



UNC PAIN MANAGEMENT CENTER

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Minimally Invasive Gynecologic Surgery

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# Coping Skills Workbook

## COPING SKILLS WORKBOOK

### Advanced Laparoscopy and Pelvic Pain

As part of your upcoming surgery, you are being asked to review a short video from your surgeon and a pain specialist. This video is intended to help you be better prepared for the procedure and to help optimize good outcomes. You can review this video again prior to your upcoming surgery by clicking on this link (). We encourage you to discuss your expectations for surgery and review coping skills below. Please let us know if you are interested in learning other strategies to help you cope with stress and pain during this time.

### **Lesson 1: Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) & The Stress Response**

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#### Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Model for Pain:

The purpose of cognitive behavioral pain coping skills training is to learn skills that can be used to control and decrease pain. Some of the skills emphasize strategies for controlling pain, while other address management of problems caused by pain. The pain coping skills presented in these handouts are designed to enhance control of thoughts, feelings, and actions that effect pain, with the overall goal of reducing pain.

What are some of the Actions, Feelings, and Thoughts that you have about your pain, or other sources of stress?

#### ACTIONS:

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#### FEELINGS:

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#### THOUGHTS:

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### Pain and the Stress Response:

Additionally, pain may be an acute, recent stressor. For many, pain may be chronic and debilitating, affecting how you live your life and the general quality of life you feel you have. Some of these coping skills can help you better manage various forms of stress in your life, including pain.

When danger is present, our sympathetic nervous system gears up with the FIGHT or FLIGHT response. Blood flows to major muscles to prepare us to either fight or flee from impending danger. Blood is directed away from peripheral areas of the body to protect against threat and away from some organ systems, such as the gastrointestinal system, that are not as important at the time. Muscles tense, stress hormones are released, and the body prepares to deal with impending danger.

This system works very well when the danger or stress is acute. However, when stress becomes chronic, the FIGHT or FLIGHT system backfires. Muscles remain tense for too long leading to muscle fatigue and sometimes pain. Stress hormones are not meant to be continuously released and over time suppress our immune system making us more susceptible to acute illnesses and chronic diseases.

What are some of your personal sources of stress (e.g. pain, bills, taking care of others, etc.)?

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What helps you manage the stress in your life (e.g. asking for help, taking time alone, music, prayer, etc.)

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## **Lesson 2: Diaphragmatic Breathing**

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How do you breathe?

- Place one hand below the rib cage and one hand on your chest.
- Take a deep breath in through your nose and out through your mouth.
- Notice the movement of your hands when you inhale. Which hand moves more?

### Chest Breathing

- Short, shallow breaths primarily use the chest and the upper lobes of the lungs
- When feeling afraid, stressed, or anxious, people often utilize this type of breathing

### Diaphragmatic breathing (belly breathing)

- Imagine how babies breathe, when you see the entire stomach and diaphragm moving in and out.
- The diaphragm is a shelf of muscles that separate the thoracic cavity (lungs and heart) from the abdominal cavity (stomach, etc.).
- A deep, full breath allows both the upper and lower lungs to fill with oxygen, moving the diaphragm downward and pushing the stomach out, to make room for all the air.
- This type of breathing increases the oxygen that enters the body, reducing tension and nourishing tissues.
- When you breathe out fully (stomach is tucked in), you also help to release all the tension and some of the toxins in the body.
- When intentionally done, this type of breathing can slow your breathing rate, eliciting a feeling of relaxation and jump starting the parasympathetic response, which has the opposite effect of the sympathetic nervous system (stress response) in the body.

### To Practice:

- This technique can be practiced lying down or when seated, and in almost any setting.
- You should practice for 2-5 minutes each day, until it feels natural and comforting.
  - You can count to three (Breathe in 1... 2...3) or come up with a phrase to say (Breathe in and imagine the oxygen going all the way down into my stomach) to help you pace yourself and ensure you take slow breaths.

### Lesson 3: Visual Imagery

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Visual imagery is a relaxation technique that can be very helpful and distracting in times of stress. This technique allows you to use all your senses to imagine yourself in a peaceful, relaxing scene. The more you can focus on your senses, the more you can immerse yourself in the scene.

#### To Practice

- Find a comfortable position and close your eyes. Take a few deep breaths.
- Identify a happy memory or a place that is enjoyable and relaxing. Some options include the beach, a warm log cabin in the mountains, a path in the woods, a hammock with a view...
- Think about all of your senses as you enjoy and/or explore the scene in your mind.

Vision-What do you see?

o Examples: Trees, grass, sun, people, water, animals...

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Smell-What do you smell?

o Examples: Ocean, candles, trees, flowers, food...

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Sounds-What do you hear?

o Examples: Birds, waves, logs crackling on a fire, wind, music...

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Touch- What do you feel?

o Examples: Warm sun, cool breeze, water, sand, grass, soft blanket...

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Taste- What can you taste?

o Examples: Cool water, salty air, juicy apple, sweet berries, hot chocolate...

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## Lesson 4: Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR) Training

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To Practice:

- Start by sitting in a comfortable position and take a few deep breaths.
- Become aware of any muscle tension in your body.
- Tense and relax muscles muscle groups as follows:
- Tense each muscle group for about 5-7 seconds.
- Hands and Arms- make a fist and pull your hands toward your shoulders
- Neck and Shoulders- shrug your shoulders up to your ears
- Facial Muscles- wrinkle your forehead and tighten your jaw
- Abdomen- as you breathe out, tighten your abs
- Legs and Feet- flex your toes upward as you raise your legs to tighten your thighs
- Then, slowly relax each muscle group for about 10-12 seconds.
- If tensing an area causes pain, just focus on relaxing that muscle group.
- Take a few more deep breaths, scanning your body again for any remaining tension. Relax those muscles again, if needed.
- Focus on the feeling of relaxation that you have found, allowing your muscles to be heavy and fully relaxed. This exercise will take should take about 10-15 minutes, so be sure to find a time and place to practice that you won't be interrupted. A recording can be emailed to you to guide your practice at home.