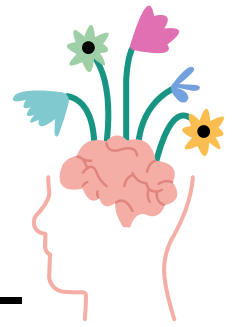


# Coping with pain through music and psychological strategies



## Why does my child experience pain?

Pain is commonly experienced by children undergoing cancer treatment. Children may experience pain during medical procedures, as well as from side effects of treatments.

### EXAMPLES:

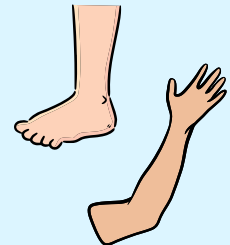


Injections



Surgical procedures

Pain in limbs



Headaches



Soreness in mouth

### ADDITIONAL FACTORS CAN INFLUENCE THE EXPERIENCE OF PAIN:



- Fear & Anxiety
- Tiredness



- Hypervigilance to symptoms
- Memories of past experience of pain
- Behaviours (e.g., avoidance of mobilizing body, poor diet)
- Thoughts (e.g., thinking about stressful events, thinking that pain is uncontrollable)





## What are the types of pain that my child may experience?

### 1 PROCEDURAL PAIN

#### Duration:

- Brief

#### Causes:

- Procedures

#### Progression:

- The pain usually stops after the procedure, but consequences can include fear of similar and repeated procedures, which increases the pain experience



### 2 ACUTE PAIN

#### Duration:

- Short-term (few days or few weeks)

#### Causes:

- Injuries
- Illnesses

#### Progression:

- Improves after healing from injury or illness

### 3 CHRONIC PAIN

#### Duration:

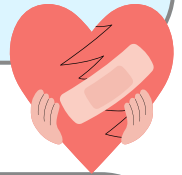
- More than 3 months

#### Causes:

- Medical condition (e.g., arthritis)
- Nerve damage
- Over-sensitive nervous system
- Psychogenic causes (e.g., stress)
- Unexplained (e.g., headaches)

#### Progression:

- Continues even after injury heals

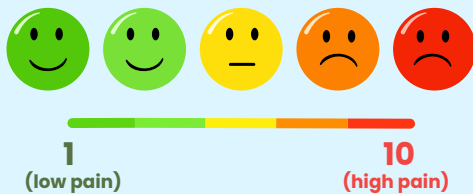


## How can my child's pain be assessed?

As pain is a subjective experience, it may be helpful to first assess your child's level of pain.

To monitor and track your child's level and experience of pain, we can utilize one of the following ways of measurement:

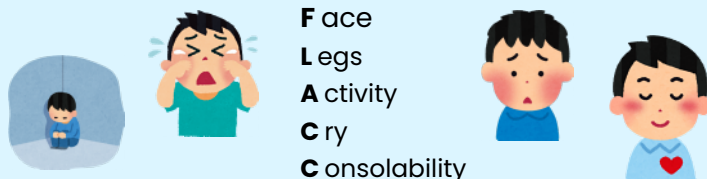
- 1 Using a **numerical rating scale**: rating their pain from 0 to 10



- 2 Using the **Wong-Baker FACES pain rating scale**



- 3 Using **behavioural observations** for children who are unable to verbally express their pain (e.g., FLACC scale)





## How can I help my child to cope with pain?

It can be very difficult for parents to see their child in pain, and parents may feel helpless when they do not know how to relieve some of their child's pain.

**Although at times we may not be able to relieve their pain, there are still some strategies that you could try to help your child cope with pain.**

### 1 Calming & Regulatory Strategies



- Deep Breathing
  - e.g., box breathing method, counted breaths 4-2-6



- Distraction
  - e.g., reading books, watching videos, playing with toys, telling stories



- Progressive Muscle Relaxation
  - e.g., getting your child to tense for 5 seconds and relax for 5 seconds
  - Going through different parts of their muscles from their forehead to eyes to lips to shoulders to arms to stomach to legs



- Visual Imagery
  - e.g., getting your child to imagine and visualize a place that makes them feel calm and peaceful
  - Getting them to describe things that they can see, hear, smell, feel and taste when they are in that calm place



- Managing their fear and anxiety towards medical procedures
  - Using play to help them familiarize with the procedure processes and medical tools
  - Touring the hospital or rooms where the child would be completing the procedure, and getting them more familiar with the space
  - Using age-appropriate language to explain the procedures to them

### 2 Pharmacological Relief

- If pain levels are high, to inform the doctor and request for pharmacological methods of pain relief

**Additional strategies for helping your child to cope with their feelings and mood changes:**

- [Theme 1, Issue 2: Helping Your Child to Cope with Their Feelings](#)
- [Theme 2, Issue 7: Dexamethasone - Coping with mood changes and increase in appetite](#)



### 3

## Music Strategy 1 - Deep Breathing with Music

*Useful for procedural, acute, and chronic pain*

**Step 1** - Choose a song you like that is not too fast and not too slow

**Step 2** - Identify the beat of the music and count, 1 2 3 4, or 1 2 1 2

**Step 3** - Use the beat of the music to guide your breathing

- o Breathe in 2 3 4 and out 2 3 4, (in) 1 2 3 4 and (out) 1 2 3 4
- o Breathe in 2 and out 2, (in) 1 2 and (out) 1 2

**Step 4** - Listen to the music intentionally without doing anything else. You can close your eyes or look at a spot and focus on your breathing, following the beat of the music.

*This strategy is meant to relax your body and take your mind away from feeling tense and uncomfortable, refocusing your mind to deep breathing and nurturing your body with good oxygen that it needs.*

### 4

## Music Strategy 2 - Singing Your Favourite Song

*Useful for procedural, acute, and chronic pain*

Did you know that singing releases chemicals in your body that help you feel good?

Singing can also help reduce tension and improve blood circulation in the body.

**So, pick a song that you like and sing your heart out!**



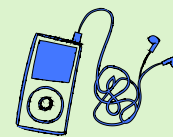
# 5

## Music Strategy 3 - Creating a Regulation Playlist

Useful for acute, and chronic pain

**Step 1** - Choose what type of playlist you would like to design

- o Mood regulation playlist
- o Anxiety regulation playlist



**Step 2** - Pick a song that best matches the starting point of how you feel

- o i.e. lowest mood, highly anxious
- o This is Song 1

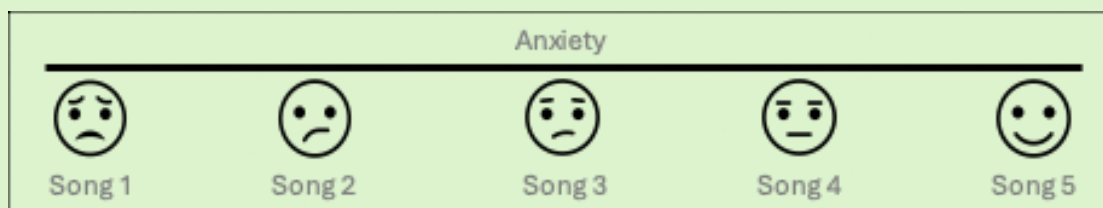
**Step 3** - Pick a song that best matches the starting point of how you feel

- o i.e. high in mood, calm and peaceful
- o this is Song 5

**Step 4** - Fill in the middle three songs (2-4) such that you have a total of 5 songs that lead you from the start to the end point of your journey

**Step 5** - Listen to the playlist in order and make necessary adjustments

- o i.e. switch order of songs, change songs



*Listen to the songs intentionally and use this playlist to help improve your mood or lessen your anxiety. Focus on listening to the songs in order from beginning to end. This strategy aims to guide you towards a much better mood or experience lesser anxiety after listening to the entire playlist.*

