

Transcript : Brent Weeks NPW 2022

Flare Up & Fatigue: Red, Amber & Green Zones



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Welcome to this short presentation "Beyond Pain" about the use of our readiness tool.

"My name's Brent Weeks I'm an exercise physiologist."

So why do we use our readiness tool? So pacing is considered an important aspect "of any rehab program, including chronic pain." "The concept's so common it can easily be skipped over." The pacing, like any other intervention, "can be done both in a helpful and unhelpful way." Without any primary education, "structure and tools," this can be a lot harder than expected and lead to just another failed intervention affecting a patient's beliefs and mindset. "So, things like, if I can't get pacing right," then what can I get right Now Pacing Tool is specific to an individual. "And aim is to help them manage" their resilience's budget for the day whilst reducing flare ups and making the most of what someone can do. The tool is built in a way that we want to try and build conditioning and endurance within an individuals symptoms and experience and not necessarily wait for symptoms to go away or reduce before building conditioning and function. So definitely trying to avoid that pattern of, you know, I'll get fitter, I'll build my endurance once the pain is gone or something like that Readiness Tool and Why So basically having to plan, consider and think about pacing "every activity all day in itself can be exhausting." "So the aim of the readiness scale is to help lighten that load," reduce the impact pacing can have on mindset and cognitive fatigue in that way.

The other aspect that we're trying to do there is with improved structure, you know, sort of trying to build in a bit of a failsafe for scenarios like, "Did I overdo it?"

"Have I done enough?" So constantly second guessing yourself or penalising yourself If you think you've overdone it or feeling lazy for not thinking you haven't done enough in your day or in your activity. So we also want to be able to review the impact of activity is having once you start to regress things over an extended period and reduce recency bias. So, you know, it's quite often you're going to think the last thing you did is the thing that caused the flare up or just slightly food poisoning. The last piece of chicken or fish or something that you ate "is what caused food poisoning when it could." It's probably more likely more complicated than that and could be many factors. So we're trying to reduce that recency bias with this as well.

Okay. "So what is readiness? I keep saying readiness. What is it?" So it's basically a reflection of how adaptive or ready body is for activity such as exercise, work around the house housework, work, all those sorts of things. Stress and the demands of the day. It's absolutely a reflection of an individual's experience of how they feel. And it's also an impact of how balanced that autonomic nervous system might be. So that's probably going through more detail on that on another presentation. But readiness is also a reflection of your Autonomic Nervous System, or ANS Which again is another way of saying how adaptive or ready "is your body for stress and change for the day?"

"So key things that might impact your readiness." And these are probably common themes

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that people hear throughout the week that also affects the pain experience. So, Time you went to bed and quality of sleep, especially differencing quality of sleep from night to night. Things like heart rate variability can have an impact to things like your resting heart rate and how much did you recover from your sleep can have an impact also I'd be looking at things like how busy where you yesterday? Were you flared up yesterday? What was your readiness yesterday as well. So once you start add those things together, "you start to get a bit of an idea of what a typical day is" "versus a worse than typical and better than typical day." "So here we've got the readiness tool development." So it's a bit of an example. So this can be taken of the average of say "three months or one month depending on" where someone's at. So as you can see, we're using a traffic light system. "So in the middle, in the amber, you've got a typical day." "So for someone that could include six out of ten fatigue," four out of ten neck pain, which is a dull ache, sharp pain at times, and significant head fog So in that type of day, the person might say, okay, I'm going to aim for a 45 minute walk 20 minute housework, 40, 45 minutes on the computer and 15 minute stints or something like that.

Okay. Then you're looking to establish okay, that's what a typical day is. What is the worse than typical day? And therefore, what is my aim for that day in terms of activity? "As you can see, all the activity is reduced" by sort of approximately 10 to 20% and equally you might have a day where you feel a bit better or a bit more ready than normal. "So in that case you can see the activity is a little bit higher." "Nothing silly, just a small sort of 10, 20% increments." "So what we're trying to do here is establish a baseline" and also ensure that we're making the most out of our activity to continue to build conditioning endurance. "Okay, so this is something that you might spend" "a bit of time at or a time doing at the start of the program," a little bit of detail and things like that. But the goal is once this is established, it reduces how much time you spend "thinking about your symptoms during the day." So effectively, once this is ready, we want to focus on what we can do, not what the symptoms are doing. Okay, so quick readiness tool during the day, there's a lot of exertion tables and ways that people can measure their exertion in a day. A lot of them require lots of numbers, numbers up to 20, all sorts of things like that. So a quick reference tool for that, "again, is establishing using a traffic light system" that an amber task you feel challenged but in a helpful way with manageable symptoms and post that activity, your symptoms stay relatively stable. Imagine a red light. You'd feel an unhelpful increase in symptoms during the activity, and those symptoms might last for minutes or hours after the activity. We'd consider that a worse than typical response to activity "and then alternatively we have a green traffic light." So that task that might feel really good, little or no change in symptoms both during and following activity. And we might call this a better than typical response to activity. So again, if "someone's performing tasks throughout the day," it's a quick reference tool to see

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if what you are doing might lead to a flare up immediately.

Okay. So key thing here is we want to keep this simple. So once we've done the background work, all we're looking to do is establish that readiness green, amber, red and put that in your calendar. "diary, could be on a paper calendar with a highlight."

You could use a tracking app on your phone.

Entirely up to the individual. "But you're making one reference in the morning." Green, amber, red. Which would also indicate what your intent is for activity for the day.

And then at the end of the day, you might document green, amber or red. So how did I. How did my energy use or or how did my activity go compared to what I planned for? Did I over do it, Did I under do it? That sort of flows into the next slide, which is the readiness tool budget. So "Did my effort and activity match my readiness?" So all days are equal. So if you think of your energy budget or your resilience budget as a pie, as you say, the pie might be a bit bigger for a green day. Pretty typical for an orange day, and smaller for a red day. "So tracking this, we're looking for patterns" such as the green days ending amber red days. Are you overdoing it? Are you trying to feel too much into your good days and you might be able to see that in the course of weeks, months, etc. Most people find that a very handy tool and ultimately do red days end as amber? So if you're starting with a red day, do you have enough rest and recovery in there? So if you're starting days as red or worse than typical and ending that way. Is there enough recovery going on again that just recorded as red and green? At the end of the day? You'll spend a lot of time on that. Let's go through a couple of quick examples. This is a very short basic example that someone might do. So as you can see, there's ambers in the first few days, both in the morning and the afternoon and you can see some reds there, a few greens And they just write a few notes around how their sleep was So they might start to see a pattern that poor sleep usually starts in red and amber days and good sleep usually starts in a green day. So a lot of the things we might know it's very helpful for an individual to be able to see this in their own experience over a period. The next example is much more detailed. "So you see a balance of activity, different colours,"

different challenges of the day. "So things like work is different to social" "exercise, mastery and hobbies, those sorts of things." So someone can look at how they're balancing their week in terms of the balance of activity. And you can see at the top, in the bottom there's just a spot there to put their readiness at the start of the day, and their readiness, energy budget at the end of the day so it's a much more detailed example. Most people probably wouldn't go to this much detail but by using this example so you can kind of see the extreme version. Okay. So when we talk about greater progression and one of the reasons we use the readiness tool "is once it's well established, obviously the key" with any functional

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conditioning program is progression. So this helps us progress the program in a very individualised way. So we'd still follow the sort of best practice greater progression principles, which that might differ a little bit between pain and fatigue and things like that. But we've been looking to change something every 1 to 3 weeks and only progressing by a total of 10 to 20% total volume. So reasons why you may not progress every week or you might progress every 3 to 4 weeks or something "as you change is if you're tracking showing mostly red days," it could be due to your activity. It could be due to other things in your life, such as stress or poor sleep "or many other things that might be happening." But if you're tracking a lot of reds starting the day red, finishing the day red, then it's also another good reference that maybe you're not quite ready to add something new yet, and we could delay that by one wait to see if that changes. So using the readiness tool, "the other key point of difference with that greater" "progression is you progress red, amber and green days individually." So to use the example back at the start, you might progress someone's walking on a green day from 60 to 70 minutes, you might increase the amber day from 40 to 50, and you might increase the red day from 30 to 35 minutes of walking. "So it's very individualised based on the readiness." You're still progressing, but you're progressing each level individually "as opposed to just increasing walking by 30 minutes," "regardless of how ready or adapted you might feel." And just sort of note on what we sort of refer to as active rest So active rest can include many things meditation, mindfulness, body scanning, afternoon sleep or siesta, which obviously might include resting in a dark room, lying down and shutting your eyes. "So we also want to sort of flip that a red day" "doesn't have to be a wasted day or a negative." "It is part of a rehab program and it will happen." But we try to flip that around a little bit to say, well, on a red or amber day, you can't do as much activity, which might let's say add up to an extra 30 or 40 minutes of reduced total load or activity that someone's doing in the in the day. Rather than seeing that as a negative, it's taking that time and putting that into active rest strategies such as the stuff that we spoke about below such as mindfulness or meditation, reducing your resting heart rate and trying to still back some extra recovery in those times when you can't do as much activity. "So it's sort of cosy in and cosy out in that way." So thanks for your time. Enjoy Pain Week and...Thank you.