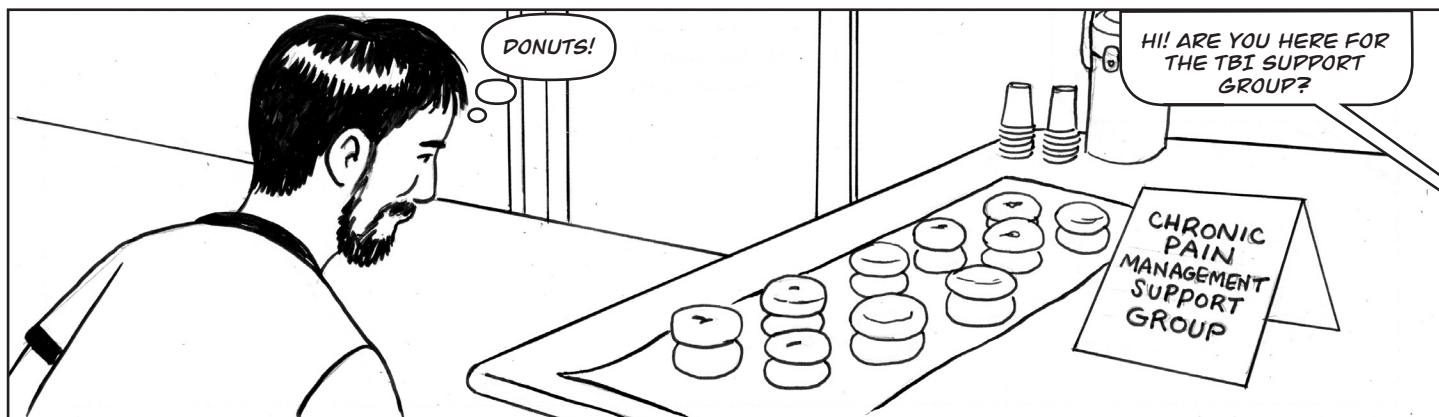


# TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY AND CHRONIC PAIN

## Part I: Life with Chronic Pain



### Common reasons for pain after TBI

#### HEADACHE

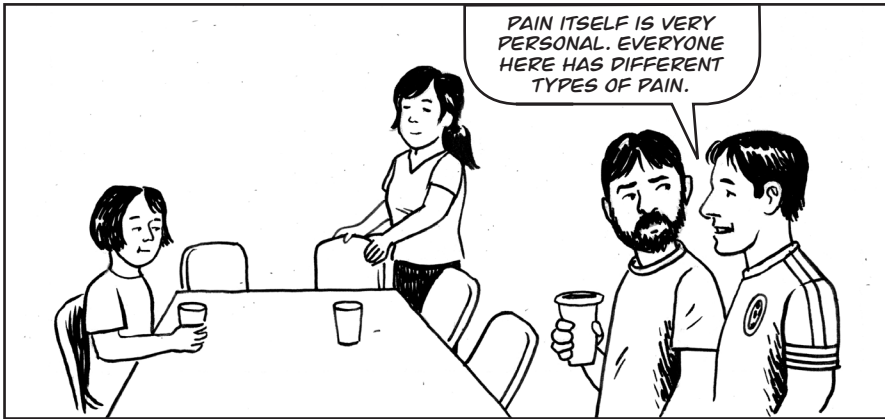
Most people with TBI have headaches at some point after injury. For many people the headaches start right after their TBI. But for some people they can start weeks, or even months, after their injury. There are several types of headaches. To learn more, refer to the infocomic *TBI and Headaches*.

#### NEUROLOGICAL OR NERVE PAIN

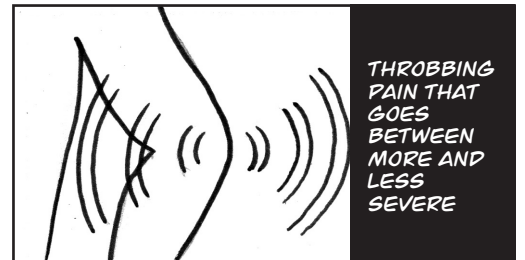
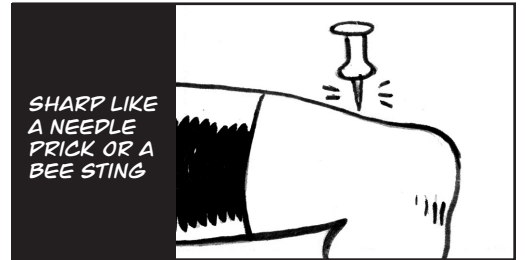
The brain and central nervous system process pain signals. These signals are usually caused by tissue damage or injury. When a nerve is injured it can cause different kinds of pain than you may feel after damage to other types of tissue. Nerve pain can feel "electric" or like "burning"; it could also feel like hot or cold; or even give you a sensation of numbness or "tingling" in your arms or legs. These types of pain often need to be treated with special prescription medications. Chemical changes in the brain can also cause the feeling of pain without obvious damage or injury.

#### MUSCLE OR BONE PAIN AND CO-OCCURRING INJURY

Often other parts of the body get hurt when TBI happens (i.e. fractures, disc injuries, torn ligaments). Pain from multiple injuries can be harder to treat because the symptoms may add to each other.



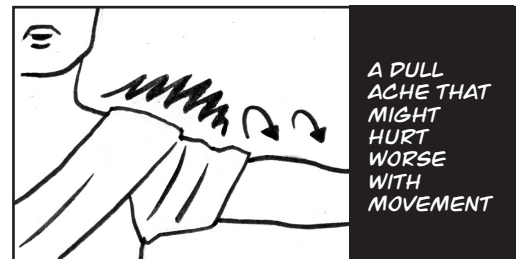
**PAIN CAN TAKE MANY FORMS**

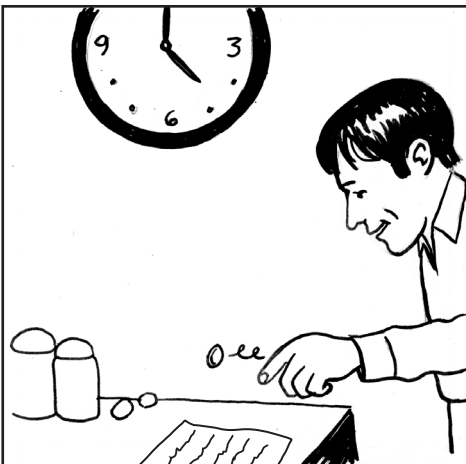


### Finding What Works

There are many different strategies that people use to manage their pain. Some of them are:

- Exercise
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)
- Scheduled rests or Pacing
- Meditation
- Biofeedback
- Breathing exercises
- Visualization
- Hypnosis
- Art therapy
- Acupuncture
- Massage
- Heat or ice
- Social activity



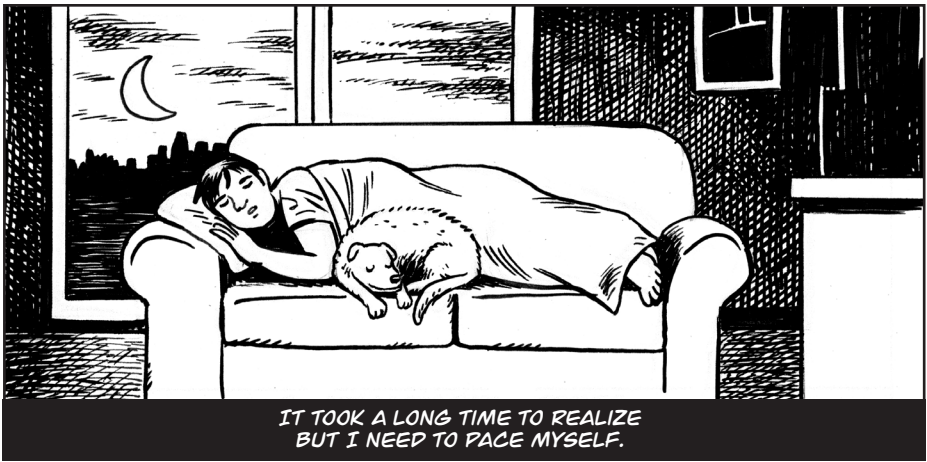


SOMETIMES I DON'T REALIZE I'M GETTING A HEADACHE UNTIL IT'S TOO BAD TO IGNORE. WHEN I HAVE A HEADACHE IT'S HARD TO FOCUS OR EVEN THINK ABOUT ANYTHING BUT MY PAIN.

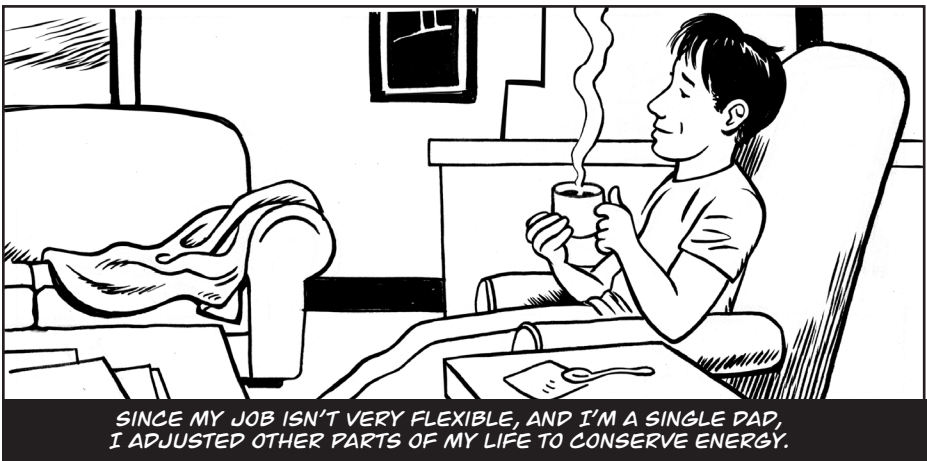
**On Demand Pain Management Strategy #1**

**MINDFULNESS:** Acknowledge your pain and examine it as you would with something you've just discovered. Study how it feels, the emotions you have in response to it, and how your body reacts to those sensations and emotions. Then direct your attention to the sounds around you. After you've examined those, repeat this with your other senses (sight, smell, touch).

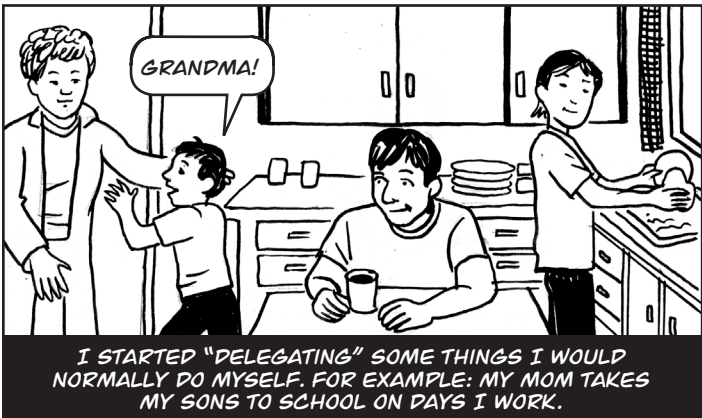




IT TOOK A LONG TIME TO REALIZE BUT I NEED TO PACE MYSELF.



SINCE MY JOB ISN'T VERY FLEXIBLE, AND I'M A SINGLE DAD, I ADJUSTED OTHER PARTS OF MY LIFE TO CONSERVE ENERGY.



GRANDMA!

I STARTED "DELEGATING" SOME THINGS I WOULD NORMALLY DO MYSELF. FOR EXAMPLE: MY MOM TAKES MY SONS TO SCHOOL ON DAYS I WORK.



I "ADJUSTED" OTHER ACTIVITIES: INSTEAD OF COOKING DINNER EVERY NIGHT, I USE A SLOW COOKER TO MAKE MEALS AHEAD OF TIME.



I MADE A LOT OF LITTLE CHANGES, BUT IT MADE A BIG DIFFERENCE IN MY LIFE.



BUT I KNOW WE ALL HAVE DIFFERENT EXPERIENCES. ANYONE ELSE WANT TO SHARE?

YES I HAVE SOMETHING I CAN SHARE...

## Managing Your Activity

**PACING** is taking breaks through your day, or an activity. This allows you to do more over time. Pay attention to how your body feels during and after activities. That will help you shift from stopping something after you're in pain, to pausing before you feel pain. Pacing helps you do the things that are important to you while still conserving your energy. Learning to pace takes practice.

**DELEGATING** is finding ways to have other people do some things, so you can save energy which is likely to help with pain.

- Use a grocery service or app instead of going to the store yourself.
- Ask your partner to carry the laundry to the machine and then you wash and fold it.

**ADJUSTING** is finding ways to do things that might be draining or time consuming, which can also help lessen pain.

- Instead of cooking every night you could use a slow cooker to make several meals at once.
- Lay your clothes out before you go to bed to save time in the morning.

# Activity Log

You can use this log to track activities or events that may be related to pain. This log can also be used to record your pain management practice.

| Date/Time | What was happening? (Event or activity) | For how long/When? | Did you have pain? (0-10) (Where?) | Other emotions? | What thoughts did you have? | What did you do in response? |
|-----------|---|--------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
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## Authorship and Illustration

This infocomic was written by Silas James and Ayla Jacob and illustrated by David Lasky and Tom Dougherty, in collaboration with the Model Systems Knowledge Translation Center.

This infocomic is adapted from the factsheet series Chronic Pain After Traumatic Brain Injury (<https://msktc.org/tbi/factsheets/traumatic-brain-injury-and-chronic-pain>) developed by Silas James, MPA; Jeanne Hoffman, PhD; Sylvia Lucas, MD, PhD; Anne Moessner, APRN; Kathleen Bell, MD; William Walker, MD; CJ Plummer, MD; Max Hurwitz, DO, in collaboration with the Model Systems Knowledge Translation Center.

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**Disclaimer:** This information is not meant to replace the advice of a medical professional. You should consult your health care provider regarding specific medical concerns or treatment. The contents of this infocomic were developed under grants from the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR grant numbers 90DP0031 and 90DP0082). NIDILRR is a Center within the Administration for Community Living (ACL), Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The contents of this infocomic do not necessarily represent the policy of NIDILRR, ACL, or HHS, and you should not assume endorsement by the federal government.

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