Find a quiet, uninterrupted space. Turn off screens and set a timer for five minutes.

Sit or lie down comfortably, with your arms and legs uncrossed. Close your eyes and place one hand on your belly and the other on your chest.

Remind yourself that, in this moment, you're safe with nowhere else to be.

Imagine your attention as a spotlight that you can control. Focus this spotlight on your breath.

Take a slow, deep breath in, noticing the air entering your nose and filling your lungs.

Exhale slowly.

On your next inhale, send the breath down into your belly, feeling it expand like a balloon. Ensure that the hand on your chest remains still.

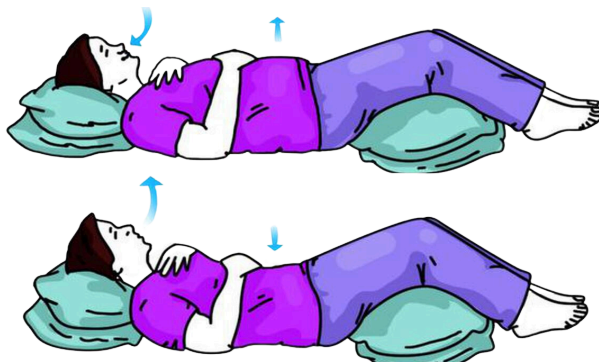
Hold your breath for a moment, feeling the air in your belly.

Slowly release the breath. As you exhale, let your shoulders and back relax, feeling your stomach muscles unwind.

Continue this pattern, maintaining your focus on your breath. With each inhale, send the air deep into your belly. With each exhale, repeat "Relax" in your mind, visualizing tension leaving your body.

Repeat until the timer rings, and if your mind drifts, gently bring your attention back to your breath.

This simple exercise can help you find relaxation, reduce stress, and manage pain more effectively.



TAKE POWER BACK FROM PAIN

Tool 4

Words that commonly describe chronic pain or illness reflect powerlessness and low self-reliance. Circle any words that sound familiar:

Sick	Disabled
Ill	Broken
Weak	Powerless
Damaged	

When you say these words, do they make you feel good—like you can do anything—or bad, like you'd rather crawl under a blanket and hide? Words focusing on pain and powerlessness keep you submissive and miserable. Instead, flip that language upside down. Start using words that make you feel strong and empowered instead, like these:

Resilient	Confident
Healthy	Capable
Strong	Powerful
Competent	

If these descriptors don't feel true to you, that's okay—even expected. Pain takes away power: that's its job. This can make it hard to tap into your strengths. But healing is a process, and feeling powerless isn't permanent. Take your power back using powerful language, even if you have to fake it 'til you make it. Pain doesn't rule you, even if it sometimes seems to. Your strengths, abilities, and accomplishments define you more than any health condition ever could. Give them a moment to shine. Look at the following sentence examples, then complete your own:



Cut here & place somewhere you'll see it everyday

I am **resilient** because:
(I never stop trying and always get back up when I get knocked down.)

I feel **healthy** when I:
(go swimming at the local pool.)

A time I felt **strong** was:
(when I talked to my boss about my needs at work.)

I am **confident** about (physical attributes, skills, accomplishments...):
(my beautiful blue eyes, my ability to problem-solve in tough situations, the award I won last year.)

I am **capable** because I can do the following things on my own:

What fills you with a sense of **Power**?
(when I set boundaries, boxing, building something)

1.

2.

3.

BODY SCAN

Tool 5

For many of us, stress not only has mental and emotional symptoms, it has physical symptoms too: headaches, back pain, and heartburn are just a few of the stress-related ailments we may experience. In fact, sometimes we are so caught up in our stress, we don't even realize our physical discomfort is connected to our emotional state. That's when a body scan meditation can be particularly useful and effective, allowing us to check in with our bodies.

By mentally scanning yourself from head to toe — many people imagine a laser copier scanning the length of their body — you are bringing awareness to every single part of your body, noticing any aches, pains, tension, or general discomfort. Staying present with and breathing into these sensations can help bring relief to our minds and bodies by evolving our relationship to pain, aches, and discomfort.

To start practicing mindfulness meditation for pain:

Step 1: Go to Youtube

Step 2: Type in the search bar Reset:

 **9-Minute Body Scan: Anxiety Skills #31**

Step 3: Follow along to the 10 min video in a comfortable, quiet space



CATCH YOUR VOICE

Tool 6

When we're in pain or unwell, we sometimes tell ourselves negative things in our minds. Our **"Pain Voice"** These thoughts can be like bullies, making us feel worse and saying things that aren't true. It's important to recognize this and not believe everything these thoughts say. By paying attention to them, we can challenge their false claims and not let them control us.

Picture your Pain Voice and imagine what he or she looks like. Notice that she is not you—she's just a cruel bully in your head who pretends to be in charge. I picture my Pain Voice as a bossy, - unattractive blonde with a tight ponytail and lumpy black clothes. She has evil, bulging eyes, dark V-shaped eyebrows, and yells into a megaphone. I call her Beasley. My inner bully, Beasley, is a major pain.

She has critical things to say about how I look, how I talk, and the things I say. She enjoys ruminating about catastrophes, pandemics, and natural disasters, vividly imagining every possible worst-case scenario. She constantly comments on my pain and health, and gets particularly loud before procedures and doctor's appointments. She always predicts these will go terribly and be unbearably painful. She constantly tries to trap me with her negativity.

Tune in to your Pain Voice and really listen hard. You've heard her a million times before. What kinds of negative, catastrophic, self- defeating things does she say to you? Here are some common Pain Voice thoughts. Circle the ones that are familiar, and add your own:

I'm broken.
My life is always going to be like this.
Nothing will ever help me.
There's no point trying this treatment because nothing else has helped.
I can't do anything on days I'm sick or in pain.
I'm not good enough. I'm not doing enough.
My body is my enemy.
I'll never get better.
Pain is an indication that my body is broken.
If I (exercise, weed, go sailing), I'll reinjure myself.
My friends have all moved on without me.
People think I'm faking.
Pain is ruining my future.
I'll never be in shape like I was before.
Tomorrow (next week, next year) is going to be as bad as today.



The Voice of Wellness: Wise Voice

There's another voice inside you, your Wise Voice. She's logical, calm, and kind, offering positive and encouraging thoughts. Sometimes, she sounds like someone who cares about you. But often, your loud Pain Voice overpowers her. Imagine your Wise Voice as someone who guides and supports you. She's always there with you.

To overcome Pain Voice, follow these three steps:

Step 1: Catch it. Get familiar with your recurring Pain Voice thoughts so you can recognize and catch them the instant they happen. Slow them down so they're no longer automatic. Remember your triggers—what situations, behaviors, feelings, and events activate negative thoughts?

Step 2: Check it. Once you've caught Pain Voice, question her to determine whether that negative thought is true. Check to see whether it's distorted, and gather logical evidence against it. Then challenge thoughts that are harmful, exaggerated, or untrue.

Step 3: Change it. Use the evidence you gather to replace Pain Voice with the voice of wellness, your Wise Voice. At first, you may not hear Wise Voice very often, but she's even more powerful than Pain Voice. Once you start attending to her kind, rational, compassionate messages, she'll get even stronger.

GRATITUDES & GOOD THINGS

Tool 7

The “Gratitudes and Good Things” activity regulates pain by inspiring feelings of happiness and gratitude. Noticing the good things in your life, no matter how small, helps you focus on things for which you’re grateful, lifting your mood and shifting your attention away from pain to things that inspire joy. This trains your brain to notice people and experiences that generate feelings of happiness, love, and safety. It also tunes you in to things that make life worth living!

Research shows that gratitude practices and positive thoughts can improve overall mood; increase your sense of meaning and purpose; reduce frustration, anger, and irritability; reduce loneliness; promote immune functioning; reduce symptoms of illness; increase ability to cope with pain; and improve overall physical health. A regular gratitude practice like this one can even change your brain pathways, rewiring your brain.

Positive thoughts and gratitudes also increase the brain’s production of serotonin and dopamine, chemical messengers that regulate mood, appetite, sleep...and pain. For these reasons, the Gratitudes and Good Things activity can be a powerful addition to any pain-management plan.

How to Do It

Find a quiet place to sit where you won't be disturbed for ten to twenty minutes. Turn off all screens. Make a list of Ten Good Things for which you're grateful or that make you feel happy. These can be memories, kind things people have done for you, kind things you've done for others, a list of favorites (foods, movies, books, animals, vacations), activities you're looking forward to, people you admire, and any other good things that have happened in your life. They don't have to be big things—they can be as ordinary as your cat purring or a gooey slice of pizza. It can be something that happened this week or many years ago.

YOUR TEN GOOD THINGS

Now make today's list. These can be sourced from the answers you generated above, or ideas they inspired.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

How did this practice make you feel, physically and emotionally?

Commit to writing Ten Good Things each day. When and where will you practice?

POSITIVE LANGUAGE RE-WIRING

Tool 8

Positive Language Rewiring is a simple yet effective tool for pain control that harnesses the power of your words to reshape your thoughts and improve your overall well-being. By choosing your words mindfully and using the tool's three key strategies, you can reduce pain-related suffering, increase hope, and break free from the cycle of negative thinking.

How to Use It:

1. Give Pain Less Airtime:

When: Be mindful of when and how often you talk about your pain.

Why: Constantly discussing pain can amplify your suffering by giving it more attention and power.

How: Share your pain experiences with trusted individuals, but avoid excessive pain-talk.

Result: By giving pain less airtime, you shift your focus away from it, reducing its impact on your daily life.

2. Use the Word "Yet":

When: Whenever you catch yourself thinking or saying negative, permanent statements.

Why: "Yet" introduces hope and the possibility of change into your mindset.

How: Replace phrases like "I can't" or "I'll never" with "I can't yet" or "I'll never... yet."

Result: Your brain starts believing in the potential for improvement, making change more achievable.

3. End Negative Expectations:

When: When setting goals or making plans.

Why: Positive expectations can drive you to take action and achieve your goals.

How: Replace "if" with "when" and eliminate "might" and "maybe" from your statements.

Result: You empower yourself to take positive actions and increase the likelihood of success.

4. Leaving Past Pain Behind:

When: Whenever you find yourself ruminating about past pain episodes.

Why: Constantly dwelling on past pain can trigger negative emotions and even physical discomfort.

How: Observe your language and reduce discussions about past pain.

Seek support from a therapist specializing in trauma or pain management.

Result: By leaving past pain where it belongs and addressing it in therapy, you can free your mind and body from its lingering effects.

Positive Language Rewiring is a valuable tool that anyone can use to regain control over their pain experience and foster a more hopeful and empowering outlook on life. Remember that consistent practice and patience are key to making these language changes a natural part of your daily routine.

DISTRACTION

Tool 9

These strategies shift your focus away from pain and onto enjoyable and engaging activities, reducing your perception of pain. The tool provides a range of distraction methods, including cognitive, physical, emotional, and sensory techniques.

How to Use It:

1. Understanding the Power of Distraction:

- **Why:** Recognize that engaging in fun and interesting activities can diminish the perception of pain.
- **Action:** Reflect on a time when you focused on pain and noticed it intensified, and contrast it with a time when you were immersed in an enjoyable activity, causing the pain to fade into the background.
- **Result:** Understand how distraction can influence your pain experience positively.

2. Combining Distraction Strategies:

- **Why:** Learn that combining different types of distraction strategies can be more effective in managing pain.
- **Action:** Consider the story of Malika, who effectively used multiple distraction techniques to cope with her constant joint pain.
- **Result:** Realize that you can use a combination of cognitive, physical, emotional, and sensory distractions to suit your needs.

Your Distraction Plan:

- **Action:** Create your own distraction plan by identifying strategies that might work for you during tough days.

Distraction Using Activities:

- **Action:** Make a list of your favorite activities and select one to engage in when you need distraction from pain.

Distraction Using Emotions:

- **Action:** Find media or activities that generate pleasant emotions, such as watching a funny movie or listening to calming music.

Distraction Using Brain Teasers:

- **Action:** Challenge your mind with tasks like Sudoku, crossword puzzles, riddles, or math problems that divert your attention from pain.

Distraction Using Your Five Senses:

- **Action:** Explore how your five senses—sight, sound, taste, touch, and smell—can generate distracting sensations. This might involve taking a hot bath, listening to music, or enjoying a cold or hot sensation.

Additional Distraction Strategies:

- **Action:** The list includes various activities such as taking photos, cooking, reading, drawing, engaging in mindfulness practices, going for a walk, playing games, trying new hobbies, and more.

Your Own Ideas:

- **Action:** Add your unique distraction strategies to the list, tailored to your preferences and interests.

Using this tool, you can create a personalized distraction plan that includes activities and techniques to help you manage pain effectively. Experiment with different distraction strategies to discover what works best for you on challenging days.

PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION (PMR)

Tool 10

"Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR) for Pain Management" is a structured exercise that helps you relieve muscle tension, reduce stress, and manage pain by systematically tensing and then relaxing different muscle groups in your body. By incorporating this practice into your routine, you can become more aware of the physical sensations related to tension and relaxation, ultimately improving your pain management skills.

How to Use It:

1. Understanding Muscle Tension and Pain:

- Why: Learn why muscle tension is a common response to pain and stress and how it can exacerbate pain.
- Action: Acknowledge that daily stress, frustration, and anger can contribute to muscle tension and increase pain.
- Result: Recognize the importance of addressing muscle tension to improve pain management.

2. Setting Aside Time for PMR:

- Why: Understand the importance of allocating 10 to 15 minutes for this exercise.
- Action: Commit to creating a quiet, screen-free environment where you won't be disturbed.
- Result: Create a conducive setting for practicing PMR effectively.

3. Initiating the PMR Exercise:

- Why: Learn the process of progressively tensing and then relaxing various muscle groups.
- Action: Follow the guided steps for tensing and relaxing your feet, calf muscles, thighs, stomach, shoulders, biceps, hands, and facial muscles.
- Result: Experience a sense of relaxation and warmth as you release muscle tension.

4. Scanning Your Body and Achieving Relaxation:

- Why: Understand the purpose of scanning your entire body for relaxation.
- Action: Conduct a full-body scan, letting relaxation flow from your head to your feet.
- Result: Feel the weight of relaxation throughout your body and create a safe, relaxed mental space.

5. Reassessing Stress, Anxiety, and Pain Levels:

- Why: Learn why it's essential to reassess your stress, anxiety, and pain levels after the exercise.
- Action: Rate your stress, anxiety, and pain on a scale from 0 to 10, both before and after the PMR exercise.
- Result: Observe changes in your stress, anxiety, and pain levels, potentially indicating the effectiveness of PMR.



YOUTUBE SEARCH:

"Reduce Stress through Progressive
Muscle Relaxation"



SELF-HEALING IMAGERY

Tool 11

"Self-Healing Imagery" is a technique that leverages the power of your imagination to transform your perception of pain. Just as your mind can conjure vivid images of external environments, it can also influence your internal bodily experiences. By visualizing and actively changing the way you perceive your pain, you can reduce its intensity and improve your overall well-being.

How to Use It:

1. Understanding the Mind-Body Connection:

- Why: Recognize the link between your imagination and your physical responses.
- Action: Understand that your body can react to mental images with genuine physiological responses, including changes in heart rate and muscle tension.
- Result: Realize that by controlling the images in your mind, you can positively impact your pain perception.

2. Preparing for the Imagery Exercise:

- Why: Set the stage for the self-healing imagery exercise.
- Action: Find a quiet, interruption-free space, turn off screens, close your eyes, and take a few deep belly breaths to begin relaxing.
- Result: Create an environment conducive to visualization and relaxation.

3. Creating Your Pain Image:

- Why: Explore your current perception of pain by focusing on its characteristics.
- Action: Observe and describe your pain, noting its color, size, shape, texture, temperature, and more.
- Result: Form a clear mental image of your pain, which you'll use as a reference point.

4. Creating Your Healing Image:

- Why: Imagine what your pain-free self looks and feels like.
- Action: Visualize the pain-free version of the body part in pain, detailing its color, size, shape, texture, and more.
- Result: Form a vivid mental image of your body as it would appear without pain.

5. Using Imaginary Transformation:

- Why: Employ your imagination to facilitate the transformation from pain to healing.
- Action: Envision a magical process that changes your pain image into the healing image. You can manipulate color, temperature, size, shape, texture, or any other quality.
- Result: Transform your perception of pain and imagine your body healing.

6. Reflecting on the Experience:

- Why: Assess how your pain and emotions have changed after the exercise.
- Action: Consider any shifts in pain characteristics and how you feel physically and emotionally.
- Result: Gauge the effectiveness of the imagery exercise in reducing pain and stress.

7. Setting a Reminder:

- Why: Ensure you remember to practice this technique regularly.
- Action: Schedule a specific time to revisit the imagery exercise and find a way to remind yourself to do it.
- Result: Establish a routine for using self-healing imagery whenever needed.