Continuing Education—November 2009
Pain Screening and Control—Part 2

(The October continuing education notes included Pain Screening, Consequences of Unrelieved Pain, and two Non-drug Pain Relief Methods [deep breathing and progressive muscle relaxation].)

In addition to deep breathing and progressive muscle relaxation, your patient might consider using Guided Imagery or other tips from the DHCH Your Toolkit for Controlling Pain.

Guided Imagery
This exercise takes practice but can be very useful in helping you cope with pain. It puts pain fighting ideas in your mind so they can be used to create pleasant feelings anytime you need them. Plan to spend 15-30 minutes twice a day on this exercise. Doing it in the morning can help give you more energy. Doing it at night can help you go to sleep.

Instructions:
1. Get into a comfortable position in a chair. At night you may want to lie flat in bed.
2. The room should be quiet. If gentle music relaxes you it can be playing very softly.
3. Close your eyes and take several slow deep breaths.
4. Let your muscles all relax by tightening and releasing them a few times.
5. Think about a place that has pleasant memories for you. It can be a meadow, the beach, a porch, grandmother’s kitchen, sitting in front of a fireplace, in church or any place that brings relaxed feeling and pleasant images to your mind.
6. Continue to think about this place, seeing in your mind what it looks like. Experience the pleasant smells and sounds that are there. Feel the pleasant sensations on your skin that happen in this place—ocean waves, sand between your toes, wind in your hair, silk on your skin. Can you remember pleasant tastes or flavors associated with this special place? The tang of a lemon meringue pie or the tartness of a green apple. There is a lot of healing energy you can connect with here. This is your special place where nothing can bother you. You can come here any time you like.
7. Continue to think of this place for a while, enjoying the feelings it brings.
8. When you begin to lose focus, take some slow deep breaths and tell your place that you need to leave now but will be back.
9. Slowly open your eyes and stretch.

Other Non-drug Treatments and Tips
It may help to find ways to help distract yourself so you don’t think about pain. You can do this by focusing on an activity such as watching television, reading a book, going for a walk or out to the store, or listening to music. Distraction can be very tiring but may be more helpful than relaxation. Use it for short periods of time only and don’t ignore signals that warn of increasing pain.

- Spend time with a pet
- Create vacation destinations in your mind and visit these spots throughout the day
- Watch a movie or DVD
- Take up (or revisit) a hobby such as knitting, art, crafts, or computer games
- Reach out to a friend by phone, letter or email and talk about something other than the pain
- Make a list of the things you need help with and refer to it when people offer assistance. This could include things like making meals and freezing them, shopping, cleaning or rearranging your living space in a way that will help you get around safely.