myHealth CONNECTIONS
PROMOTING HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

ignites

Wellness Wednesdays

SEPTEMBER, 2025 WEEK 3

WHEN THE PAIN RUNS DEEP: The Body-Mind Connection

Pain is not just physical. When it lingers for weeks or months, it begins to impact other areas of your life: your mood, your motivation, your ability to concentrate and even your relationships. Chronic musculoskeletal pain, especially in the lower back, is closely tied to mental health concerns like anxiety, depression, irritability and fatigue.

When the body hurts, it becomes harder to enjoy day-to-day life. You may find yourself withdrawing from social events, feeling frustrated at work or losing sleep. Over time, this cycle of physical pain and emotional stress can feed into each other, making both harder to manage.

The good news is that there are ways to break the cycle, and it starts with caring for both your physical and emotional wellness at the same time.

How Pain Affects Mental Well-being

Research shows that people with chronic back pain are at higher risk for experiencing:

- Sleep disturbances
- Mood changes and increased irritability
- Lower energy or motivation
- Feelings of isolation
- Depression or anxiety

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CLICK OR TAP! **We've highlighted some resources you may want to look into further. Simply click or tap the icon or its hyperlink to access these select materials!**

PLAN WITH PURPOSE : ENROLL WITH CONFIDENCE

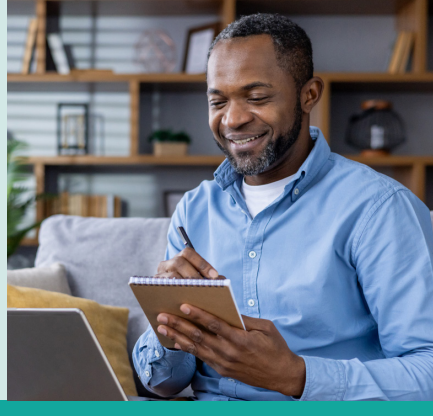
OPEN ENROLLMENT 2026

Open Enrollment Roadshow Alert!

The first two Open Enrollment Roadshows will take place:

Sept. 30 – Criminal Courts Building, 2nd Floor Cafeteria: 10 am – 3 pm
Oct. 2 – Stroger Hospital, Lower-Level Cafeteria: 10 am – 3 pm

You should be there! Get the information you need to enroll with confidence.



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These emotional responses are not signs of weakness – they're a normal part of living with persistent discomfort. The nervous system is deeply connected to your perception of pain and your emotional responses. Stress can even amplify how pain feels, leading to a vicious loop.

Understanding that pain and mental health are interconnected is the first step toward better management.

Support for the Whole You

Managing chronic pain isn't just about fixing the physical issue but also strengthening your emotional resilience. Here are some practical ways to support both your body and mind:

❶ Practice relaxation techniques.
Deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, guided imagery and mindfulness meditation can help calm the nervous system and reduce the stress response that intensifies pain.

❷ Make movement a habit.
Low-impact exercises like walking, yoga, tai chi or water aerobics can relieve muscle tension and improve your mood by releasing endorphins – your body's natural feel-good chemicals.

❸ Talk about it
Whether it's with a therapist, a support group or a trusted friend, talking about how pain is affecting you can reduce feelings of isolation and give you new ways to cope.

❹ Stick to a sleep routine.
Pain and poor sleep often go hand-in-hand. Try to go to bed and wake up at the same time each day and avoid screens or caffeine in the evening. If needed, speak with your provider about sleep support options.

❺ Set realistic goals.
On tough days, it's okay to scale back. Focus on small, manageable tasks and celebrate progress, even if it's just a short walk or five minutes of deep breathing.

❻ Explore integrated care.
Many **BCBSIL health plans** offer access to physical therapy, behavioral health support and coaching programs that take a whole-person approach to pain and wellness.

When to Seek Help

Chronic pain is often invisible to others, but it doesn't have to be endured in silence. If you've been dealing with ongoing discomfort and you've noticed your mood or mental health changing, it may be time to talk with your provider. Help is available, and you don't have to wait until it feels overwhelming.

You should consider reaching out if:

- Pain is affecting your work or relationships
- You feel sad, hopeless, or irritable most days
- You've lost interest in activities you once enjoyed
- Sleep, eating, or energy patterns have changed
- You feel anxious or on edge more than usual

BCBSIL Resources can connect you with care for both your physical and mental well-being. These may include:

- Physical therapy and pain management services
- Behavioral health counseling, in person or virtually
- Health coaching for stress and sleep
- Tools and tips for posture, movement, and self-care

Accessing support is not a sign of weakness. It's a step toward relief and strength.

Pain is real. So is healing.

Living with back pain or any musculoskeletal issue can be frustrating and exhausting, but you are not alone. With the right support, habits, and self-care tools, it's possible to feel better, move more freely, and improve your mental outlook along the way.

Your body and your mind work together. Treating both with care is the foundation of true wellness.

SOURCES: *Leslie Crofford*, *Springer Nature*, *Mayo Clinic*

Share with colleagues—smart tips about the mind-body connection!