



## Pain is multidimensional

### The overflowing cup

As pain persists it becomes less about tissue damage and more about anything in your life or something particular about you that can make you more sensitive. Remember, pain is normal but what happens when it persists is that we get better at it. In a sense, we have an over-reactive and over-protective system. Its easier for the pain to be "triggered" and multiple things in our lives can contribute to this.

Its not just about muscles, tendons and joints (although they are sometimes important). Its everything in our lives. For example, big tough football players are more likely to get injured when they have a lot of physical/mechanical stress. That is what most people would expect. But they are also more likely to get injured when they have a lot of academic stress. Dancers are more likely to get injured when they have poor sleep or higher levels of anger/hostility.

Look at pain as the overflowing of a cup. Many things contribute to what is in that cup. You can have a lot of physical, mechanical, emotional and social stressors and have no pain. But at some point a sudden increase in one of those stressors or a new stressor puts you just over the edge and the water flows out and now you have pain. Often people will have more pain when there a changes in the stressors in their life. It is the inability to adapt to the new stressor that contributes to pain not necessarily the amount of the stressor in your life.

Pain occurs when we fail to tolerate and adapt to all the stressors in our life. Its not stress - its unmanageable stress

We need to keep that cup from overflowing.

### What is great about all of these factors and this complexity?

You can tolerate each of these factors. You get to work addressing the ones that are important to you but its unlikely that one of them **MUST** change to get out pain. Often improving one or two of these is enough to be a huge difference. Further, sometimes just understanding that these factors are important can help your situation.



### Lots of Options for Change

The multidimensional nature of pain means there are a multitude of things that can help with pain.

You can decrease one contributor a great deal or perhaps address a few of them. What you can also do is **BUILD A BIGGER CUP**. This means over time you can build resiliency or coping that allows you to adapt and tolerate all the stressors in your life. Most people can't run a marathon today. But people can slowly build their tolerance to the stresses of running and do it soon.

Pain recovery and coping is the same thing. You can decrease some of the stressors in your life but also build resiliency to those stressors.

