

WORKING WITH PAIN

A GUIDE TO A NEW RELATIONSHIP WITH PAIN

Most of us approach pain the same way: as something to fight, fix, or get rid of as quickly as possible. That approach is understandable. Pain is unpleasant, and wanting it to stop is only human.

But there is another possibility. Pain is a form of protection — one of the body's ways of signaling that something deserves our attention. When we treat it as an enemy, we are, in a very real way, making protection our adversary. This can in turn lead to more protection and more pain.

This guide explores a different orientation: working *with* pain rather than against it. Not because we have to like it or pretend it isn't there, but because curiosity and cooperation tend to produce something that resistance rarely does: learning, safety, and healing.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide is organized into several sections, each exploring a different dimension of your relationship with pain.

There are no right or wrong answers. The prompts are simply invitations to look honestly at your own experience and reflect on *what is* and *what could be*.

Write as much or as little as feels useful. Return to any section as often as you'd like.

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Section 1: What pain means and how we relate to it

How do I typically relate to the pain? What is my relationship with it?

What does pain mean to me, and how has that meaning shaped my relationship with it?

Section 2: Our strategies and instincts related to managing the pain

What has been my approach to managing the pain so far (pushing through, avoiding, researching, accepting)? What has worked, and what hasn't?

When the pain is present, what has been my first instinct? What does that tell me?

Section 3: Our inner experience when the pain has arisen

How have I spoken to myself when the pain has been bad, and what would a kinder inner voice sound like or say?

On an average day, how much of my attention goes toward pain, and how much toward other experiences (e.g. comfort, ease, pleasure, warmth)? Is that balance something I'd like to shift?

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Section 4: Pain as information, and what it might be teaching us

If pain is a form of protection, what might my body be trying to protect me from or draw my attention toward when it is present?

What have I learned about myself through the process of working with the pain so far?

Section 5: A different way of being with pain

What would it feel like to simply allow the pain to be there — not fighting it, not welcoming it, just letting it exist?

What was a time that I experienced pain without it dominating my experience; when it was present but not in charge? What made that possible?

Section 6: What could be

Is it possible that pain and pleasure — difficulty and ease — can coexist? What would my life look like if pain was present but not in charge?

What would I like my relationship with pain to be like, ideally? What's one shift I can make to move toward this?