



Learning to  
Apply  
Mindfulness to  
Pain

**Newsletter #2:**  
**Connecting with LAMP**

### Letter from the LAMP Principal Investigator

You are receiving this newsletter because you're taking part in the LAMP study. I would like to start by thanking you: together, we will work to improve pain management for Veterans. As a participant in LAMP, you are an essential part of the project's success.



**Make sure to check your email for your incoming survey!**



As always, these newsletters are available on our website: <http://lamp.umn.edu>. Feel free to reach out to us at 877-467-5079 or email us at [vhamin-LAMP@va.gov](mailto:vhamin-LAMP@va.gov). We'd love to know what you think

### Meet LAMP team member Dr. Kelli Allen

Q: Why is pain research important to you?

A: I'm trained as an exercise physiologist, and one of my first work experiences was in the context of clinical trials for people living with chronic pain conditions. As an exercise coach on these studies, I had an opportunity to see how physical activity and other healthy behaviors truly impacted the lives of people with chronic pain in very practical and significant ways. That experience set me on a path of devoting my career to pain-related research. Chronic pain can have huge effects on so many aspects of life. I'm motivated by helping to find ways that people can reduce pain and its impacts and live well.



Dr. Kelli Allen, Researcher at the Durham VA Medical Center and Professor of Medicine at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, School of Medicine

### Tips for Dealing with Pain

#### Tip #2: Practice relaxation techniques like "belly breathing."

Have you ever noticed how you breathe when you feel relaxed? The next time you are relaxed, take a moment to notice how your body feels. Or think about how you breathe when you first wake up in the morning or just before you fall asleep. Breathing exercises can help you relax, because they make your body feel like it does when you are already relaxed.

Deep breathing is one of the best ways to lower stress in the body. This is because when you breathe deeply, it sends a message to your brain to calm down and relax. The brain then sends this message to your body. Those things that happen when you are stressed, such as increased heart rate, fast breathing, and high blood pressure, all decrease as you breathe deeply to relax.

#### Belly breathing

Belly breathing is easy to do and very relaxing. Try this basic exercise anytime you need to relax or relieve stress.

1. Sit or lie flat in a comfortable position.
2. Put one hand on your belly just below your ribs and the other hand on your chest.
3. Take a deep breath in through your nose, and let your belly push your hand out. Your chest should not move.
4. Breathe out through pursed lips as if you were whistling. Feel the hand on your belly go in, and use it to push all the air out.
5. Do this breathing 3 to 10 times. Take your time with each breath.
6. Notice how you feel at the end of the exercise

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## Q & A with Rosie Glen; Navy Veteran and Member of LAMP

### Veteran Engagement Panel



#### **Q. Can you tell us about who you are and why pain research is important to you?**

**A.** I live in constant pain. Some days are worse than others. Yet, I am one of those who does not like to take opioids, or any drugs really. Pain research is important to me because it opens up opportunities to learn of other options for pain management.

#### **Q. Why should Veterans consider participating in LAMP?**

**A.** I would start by asking if they are satisfied with their current pain management or if it is all they know. Most who suffer from chronic pain are tired of waiting for a breakthrough treatment. Why not become a part of the solution? This study is a way to help veterans who are suffering from chronic pain. Eventually we hope to help the public at large. That all starts with people like you who are willing to be a part of it all from the beginning.

#### **Q. What would you say to a Veteran who feels isolated or hopeless about his or her pain?**

**A.** Are there times when you feel hopeless? You may feel like you are in this alone and no one understands? You may wonder if there is help for all the pain that you feel. Even doing day to day activities may be hard for you, so you may feel useless. You are not useless. There is a way to help yourself while helping others. Join a pain study. It can give you a sense of purpose knowing that you are working for a common good. In 2018 the CDC reported that approximately 50 million people suffer from chronic pain. About 20 million of those have a hard time living day to day. Don't isolate yourself. You can be a part of helping that 50 million. You can be a part of helping yourself.

#### **Q. What would you recommend to Veterans, to help them with their pain?**

**A.** Massages have helped me in the past. First, I make sure that it is targeted. I have even tried counseling, because stress can make pain worse. Find something that you truly enjoy and do that. It will relax you. Remember to stretch often. Pain is definitely worse when you are tense. Do some research to find out why you are in pain. If you know why, you can stop treating the symptom and treat the issue. Check your diet. I found that cutting back on certain foods or removing them altogether helped ease my pain. Most importantly, stay in touch with those who are supportive. When we are in pain, sometimes we just don't want to be bothered and end up feeling isolated. Don't let this happen. It gives you too much time to focus on the pain. Unfortunately, you may have to distance yourself from those who always try to compare you to themselves or others to mitigate your pain.

#### **Q. Is there anything else you would like to say to Veterans with chronic pain?**

**A.** Stay strong. Stay focused. Yes, you are a sufferer. Own it. You are also a conqueror. You are a survivor. You can be all of these things. You are more than your pain, so BE more than your pain. Own that too.

### Other Resources

Check out these tips at Web MD:

<https://www.webmd.com/pain-management/guide/11-tips-for-living-with-chronic-pain#1>

The VA Office of Patient-Centered Care has many resources related mind-body approaches to pain.

• <https://www.va.gov/WHOLEHEALTH/veteran-resources/MobileApps-OnlineTools.asp>

**We'd love to hear from you call us at 877-467-5079 or email us at [vhaminLAMP@va.gov](mailto:vhaminLAMP@va.gov).**

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