

FAST FACTS: Distraction as Nondrug Pain Treatment

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 an individual's ability to process only so much information at one time.

✓ **Benefits of Distraction**

- Decreasing pain
- Increasing relaxation

✓ **Potential Problems with Distraction**

- When distraction successfully relieves pain, some people may doubt the presence or severity of the pain
- You may become even more aware of pain when the distraction ends
- You 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 bringing it out when you need something to do
 - Look at a picture and describe it in any way you choose
 - As soon as you lose 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 you need a distraction
 - Watch portions of a funny movie
 - Read sections of a funny book out loud

✓ **What else can you do**

- Write down and share information about your pain with your healthcare provider
- Consider using a [Pain Diary](#) to note important information useful to the provider
- Try a non-drug treatment and document the impact on your pain in your Pain Diary

Adapted from:

1. 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).

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