

Effective Chronic Pain Management: Helping Clients Understand and Improve Their Experience

Program Description

Chronic pain not only challenges individuals suffering from it, but often those who are trying to help treat and support them. The challenges increase when symptoms feel unpredictable, unbearable, and overwhelming—in response, individuals and practitioners can both suffer from feelings of frustration and hopelessness. Assessment and treatment also become more complex with comorbid mental health problems, such as depression and anxiety, which can arise from associated grief and loss, fear about the future, and changes in key roles and sense of self.

In this workshop, Deborah Barrett will provide a framework for practitioners to help clients help make sense of their experience and improve it. Drawing from a “dialectical” approach, Dr. Barrett will highlight cognitive and behavioral strategies that are also rooted in acceptance, mindfulness, and compassion. Because effective pain management relies on self-awareness, Dr. Barrett will coach participants on how to help clients cultivate an experimental mindset and to incorporate evidence-based strategies for reducing suffering, increasing positive engagement, and improving choice through mindful deliberation and flexibility. Participants will engage in experiential exercises to use with clients, and also have opportunities to consult on challenging cases.

Program Objectives

Upon completion of this workshop, participants should be able to:

1. **Discuss** the unique challenges faced by individuals who have chronic pain and associated mental health symptoms;
2. **Apply** Pain Control Gate Theory in work with individuals with pain conditions;
3. **Engage** in a collaborative relationship with clients that supports an individualized approach to self-tracking;
4. **Incorporate** best practice approaches for treating chronic pain and support clients in evaluating what works; and
5. **Offer** approaches to pain management that bring together both acceptance and change strategies to enhance life quality.

This workshop will be beneficial for clinicians, therapists and counselors, including psychologists, social workers, marriage and family therapists, psychiatric nurses, substance abuse counselors, vocational rehabilitation counselors, and all interested others.

Contact Hours

6.0 hours

Program Agenda

9:00 – 9:15: Introduction

9:15– 9:30: Chronic Pain as Its Own Entity

9:30 – 10:15 – Model of Chronic Pain – How it Works

10:15 – 10:30 – Partner exercise

10:30 – 10:45 - Break

10:45 - 11:30- Variation and self-tracking for behavioral change

11:30 – 12:00 - Case examples and discussion

12:00-1:00 Lunch

1:00 – 1:30pm – Acceptance/Change Dialectic

1:30 – 2:00 – Experiential exercises

2:00 – 2:15 – Break

2:15 – 3:15 – Evidence-based change strategies

3:15-4:00 – Case consultation / role plays

4:00-4:30 – Reinforcement of Approach, Case consultation

Faculty

Deborah Barrett, PhD, LCSW is a clinical associate professor of social work at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where she has taught courses in health and mental health. In 2005, she founded the UNC Clinical Lecture Series, which offers continuing education for practitioners and students, and in 2014, she launched the UNC Clinical Lecture Institutes to offer more indepth trainings in evidence based practices. Debbie is committed to increasing access to mental healthcare services, and helped found the Pro Bono Counseling Network, at the Mental Health America of the Triangle, where she serves on its advisory board. She is also a psychotherapist in private practice, specializing in individual and group treatment of emotional and/or physical pain and suffering. She speaks and writes on this topic, including a self-help book, *Paintracking: Your Personal Guide to Living Well with Pain* (2012).