



The Chronic Pain Decoder

What they say. What we hear. What to say instead.

💬 If you've ever heard "You're still in pain?" or "Just be positive," this one's for you.

✅ Real talk for partners, friends, teachers, coworkers, and family.

🔄 Share it. Save it. Send it with love. **#navigatechronicpain**

"You're still in pain?"





What they say:

"You're STILL in pain?"


What we hear:

"Aren't you better *yet*?"

 The Reality: Chronic pain isn't a flu. It doesn't just go away. It's often lifelong, with ups and downs.

 Say this instead:

"I can't imagine how hard this is — I'm proud of you for getting through today."



"You just need to stay positive!"

What they say:

"You just need to think positively."

What we hear:

"You're doing this to yourself."

The Reality:

🔍 Positive thinking doesn't cure pain. It *can* help — but only when it's paired with compassion and validation.

Say this instead:

✅ "I believe you. I'm here. And I'll hold hope *with* you."

"You were fine yesterday!"

1

What they say:

"But you were fine yesterday!"

2

What we hear:

"You're faking it today."

3

The Reality:

🔍 Flare-ups can hit out of nowhere. Pain can change by the hour.

4

Say this instead:

✅ "I know things can change quickly. What do you need today?"



"I get tired too."



What they say:

"Yeah, I get tired too."



What we hear:

"Your exhaustion isn't valid."



Say this instead:

✅ "Is there anything I can take off your plate right now?"

🔍 The Reality: Fatigue from chronic illness is like walking through quicksand — even after sleeping.



"Have you tried ____?"

?

What they say:

"Have you tried yoga? Keto? A healing crystal from Etsy?"



What we hear:

"You're not trying hard enough."



The Reality:

Most of us have tried *everything* — repeatedly.



Say this instead:

"I trust you're doing what's best for you. I'd love to learn what actually helps you most."

"You're just being sensitive."



What they say:

"You're overreacting / too sensitive."



What we hear:

"You're not allowed to have needs."



The Reality:

Pain rewires the nervous system. Sensitivity isn't weakness — it's physiology.



Say this instead:

"Your experience is real. Let's figure out what would make things easier."



If You've Said These Before — It's OK

Learn

✨ You didn't mean harm. Most people just don't know what chronic pain *really* is.

The best thing you can do now? ☒ Learn more about chronic pain conditions.

Listen

☒ Listen to those experiencing chronic pain. Their experiences are valid and real.

Love Better

☒ Use what you've learned to support those with chronic pain more effectively.

📦 Send this to someone who needs it. 💬 Share it with:

<https://navigatechronicpain.org>

Want to Say the Right Thing Next Time?



Conversation scripts

Learn exactly what to say in difficult situations



Validation tips

Support loved ones effectively



Emotional support

When you're too tired to explain again

Let **Navigate Chronic Pain** help. Try asking it:

☐

💬 "How do I explain this to my partner?"

☐

💬 "What can I say when someone minimises my pain?"

☐

💬 "Help me feel less alone right now."

✨ Try Navigate Chronic Pain free at navigatechronicpain.org