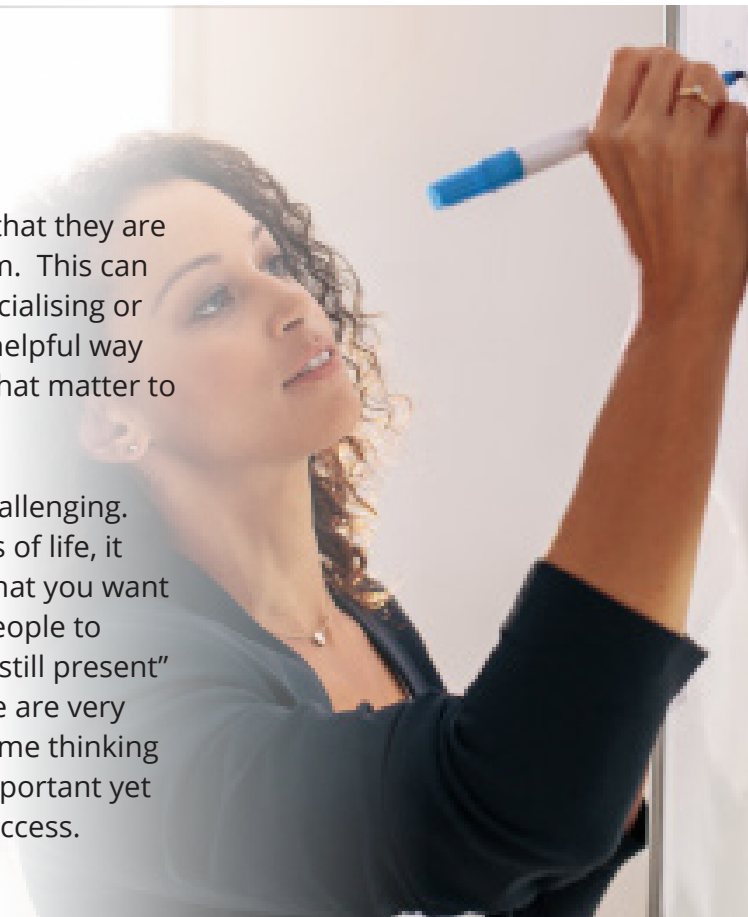


Goal Setting: Doing what matters most.

Why bother setting goals?

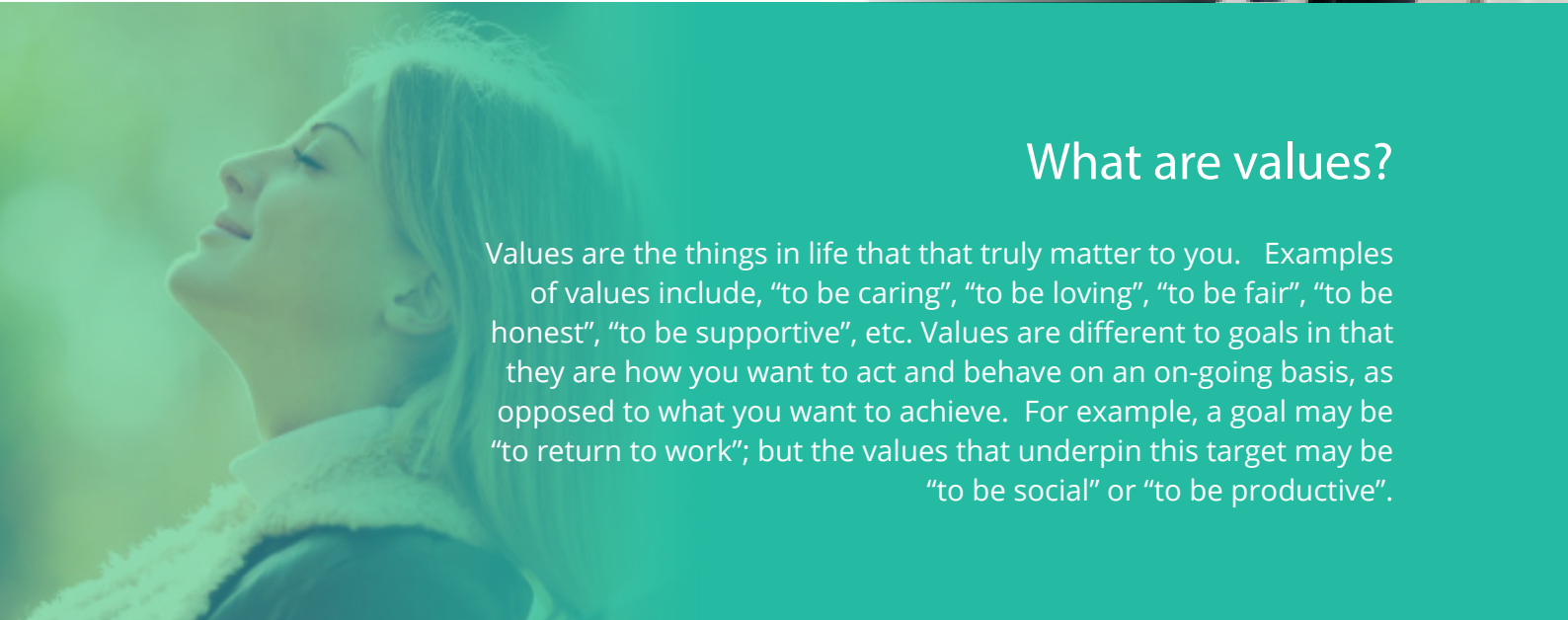
People living with persistent pain often report that they are able to do less of the things that matter to them. This can include going to work, playing with children, socialising or being able to exercise. Goals setting can be a helpful way of setting a direction to get back to the things that matter to you alongside your pain.

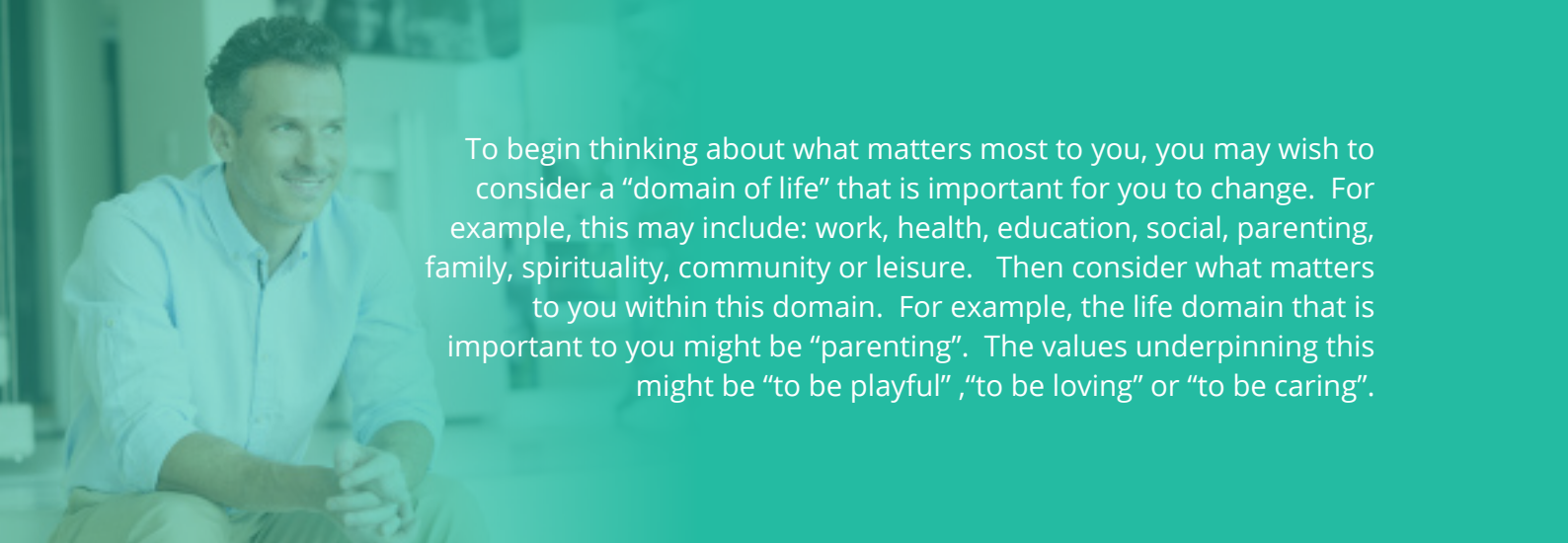
However, thinking about goal setting can be challenging. Firstly, when pain impacts on so many domains of life, it can be difficult to identify one particular area that you want to work towards. It's also not uncommon for people to have thoughts such as "I can't when my pain is still present" or "I've tried this before & it didn't work". These are very normal thoughts to have; however, spending time thinking about your values may help you to consider important yet achievable goals, offering a better chance of success.



What are values?

Values are the things in life that truly matter to you. Examples of values include, "to be caring", "to be loving", "to be fair", "to be honest", "to be supportive", etc. Values are different to goals in that they are how you want to act and behave on an on-going basis, as opposed to what you want to achieve. For example, a goal may be "to return to work"; but the values that underpin this target may be "to be social" or "to be productive".





To begin thinking about what matters most to you, you may wish to consider a “domain of life” that is important for you to change. For example, this may include: work, health, education, social, parenting, family, spirituality, community or leisure. Then consider what matters to you within this domain. For example, the life domain that is important to you might be “parenting”. The values underpinning this might be “to be playful” ,“to be loving” or “to be caring”.

Setting a goal that is **SMART!**

Once you have considered what truly matters, this may then help you to develop goals that are important to you. The natural tendency will be to think of the medium to longer term goals; however also consider the more immediate steps.

To give you the best chance of succeeding with goal setting, it can be helpful to use the “SMART” acronym, as described below.

S

Specific: You need to make your goal specific. For example, instead of “I would like to be fitter” the goal might be “I will go for a walk every other day around the park.”

M

Measurable: It is useful to have something to measure to see how you are progressing – such as the distance or time.

A

Achievable: The goal should be realistically achievable within the timeframe.

R

Relevant: As already emphasised, the goal needs to be important to you and based on your identified values.

T

Timed: To make it more specific, set a timeframe for when you may be able to achieve your goal.

Once you have a goal, write it down to make it more real and to act as an on-going reminder. It has been shown that people are more likely to take action if they tell others, so make a public commitment by informing your family or friends.

Remember: every small step taken is a meaningful step towards change. As the famous saying goes...

“The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step.”