

Where can I go for help?

There is hope. You are not alone. There is help for friends and family of people in pain. Pain BC is a non-profit made up of people working in health care, people living with pain, and others with a passion for reducing the burden of pain in British Columbia. We provide tools, support, and education.

On our website at www.painbc.ca you will find:

- Pain self-management workshops (to help you understand how to manage pain better) –online and in-person
- The latest research on pain
- Information on in-person support groups and pain self-management classes near you
- Toolkits, books, and other resources

If you are on **Facebook** or **Twitter**, please join us at www.facebook.com/PainBC and www.twitter.com/PainBC. You'll find thousands of British Columbians who live with chronic pain, and their friends and families, who know what you're going through. If you are feeling hopeless, don't give up. Call the **Crisis Line** at 1.800.784.2433. There is someone there to take your call, listen, and help you get through this hard time.



Changing pain.
Changing minds.

painbc.ca



Dear family and friends,

Please try to understand that I depend on you in so many ways. I need you to visit me when I am too sick to go out. Sometimes I need you to help me with shopping, cooking, cleaning, or taking me to the doctor. You also help me keep in touch with the parts of life that I miss and hope to enjoy again someday.

Please try to understand that I spend most of my day in a lot of pain. Sometimes I must not seem like much fun, but I still care about my family and my friends and like to hear about what's going on in your life.

Please try to understand that I've been in pain for a long time, but I am not sad all the time. If I sound happy, it means I am happy. It does not mean that I'm not in a lot of pain. It just means I am doing my best to get by.

Please try to understand that being able to stand up for ten minutes does not mean that I can stand up for twenty minutes, or an hour. I never know from day to day how I am going to feel. If you want me to do something, please just ask. If I'm not up to it, I'll let you know. And please don't get upset if I need to cancel our plans—I'm just not feeling well enough.

Please try to understand that if I seem grumpy, it's because I am. Pain is tiring and annoying. I ask you to please accept me as I am. I know that all of this can be really hard to understand. I am asking you to please try.

Thank you so much for all the ways in which you have already been so helpful, caring, and understanding... it really means a lot to me.

Sincerely,

Living with chronic pain

Chronic pain hurts everyone.

Support for friends & family

PAIN & BC

What happened to the friend/partner/child/sibling/parent I used to know?

You may notice that your friend or family member does not seem like their “old self”. People living with pain can feel like they have lost so much—their confidence, maybe their job, or the ability to enjoy an active life. It is no surprise that they are much more likely to get depressed than people without chronic pain. It takes a lot of courage to live with pain every day. Living with or being close to someone with so much pain can be just as hard.

But they don't look sick!

Short-term pain, like stubbing your toe, does not last—ice it, raise it, and soon the pain is gone. Chronic pain on the other hand is complex, often invisible, and may have no end in sight. The science of pain is evolving and there is a lot that we don’t understand. We do know that once the body has healed, nerves may still be excited and engaged. Imagine the pain of a badly sprained ankle, a broken arm, or a splitting headache, which lasts for three months or more. Why would someone invent such awful pain? It’s not likely. By giving them the benefit of the doubt, you will really improve the life of someone in pain.

Why can't I say or do anything right around them?

People in pain may feel that no one understands. Family, friends, and even their doctors, may express doubt that their pain is as bad as they say, or that it exists at all. People in pain may respond with anger, worry, annoyance, and sadness. When stressed out, even questions like “Why don’t you try this?” or “Maybe if you exercised more you’d feel better?” can feel like an attack. If you get this reaction, don’t blame yourself. It’s really hard for someone who doesn’t have chronic pain to “get” chronic pain.

What can I do to help?

No one knows what your friend or family member needs better than they do. If you want to help, ask them gently how you can be most helpful. Often, the most important thing you can do is to listen without judgment while they express their feelings. It may also be helpful for you to remember that it takes a lot of courage to get through each day as a person living with pain. If it feels right, you may want to tell them: “You have shown so much courage in dealing with all this pain for so long. It’s very inspiring to me.”

But this is so hard!

It takes strength, patience, and energy to support a person who lives with pain. It may *feel* hard because it *is* hard. Your relationship may feel tense, you may not know what they expect, and you may feel as though everything has been dumped in your lap. You may start to wonder what you are getting out of it. You may also fear that this is more than you can handle.

Take a moment to think about all that you *have* done to help your friend or family member. Learning to take things day-by-day can also help you handle this hard situation better.

Try to set limits. If you really don’t feel like doing extra dishes or picking up groceries for your friend or family member, don’t do it.

Wait until you are ready to give without feeling angry, and you will avoid a lot of problems.

If you are feeling stressed out, it is really important that you take good care of yourself. Are you sleeping well? Are you eating well and getting enough exercise? Taking care of yourself will make it easier to help your loved one.



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