



FIVE TOP TIPS FOR DEALING WITH CHRONIC PAIN AT WORK

*Sound advice from Bee@one Coaching
Transforming your Chronic Pain*



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Work plays a fundamental role in shaping our identity; it provides us with a purpose, financial stability, and companionship. However, if you live with chronic pain, you may face many challenges in maintaining your health and wellness within the workplace. Millions of individuals manage chronic pain while working. Unfortunately, waking up (if you manage to sleep) to intense pain and fatigue makes it difficult to muster the motivation and energy to fulfill work responsibilities. This PDF offers valuable tips to encourage proactive chronic pain management in your work environment.

1. Effectively Communicating Your Pain to Others

Chronic pain can be difficult for others to grasp and empathise with, mainly since it is often not visible. In the workplace, you have the right to confidentiality and are not required to disclose your health status to anyone. However, different levels of disclosure can be beneficial. For instance, let your employer know they can make reasonable adjustments to your work. Sharing your pain with colleagues helps them understand how and when to offer support. Please look at your relationship with your employer, work objectives, and the company culture to determine the level of disclosure that feels right for you.

2. Your Physical Work Environment

If you haven't done so, adjusting your work setup can be essential for managing your pain effectively. This might involve something as simple as switching to an ergonomic mouse or arranging for a thorough workplace assessment by your employer. Whether you work in an office or from home, keep these suggestions in mind:

- A sit-to-stand desk to encourage movement and relieve pressure on joints
- A high-quality supportive chair that offers lumbar support
- An ergonomic keyboard
- A vertical mouse
- Adjusting computer screen settings to minimise blue light and brightness, which can alleviate migraines
- Utilising speech-to-text software

3. Workplace Changes

When you return to work, it's beneficial to seek assistance. Your primary healthcare provider or employer might connect you with a return-to-work specialist or an occupational therapist. Regardless of the support you receive, it's essential to assess the range of changes needed and available carefully. Moreover, adjustments may require clinical evaluation and justification, as they might not be suitable for every role or organisation. Some potential workplace adjustments include:

- Modifying hours worked, such as a phased return
- Reducing hours
- Allowing time off for critical healthcare appointments
- Working remotely
- Implementing flexible work hours, such as working in the afternoon, if mornings are more painful
- Job sharing
- Scheduling regular breaks for stretching, mindfulness, and fresh air

4. Behaviour Changes

Prioritising self-care is one of the most critical behavioral adjustments you can make, with some being easier to adopt than others.

Incorporating stretches tailored to your specific pain into your daily routine will help you maintain movement and change positions throughout your workday. Set hourly reminders on your phone or watch.

Consider these suggestions: desk or chair exercises, spending time outdoors, taking a lunchtime walk, or having walking meetings. Ensure that pain medications and self-care are integrated into your daily work habits.

Maintain a healthy and regular eating schedule; resist the temptation to skip meals due to a busy schedule. Stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water. Utilise apps like MyFitnessPal to help track your well-being. You can plan your workplace wellness strategies as far in advance as you can and pace yourself. For instance, if you feel well one day, avoid overexerting yourself, as pushing too hard may lead to increased pain and exhaustion in the following days.

5. Cognitive Interventions

Numerous tools and techniques are available to help you reshape your thinking about work and chronic pain. Consider using methods such as **Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP)**, Mindfulness, Breathing exercises, **Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT)**, and Meditation. A specialist coach can guide you in effectively utilising these tools when you need them the most. When pain escalates, distractions can be beneficial. You might listen to music or a podcast, solve a crossword or sudoku puzzle, engage in conversation with a colleague, take a break from your desk, or practice positive self-talk to remind yourself that you can navigate this challenging moment.

And Finally

At times, managing pain at work may not be feasible. Taking time off to recuperate might be essential, and seeking professional support or learning coping strategies is valuable. It's essential to recognise that alternative ways to contribute to society beyond traditional employment exist. The global pandemic has demonstrated how creativity and utility can thrive in various forms. You can explore opportunities such as working from home, volunteering, mentoring, crafting, teaching, counseling, and more - all while accommodating your chronic pain. Maintaining a positive, can-do attitude will enhance your recovery journey, empowering you to progress and evolve.

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