



American Chronic Pain Association Kits for Wellness

Basic Rights



Kit Six

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Your Basic Rights

- 1. THE RIGHT TO ACT IN A WAY THAT PROMOTES YOUR DIGNITY AND SELF RESPECT.**
- 2. THE RIGHT TO BE TREATED WITH RESPECT.**
- 3. THE RIGHT TO MAKE MISTAKES.**
- 4. THE RIGHT TO DO LESS THAN YOU ARE HUMANLY CAPABLE OF DOING.**
- 5. THE RIGHT TO CHANGE YOUR MIND.**
- 6. THE RIGHT TO ASK FOR WHAT YOU WANT.**
- 7. THE RIGHT TO TAKE TIME TO SLOW DOWN AND THINK BEFORE YOU RESPOND.**
- 8. THE RIGHT TO FEEL THAT YOU DON'T HAVE TO EXPLAIN EVERYTHING YOU DO AND THINK.**
- 9. THE RIGHT TO SAY "NO" AND NOT FEEL GUILTY.**
- 10. THE RIGHT TO ASK FOR INFORMATION.**
- 11. THE RIGHT TO FEEL GOOD ABOUT YOURSELF.**
- 12. THE RIGHT TO ASK FOR HELP OR ASSISTANCE.**
- 13. THE RIGHT TO DISAGREE.**
- 14. THE RIGHT TO ASK "WHY?"**
- 15. THE RIGHT TO BE LISTENED TO AND TAKEN SERIOUSLY WHEN EXPRESSING YOUR FEELINGS.**

**Tear this sheet out and post it where you will see it every day.
These are your rights!**



I don't think I ever thought I had rights. My needs came last. Being assertive meant being aggressive and pushy in a negative way. It was an unacceptable way to behave. This is how I was raised. There isn't one basic right that I grew up knowing. Becoming chronically ill, brought me to my basic rights and I now use them in all areas of my life, not just chronic pain. The basic rights gave me permission to listen to my "inner voice" that voice inside myself that was my truth. They gave me permission to walk my own path and to be true to myself. Each and every one is so very important to me. I can remember you telling me that it was a basic right to make mistakes. What a revaluation that was! I had the right to ask questions which even meant I could question those in authority including the medical professionals. I had the right to say no. Each and every one of the Basic Rights is very meaningful and valuable to me. And I need to continually remind myself that they are my rights.



*Jan Widdowson
Petaluma, CA*



Step Five

Basic Rights

Introduction

In the early year of the United States, your forefathers fought for your right to freedom. You know that you have the right to vote, the right to free speech and many other rights given to you by the Constitution of the United States. When necessary, you evoke your rights. But, there are many other rights that you may not be familiar with. They are called your basic rights. Rights that allow you to be equal to other people.



You might be asking yourself what do these right have to do with how well you manage your pain? Plenty! Pain has taken away a large portion of your identity, your freedom, and in many cases, your personhood. It is now time for you to learn not only what your rights are, but how to apply them to your daily life. Rights that will allow you to begin your journey from patient to person.



Your Basic Rights

1. The right to act in a way that promotes your dignity and self respect.
2. The right to be treated with respect.
3. The right to make mistakes.
4. The right to do less than you are humanly capable of doing.
5. The right to change your mind.
6. The right to ask for what you want.
7. The right to take time to slow down and think before you respond.
8. The right to feel that you don't have to explain everything you do and think.
9. The right to say "no" and not feel guilty.
10. The right to ask for information.
11. The right to feel good about yourself.
12. The right to ask for help or assistance.
13. The right to disagree.
14. The right to ask "why?"
15. The right to be listened to and taken seriously when expressing your feelings.



For the sake of clarity, we have combined several of your basic rights listed on the previous page. They are similar enough to take a closer look at together, however, that does not diminish the power of each of your basic rights.

1. The right to act and be treated in a way that promotes your dignity and self-respect.

2. The right to be treated with respect.

11. The right to feel good about yourself.

These basic rights lay the foundation for you to empower yourself. Unless you believe you deserve equal and fair treatment, the rest of your rights are of no use to you. You first must take a hard look at who you are. Liking who you are is vital if you are to have a real sense of personal value.



There is, however, a danger in trying to gain respect of others by altering yourself to fit another's expectations. You are equal. Some of you may struggle with low self-esteem which may prevent you from asserting your rights. Let us take a look at how you might improve your opinion of yourself.

*If you want to be respected by others, the great thing is to respect yourself.
Only by that, only by self-respect will you compel others to respect you.*

~ Fyodor Dostoevsky

According to Jim Downes in his book, *The Book of Positive Qualities*, he list three observations about self-esteem.¹

- ❖ One of the causes of anger is a lack of self-esteem.
- ❖ One of the causes of guilt is a lack of self-esteem.
- ❖ One of the causes of insecurity is a lack of self-esteem.

¹ Downs, Jim, *The Book of Positive Qualities*, Warner Books, Inc., New York, NY, 1996, P.451.



The dictionary defines self-esteem simply as pride in oneself. Perhaps self-esteem and feeling good about who you are depends on your attitude in general. If you have difficulties recognizing the qualities of everyday life, it is likely that you will have difficulty recognizing the qualities in yourself. Each of us has areas in our life which we could improve. But, the danger is allowing those areas to overshadow the exceptional things about you.

You might want to go back to the kit on *Getting Involved* and review your personal attributes, assets and abilities. If available, use that list to complete the next section.



Reasons to Feel Good about Myself

List all the things that make you feel good about yourself.

List all the things that you would like to improve about yourself.

Select one of the things on your list that you would like to improve and write it on the space below.



Next develop a plan of action you will be able to work through. Keep it simple so you can quickly identify change. Don't forget, you have no control over another person, so make sure that you are the only one involved in creating change. We have provided a means below to design a three-step approach. Each step should provide a means to identify the change you have made.

Step One: Plan

Step Two: Action

Step Three: Results

Repeat this exercise as often as you feel you need to.



*To dream of the person you would like to
be is to waste the person you are.*

~ Unknown

Now let's look at how we can apply our new-found self-esteem to obtain respect from others. Keep in mind that the only way people can treat you disrespectful is if you give them permission.

Below are three situations you may have experienced. Read each one and write a brief script on how you could be treated as an equal.

1. You are planning on going to dinner with some friends. The group discusses where they might like to go. Everyone is asked where they want to go expect for you. The suggestions are discussed and a place is agreed upon. How could you have changed this situation to become part of the decision making process and make your choice known?



2. You are waiting to see your doctor for a checkup. You had an appointment and were on time. Unfortunately, a salesman came in just as the nurse was ready to take you into the examining room. It has been over an hour since you were scheduled to see the doctor. What do you do?

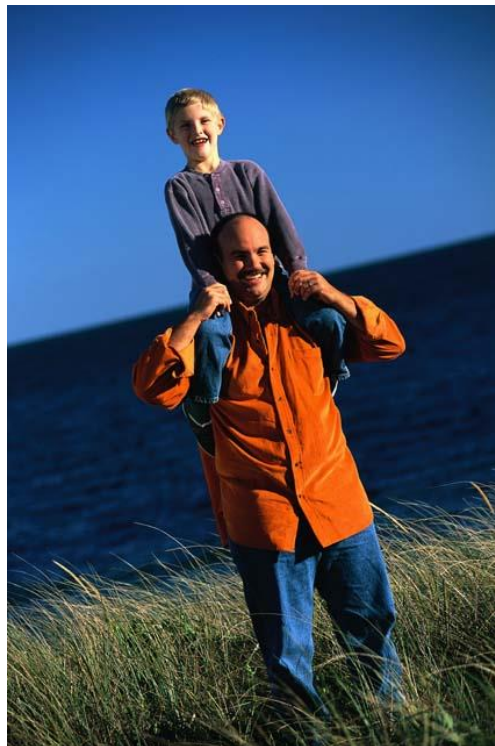
3. You have been listening to a friendly discussion that you feel very strongly about. You have quietly listened to what everyone else has to say and you want to make a few personal comments yourself. Unfortunately, you are not able to get a word in because every time you try someone else interrupts you. How do you make your point?



Allowing people to overlook you, ignoring your comments and feelings will prevent you from getting what you want. Unless you take an active part in all discussions concerning you, you will not be treated with respect. Remember, you have to give permission for others to be disrespectful of you.

Measure yourself by your best moments, not by your worst. We are too prone to judge ourselves by our moments of despondency and depression.

~ Robert Johnson



3. The right to make mistakes. This right is one we all have, but very few of us seem to recognize. There is not one person who does not make a mistake occasionally. You have heard the old adage, "I learned from my mistakes." Well, it's true. How often do you remember all the right things you did? Not very often. But think back on all the mistakes you have made during the past year. Most of them you can remember. The point is, we are all human and we all make mistakes. Just realize that you have made a mistake and use it to your advantage as a learning tool.



For the next three days, using the form below, keep track of each time you realize you have made a mistake. Simply make a brief notation of what you did. No need to go into great detail. Then fill in the next column that asked you if you learned anything from your mistake. And finally, write a brief notation about how you might use what you have learned the next time a similar situation arises. Remember, not all mistakes are major events.

Day _____		
Mistake	What I've learned	Apply lesson

Day _____		
Mistake	What I've learned	Apply lesson

Day _____		
Mistake	What I've learned	Apply lesson

Hopefully you realized that each day there is a strong possibility that you will make a mistake. But, so does everyone else. So why is it that some of us can be so hard on ourselves? Why is it that others can quickly forgive us, but we hold on to our



mistakes as a means of punishment? Perhaps those who find it difficult, if not impossible, to forgive need to work on his or her self-esteem.

1. What do you do when you realize that you have made a mistake?

2. If you are one of those people who find it difficult to forgive your mistakes, why do you think that is? Please explain in detail.

3. How do you react when someone else makes a mistake? Are you more forgiving? If yes, why is that?



Making mistakes are a part of life. There is no way that you can avoid them. Your job is to allow yourself to make mistakes from time to time and then move forward with the knowledge you have gained.



Experience enables you to recognize a mistake when you make it again.

~ Franklin P. Jones



4. The right to do less than you are capable of doing.

Recognizing your limitations is important if you are to be successful in dealing with your pain. Knowing when to stop is extremely helpful. But there are times when you do not feel motivated to do anything. Sometimes people feel that they must be productive each and every minute of the day in order to justify their existence on this earth. Not so. Be good to yourself and allow free time to do what you want, even if it means doing nothing at all. And don't wait until you "deserve" to relax or you probably never will stop.



*The whole point about getting things done is
knowing what to leave undone.*

~ Stella, Lady Reading

You may be one of those people who equates your self-worth with the amount of work you accomplish in a given day. You may believe if you work as hard as you can—do far more than most people could accomplish—others will respect and admire you. You may believe that the accolades of others define your true value. You neglect to see that there are other things that contribute to your personal value.

Take a minute to answer a few questions about your own personal drive to see if you allow yourself to do less than humanly possible.

1. Can you sit down and take a short break when you are in the middle of a task? Please explain why you do take a break or why you do not.



2. When you start to feel your pain level increase, even slightly, do you stop for a few minutes? If you answer no, please explain why you choose not to recognize your increased pain.

3. If you push yourself past your limits, on the average, how much longer can you usually work? Please explain.

4. If you push yourself to your ultimate limits, how long does it take you to recover from the increased pain?

5. Do you spend more time recovering from overextending yourself than it would have taken you to complete the task if you had taken short rest periods throughout the day?



Clearly, for many people, pushing past personal limits takes far more time and energy than to approach the task realistically. Pacing is a necessary tool in managing chronic pain. A tool that you must learn to use skillfully. If you have a difficult time with this, it would be to your advantage to obtain the kit on Time Management.

There are always those who go from one extreme to another. Doing less than humanly possible doesn't mean that you should spend all day in bed, avoiding any type of physical activity. You may have to establish a happy medium whereby you can meet your own personal needs and abilities. The best advice is to listen to what your body is telling you.



- ❖ Clearly define the task.
- ❖ Develop a time table with the necessary steps to complete the task and how long you anticipate each step will take you based on your current ability.
- ❖ Schedule breaks to avoid becoming overly tired or increasing your pain level.
- ❖ Keep track of how long you worked and how often you took breaks.
- ❖ Upon completion of task, evaluate how you feel both physically and emotionally.
- ❖ Write a brief statement of satisfaction with your effort to pace yourself, including a statement on what you have learned.

My task was: _____

My overall impression with my performance and ability to pace is:



If you are one of those people who has a difficult time relaxing you might want to review the questions below. There are restful things you can do that fulfill your need to achieve and afford you some slow paced activities.

- ❖ When was the last time you took a short walk by yourself to collect your thoughts? A walk can be as short or long as you choose. There is no reason to walk any longer than is comfortable for you.
- ❖ When was the last time you took the time to listen to the sounds of nature? Sitting in a neighborhood park can open a whole world of discovery as well as provide a means to relax.
- ❖ When was the last time you took time to read a book?
- ❖ When was the last time you wrote a letter to a friend that you have not heard from in a long time?

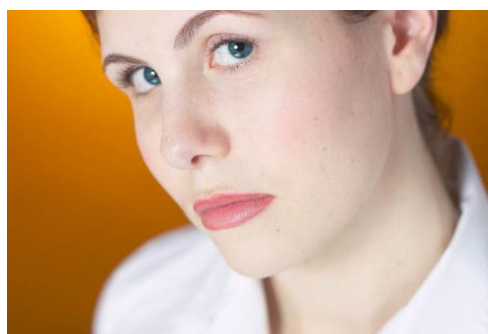


Perhaps you need to redefine your role in life. Ask yourself what is important to *you*, not to those around you. You can be helpful to friends and family and still have time for yourself. Your free time can be spent any way you choose—it does not have to be work time. You have the right to do LESS than humanly possible.



5. The right to change your mind. “If I said I would do something, then I am going to do it no matter what!” might be said by those who never allow room in their thinking to change their minds. In spite of all that may have occurred during the day, they will not cancel evening plans. This type of behavior is dangerous. You may often be approached by someone who knows just the right moment to ask a favor of you. Because you are off guard, you agree to do something you really don't want to do. There is no reason you cannot change your mind if you find that you have made a commitment to something you really don't want to do. Having this flexibility can cut down greatly on the amount of stress in your life.

If you look at life as right or wrong, yes or no, black or white, this basic right could be next too impossible for you to embrace as part of your daily life. Change is a difficult thing for many of us to accept. Whether it is a drastic change or a simple change, we need things that we can depend on. But, life is filled with change and with change comes new challenges.



Life is in a constant state of change. Each moment of every day change occurs. So why do you feel uncomfortable when you are the one creating the change? Think about it, throughout your life you have made many changes. Some you choose to make, while others were out of your control. Take a moment to answer the questions below. If you have a difficult time feeling good about changing your mind, the questions may help you to understand your hesitation.

Do you feel guilty when you change your mind? Why or why not?

How do you react when plans change?



Is there anything that you can do to prevent change in your life?

Keep in mind that change promotes personal growth. When it comes to changing your mind, the bottom line might be to ask yourself if you can live with your actions? These questions can help clarify a situation and force you to look at the long term affect. Allowing yourself the flexibility to change your mind can also reduce your level of stress.

The questions below can help clarify to a situation that you are struggling with. When you are faced with the problem of changing your mind, first ask yourself:

1. What is the worst that can happen if you change your mind?

2. Can you reschedule?

3. What makes you such a dependable person in the first place?

4. How do you feel when you find that you are overextended and must eliminate something from your daily activities?

5. How do you go about changing plans? Please give an example of a recent situation where you had to change your plans.

Simple steps to evaluate and change plans:

- ❖ state the original plan
- ❖ briefly explain you have to change your mind/something came up
- ❖ give a time that would be better to replan or follow through
- ❖ ask for a reminder if the plan is delayed more than a week
- ❖ reinforce that you are sorry for any inconvenience you might have caused
- ❖ restate the change before saying goodbye

*There is nothing permanent except change.
~ Heraclitus ~*

The things that make a person dependable is the trust you have in them. This trust is built over time. Knowing that you can depend on someone means a great deal. You should be able to work together with others to adjust situation according to circumstances. Not every plan will work out, but you will develop a “history” with people. They will know that you are dependable, but like everyone else, sometimes things happen which are out of your control. Compromise may be in order.



*Living up to ideals is like doing everyday
work with your Sunday clothes on.*
~ Ed Howe

6. The right to ask for what you want. If you do not express your needs, it is unlikely that your needs will be met. No one can read your mind. You must tell people what you need!

Having the right to ask for what you want and actually asking are two very different things. Let's break this down into three parts: identifying the need, determining how to have that need met and asking.

Identifying Needs

The first step is having the ability to identify personal needs. Many of your needs are basic. You do not have to be reminded that you need to have well-balanced meals each day. You do not have to ask permission to get the required amount of sleep. But there are many needs in life that are not so easily identified.

When was the last time you felt the need to tell your family that you simply wanted to be left alone? Or the last time you knew you needed to have a friend around for moral support? Can you remember the last time you told someone you needed just a few words of encouragement? How about a simple pat on the back for doing a great job at work, school or home? Can you honestly say that you always know what your needs are? You're so caught up in the big stuff of life that you neglect to see the little things. Unless you are able to have all your needs met, especially the little ones, life can become difficult and stressful.



To identify your needs, personal awareness is necessary. Tomorrow as soon as you get out of bed, list everything you think you need. Don't leave out a thing. Your needs can be as simple as a drink of water or as complex as a good financial plan to help you pay your bills. Use the following page as a worksheet. As you go through your day, make a note of each one of your needs.



Date: _____

Time you woke up: _____

What was the first thing that you thought about today? _____

Who are the people that you think you will or have come in contact with today?

List the things that you believe you will need from the people that you came in contact with. You may want to make notes throughout the day to ensure that you do not miss anything.

List the things that you think you will need from yourself. In other words, do you recognize your own needs and if so, what are they?

What time did you go to bed? _____

What was the last thing that you needed at the end of the day?



Determining How to Have Needs Met

Now that you have some awareness about what your needs are, let us look at how to have your needs met. Perhaps the most difficult part was admitting you had needs. Was it difficult to affirm that sometimes you need others?



From your list of needs, select three that are important to you and involve someone else. Write them in the space below.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Next, select one of your needs from the list above and list all the components necessary to have your need fulfilled.

What I need to do to ensure my need is met:

Resources I will need to fulfill my need:

People that are necessary to have my need met:

Asking

Now it is time to ask for what you need. Remember this is one of your basic rights. The best way to let others know what your needs are, is simply to ask or tell them. Below are some hints to help you ask a question which clearly states your needs.



- ❖ Keep your request simple. Be very clear about what you need. Give only the necessary details. Too often the listener loses interest because we give too much background information and do not come right to the point.
- ❖ Avoid tentative request like borrowing something that cannot be returned. Example: “I need to borrow you for about an hour to help me move some dishes.”
- ❖ Use closed questions. These are questions that require only a simply yes or no answer. This type of question allows you to be direct and to-the-point. Example: “Will you go to the post office for me?”
- ❖ Listen to the person’s response. If necessary, paraphrase what he or she just said, ensuring that the request is understood. This can save misunderstandings and confusion about issues. Example: “What I heard you say is that you would be willing to pick up the children after school today.”
- ❖ If the person you are making the request of answers in the negative, you might consider using a guided question. A guided question simply ask what they might be willing to do. Example: “What would you be willing to do to help make this happen?”
- ❖ When you ask to have a need met, give the person you are asking time to respond.
- ❖ If possible, give an estimated amount of time the task will take.
- ❖ Do not put yourself in the role of “disabled” by saying you can’t do it. Rather ask for assistant and be willing to lend a hand.



10. The right to ask for information.

12. The right to ask for help for assistance.

14. The right to ask “why?”

The word **question** is defined as by the *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* as follows: 1. An expression of inquiry that invites or calls for a reply; an interrogative sentence, phrase, or gesture. 2. A subject or point open to controversy; an unsettled issue. 3. A difficult matter; problem: *a question of ethics*. 4. A point or subject under discussion or being considered. 5. A proposition brought up for consideration. 6. Uncertainty; doubt: *no question about its validity*. 7. Possibility: *out of the question*.

Using questions as a tool is important if you are to be an active participant in your recovery. We will look closer at the art of asking questions in the kit on communications skills. For now, let's look at the value of this right. Asking questions:



- ❖ provide necessary information to help you make decisions
- ❖ clear up misunderstandings about what a person said
- ❖ give instructions or directions
- ❖ begin a conversations with new acquaintances
- ❖ find out what others know or may need to know
- ❖ get different opinions
- ❖ provide you with the help you need
- ❖ allow your need to be known
- ❖ provide answers to questions that may otherwise go unanswered
- ❖ gives a clearer understanding of a situation



There are a few basic hints that might help you to ask questions.

1. Clearly state what you want. Don't volunteer information that is not necessary.
2. Think about what you are going to ask before actually stating your question.
3. Go to the source. Don't involve others who have no means of providing you with what you really want or need.
4. Realize your needs are important. Don't trivialize your needs and talk yourself out of asking for information.
5. Make direct eye contact. To show that you are confident and comfortable with who you are and what you need, direct eye contact is important. It is a sign of assertiveness and confidence.
6. Act on your needs as they arise. Putting off the need for information may make it more difficult to ask at a later date.

To help you fine tune your ability to ask questions take time to do the exercise below. There are five situations where you must write one simple sentence asking a question. Keeping your answer short and to the point in this exercise will help you in a real life situation. After you answer each question, please write two feeling words that describe how you felt. A list of feeling words can be found at the end of this kit.



1. You need help in a department store to find a specific item. You only have twenty minutes to shop. How would you ask for help?

I felt: _____



2. You have been managing your pain for a long time. Recently you have been feeling increased levels of pain. How would you ask your doctor about your concerns?

I felt: _____

3. You got off the wrong exit on the freeway. You have no idea where you are or how to get back on the freeway. How would you go about getting directions?

I felt: _____

4. You just opened a new account at the bank. You were given a detailed overview of what services the bank would provide. As you go out the door, you think of one more question. How do you go back and ask your question?

I felt: _____



5. You have a repair person working on your car. You agreed on a the cost of making the necessary repairs to your car. When you get home you realize that there is an additional charge of \$3 on your bill. How do you go about calling the shop and asking about the additional cost?

I felt: _____

These are only a few examples how you can feel more comfortable asking for things that you need. Try to identify other situations where you had a difficult time asking questions and write down how you might have handled the situation. Don't forget to include two feeling words!



Here is something to think about when ASKING a question:

Allow people to help you when you really need it.

Smile when asking, it can help.

Keep request simple and to the point.

Involve several people in a larger task to avoid overburdening one person.

Never get angry at people because they don't realize that you need help, ask.

Giving and helping others makes people feel good.



7. The right to take time to slow down and think before you respond. Remember this one. It can be useful. When a request is made of you, rely on this right to be fair to yourself and the person making the request. A good response for this rule is: "Let me think about it and I will get back to you in a few hours."



*I reject get-it-done, make-it-happen thinking. I want to slow things down so I understand them better.
~ Governor Jerry Brown*

This basic right is especially useful to ensure that you do not overextend yourself. It is very easy to get caught-up in the moment and make personal commitments that you may not be able to—or want to—fulfill.

This basic right will . . .

- ❖ *Give you time to think about your desire to become involved.* If you are asked to accept responsibility for a task, you might want to use the phrase, "I'll get back to you after I check my calendar." Doing this will allow you the time to determine what you really want to do. It will provide you with time to step back and take a look at the situation before deciding what you want to do.
- ❖ *Provides you with a means to prevent you from overextending yourself.* A real danger of agreeing to do something before you have time to think what that commitment means to you personally is that you may overextend yourself. Your need to please others may contribute to taking on more than you can handle. Giving yourself time to step away from the situation will allow you to make a decision based on your needs, abilities and interest.
- ❖ *Will prevent you from being pressured into commitments.* Have you ever found yourself in a situation where you are asked to do something and everyone involved immediately tells you that you are the only one who can do it because you do it so well? They are using flattery to get what they want. And, unless you have the opportunity to step away from the situation and think clearly, you may end up doing things you do not want to do.



We all have the right to adequate time to clearly think about what we want to do and what we do not want to do. Just remember that it is also important to get back to the person making the request in a reasonable amount of time. Responding to a request with, “Let me check my calendar and I’ll get back to you by tomorrow evening,” will give you the time you need to consider the request as well as giving the person making the request a reasonable time to expect your response.

This is a powerful basic right that you can use to your advantage. It puts the power of making the decision based on your needs and desires in your hands.

When I first went to an ACPA meeting, the group was talking about basic rights. I immediately understood the importance of knowing my basic rights. These rights empowered me. They changed my life. They allowed me to feel more like my old self because they took away my feeling that I was always on the defensive. These rights are the best thing that has happened to me in a long time!

R.C., Ft. Worth, TX Chapter



8. The right to feel that you don't have to explain everything you do and think.

The best way to ensure that you are seen as a person rather than a patient is to avoid explaining your behavior or lack of it. You see, when a person with pain attempts to justify his or her behavior they are unknowingly drawing attention to the fact that he or she has pain. Always feeling the need to explain your behavior has a negative affect on your self-esteem. Instead of focusing on the things that you can do, you find yourself explaining why you cannot do things. It is a negative experience all around.



This basic right can help you make your first steps from patient to person. Below are a few situations that many of us find ourselves in. Take a few moments to answer them as you “normally” would. Remember, this is an exercise to help you understand where a few changes in behavior can free you from the role of “patient.”

1. You are asked to go to a family picnic in a local park. You have been to that particular park before and know that there is no comfortable place to sit. The picnic is an all day affair and would be physically difficult for you. What do you say?

Did you consider any alternative ways to attend the picnic? Or did you simply explain that you are in pain and would not be able to sit in the hard park benches? Did you go on about how difficult it is for you to make any plans past the next minute because you never know how you will feel?

There are always alternatives. Taking your own chair. Stopping in for a short time to at least say hello to family and friends that you don't normally see. Or, simply saying that you have other plans that day and cannot attend—never mentioning that it is because of your pain that you are not attending.



2. You are asked to be on a committee at work. The committee meetings always run long because you know the chairperson and they never stick to the agenda. You are afraid of making a commitment that you will not be able to keep. It could jeopardize your position at work. How would you handle this situation?

If you simply explained that you are interested and that while you cannot make a firm commitment to be at every meeting, you would certainly like to have the opportunity to sit in when you can, then you did very well. If you explained that you are always in a lot of pain and by the end of the day all you want to do is go home and lie down, then you violated your own basic right and put yourself in the role of a patient.

There are other situations that you may feel compelled to justify your actions. See how you do with the next few questions.

3. You received two identical gifts for your birthday. You are going to return one. When you are face to face with the sales clerk, what do you tell them?

If you told the clerk the whole story about your birthday and your two friends getting you exactly the same gift, then you once again violated your basic right. Simply saying that you want to return it would have been the way to handle this situation if you respect your basic rights.



4. You just returned from a long weekend away from home. The trip was good, but the drive home was exhausting and your pain level is increased. Now you have to take all your luggage up two flights of stairs to your apartment. It is clear that you need help, what do you say?

Asking for help is one of your basic rights. There is no need to get into a long explanation why you requested help. Simply saying that you need it is enough. The worse thing that can happen is for the person to say no. Do you always ask people why they are asking for help, or do you willingly give them a hand? Why don't you apply the same kindness to yourself?

5. You are out shopping with a friend and stop by the music store to buy a new CD. You want to listen to the music in the Jazz section. Your friend tells you how much he or she hates Jazz and is not willing to have anything to do with that type of music. What do you say?

Did you say that you like it and they could go to another section while you listen to the Jazz? Or did you fall into that trap and go to another section where you purchased a CD that your friend really likes? You know each person has different taste. Listen and buy the music you like . . . it is your right.

This basic right can be difficult to apply to your daily living. Like many behaviors that have been a part of you for so long, you have to make a conscious effort to



create change. Perhaps the best way to ensure that you master this basic right is to keep track of situations that put you in a position where you feel an explanation is necessary. Identifying these situations is the first step. Being aware of how you handled the situation is next. And finally recognizing other possible alternatives.

*I am in earnest—I will not equivocate—I will not excuse—
I will not retreat a single inch—
and I will be heard!*

~ William Lloyd Garrison

For the next week keep a list of situations where you found yourself justifying what you did or said. Use the chart below to aid your efforts.



You Don't Have to Explain			
Date/ Time	Situation you felt you needed to justify yourself. Briefly explain.	Explained Yes or No	How did you feel?

Some of you will have filled the chart while others have only one or two entries for the entire week. There are those who have no trouble asserting him or herself. That is a positive asset for you. However, there are others who feel the need to explain everything.



9. The right to say “No” and not feel guilty.

Not every question can be answered with a “yes,” yet many of us find ourselves to be “yes people,” the people everyone comes to when they want a “yes” answer. You have just as much right to refuse a request as anyone, and there is no reason to feel guilty if you are sincere in your response. It may take an internal struggle, but say “no” when you want to. Eventually, this response will become comfortable.



If you are willing to relinquish control of your life to others, then you do not need this basic right. However, if you believe that you should determine what path your life will take, then you need this basic right.

Using this right may feel awkward at first, but with practice, you will be able to review situations and determine what is best for you. Learning from experience is valuable. The exercise below is a learning tool. Please list five situations where you did something you did not want to do because you could not say no.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

From the above situations, pick two and determine what you could have said that would have more clearly expressed your true feelings and made it easy to say no without feeling any guilt?

1. _____
2. _____



Ask yourself what would have been the worse thing that could happen if you said no in these situations? Usually our fears are unfounded. Below are a reasons why some people may be afraid to say no.

Why people are afraid to say no:

- ❖ fear of rejections
- ❖ lessen personal value
- ❖ reinforce disability
- ❖ loss of status at work

Do not bind yourself to what you cannot do.
~ George Shelley

Another aspect of doing things that you do not want to do is the emotional responses that it creates. When you find yourself doing things that you really don't want to do, what emotional reactions do you have? Take time to think about a situation where you were doing something that you truly did not want to do, but did it anyway. You may need to use the feeling words found at the end of this kit.



Situation: _____

What made it so difficult to say no? _____

Emotions you experienced _____

What have you learned from this experience? _____

If you are faced with a similar situation at a later time, how might you handle it based on what you have just learned?

Feel free to make copies of this form to help you better understand the importance of asserting yourself. Saying no is one of your basic rights. While we cannot get the moment back where we did not say no, we can learn from the experience and apply our knowledge to current situations. Saying no is not the end of the world, simply the beginning of empowering yourself to regain control of your life.



13. The right to disagree. Giving a positive response all the time is one way to ensure your popularity. How many times, however, have you asked a question or asked for advice, not because you wanted someone to agree with you, but because you wanted an honest answer? Not expressing your true feelings can cause undue tension or stress, and these feelings will come out in some form. For chronic pain sufferers, increased pain levels usually occur. Your opinion is valuable and should be expressed, even when it is a negative one.



It is only by risking that we live at all.
~ William James

When looking at this basic right, the word risk seems to go hand-and-hand with disagreement. There is a level of fear and risk one takes when standing his or her ground. The question you need to ask yourself is, do you feel comfortable risking the loss of a friend by standing up for something you believe in, even if it is your personal opinion? When it comes right down to it, you are the only one who knows what you believe. Because you have a right to your own opinion, you also have the right to defend that opinion by disagreeing with what is said.

In order to be comfortable disagreeing, you must know what it is you believe in and be willing to take risk to hold on to your beliefs.

Your Beliefs:

List five things in life that you feel very strongly about.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____



Answering the following questions about how you would react if someone challenged one of your beliefs.

1. Do you feel comfortable standing up for what you believe in? Why or why not?

2. Would you allow a friend to minimize something that you felt strongly about? Why or why not?

3. Are you a “yes” person, always agreeing with the majority of the people? Why or why not?

4. When was the last time you challenged what someone said? How did it make you feel?

5. What do you think would happen if you disagreed with a close friend? Please explain.



There are many different types of people. From the list below, circle all the words that would best describe you.

loyal	trustworthy	worrywart
friend	yes-man	influential
trouble-maker	proud	composed
phony	logical	bold
polite	gloating	shy
compliant	idealistic	congenial
freethinker	liberal	radical
compromising	know-it-all	
individual	tentative	
yielding	uncertain	

List three of the words that you chose:

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

If the three words that you chose are all representative of a free-willed, confident person, than you can move to the next section. If not, continue below.

Now, out of that list, write a script about how you might begin to change the way that you look at yourself. What can you do to overcome the way you feel?



According to *Webster's Dictionary*, a freethinker is a person who refuses to accept dictated beliefs or formal creeds. That is what gives you the freedom to make your own choices. But, when talking with friends, family, co-workers and even health care providers, it is very risky to disagree. Freedom of choice is vital to your independence. With that freedom of choice comes certain rights. The right to disagree allows you to remain true to yourself.



15. The right to be listed to and taken seriously when expressing your feelings.

You have the right to express your own feelings. Putting others above you in importance is only hurting you. Anything that you say is either a statement of fact or an expression of your feelings.



There was a man, Jim, who wanted more than anything to march in the Annual Community Fourth of July parade. Each year at the planning meeting he sat in the back room as his friends and neighbors planned for the big day. And each year he hoped against hope that they would ask him to be part of the parade. He had wanted this since he was a little boy when he saw his grandfather march in the same community parade. His grandfather had been living in a nursing home about 100 miles north of where they lived. His health was failing, but the parade meant a great deal to him. He endured the long drive just to march in the parade; it was hot humid sunny afternoon, but his smile grew with each step he took. It was shortly after the parade that Jim's grandfather passed away. The parade was the last memory he had of his grandfather and that is what motivated his desire to be in the parade. But, year after year, no one said anything to him about marching in the parade. Jim never felt comfortable asking to be in the parade for fear he would have to explain why it was so important to him. He believed that men should not get emotional about anything. But, his emotions were on overdrive as the meeting came to a close and he was once again, not in the parade.

The story above is a simple demonstration of not using one of your basic rights. How would you have handled the situation? Keep in mind that Jim has to live and work with his neighbors daily. He has a real fear of showing what he believes to be "sentimental emotions." He believes showing sentiments is not in line with a "real man."



1. You are invited to rewrite this story. The facts will remain the same, but hopefully, you can put yourself in his place and figure out a way to express your feelings. Please write your story below.

2. Now, from a different point of view, list all the emotions that you believe Jim felt as he sat quietly.



3. Now list all the emotions that he felt in your story

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

If you are doing this in your ACPA group, invite members to do this along with you and share his or her endings along with the feelings words they listed in two and three. This is a simple example of how using one of your basic rights will make you feel as if you are in control of your life. You may want to work through your own personal situations using the same format above.



To Review

Each basic right is meant to empower you. They are designed to allow you to be an equal part of any situation. Believe it or not, everyone has the same rights. There are some who believe they are not equal to others and therefore do not have the same rights. Unless you make an effort to use your rights whenever possible, you will be victimizing yourself.

It will take practice for you to feel comfortable using your rights. However, it is worth the effort. After all, what do you have to lose but feeling inferior?



Feeling Words

active
aggressive
apathetic
apprehensive
assertive
bad
bewitched
blah
blissful
bored
bullied
bullish
calculated
calm
careful
charming
clear-headed
cold
coping
crazy
creative
curious
degraded
delighted
deserted
desperate
devastated
devilish
do-gooder
dolled-up
dopy
dreamy
dumb
eager
easy-going

eccentric
eery
energetic
erotic
evil
explosive
fake
fancy
fickle
firm
flamboyant
flighty
foggy
forceful
forgetful
forgiving
free
frightened
frugal
funny
gainful
gallant
gaudy
generous
gentle
giddy
gifted
glib
gloomy
glorious
good
great
grim
grown-up
guilty

handsome
happy
hard
harmed
harsh
hateful
heavy
helpful
heroic
hesitant
hindered
hog-tied
hopeful
horrificed
hot
humble
humorist
hunted
hurt
hyper
idle
ill
illogical
imaginative
immense
imperfect
important
imposed
impressed
impulsive
included
inconvenienced
independent
individual
indulgent



inferior
inhibited
injured
innocent
insecure
inspired
insulted
interested
intimidate
intolerant
invaded
invisible
irritable
jealous
jeopardized
jinxed
jolly
jolted
joyful
jubilant
judgmental
jumbled
jumpy
justified
kicked
kind
labeled
lame
large
lavish
lazy
leader
left out
less
let down
lie to
lifted up

light
limited
lively
loaded
loco
logical
loved
low
lucky
lustful
macho
mad
magical
magnetic
manageable
manipulated
mannerly
marvelous
masterful
maternal
mature
mean
mechanical
meaningful
melancholy
mellow
merciless
merry
messy
meticulous
microscopic
mindful
mischievous
misinformed
misjudged
mistreated
mixed-up

monopolized
moody
motivated
mousey
mute
naive
nameless
narcissistic
nasty
naughty
neat
nebbly
necessary
neglected
nervous
nice
noble
noisy
normal
noticed
nourished
numb
nurtured
obedient
obligated
oblivious
obnoxious
obscure
observant
obstinate
offended
open
opinionated
optimistic
ordinary
original
ornery



outraged
outstanding
over-weight
over-wrought
overcome
paranoid
parental
passionate
passive
peaceful
penalized
people-pleaser
perceptive
perplexed
personable
persuasive
petty
photogenic
pissed
plain
playful
pleasant
pleased
plump
poetic
poor
popular
powerful
predictable
prepared
pressured
profound
psycho
pure
purged
purified
put-off

puzzled
quaint
queenly
questionable
quick
quiet
quip
quivering
radical
railroaded
rattled
ravished
raw
reasonable
receptive
reclusive
reconciled
redeemed
reformed
refreshed
refused
rejected
reluctant
remembered
renewed
repulsed
resilient
resourceful
respectful
responsible
restless
revenged
romantic
rotten
rough
rude
ruthless

sad
saddled
safe
savage
saved
searching
secretive
secure
sedate
seduced
sensible
sensitive
sentimental
serene
settled
sexy
shaken
shameful
sharp
shy
sick
silent
simple
sincere
sluggish
small
smothered
sneaky
sociable
soft
solid
sorrowful
sorry
sour
specious
spiteful
spontaneous



sporadic
spunky
squeezed
stable
stagnant
steady
stigmatized
strained
strict
strong
suffocated
superficial
superior
supportive
suspicious
sweet
sympathetic
talkative
tame
taunted
tearful
temperamental
temporary
tense
tentative
terrified
testy
thankful
thoughtful
thoughtless
thrifty
thriller
tidy
tired
tireless
tolerant
torturous

tragic
tranquil
transparent
trapped
triumphant
trusted
truthful
two-faced
ugly
unaware
uncertain
underestimated
understood
unfaithful
unpleasant
unsatisfied
up-tight
used
valued
venerable
versatile
useful
usual
vague
vain
validated
vibrant
victorious
vile
vitalized
wanted
wanting
warm
wasted
weak
weary
weepy

weird
wicked
wild
wilted
winner
withdrawn
witty
wonderful
yellow
yielding
young
youthful
zapped
zealous

