Understanding how pain works and the impact that it has on an individual is an area that continues to fascinate me. I spent many years working in the field of chronic pain, understanding the impact that it can have on anyone’s quality of life.

Pain research is an on-going development in the world of medicine and as such the research continuously highlights new receptors and hormones that impact on our experience of pain.

The international study of pain defines pain as “an unpleasant sensory and emotional experience associated with actual or potential tissue damage, or described in terms of such damage”.

The keynote here is the emotional experience. Pain is an individual experience – no two people with the same problem/condition will experience their pain in the same way.

Pain is not all bad and in most cases it is a good indication of the need to respect the body. But on-going pain leads to avoidance, which indirectly impacts on mood and quality of life. To ignore the pain, following a NO pain, No gain approach is not necessarily helpful. And on the opposite side giving it too much credit, stopping/resting has no long- term benefit. The problem is to find the middle ground. No one is able to tell any individual what that amount of movement or exercise should be as each one of us is individual, with different lifestyles and expectations.

Neither one of the above approaches is very helpful in managing any pain whether acute or long-term. In both approaches you let the pain take control and dictates what you do or not do.

The body is an evolving organism that changes in relation to how we as individuals respond to the messages and the way our brains perceive it. If we try and fight the pain and push into the “no pain- no gain’ barrier, we continue to stimulate the pain message and the brain eventually perceives it as normal. On the other hand, if we stop all movements/activities then we gradually allow the body to decondition causing additional areas of pain and discomfort.

How you approach any pain is fundamental to how we progress and manage the symptoms.