

Refocus your pain

Sometimes people in pain start to focus their entire lives around their pain, says a pain specialist.

“I find the people who feel better about their situation are the ones who can focus their lives around their activities instead. They gauge how they are by what they can do,” observes Dr. Heather Tick, professor of integrative pain medicine at the University of Washington.

“We reinforce the nerve connections of the things we focus on. If we focus on pain, we make those connections stronger. If we can shift the focus, we can distract ourselves and reinforce other nerve connections instead,” said Dr. Tick.

In her book, *Holistic Pain Relief*, she offers some strategies to refocus:

- Eat an anti-inflammatory diet, which means eating low-glycemic foods and good-quality proteins, avoiding foods with added chemicals, and drinking plenty of fresh water.
- Talk to your doctor about taking anti-inflammatory supplements. Examples are omega-3s, vitamin D, and magnesium.
- Exercise regularly to the best of your current ability and expect to improve.
- Identify your sources of stress and try to spend some time de-stressing. For example, meditate or do breathing exercises.
- Take responsibility for getting well.
- Find joy and meaning in your life.
- Find a primary practitioner and a treatment team you like working with.

