

# LIVING A MEANINGFUL LIFE

## with Chronic Pain and Illness

Pain affects every part of life, and the changes and losses associated with pain can lead to grief and a loss of identity and purpose.



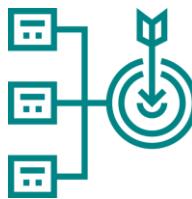
The first thing to do is to acknowledge and normalize the distress we feel and attempt to be a compassionate and encouraging friend to ourselves.

### WHAT IS a Value?

Values are not the same thing as goals.



**VALUES** are principles held personally that can give life direction and meaning. They are your own judgment of what is important in life and act as a compass for how you behave or act.



**GOALS** are specific things we do in order to live out our values. The goals available to us change due to time, money, health, and other resources.

A values-focused life may result in less struggle and greater fulfillment than a goals-focused life.

### KNOWING Your Values



Helps prioritize what activities are important and meaningful.



Helps to choose and do activities that give a sense of purpose.



Helps with decision making.

## **IDENTIFY** your Values

A health crisis can spur us to clarify our values: how we want to act, what we want to stand for, how we want to treat ourselves and others, and who and what is most important.

- » What do you want your life to be about?
- » What sort of person do you want to be?
- » What kind of things would you be doing if you were living that value?

## **TRACK** your Values



There are many ways to clarify your values. They often involve connection, caring, and contributing.



By tracking your time, you will discover where you are putting your energy. You may notice patterns in your activity and in the values, you put energy toward. This can help you figure out what goals are most important to you so that you can live by your values.

## **SKILLS** that help us as we engage in meaningful action include:

- Pain management skills
- Focusing on small, manageable goals
- Relating differently to stormy thoughts, feelings, situations, and urges that try to jerk us around

If you are in crisis, please visit your family physician, local branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association, or nearest hospital emergency room.

## **LEARN MORE**

“The Happiness Trap”, “The Reality Slap”, and “The Confidence Gap”  
by Russ Harris

“How to Be Sick” and “How to Live Well with Chronic Pain and Illness”  
by Toni Bernhard

“The Pain Survival Guide” by Dennis Turk and Frits Winter

“Living Beyond Pain” by Joanne Dahl and Thomas Lundgren

“Get Out of Your Mind and Into Your Life” by Steven Hayes

“Man’s Search for Meaning” by Victor Frankl

[ACTMindfully.com.au](http://ACTMindfully.com.au) (or other videos by Russ Harris on YouTube)

Ontario  
Chronic Pain  
Network