

# Nurse Coaching: The Crucial Tool Missing From Pain Toolbox

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AANP Pain Management Specialty Practice Group

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## Conflict of Interest Disclosure Information

- Speaker bureau for Salix Pharmaceuticals: opioid induced constipation
- Speaker bureau for Nevro: neuromodulation/ spinal cord stimulation for chronic pain
- Founder and Coach: Nursing Beyond the Job LLC: nurse coaching for burnout

*All relevant financial relationships have been mitigated.*

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# Objectives

- Define what nurse coaching is and how it differs from the traditional medical model.
- Identify 3 benefits of coaching interventions in patients with chronic pain.
- Describe 1 coaching technique that can be used with patients to identify goals.

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# Why Do We Care?

- Pain is often a chronic condition that requires continued management since cure is not always attainable.
- Catastrophizing worsens perception of pain and decreases pt. function.
- Ambivalence as a protective behavior that often is misinterpreted.
- Goal setting is an effective behavior change technique.
- Coaching can challenge the patients' limited self-perception.

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**Can be done individually or in a group setting.**


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# Current Common Modalities

Medications	Physical Therapy	Interventional procedures: nerve blocks, neuromodulation
Acupuncture	Surgery	What do these have in common?

**What's missing?**



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# What Coaching Is

A skill to be learned and practiced	Collaborative relationship
Goal focused	Tool to have patient develop their own care plan
Facilitation of meaningful conversations	Identifying gaps between a patient's vision and reality
Exploration of the patient experience	

# What Coaching Isn't

Giving advice	Mentoring
Teaching or directing	A way to measure compliance
Standardized experience for patients	

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## Data Supporting Coaching Interventions

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Cancer pain management study: pts in coaching group had significant improvement in ratings of pain related interference with function, general health, vitality and mental health. Thomas et al., 2012

Chronic pain patients 12-month health and wellness program: at end of program, statistically significant improvement reductions in pain intensity and pain related interference. Rethorn et al., 2020

Symptom cluster of fatigue, pain and sleep disturbance in cancer patients: improved fatigue severity and interference, sleep disturbance, depression and anxiety. Not statistically significant findings in pain in this Vietnamese cancer pop. Nguyen et al., 2018



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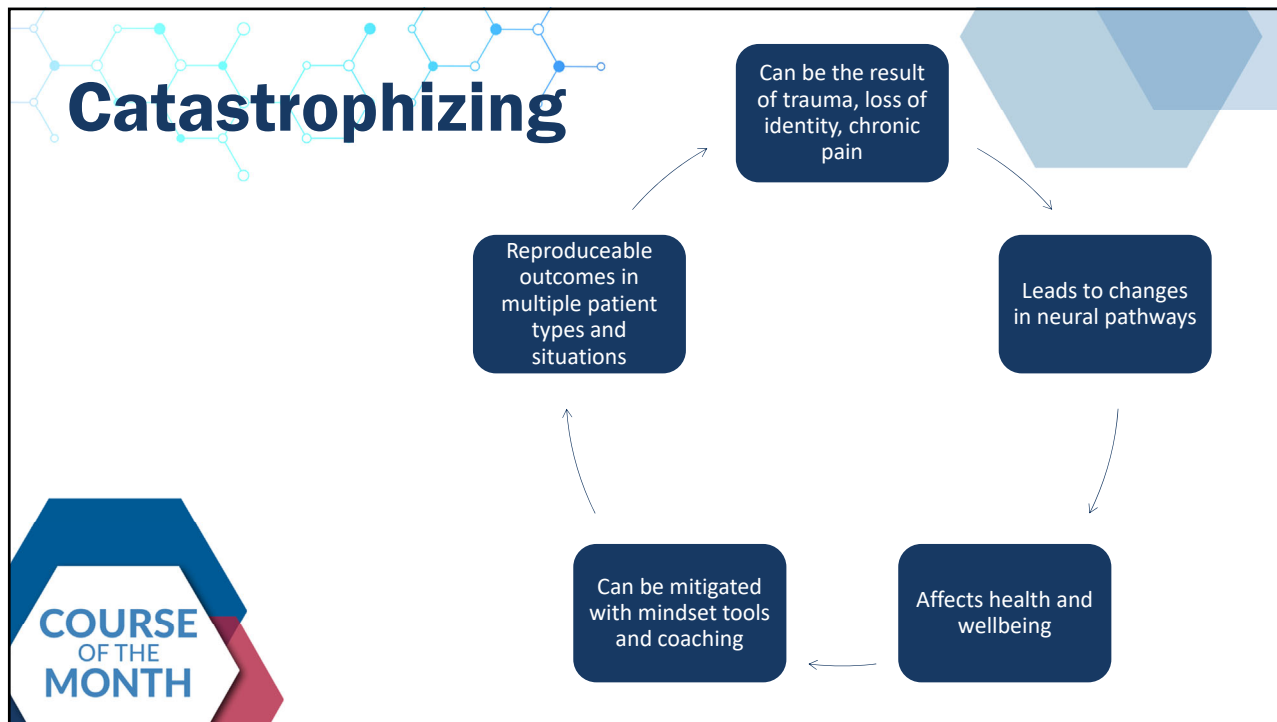
## Prescriptive Approach $\neq$ Motivation to Change



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**Transtheoretical Model of Change**

**Change is a function of the patient's state of readiness (motivation) to modify a behavior.**


- Precontemplation:** no intended action at this time
  - "I can't, I won't"
  - underestimate the pros of change and overestimate the cons
  - coach task: raise awareness
- Contemplation:** intend to start in the foreseeable future
  - "I may, it might help"
  - Acknowledge pros=cons
  - Coach task: help resolve ambivalence/ help to choose change
- Preparation:** ready to take action
  - "I will, I plan to"
  - Start taking small steps
  - Coach task: identify appropriate change strategies
- Action:** recently changed behavior
  - "I am"
  - Intend to keep going, modify problem behaviors and add healthy
  - Coach task: help implement change and decrease potential for relapse
- Maintenance:** Sustained change for 6 months
  - Intend to continue, work to prevent relapse
  - "I still am"
  - Coach task: develop new skills for making recovery
- Termination:** I am never going back

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## Goal Setting with Coaching Interventions

- Main goal is really to decrease pain interference.
- Goals put focus on future possibility vs. what's not working.
- Re-evaluate and revise as the process continues.
- Identified by the patient not the practitioner.
- In order to set goals: facilitate resolution of ambivalence.
- Not sure? The first goal: help them discover specifically what they want.
- Identify competing interests and constrain to one.
- New goals emerge as patient changes.



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**Ok, so  
how do  
we do this?**

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# Coach Skills

Coach skills can increase clients experience of autonomy, support, intrinsic motivation, goal attainment and satisfaction.

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# Leadership of the Nurse in the Coaching Role

- Acknowledge patient as expert /transfer of power/autonomy.
- Present new perspectives to challenge assumptions and ideas.
- Hold belief for the client until they can believe themselves.
- Identify and celebrate progress along the way (protect from the all-or-nothing trap).
- Contingent reward behavior: client is responsible for the implementation of the action steps and ultimately goal attainment (reward).

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# Active Listening

**WAIT: Why Am I Talking**

Recognize incongruities between words and body language or tone

Focus on the essence of the story

Paraphrase and summarize

- Here's what I'm hearing...
- Tell me if this is right?
- Can you say more?

Acknowledge ambivalence to change

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# Motivational Interviewing

Explore behavior change by working with ambivalence and resistance.

## 4 Basic Principles


**Support Self Efficacy:**  
with possibility comes motivation, encourage planning and support change

**Express Empathy:** hold space for their story  
ie: listen

**Roll with Resistance:**  
people don't resist change, they resist being changed

**Develop Discrepancy:**  
identify where you are vs. where you want to be

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# SMART Goals

*(Not just for patients)*

We know this, but do we actually assist the patient in working out the details of their goals? What do they want from the decrease in pain? What does this look like?

**S**pecific  
**M**easurable  
**A**ttainable  
**R**elevant  
**T**ime bound

More effective when requiring feedback from another person.

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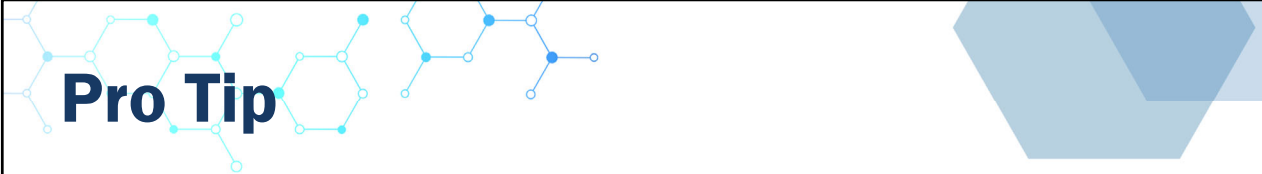
If we want something to count in our lives, we should figure out a way to count it.

*Gretchen Rubin*

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## Pro Tip

- 1 Goals for pain patients don't all have to be pain related.
- 2 Many patients feel that their pain has taken away their self-efficacy in all things and they may need help challenging this idea.
- 3 Achieving goals in other areas of their lives may improve their overall resilience.



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## Powerful Questions

What's your ideal vision? What is getting in the way?

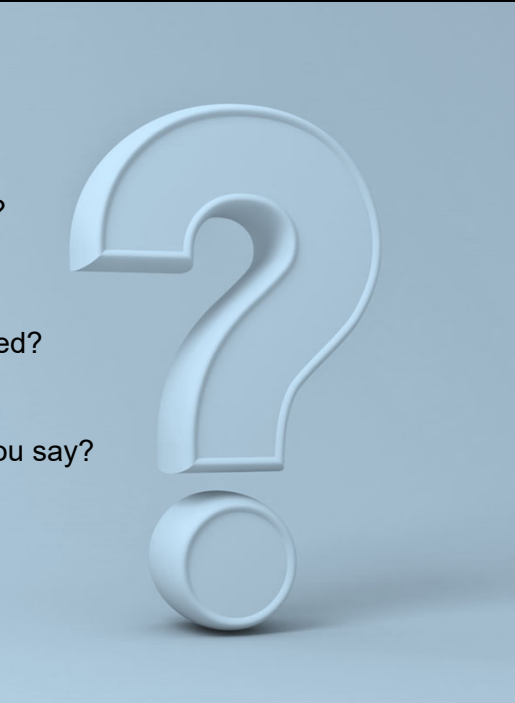
Why do you want to do this?

What would your life look like if this was accomplished?

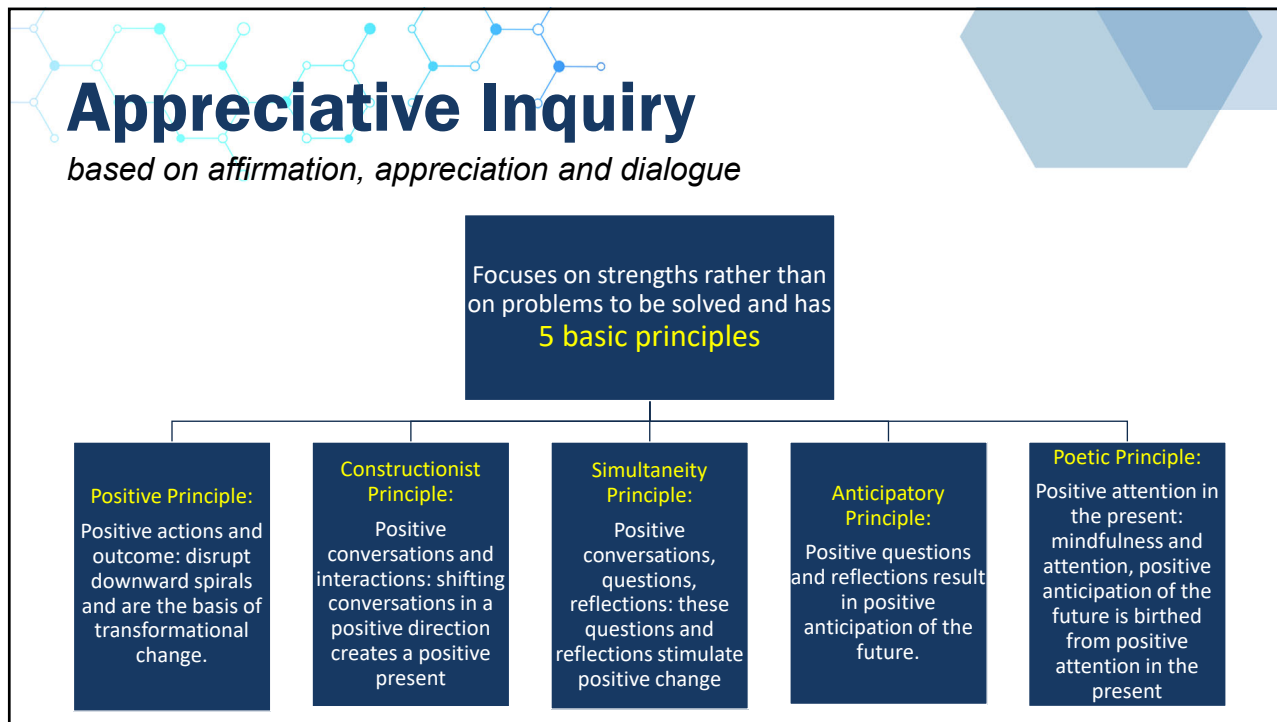
What do you think would work?  
If you did know, what would you say?

What wouldn't work? Why?  
Can we solve for that?

Is there anything else I should know?



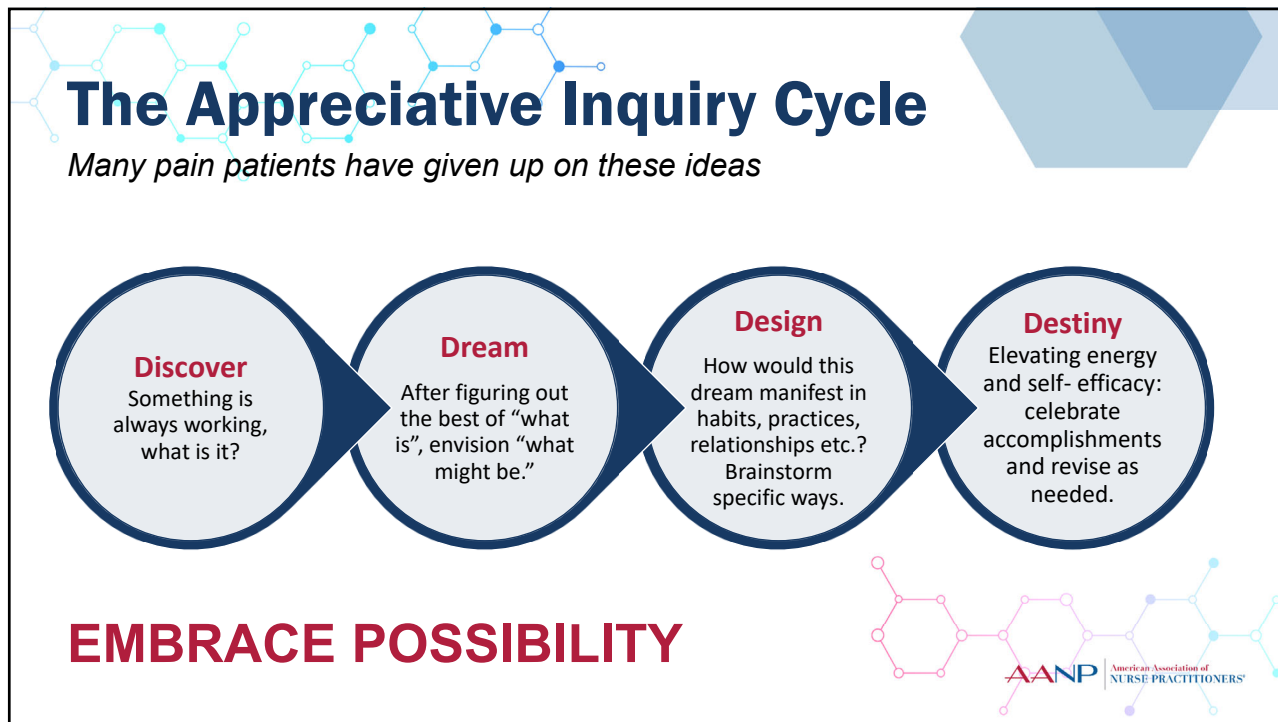
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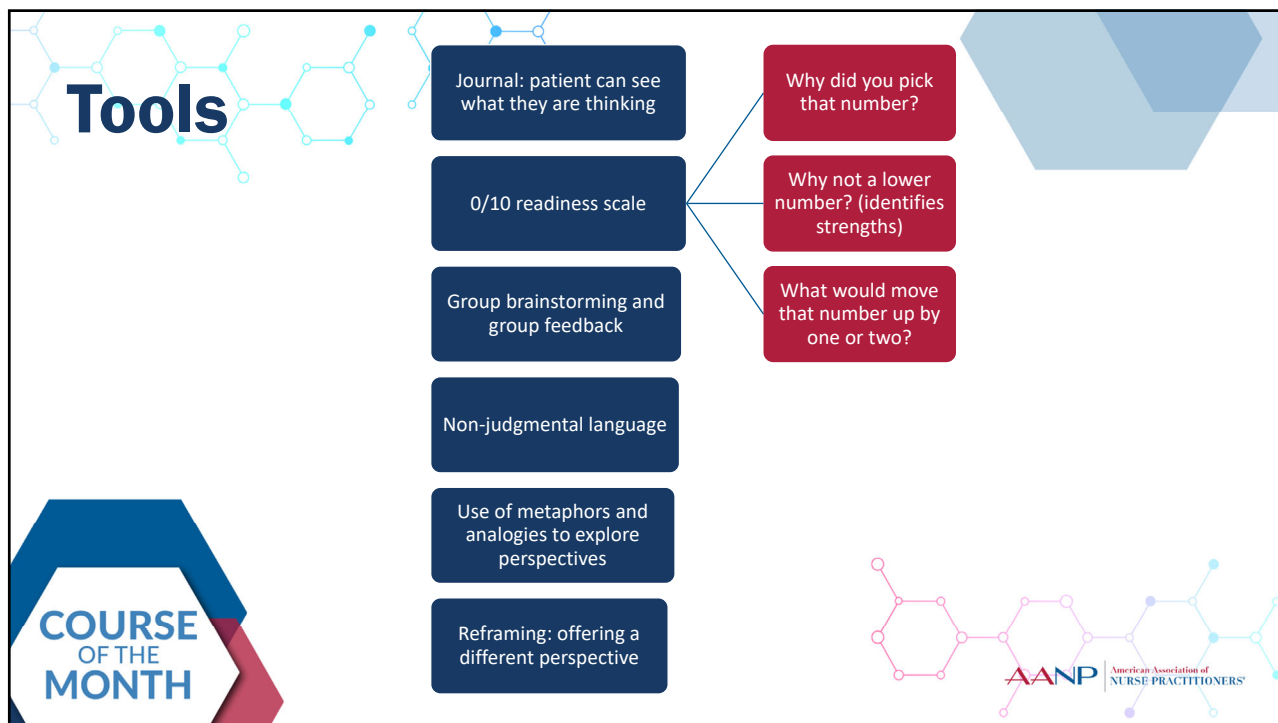
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## Other Nuances

- Asking permission to give a suggestion.
- Suggestions phrased as questions: Have you considered...?
- Being unattached to your suggestion being accepted.
  - Not pursuing suggestions refused by the patient.
- Focusing on what the patient is saying and not saying.
- Understand that this is not a linear process.



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## Re-evaluation of Goals

- What worked? What didn't?  
What would you do differently?
- Have the patient ask themselves, "how am I doing?"
- Acknowledge successes (hard to do if goals aren't set)
- Part of the problem-solving process




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# Benefits of Group Coaching



Facilitates creative process and exploration of alternative ideas



Clients can see their own thoughts and behaviors mirrored in other group members



Autonomy supportive climate




Clients report that both the interaction with the coach and the feedback and support as beneficial



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# Most Common Topics in Pain Group

How to deal with family/friends who don't understand.	How to deal with pain related to weather changes.	Strategies for bad pain days: distraction, rest, being outside, mindfulness, journaling, music, imagery.	Setting intentions for the day or week.
Trying new things that work for other people.	Validation of shared symptoms or experiences.	Feedback on pain modalities.	Expectations of yourself.



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## What Real Patients Say About It

- It would have to be a life event for me to miss this group.
- You can say anything here with **no judgement**.
- It's so helpful to get ideas from other people who actually **know how I feel**.
- Chronic Pain at times, at best, can be overwhelming and depressing. There are so many suggestions from our group to try to **give hope that together we can help each other**-- even if we are not aware of the hope we share.
- Listening to what others do to deal with the constant pain **gave me ideas** on how to deal with my own pain.

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## Moral of the Story?

**Alliance not compliance.**

Coaching is a natural extension of the nurse process. It can be used in formal settings and day to day interactions.

Coaching can improve not only patient outcomes but patient satisfaction.

Coaching includes a set of specific skills that can be learned and practiced.

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# Interested in Nurse Coach Certification?

Board Certification offered through  
 American Holistic Nurse Credentialing Corporation

<https://www.ahncc.org/certification/holistic-nurse-coach/>



**Examples of educational programs to meet requirements for certification**

- <https://thenursecoaches.com> The Nurse Coach Collective
- <https://inursecoach.com> Integrative Nurse Coach Academy and International Nurse Coach Association
- <https://huntingtonmeditation.com> Transpersonal Nurse Coaching
- <http://www.wisdomofthewhole.com> Wisdom of the Whole

There are several University Nursing Programs that include the necessary preparation.  
 These can be found on the [AHNCC website](#).

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# Let's Connect

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