

Episode 4_Coping with Pain_v3

Wed, Feb 01, 2023 9:15AM • 43:52

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

pain, coping, coping strategy, strategies, coping strategies, classes, distraction, meditation, chronic pain, pacing, comfortability, learned, body, stressed, sleep, feel, helpful, therapy, psychologist, started

Welcome. I'm Dr. Rachel Coakley, a pediatric pain psychologist at Boston Children's Hospital, and the founder and director of the comfortability program. And this is chronic pain as you've never heard it talked about before. A podcast series developed and produced by the comfortability program peer advisory board. The amazing teens and young adults you're going to meet in this podcast episode, aren't here to offer up some of their best learn tips and tricks for coping with pain spread from great science back knowledge. And importantly, to let people who are struggling with chronic pain know you are not alone. So let's dive in. We're really glad you're here.

Welcome back, everyone. I'm Fiona.

I'm Sofia.

I'm Brooke. I'm Bridget.

And today we have the whole group back together to talk about coping strategies. Before we get into our personal experiences, we just wanted to cover a little bit about what coping strategies are and why they're important and how they can be used. So coping strategies are things that you can do that are under your control to take care of your body when in pain, or Honestly, even just when things are bothering you. Active coping strategies are ones that you can use, choose to do proactively versus relying on avoiding things like pain or whatever problem you're having. When we talk about pain and coping skills, these are skills that you can use when your nerves are having a conversation with your brain that's out of your control. But you want to do something to take care of yourself. And coping strategies are really important, because it gives you a sense of feeling like you're controlling your body controlling your health and having some sort of control over the outcome of the situation. coping strategies can be used in a lot of ways we mostly use them for pain in the beginning. And as you'll probably hear people talking about later, we use them in a lot of other aspects of our lives as well. But they're a really important skill that you can learn to help yourself take control of your pain and your life. I know that there's probably some people listening that are feeling a little bit skeptical. So the first question I wanted to ask the group is, if any of you guys were skeptical when you're first learning about the idea of coping strategies,

I definitely was skeptical. I like really had a hard time grappling with the fact that something like breathing or meditating could have anything to do with my body. For me, I really like kind of, I really

wanted to compartmentalize things and put things in boxes, and just be like, okay, like my pain, this is a physical thing. And anything else I do, like has nothing to do with it, because it's not a physical thing. So that's what I had a really hard time with. And then like actually learning about pain science and about how treating pain you can't only treat the physical thing by going to physical therapy or whatnot. Like you also have to treat mental components and learn exercises that target like these different categories. It's that's only when I really like started believing coping strategies, I guess I was

definitely pretty skeptical. In the beginning, I kind of learned coping strategies for the first time when I went to the pain rehabilitation program. And before then I was pretty much just jumping from doctor to doctor getting put on a medication, treatment test procedure, etc. And I was really just confused and very overwhelmed to kind of think that, oh, like all these lifestyle modifications that they're kind of requesting that I make such as like dropping down levels and classes and really booking activities that like served me instead of just filling my day with all just like random things just to take up time. I was like, how am I going to just like cut back on everything like I'm a senior in high school I'm applying to college, like colleges don't want to see you scaling back. They want to see you amping everything up for your application. So I was really skeptical. I was like, How is having a bedtime and wake up time every day going to help my pain. And honestly, I just started my program was three and a half weeks. And I just started implementing those strategies, one by one in my life almost. And now I don't necessarily think of them as coping strategies, but I just think of them as habits as part of my A day.

Um, for me, I remember being so skeptical of coping strategies when I first heard about them. And for me hearing about them for the first time was when I went to the comfortability program for a workshop. And remember, one of the things they told us to do was like, fix your sleep schedule, because I like I had so much trouble sleeping because of pain, because I'd go home and take a nap. Because I was so tired from like, using crutches all day, but then I'd be up to like, two in the morning. So the I was so stupid, I was like, how is this gonna work like, this is gonna help me at all, like, I'm just gonna lie awake at night. So I remember the first night and I had to stay up till like 1030, which was really late for me at that time. And I was like, I need a bedtime, like, I'm not four years old. And it all felt really ridiculous to me at first. And eventually, I got so used to it. And it became like, incredibly helpful, but it definitely took a long time. And I think like the physical coping strategies, I was the same way with I was like, How can like walking, like going on a walk helped me, like manage my pain, or like, make me feel like I'm back in control. And now that's like my favorite coping strategy, like I went on a walk today. So I think I was definitely very skeptical at first, but the more you give it a chance. Like, then you'll see the results that you want.

coping strategies aren't necessarily just like belly breathing or like, guided imagery, but it's things like having a routine, that is also still considered a coping strategy.

Yeah, and I also think something that we might not necessarily think of off the top of our heads as a coping strategy. But things that have really helped me have been cognitive coping strategies. So the program that I went to really focused a lot on using humor as a coping strategy, as well as positive self talk. So while if I'm in pain, the last thing I want to do is to like be positive, but like sometimes when I really just force myself, and just like, I will literally say out loud, like, you can do this, you have done it

before, or like, I'll even just like, find a quote, and like, I'll just say over and over and over again, like, and just even like little things that may seem silly, are very helpful.

I know that for me, finding coping strategies, and getting myself to actually like, follow through with them was really challenging. What was the hardest part for you guys of finding coping strategies, and then motivating yourself to actually keep using them?

I think I was like, my own biggest barrier, I think, because I would get so frustrated with myself when something like wouldn't work, or when I felt like something was supposed to work. And I was so like, set on quick fixes, I didn't want to fix my, I didn't want to like, if we're using sleep schedule. As an example, I didn't want to like go the whole nine yards and fix my sleep schedule. Every single night, I wanted, like one night of sleep to be like enough to like, make everything get better. And so I feel like I got caught in this little cycle of getting obsessed with quick fixes. And, like doing one thing once. And if it didn't go exactly according to plan that one time, I wouldn't want to do it again. So I think that was the hardest part for me. But I also how I kind of got around that was by making myself try like to do one new, like coping strategy a day. And that way I really, like built my toolbox and like some things immediately I was like, This is not for me. And others. I was like, I could see this being for me. So I would continue to do them. And then like, it kind of just forced me to try and do a bunch of different things, I guess.

Yeah, I would say one of the hardest part, it was really just kind of kind of changing the mindset that my, the way that I'm going to get better is really through functioning, and less about attending to the pain. And I had a whole array of coping strategies. And there were some that like I was so into, like I was so all down for like altering my sleep schedule. And that was one that I was actually like, okay, like, this is something that I can physically do that a fairly easy fix that once I kind of gotten the routine, like my body just crave sleep at like 930 now like, I don't really function much past 930 But there were other things that like just I wanted to do that just I just wasn't into like For me art was not really a coping strategy I was into. I tried it many times I would go to the art store and get all these art supplies and be like, I'm going to do art. I'm going to make a beautiful coloring book. I'm going to do paint by numbers. I'm going to do all these like amazing art projects, and then like I would, they would just sit in collect us. So it was something that like, there were some that I wanted to do, but then I would start doing them. And I just knew that they weren't for me. But then, I guess on the contrary, it really helped narrow down for me which ones were successful. And because I felt more in control, because I had, like, tried and true strategies that I knew worked.

Um, I think that's something like I totally agree with is, it's kind of weird how I think you have to, like, eliminate some define what like really works for you. And it's, and like, that's can be so frustrating. Like, it can be such a frustrating process is like you have to go through, sometimes you have to go through a lot of things because not everything is going to click immediately. And that was something I totally went through to it like the art thing. I just, I was like frustrated. I was like, I can't draw, like what am I trying to do here. And my dad's like, like a professional artist. So I was like, this is disappointing. Like, I was just frustrating myself. Um, but then I was like, this just isn't for me. And it was something I had to accept. I was like, there's, there's something out there that is going to work for me. But it's not I'm like realizing now like few years later, it's like, I gave it a chance. And that was what was most important part, I think with any coping strategy is like, you're never going to find what works for you, unless you like, Give

everything a chance. Because one thing might be great for you. But then you try something else. And it's like, even better. And it might help you, maybe more when you're out in public rather than like by yourself. So there's like a whole array of categories and how they can help you like based on where you are and who you're with.

I also think it just really helped me to start looking at coping strategies and like trying new coping strategies as like something that I could do something that was in my control. And like, even though I felt so out of like, I felt like everything was out of my control, especially with pain, I felt like I literally had no control over how I was going to feel and what I was going to feel what. And I started like looking at coping strategies as, like these little tools that I could implement, that I was doing for myself, and like I had control over if I did or didn't do them. And yeah, I wasn't guaranteeing that they were going to help me but I was at least trying. And that like taking back some power, in a sense was like really helpful for me to like continue trying new strategies, I guess,

I totally agree with that was probably like one of the main motivating things for me. And finding coping strategies was realizing that like, at a certain point, I was the only person who could help myself. And I was the only person like benefiting from me trying coping strategies, you know, my parents could suggest it, but they weren't getting anything out of it by suggesting it was only me doing them. Because it was so frustrating trying coping strategies and not having things work the first time. Because a lot of the coping strategies that I use now took like days, if not weeks for me to actually notice that they were working. And it was like, like you were saying, Sophia, I wanted something that was going to work immediately. But I think the way that I found it to be most motivated to keep looking for coping strategies was trying to do things, finding coping strategies and things that I enjoyed doing, or things that I would like look forward to. So like, I use a lot of distraction coping strategies. So if that was like things that involve chocolate, I knew I was going to look forward to it. And then I was more likely to use that coping strategy. So that was just kind of one of the ways I did myself with chocolate.

Yeah, distraction has also been a huge coping strategy for me. And it's probably one of my favorites, because it probably works the best for me. And it probably was one that was like the quickest to work. But I also think distraction can be really applied in any setting. And it doesn't necessarily take something like you have to remember your headphones when you leave the house or you have to, I guess, plan your day around like distractions. But something that I have found to be really helpful is turned something that I'm potentially interested in as a coping strategy. So for example, I love to spin like I love spinning I love like indoor cycling, that's probably like my favorite form of exercise at the moment. And I really look forward to it. And it's something that at the end of the day, when I'm done with classes, I just love coming back to my apartment and taking like 3045 minutes between class and wall. It's both a pain reduction skill and a coping strategy because it's distracting and it's physical activity. I don't think of it is bad I just think of it as something that I just really enjoyed doing. And it could be applied for sports, it could be applied for hobbies, and really just finding something that you enjoy. And kind of using that as a coping strategy has been really beneficial for me.

Um, something I've just like realized, like even just find out is the word distraction gets such a negative connotation, like, in just like society, but and I like one of our main goals for this podcast was like reducing stigma around chronic pain. And I think that's one of the things like you can really focus on, it's

like, how positive distraction can really be when you're trying to, like manage your pain. And like what like what you said, Brooke, it really is one of the most beneficial like coping strategies. Like no matter how small or big your distraction is. And I like what you said about like, finding something that really interesting interests you like, for me, like physical activity, like I love that, like I play tennis all the time, because it's just a great distraction from not only like the pain I'm feeling, but it's just like I forget about everything else, you know, it's like, it's my own little bubble. It's a little world. And like, that's how I cope with like, just daily like stress. It's like, I have a lot of homework, oh, I'm not going to skip tennis, I need to do it just so I don't feel stressed about going home. And like getting it all done. Because then it's like, I exercise I moved my body and I wasn't just sitting and studying for like five hours straight.

And I also think distraction has proven to be like, the most beneficial, like skill for me, because for so long, I use school as a distraction for my pain. And I know I've talked about this before, but like I would just try my hardest to focus on the class I was in and take like, notes and things that would help me later. And by like, trying to focus so hard on like, the actual class I was in, it didn't leave a ton of space to focus on my pain. Obviously, like, my pain was persistent. So like, it was still in the back of my mind. But like, when I was really like focusing on the classes, it helped me academically and helped me like grade wise, and also helps me like, think about something other than my pain and focus on something other than my pain, which was obviously like really good. And I also love distraction, because I think it's so versatile. Because really like anything can be a distraction. Like a lot of teachers are worried about their students being distracted, but I was using like their class as my distraction to like, you know, it's very versatile.

Sofia, I think like that whole school thing, they brought it up. Like that's just something I used today. Like, my friends make fun of me because I say like you can have like a good time at school. Like if you try hard enough. It's like if you work hard for your like good grades, even though that can take like use the use of coping strategies. Like the only reason I get good grades now is because I've implemented so many of these coping strategies like into learning while having pain, but just like life with like, just life in general. And they like apply everywhere. So like school for me, like during the thick of it. And before I knew I had chronic pain was my biggest attraction, best grades of my life was eighth grade, I had like 95 and above in every class because it was my distraction. And, like, I know, there's some people who struggle with school with their pain. But I think it's like even taking that just you can even start with one class and just turn it into like, I'm gonna really work hard in this class. And it can be your distraction in like, but pacing yourself while you do it. But I think like a lot of like experiences can be turned into a distraction, like we've said, like in a positive way, but you have to like, pace yourself through it and use like other coping strategies to get there.

I love that you said pacing because I was going to ask if you guys use coping strategies in your day to day life that are non distraction, coping strategies such as pacing, you guys also mentioned routines.

I definitely have used like mindfulness and meditation a lot. Just because even though I use school as a distraction, it doesn't mean school is incredibly stressful at times. And so like when I was in the thick of my pain journey, meditation was probably like the only reason or Yeah, like the only reason I ever could fall asleep because my pain for me made sleeping like almost impossible. Every night like my comforter would feel like a blowtorch, burning my skin. And then I would stress about not sleeping because I was

gonna have a pain flare. And then because I was so stressed my pain would flare and it was just kind of like this terrible cycle. And so sleep was very, very hard for me. And I use like meditation and mindfulness a lot to like actually be able to have a normal sleep routine. And like over time, I was able to and I still use it today like, for sleep and also for school stress, and things like that. And so I think like mindfulness and meditation have been like my go to's, along with pacing, I guess.

Yeah, I think mindfulness and meditation and also yoga has been just a huge coping strategy for me. And I'm actually starting to get into, like, outdoor yoga. And I'm really enjoying that just because I'm really enjoying, like really getting to immerse myself in nature. And that's been pretty helpful for me. But also, yes, pacing and moderation and really, like, understanding myself and my body. And if I, I have to do something or not do something, it's not because I don't want to, it's because I have to almost protect my time and protect my energy in order to be able to continue to function. So for example, my schedule is pretty much nine to five at graduate school almost every single day, before I even start my homework. So it's essentially a full time job. And something that I've definitely learned is that I need to start treating my graduate school experience like a full time job and not just be working 24/7, I still need to sleep, I still need to eat, I still have to make time to do all these coping strategies, because at the end of the day, it's going to catch up with me if I slack off on them. And it's happened a few times. I mean, we're all not perfect, we all get lightheaded life kind of gets in the way of doing yoga, and mindfulness and meditation and all these different strategies that we were so kind of like, dependent on and then you kind of, not do them for a few days, and then the pain flares up again. And then I'm like, okay, maybe I need to take a step back and come back to do them. And maybe I'll do extra coping strategies for a few days to kind of get it back under control.

That is such a good point. I'm broke. We're all talking about like the great things that we do. But we are in no way perfect. And we all like forget to use our coping strategies, or even choose not to sometimes. So I like that you said that because we all do that. Yeah, and

just something else that I kind of want to add is like, recognize your limit and recognize your body's limits. Like I know, for me, my body does not function very well. If I go to bed late every single night of the week, that has been something I've been like that my entire life, even before chronic pain, so really get to know yourself and get to know what helps your body function the best. And for me, I've always been a person that needs a lot of sleep. So recognizing that, okay, well, some people might not need as much sleep as I do. There are other things that they need that I don't so don't necessarily think of coping strategies as like a hinderance to what you're doing because everyone has their own strategies, what they do, regardless if it's for pain or not. It's such a good

point. And like, like, we definitely like you were, like you both were saying we definitely do forget, like this past week. I started like a new internship. And I was like, Okay, I need to try. So, so hard. I need to like work as hard as possible work as long as possible. And because I was like working such long hours, and like kind of forcing myself to go above and beyond. I didn't really have time to do anything else this week, or this past week. And the end of the week, I was like, Why do I feel like so terrible. And it's just like, I neglected to do everything that I know, my body needs, like getting the exercise I need, like, actually having like, social interactions and seeing people and not living in like a little bubble of internship and working harder than I should and like not sleeping enough. And to like I definitely like do

need reminders. And I think like my body acts as like the biggest reminder, when I neglected to do all of these things.

I think that kind of goes back to like that either too much of a good thing or too much of like, even like a bad thing. It's like, everything has its limit. And that's kind of where you find your own, like personal balance, I think and I think coping strategies come into that like they, they play along with that too, because they can help you like maintain that balance. But um, I know I remember like a few weeks ago I was like so stressed I was like frazzled. I'm freaking out with school. And my mom was like, use like your coping strategies like use what you've learned because they really do apply like to like every aspect of life. And like that was me like realizing like I needed to be reminded because As in like, because you're you can't be perfect. Like we said, like, you're always gonna, like get caught up with something, whether it has to do with pain and you're just like having such a bad pain flare and you like, don't know what to do, and you're so uncomfortable. And it's so like really taking that step back. And it's like, going back to like that maybe that place in your head where you felt like the most like balanced in your life, or the most peaceful. And I think that's what these coping strategies really help you do. And like mindfulness, meditation can help you go back to that place. And even if it's just like, a beach meditation, something like that, like if you're on vacation, and that was like an amazing experience for you. There's like meditation videos online, and guided imagery online that can help you find something similar that can bring you that to that balanced place in your head, which can make you feel better physically.

Yeah, so there's actually a book that I'm reading right now for a class by a psychologist or psychiatrist, named vessel Bessel Vander Kolk, and it's called the Body Keeps the Score. And it's just really kind of just the title of it just is reminding me like, even if you're not trying to be consciously doing something, your body knows what's going on your body reacts to the world around it, your body reacts to the positive and the negative. And if you slack off on the coping skills, your body will know. And that's kind of always just served as a reminder to me to always just kind of never kind of forget about how valuable the coping strategies are. Because even though they might take time out of my day, or I have to carve out additional resources, I mean, I know that my body will suffer otherwise.

So we'll have coping strategies that we liked from the beginning, probably. But did you guys have coping strategies that you really didn't like in the beginning, that you've still stuck with and ended up actually finding to be helpful.

Um, I think for me, honestly, it was like, meditation was something like I like because I was like, 13 years old, I was like, this is for moms. This is some kind of like yoga stuff. I'm like, it wasn't for me. And maybe it didn't work in the beginning, because I didn't really give it a chance, I would just like decided it wasn't going to be for me, because I was too young. And I shouldn't have to do something like that. But now, like mindfulness and meditation are something I love. Maybe it's because I've grown up a little bit. And I've found that some distractions are easy, like easier, and some coping strategies are easier to use, like as you grow, and they're going to change. Like as you change, but it was me, it probably was, maybe because I didn't give it a chance. But I really didn't like it at first, like we do it at the pain rehabilitation program. I just be sitting there, um, I would not be paying attention, I'd be like, I'd be thinking about something else might not even be about pain. But then, like starting freshman year of

high school, I started using it more, I think maybe I think it was like a night I had trouble sleeping. And I was like, Oh, I gotta do this. This is what it comes down to. It helped like the calm app that's like one of my favorites with all their guided meditations and guided imageries. And they have some that, like their ocean wanna think is my favorite. And it really works. And I was like, this works. But it like it changed. Like it took a year for that to happen.

Yeah, I definitely agree. I think I had, every coping strategy that I had a lot of trouble with that actually proved to be very effective, was like, kind of because I didn't give it a fair shot in the beginning. So maybe this isn't like a conventional coping strategy. But like, for me, therapy. I didn't really like want to commit to therapy. When I was in therapy. I wasn't really there. Like my mind was other places. And I like, didn't want to actually talk about what needed to be talked about. And I didn't want to talk about pain. I just wanted to be like, I'm fine, I'm fine, I'm fine. I'm fine. I'm fine. There's nothing to unpack here. There's nothing to deal with, like, totally fine. And because of that, therapy, like obviously didn't really help me because I wasn't truly there. And then after a while I like decided to like genuinely commit to therapy and like commit to meditation and things like that. And that's when I like actually started seeing a difference because I was like, I felt like I was holding myself back. And now those two things like meditation and therapy are things that I still do like I'm still in therapy, and I don't think I will ever stop because and I don't think I'll ever stop doing meditations when I'm stressed out or anything like that because they have just been so helpful. And like I mean, like I started when I was like what 11 And I'm 18 now like this has been like such a constant for so long. And that's like comforting, I guess.

I think kind of Having the mindset of having like, for me, if I think something is not going to work from the beginning, it's not going to work. Like there's not really anything changing my mind. So I kind of went into learning the coping strategies with mild apprehension. But one thing that I really didn't think was going to work was moderation and pacing, and really taking a step back from my classes for my activities. And that was something I was like, That is the worst idea I've ever heard like I was, I remember that being the hardest part of my Pain Rehab journey, just because as somebody who I'm sure we can all attest to this, we're all overachievers, we're all perfectionistic, we all have some of the classic qualities that I frequently see with people with chronic pain. And the last thing somebody who's an overachiever wants to do is to be told to scale back on their classes. And that was probably the hardest for me. But that was actually probably one of the biggest learning experiences, in that I learned that there's more to life than school, you could still go to college, taking regular level classes, you could still go to grad school, taking regular level of classes, but also how important it is to take care of yourself before anything, and that. So what like I was just talking to a team group about this a few months ago, that they were really not thrilled about the idea of having to step back in, in levels of their classes. And I'm like, honestly, like, I was super apprehensive. But it is probably why I enjoyed my senior year of high school because I wasn't stressed about school at all, like I actually got to finally enjoy school for the first time, in like four years.

I think that's something that I really am working on right now as like in the middle of high school. Because like, even as a freshman like people like the I think the reality of it is now it's like they start to push College on you like freshman year. And, like, I already know what I want to do with my future. I wanted to be psychologist or a neuro psychologist, actually. But it was like scaling back on classes is like really was really hard for me. It's like I got recommended to take honors Spanish next year is like,

why would I not take the honors class? Like, apparently I can do it. But I was like, What am I doing? Like, I don't need to, it's so unnecessary. And I think goes back to what you said too, about, like, I was an overachiever. And like a perfectionist, before I had chronic pain. So after like, taking, like learning how to like, it was hard for me to pace that and like once I got back to like, posts to like, learn how to manage my pain. I was like, just went all in trying to get back to that, like 100%. And it was, it didn't like it didn't work. I had to really like take things slowly and like use that pacing strategy. But it's still something I'm like really working on, especially with school because I really push myself. And it's like, I don't need to like as much as I do. Like, my little overachiever story of the day is like my grade dropped from a 102 to a 99 in history. I was so upset about it this morning. I was like, who cares? Like it's 99. But it took me like the whole day. And I was like, why does this matter so much like it doesn't. And it's like, I got I like, I'm more comfortable. And I'm less stressed out with my, with my one point below 100. And that's what I've realized was so many of my classes, like with math, I used to really struggle with it. And at a point I was just like having an ad in math is okay, I don't need to have a 90 or above. Like it's always going to be something I struggle with. And I think that was so hard for me to realize is like we all have something that we struggle with, like whether it's with a subject in school, or like a social component or like there's something that everybody struggles with and you might never get there no matter how hard you work and it's kind of tough to accept at one point and it helps you like again like find your balance like you know you're good at some things and some things you're not that good that but that's okay because everyone's the same way

Yeah, and I think like the really beautiful thing about pacing is it's not permanent. So for me my freshman year I didn't set it like didn't step back on my classes when I needed to and so my because my pain still needed like a lot of being dealt with and I like didn't really want to deal with it. My grades suffered because I was taking too hard classes and also completely ignoring the fact that I had chronic pain. And so obviously like that was like a fine line to walk on. And I did end up stepping back and like I got a pain like my pain situation in proved a lot. And this year, I stepped up my courses a lot more. And I managing because I know how to manage my pain and I kind of like use those strategies and carry them over to managing a very intense workload. And so like, just because I like, had to pace myself before, doesn't mean like, I couldn't like go back into accelerated classes and things like that. I just, like, need to remember to pace myself with that just as much. And so I feel like that was like, a weird thing for me to juggle with. Because, like, just because you're in a harder class, like, actually, I think if you're in a harder class, it just means you need to pace yourself more. And like, need to make sure like, you're actually like having these checks and balances, like, okay, like you did homework for X amount of hours. And you could go like, triple that. But like, at what point does it come at a cost to your body and like your mental health and like, your pain? And so, yeah, I think like, that was the cool thing for me about pacing, because it wasn't permanent. And I could step back with my classes. And then once I got to a place where I was ready, I could kind of like, try harder classes. Again,

I think pacing is definitely something that like, although it doesn't need to be permanent, I still definitely use it in my everyday life, like I work at healthcare now. And it's a very fast paced environment, and I am totally a morning person. So I can get like wound up at the beginning of my shift being like, Okay, I'm gonna do everything that I'm supposed to do in the next 12 and a half hours and try to do it in four, which never works out well. So that's like definitely pacing, something I absolutely use in everyday life,

like as an adult still today? Do you guys have strategies that you've learned first, for pain that you use more just in your everyday for like stress or something like that now?

Yeah, definitely pacing. I also really just think setting boundaries has been something that has been incredibly beneficial, I think kind of having a list of what your daily priorities are, and making them a non negotiable, just as you wouldn't skip out on an important work meeting or an important class. Like you can't skip out on your workout, if that's something that is really critical for you to keep your pain under control, or you can't skip out on a meditation session, or yoga, or whatever it is, that keeps your pain at bay. Honestly, like, right after my pain rehab program, I scheduled everything down to the hour, and I treated everything as a non negotiable. And while I did that for a few months, it was really helpful. And knowing that the thing that I have to do to take care of my body are equally, if not more important than the things that I actually have to do that I'll get to see like, a direct benefit from like, a class, or, like an assignment. So really treating the things that you use for chronic pain as a meeting or something that you can't skip out on.

Um, for me, that's something like, that's like, so important is like, what really works and like really applying it like, this week, on Thursday, I have a family dinner, I'm supposed to go, but it conflicts with me going to therapy. And like my mom was like, and I thought about it too. I was like, I need to go to therapy, I need to go see my psychologist because I couldn't go for like a month because there's just so busy on a vacation. I had like exams, all this stuff. And it really like affected me like I was a little bit like I was really anxious and frazzled. And that's when I had to go back to like, use my coping strategies. And I really had to, like apply them myself. And it was something that I like wasn't used to because I was always having someone there is like my outlet to talk to you. So I'd be less stressed. So I wouldn't my coping strategies, I'd still use them, but they wouldn't have to be like a constant. And so like you said, Brooke like setting boundaries and like really putting yourself first I think is really important. And like really putting yourself first in terms of like the things you want to do to like, like put that above, like even your pain. I think like once you learn how to manage your pain, like, be like be the best person you can like in that aspect because like you're gonna feel so much better about yourself and the things that you accomplish. It's like even though I have pain, like Look what I've done, and then it becomes like this is who I am not my pain once you get past that point.

Yeah, I definitely agree. I think that like at least I feel for me like as a young woman. I feel as though like putting myself first like are putting my Body first would be like looked down upon because like, I feel like that's selfish in some way. I don't know why it's just like some weird societal pressure that I have internalized. And so I think, like, I struggled that for a really long time, because it was like, oh, like, Why should I, like skip out on like family, like you were just saying, like, family time to go to therapy, but it's like, if I know therapy is something that's incredibly beneficial for me, which it is, like, that needs to be the priority. And I need to like, before I really worry about everything else, like I need to kind of worry about myself because, like, the end of the day, like you are the most constant thing in your life, I guess. And like, so you need to, like be your best advocate and like, you need to do the things that like, you know, will help you and like, so, I think like that has been like really hard for me to like, manage, and like not let that like flake as like, my courses have gotten more challenging or like I've gotten stressed with external things. But I think over time, like I've, like seen that, like needs to be held true. Like you need to like be there for yourself in a way.

Well, I think all of you guys are so inspiring to me every time I talk to you guys. It's just like I learned something new about you. And I feel like I there's also something I learned that's new that I can implement in my life. And Bridget I just feel like you're wise beyond your years honestly. So yeah, thank you guys so much for being here talking about coping strategies. And to anyone who's listening Stay tuned for the next episode in which Sophia Brooke and Bridget are going to talk about how to talk about pain.

On behalf of the comfortability program. I want to thank Sophia, Fiona, Brooke, Bridget and Katie for their incredible work in writing, producing and recording this amazing podcast. We are so lucky to have the privilege of learning from you and working with you on the comfortability peer advisory board. I am also so grateful to my comfortability team, especially Dr. Amy Hale, who provided support and guidance to the pier board and staff throughout the project. Thanks to Dr. Hale, we all got a little zippier and felt a lot more confident. I also want to thank the Department of Anesthesia, critical care and pain medicine at Boston Children's for supporting this work, and the team at open pediatrics for the podcast post production. Finally, a shout out of gratitude to our strong and growing network of dedicated partner sites in the US, Canada and Australia. If you're looking for more great science backed information about managing chronic pain, check out our website that comfortability.com We've got lots of helpful resources online including information about how to find a comfortability workshop near you. If you enjoyed the podcast and you want to help the comfortability program grow, so we can continue to support young people with pain. Please consider a tax deductible donation to the comfortability program through Boston Children's Hospital. How do you donate? It's easy. Just go to our website, the comfortability.com and look for the donation button in the upper right hand corner. For more great content. You can follow us on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. We are at a comfortability across all social media. Finally, I just want to say I'm so happy you tuned in to listen today. I know I speak for myself, our peer Advisory Board and the comfortability team when I say