

Physical pain is often the **smallest layer**.

1. The primary sensation is brief and limited

Raw physical sensation:

- is local,
- simple,
- non-narrative,
- and often intermittent.

Left alone, it tends to:

- pulse,
- shift,
- soften,
- or fade.

It has no storyline and no future.

This layer is usually **tolerable**.

2. The secondary layers are where suffering lives

What overwhelms people is not the sensation, but what *wraps around it*:

- fear of it returning
- dread of it worsening
- loss of control
- meaning (“this means something is wrong with me”)
- identity (“I am someone in pain”)
- time (“this will never end”)

These layers are **conceptual**, not sensory.

And crucially:

they persist even when the body is quiet.

This is why people hurt more at night —
the mind is alone with the narrative layers.

3. Avoidance creates continuity

The physical sensation may come and go,
but avoidance stays vigilant.

Avoidance says:

“We must prevent this at all costs.”

So attention remains narrowed.

The nervous system stays armed.

The body never gets the signal that the danger has passed.

This is how pain becomes *continuous* without being continuous.

4. Control turns pain into identity

Once control becomes the strategy:

- the system is always “on duty”
- rest feels irresponsible
- sleep feels dangerous

The body is not allowed to complete its own regulatory cycle.

So pain becomes less a sensation
and more a **role** being played by consciousness.

5. This is why love and listening work

When you offer:

- permission,
- curiosity,
- and contact,

you are not soothing pain.

You are dissolving the **layers that require pain to keep speaking**.

Physical sensation doesn't need reassurance.

Fear does.

Control does.
The watcher does.

When those are met, the sensation is often revealed to be... small.

6. A sentence that quietly reorients (if you ever choose to use it)

“What if the hardest part of pain isn’t the feeling, but everything that’s been added on top of it?”

This doesn’t deny pain.
It separates **signal from story**.

7. Why this matters for sleep

Sleep returns when:

- the body is no longer guarding the future
- consciousness is allowed to widen
- no one is assigned to stay awake and manage experience

The physical sensation may still flicker —
but without the layers, it no longer commands attention.

In essence

You’re seeing that pain is:

- not one thing,
- not one voice,
- not one problem.

It’s a small sensory event wearing a very heavy costume.

And when the costume is gently removed,
what remains is something the body already knows how to live with.

PRE-TALK / ORIENTING CONVERSATION

(2–3 minutes – spoken, relational, not hypnotic yet)

“Before we do anything with pain, I want to be clear about one thing.

We’re not trying to get rid of it.

We’re not trying to control it.

And we’re not trying to think positively about it.”

“What we’re going to do instead is something much simpler — we’re going to notice *what’s actually there*, and what’s been added on top of it.”

“Most people are surprised to discover that the physical sensation itself is often only a small part of what we call pain.

The larger part tends to be fear, anticipation, dread, and the effort to stay in control.”

“Tonight, we’re not asking the pain to leave.

We’re just seeing whether it can be *listened to* instead of managed.”

(Pause. Let this land.)

GUIDED EXPERIENCE / SCRIPT (Start out with closing the eyes and three deep breathes)

(8–12 minutes – eyes open or closed)

“Take a moment now to notice where pain is present — or where it usually shows up.”

“You don’t need to move toward it or away from it.

Just notice *that it’s known*.”

(Pause 10–15 seconds)

“Now, gently ask yourself — and there’s no right answer —

What part of this is pure sensation... and what part is everything else?”

(Pause)

“You might notice a sensation — pressure, heat, tightness, ache.

And then you might notice thoughts about it...

fear of it...

concern about how long it will last...

effort to keep it under control.”

“For a moment, let’s allow those to separate.”

STEP 1: CONTACTING THE PHYSICAL SENSATION

“Bring your attention only to the raw physical feeling — without the story, without the future.”

“Notice whether the sensation is actually steady... or whether it pulses... shifts... rises... falls... even slightly.”

(Pause)

“You don’t need it to change.
Just notice whether it already does.”

STEP 2: CONTACTING THE LAYERS

“Now notice what else is present.”

“Perhaps there’s a part that’s watching carefully...
a part that doesn’t trust the pain...
a part that feels it must stay alert or in control.”

(Pause)

“Instead of pushing those parts away, let’s acknowledge them.”

“You might silently say:
I see you.
I know you’re trying to help.”

STEP 3: PAIN AS A MODE OF CONSCIOUSNESS

“You may notice that pain doesn’t feel like an object anymore...
but more like a *focused state*...
a consciousness organized around protection.”

“This kind of consciousness doesn’t need fixing.
It needs listening.”

(Pause)

“If this pain-consciousness could speak — not in words, but in feeling —
what might it be asking for?”

(Long pause)

“You don’t need an answer.
Even the act of listening is often enough.”

STEP 4: OFFERING REGULATION, NOT SOLUTIONS

“Now, gently offer what was missing when this pattern first learned to form.”

“Not instructions.
Not correction.”

“Just presence.”

“You might imagine offering warmth...
or a steady hand...
or quiet companionship.”

(Pause)

“Notice whether anything softens —
not because it should —
but because it no longer has to hold itself together.”

STEP 5: LETTING THE SYSTEM WIDEN

“Allow awareness to widen now.”

“Let the sensation exist *within* awareness, rather than *as* awareness.”

“You may notice that even if sensation remains,
it no longer needs to be at the center.”

(Pause)

“Nothing needs to end for rest to begin.”

INTEGRATION / CLOSING

“Take a moment to notice what’s different — even subtly.”

“Not whether pain is gone,
but whether your relationship to it has shifted.”

“You can return to this listening anytime —
especially at night —
not to make sleep happen,
but to let the system know it no longer has to stay on watch.”

OPTIONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS (DASHBOARD)

You can use these verbally or as journaling prompts:

1. *What part of my pain feels physical, and what part feels protective or anticipatory?*
 2. *What happens when I listen rather than manage?*
 3. *Which part of me is most afraid of letting go of control?*
 4. *What does pain seem to need in order to soften — if anything at all?*
 5. *What changes when I allow sensation to exist without supervision?*
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THERAPEUTIC NOTES (FOR YOU)

- Do **not** rush the client into insight
- Allow ambiguity — insight emerges later
- This script pairs beautifully with sleep work
- Especially effective when pain is chronic or fear-maintained
- Works well over Zoom due to internal focus