

FAST FACTS: Non-Drug Treatment: Distraction

Distraction is the process of drawing a person's attention away from one thought, object, or experience and toward a different thought, object, or experience. Distraction may decrease the experience of pain because of a person's ability to process only so much information at one time.

✓ **Benefits of Distraction:**

- Decreasing pain
- Increasing relaxation
- Providing an opportunity to spend enjoyable time with other people

✓ **Potential Problems with Distraction:**

- When distraction successfully relieves pain, some people may doubt the presence or severity of the pain.
- The individual may become even more aware of pain when the distraction ends.
- The individual must be ready for and interested in using distraction as a pain relief technique.

✓ **Methods of Distraction:**

- Watching TV or movies
- Petting an animal
- Playing games
- Listening to music
- Looking at pictures. Pictures may be used in the following way:
 - Fill a folder or box with pictures from magazines or calendars.
 - Keep the folder or box on hand and bring it out when your loved one needs something to do.
 - Have your loved one look at a picture and describe it in any way they choose.
 - As soon as your loved one loses interest, choose another picture.
- Use of Humor. Humor may be used in the following way:
 - Create a humor library; cut out favorite cartoons, sayings, jokes, or quotes and put them in an album or folder; bring it out when your loved one needs a distraction.
 - Watch portions of a funny movie.
 - Read sections of a funny book out loud.



✓ **What Else You Should Do**

- Write down and share information about your loved one's pain with their healthcare provider.
- Use a [Pain Diary](#) to note important information useful to the healthcare provider.
- Encourage your loved one to try a non-drug treatment and document the impact on their pain in their Pain Diary.

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References

Adapted from: Fouladbakhsh, J.M., et al., Nondrug therapies for pain management among rural older adults. *Pain Manag Nurs*, 2011. 12(2): p. 70-81. 2. The Nursing Home Pain Management Algorithm Clinical Trial, R01 NR009100, 7/1/05 – 4/30/10; Mary Ersek (PI) Used with permission of Mary Ersek and HPNA (2009).

Stanford Health Care. 2021. *Management of Pain without Medications*.

<https://stanfordhealthcare.org/medical-conditions/pain/pain/treatments/non-pharmacological-pain-management.html>.