

# GROUP EDUCATION WORKSHOPS

Below is a description of what you might expect at each workshop:

## **Introduction:**

You will meet the members of your group and be introduced to the Health Care Providers within the Chronic Pain Program. Introduction occurs in a classroom setting with tables and chairs. You are encouraged to stand, sit and move as you need to. This session is 1.5 hours with breaks in between. This workshop involves active participation; setting goals for yourself to work towards both during and following the program.

## **Pain 101:**

What causes pain and what purpose does pain serve? What happens when conventional diagnosis and treatment of pain symptoms do not lead to a cure? How dominating belief in "more pain equals to more tissue damage" continues to promote fear of activities and undermine our functional improvement? How psychological and social aspects of a whole person interact with chronic physical experiences? How our default response to pain is determined by the ways we habitually deal with pain? How pain signals can be intensified, reduced, or blocked from our perception? How helpful management approaches differ for acute and chronic pain? How pain may be reduced and sometimes even eliminated by alternatives to medications, surgeries and other external modes of treatment?

## **Pain 102:**

At times, our nervous system gets stuck at an over-sensitized setting, which allows information carried by our peripheral nerves to move up to our brain, via our spinal cord, in an overly amplified manner, thus producing pain sensations that others' less sensitized nervous systems do not produce. We discuss how we may, through regular practices, retrain and recalibrate our nervous system to reduce/eliminate pain. How we can get unstuck from a vicious fear driven cycle of avoiding activities and loss of physical functioning. We begin to discuss factors such as thoughts, emotions, chronic stress and trauma that influence our experiences of chronic pain.

## **Loss & Costs from Pain:**

Pain is so personal it is hard for us to express how we feel in words. We explore how we currently deal with challenging emotions, thoughts, stressors and more helpful and productive ways to address them. One of the greatest challenges is coming to terms with loss and the accompanying grief over our loss of health, employment, income, relationships, and goals. We revisit who in our life are important to us and what we want our life to be about moving forward. We discuss actions we can take to regain our bearing, such as maintaining structures, avoiding stress, solving problems, acknowledging loss, connecting with others, be radically accepting and compassionate to our need to work through our loss.

## **Living with Pain:**

We appreciate through an experiential exercise the power of our mind and body connection. We explore stress and its impact on our health and our already overly-sensitized nervous system. We discuss using our breath, thoughts, healthy lifestyle, communication, and mindfulness practices to distress. We develop self-awareness about our highly charged pain specific thoughts that overwhelm us further when we are in pain. We review progress of SMART activity goals we have created previously and we conclude with provision of further resources, workshops and Chronic Pain Support Group information.

