

Pain BC is here to help

There is help for friends and family of people in pain. There is hope. You are not alone. Pain BC is a collaborative non-profit organization made up of people in pain, health care providers, and industry leaders. We provide tools, support, community, and education for people living with pain and their friends and family on our website www.painbc.ca.

Pain BC's Pain Support Line program advocates for people in pain and their families, connecting you with services and support that go beyond your doctor's office. Visit www.painbc.ca/supportline to learn more.

Live Plan Be is a free online self-management tool developed by Pain BC to support those living with pain and their friends and family. Learn about the science behind chronic pain and connect with a like-minded community on our secure discussion forum. Visit liveplanbe.ca today to get started.

If you're 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. Join our supportive community.

painbc.ca



PAIN BC™

Chronic pain hurts everyone.

Support for friends & family

Remember that you're not alone.
Pain BC is here to support you too!

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

You may notice your friend or family member doesn't 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's no surprise they're 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 also be really hard.

But they don't look sick!

Short-term pain, like stubbing your toe, doesn't 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's a lot we still don't understand. We do know, though, that once the body has healed after surgery, illness, or injury, nerves may still be excited and engaged. This can cause long-term chronic pain. Imagine the pain of a broken arm or a splitting headache lasting for three months or more. It's not likely someone would invent such awful pain. By believing your family member or friend, you'll 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?" 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.

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What can I do to help?

No one knows what your friend or family member needs better than they do, so 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's helpful to remember that it takes a lot of courage to get through each day 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 inspiring to me."

But this is so hard!

It takes strength, patience, and energy to support a person living with pain. It feels 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 fear it's 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 up to helping your friend or family member, don't do it. Wait until you're ready to give without feeling angry, and you'll avoid a lot of problems and burn out.

If you're feeling stressed, it's 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.

And remember that they do appreciate all the ways you're helpful, caring, and understanding... Being connected to someone like you can make the world of difference. Remember that you are not alone. Pain BC is here to support you too!