

## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Chronic pain involves a mix of physical and psychological symptoms, that is why treatment should address the physical, emotional and psychological aspects of pain.

**Medical treatments**, including medication, surgery, rehabilitation and physical therapy, are helpful in treating chronic pain.

**Psychological treatments** are an important part of pain management as well.

We could describe pain as a problem that starts in the body, but which is maintained in the brain. When we experience something, such as pain, our brain activity is modified by that and the 'pain memories' become stronger. Psychological treatments for pain can alter how your brain processes pain sensations. The goal is to help you develop skills to cope with your pain and live a full life.

**Understanding and managing the thoughts, emotions and behaviors that accompany the discomfort can help you cope more effectively with your pain and can reduce its intensity.**

The treatment plan often involves teaching relaxation techniques, changing old beliefs about pain, building new coping skills and addressing any anxiety or depression that may accompany your pain. Furthermore, a growing body of research indicates that **EMDR can significantly reduce both physical and emotional distress associated with pain**, reducing also the vividness of the traumatic memories that might be associated with it.



Chartered Psychologist



Elena Brogi is a Counselling Psychologist registered with HCPC and a Chartered Psychologist (CPsychol) accredited with BPS. She specialises in EMDR therapy and in family and systemic-relational therapy.

Since 2001, Elena has worked with individuals, couples and families in many areas, including trauma, grief, chronic pain, eating disorders, drug and alcohol addiction, depression, anxiety disorders and phobias, low self-esteem, separation.

Elena Brogi is a Healthcare Provider with the main UK health insurance companies.

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## MANAGE YOUR PAIN

Psychological counselling and EMDR therapy for chronic pain



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Pain is the most common reason for patients to enter healthcare settings and the most common reason given for self-medication.

There has been a growing recognition that pain is a complex perceptual experience influenced by a wide range of psychosocial factors, including emotions, social and environmental context, the meaning of pain to the person, their beliefs, attitudes and expectations, as well as biological factors.

## WHAT IS CHRONIC PAIN?

Chronic pain may start with an injury or illness, even though sometimes there may also be no clear cause. It persists or progresses over a long period of time and it does not respond to normally effective treatments.

Chronic pain can cause feelings of anger, hopelessness, sadness and anxiety and can be associated with other health problems, such as fatigue, sleep disturbance, decreased appetite, and mood changes.

Chronic pain may limit a person's movement, affect interpersonal relationships and reduce the ability to carry out important and enjoyable activities.

### EXAMPLES OF CHRONIC PHYSICAL PAIN

Back pain  
Cancer  
Fibromyalgia  
Sciatica  
Somatic Symptom Disorder  
Migraine pain

## PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS

Even though psychological factors rarely seem to be an important cause of prolonged pain, they invariably affect it.

Stress can contribute to a range of health problems and trigger muscle tension or muscle spasms that may increase pain. Managing your emotions can directly affect the intensity of your pain.

Fear, feelings of vulnerability and worthlessness, loss of confidence, shame and depression are commonly related to pain.

Coping skills and self-effectiveness can help to manage the negative emotions.

In some cases, chronic pain such as nausea, muscle aches, headaches, back pain, stomach ache and chronic widespread pain can be associated with PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder).

The types of trauma most commonly associated with pain include:

- early childhood adversity
- serious accidents
- surgery
- diagnosis of a life-threatening illness
- abortion
- combat trauma

## WHAT IS EMDR?

Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) therapy is an integrative psychotherapy approach that has been extensively researched and proven effective for the treatment of trauma, mental health problems, and somatic symptoms.

EMDR is a set of standardised protocols that incorporates elements from many different treatment approaches and can help relieve many types of psychological stress.

A growing body of research indicates that EMDR can significantly reduce both physical and emotional distress associated with pain, reducing also the vividness of the traumatic memories that might be associated with it.

