

# What is Self-Efficacy and Why is it Important?



GUARDIAN  
exercise rehabilitation

Self-efficacy is, according to psychologist Albert Bandura who originally proposed the concept, a personal judgment of "how well one can execute courses of action required to deal with prospective situations"

What this really means is your ability to think "I can do this".

And this is important in managing your pain journey and maximising your recovery. One of the first areas of self-efficacy to explore is pain self-efficacy, and this is essentially your ability to function and carry on despite your pain. Of course, it isn't as simple as flicking on a switch and being ok to carry on, because there can be lots of important factors that are shaping this belief. You may be thinking "well, my pain is too severe, so I can't do that", or "if I do that it will make my injury worse". For example, if we believe that pain equals more damage and we should slow down, then this will directly influence our ability to carry on doing that activity.

A low level of self-efficacy can often occur when you have a feeling that you need to be fixed by someone – for example, "I need someone to crack my back into place" or "I need surgery to fix my broken knee". Whilst your Physiotherapist or Exercise Physiologist is there to help, now is the time to take control and acknowledge that you are the most important piece of your recovery journey. Think of your Physiotherapist or Exercise Physiologist as your Tour Guide and you as the Tourist. They will show you the way and make recommendations on what may be enjoyable, but you are the one that will still take control of your own holiday and venture out and experience new things and take your own meaning from them.

What we also need to acknowledge and accept is that there will be ups and downs and peaks and troughs throughout the recovery journey – and while it's important that we continue to be positive, robust and resilient, it can sometimes be hard to do! This idea of simply becoming positive in an instant can be confronting, and that's ok, but this is a journey and gradual process; a journey that your Physiotherapist or Exercise Physiologist is on with you, and over time we can start to see just how strong and resilient your mind and body can become with the appropriate reassurance and support.

How can your Physiotherapist or Exercise Physiologist help to assist in enhancing your self-efficacy?

**Find out how much self efficacy you have - Measure it with questionnaires**

**Highlight previous success & strengths**

**Provide optimism and support**

**Set personalised and meaningful goals**

**Help plan out exactly what to do**

## References:

Black, O et al. (2017). The Effect of Self-Efficacy on Return-to-Work Outcomes for Workers with Psychological or Upper-Body Musculoskeletal Injuries: A Review of the Literature. *Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation*.