

LEARN TO LIVE BULLETIN

Your guide in wellness & mental health

Using Your Mind to Manage Your Pain

Does chronic pain seem to steal the joy from day-to-day living and keep you from being the productive person you used to be? Do you experience discouraging thoughts that leave you wondering if you will ever feel better? If so, you're not alone.

Chronic pain affects over 100 million adults in the US, causing constant discomfort and impairment. The struggles and limitations that come with chronic pain can feel frustrating and debilitating. It can create even more challenges when there is uncertainty about where the pain is coming from, how long it will persist, and especially when there aren't any answers for how to make it go away. This can leave those suffering feeling dismissed, powerless, and hopeless while the pain continues to impact sleep, work, and relationships, and dramatically reduce quality of life. Finding some degree of control through pain self-management techniques can make a big difference in our overall experience. While pain medication can sometimes provide a level of relief, it's often not enough. Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) offers an evidence-based approach that can help alleviate chronic pain by reshaping the thought patterns and behaviors that sometimes amplify pain signals over time, even after an injury has healed.



How CBT Can Provide Relief for Those Suffering from Chronic Pain

Research shows that CBT can often lead to significant improvements in pain levels, disability, mood, and quality of life that can be maintained long-term. Although chronic pain is complex, CBT can provide a sense of control and empowerment for many of those suffering. You might seek out the support of a CBT provider who specializes in chronic pain. You might also find some benefit from Learn to Live's self-paced digital platform where we have many of the CBT strategies that can help, including:

- **Thought inspection:** Helps you identify and challenge thoughts (i.e., "My life will always be horrible because of this pain") that focus on, and therefore worsen the pain experience.
- **Relaxation techniques:** Progressive muscle relaxation and guided imagery can reduce muscle tension and lower pain sensitivity.
- **Activation:** Encourages appropriate levels of activity within the current limitations of your pain (rather than avoiding many activities out of fear of pain, which can increase sensitivity long-term).

By lowering perceived suffering, CBT empowers those struggling with chronic pain to reclaim a sense of control and live fuller lives.

Getting Started

Chronic pain is often accompanied by stress and anxiety that can further amplify our pain, so you could start with our Resilience or Stress, Anxiety, & Worry programs. Or consider taking a quick mental health assessment by scanning or visiting learntolive.com/partners and enter access code **MIIA**. Learn to Live is available to you and your family members, ages 13 and older at no cost.

