



**PSYCHOLOGICAL GROUP INTERVENTION
FOR CHRONIC PAIN**

Jesús Rodríguez-Marín, Sonia Couceiro y Carlos J. van-der Hofstad
Madrid: Ediciones Pirámide. 2021

José Pedro Espada
Professor of Psychological Treatments. Miguel Hernández University

How can psychology contribute to the management of chronic pain? This is one of the main questions addressed in the book, "Intervención psicológica grupal en dolor crónico" [Psychological group intervention for chronic pain], recently published in Ediciones Pirámide, and with a clear vocation to serve as a tool for applied work in the field of hospital psychology.

The problem addressed in the book is particularly relevant because of its visible effects in the form of physical discomfort. Pain is one of the most common symptoms that lead people to seek medical help. In Spain, it is estimated that one in six people suffer from chronic pain. Since it is a phenomenon of organic origin, the experience of pain is an individual experience. As Professor Ramón Bayés notes, pain and suffering are not synonymous. However, they are often related phenomena, depending precisely on the psychological aspects. Beyond the physical discomfort itself, pain is a sign that can be interpreted as different types of threat, with different paths and meanings, and with greater or lesser possibility of a certain control. Undoubtedly, living with chronic pain involves a difficulty or inability to lead an adapted life with sufficient quality. It is also worth noting its high frequency. The fact that—despite it being a physical symptom—pain is a phenomenon closely linked to psychological aspects, is an initial premise supported by psychological science. As a discipline that analyses and predicts people's behavior, it provides knowledge to better understand the process that the person experiencing pain goes through, and an arsenal of strategies aimed at better adaptation to all kinds of situations in life that must be lived through in spite of pain.

Health psychology is a specialty with a long tradition in applied psychology. I would like to take this opportunity to say that it could do with greater consolidation in the Spanish hospital system. The role of psychology in processes of disease, and coping with and managing illness, is crucial to understand the processes underway and the wellbeing of the subject, because it alleviates the emotional suffering associated with physical suffering, and because of the role of the regulation of emotional states in physical problems such as pain.

This book presents a program designed for group application, which integrates a variety of psychoeducational and cognitive-behavioral techniques. The program aims fundamentally to generate and improve the patient's perception of control over the pain they experience, and to teach them to influence their sensations and emotions. The program is structured in six sessions that are described in the book step by step, and that provide the practitioner with a detailed guide for intervention.

The reading of this monograph is recommended because of its benefits, of which I will point out only a few here. The first is that it was a necessary book. Although there are excellent publications in this field, the authors contribute their professional experience accumulated over many years of experience and fill a gap in the publications that provide resources for intervention. It is a practical book designed as a tool for practitioners. The program has already been tested in the hospital setting and has been manualized for its application.

The final part of the book includes all the materials necessary for the application of the program, with documents for the participant to read, scripts for the application of specific techniques, notebooks for the patient, registration models, and other valuable materials for use with groups of patients.

This review cannot be concluded without highlighting the profile of its authors. Jesús Rodríguez-Marín is one of the fathers of Spanish health psychology and a very prominent figure in this discipline. Sonia Couceiro is especially dedicated to psycho-oncology, and Carlos van-der Hofstad has been in charge of the Hospital Psychology Unit at the Hospital General Universitario de Alicante for many years. The team combines extensive experience in the field of health psychology, in its development in the hospital setting, and a high specialization in the discipline. For years they have integrated research and applied work in their healthcare work.

For a subject so undeniably challenging as the psychology of pain, the authors manage to make it attractive and provide a useful and rigorous protocol, interesting to read for students and practitioners. We are grateful for the authors' initiative in publishing this work and their generosity in sharing their experience, transmitted in an enjoyable and practice-oriented way. May they long continue to do so.

