

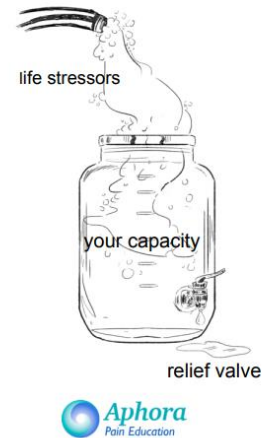
Stress and pain

The stressors of life are constant. They are both invaluable and troublesome depending on our capacity to cope with them. When we cope well they increase our capacity for others. This is what learning and growth are all about. However, when our capacity is too limited for the stressors we are experiencing the jar overflows and life gets very messy. Most of us can recognize that when we are in a lot of extra stress our pain increases. I love the analogy of the overflowing jar to illustrate this concept.

In the context of pain, it doesn't matter what caused the jar to overflow, it just did. This concept helps explain how some seemingly trivial event or comment can set us off. This image can lead to several strategies to deal with stress. First, decreasing the stressors may be possible. If so then that could help. If you are in a job that you hate, a relationship that is toxic, or have pain that is out of control will all challenge our capacity to cope. Having some control over our daily pain Second, actively working to increase your capacity to handle stress is often the best strategy. This can take time but long term is the most effective. Physical exercise is a great example of how this strategy is often used but this strategy can easily apply to other types of stress. Also improving your sleep will improve your capacity to deal successfully with stress. Last, learning and using some stress relief tools such as taking what my friend Sharna Prasad calls mindfulness and movement snacks. Or developing a journaling practice, Or developing a consistent meditation practice. The possibilities are endless and unique to each of us.

This is all part of the exploration of stress and pain that we each must take. We are working to create maps of the new terrain that we are living in. Since the pain arrived in our lives, the terrain has shifted and the map that we had of the life that we were living no longer applies. It is as if we have a map for Kalamazoo MI but find ourselves now in Boseman MT. The longer we keep trying to make sense of the old map, the longer it will take to create our new map and find our way back to a life we enjoy. Remember When map and terrain differ, follow the terrain. A successful exploration out of a life controlled by pain often starts with developing an active (not passive) go to pain relief strategy. Again this is the relief valve. Something that you can reliably use to calm your pain. Having this can give you the confidence to explore the terrain with curiosity rather than fear.

Stress management



- 3 options to manage stress
1. decrease your stressors
 2. build your capacity
 3. open up the relief valve

What is your strategy?
What is your plan?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.