



Why resuming meaningful activities is so important

When you have experienced pain for a while, it is normal to cease doing the things that you love. For each person, this is going to be different. For somebody, it might be lawn bowls, or playing darts with friends, or running. A common reason for stopping these meaningful activities might be that you feel you need to be 'fixed' and 'pain-free' before you recommence them. You may have been told that you have one leg shorter than the other, or your muscles are not 'firing properly', or you have a weak core, or you have poor posture - the list is potentially endless! A common and unfortunate pitfall of this treatment approach (apart from it not being evidence-based), is that it focuses on "fixing" - we need to "fix" this, we need to "fix" that.

When we have a contemporary understanding of persistent pain, we understand that it usually means our internal alarm system is too good at its job of protecting us. It goes off too quickly, too soon, and too easily. It has nothing to do with needing to be mechanically fixed.

Pain does not equal damage, and we can adapt positively to physical load - it is just a case of finding the right place to start. But fundamentally, for the most part, nothing is off limits.

While reengaging in activities you love to participate in clearly provides physical benefits and hardening, it will also have amazing psychological and social effects too, right? Let's answer a few questions:

What makes you, you?

What would you do tomorrow if you had no pain?

What did you enjoy before you had your pain?

Once you have established the activity:

What needs to happen for you to start those things?

What do you think would happen if you did those things tomorrow?

If you enjoy running, it is not as simple as just going out and running a marathon; that would of course be too much, too soon! But we can discuss ways to modify movement and build physical strength, as well as finding the right place to start - with the goal of gradually progressing towards running that marathon.

It is empowering and enriching to start participating in activities that you previously didn't think you could do, as we can start to flip the script; not focusing on what you can't do, but focusing on what you can do. And you don't need fixing before you start doing!

Speak to your Exercise Physiologist and figure out a collaborative plan to help you recommence the things you love.

References: Lehman, G. (2017). Recovery strategies: pain guidebook. Retrieved from <http://www.greglehman.ca/recovery-strategies-pain-guidebook>

