

supporting you  
through your  
Chronic Pain  
Journey



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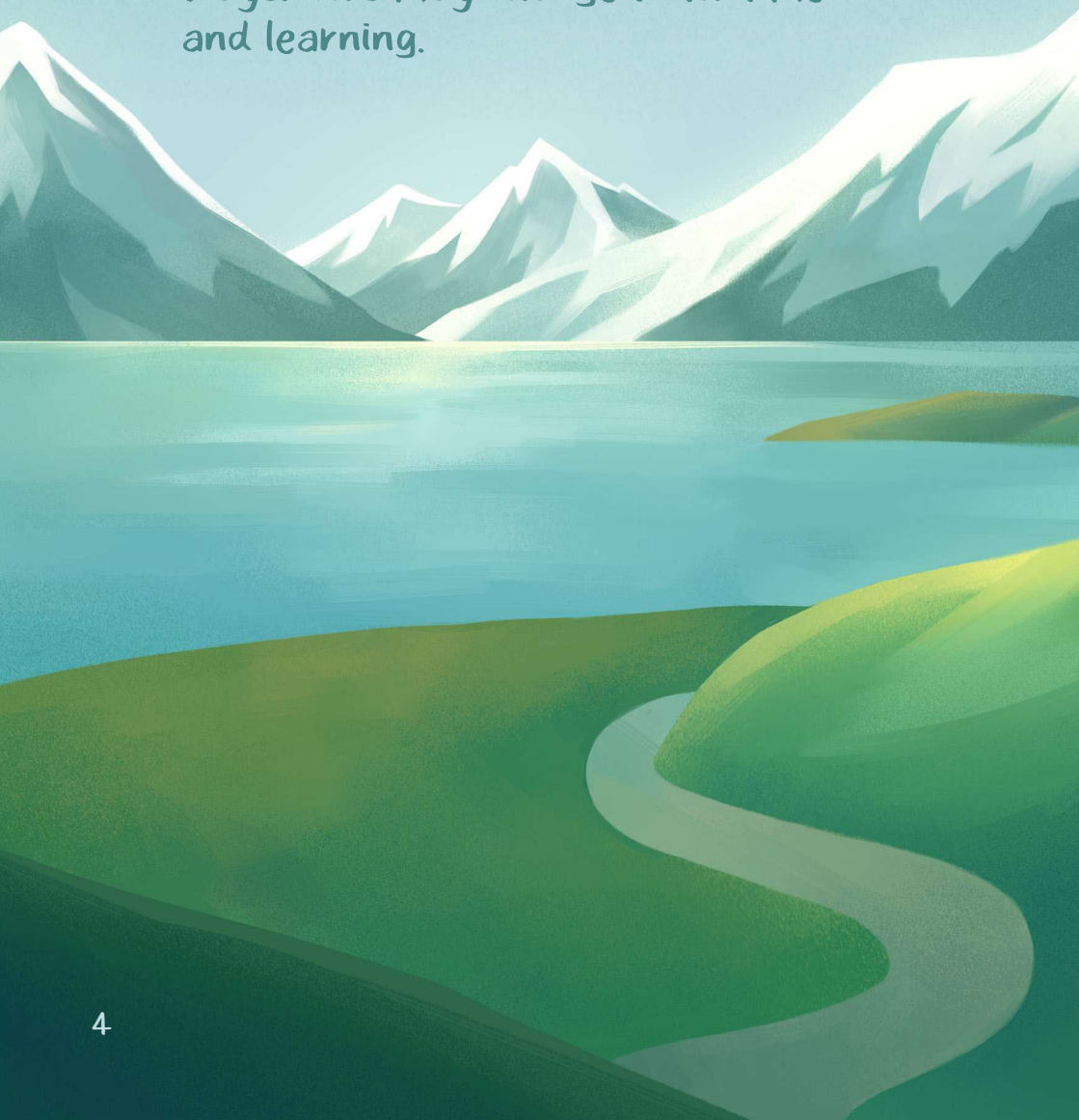


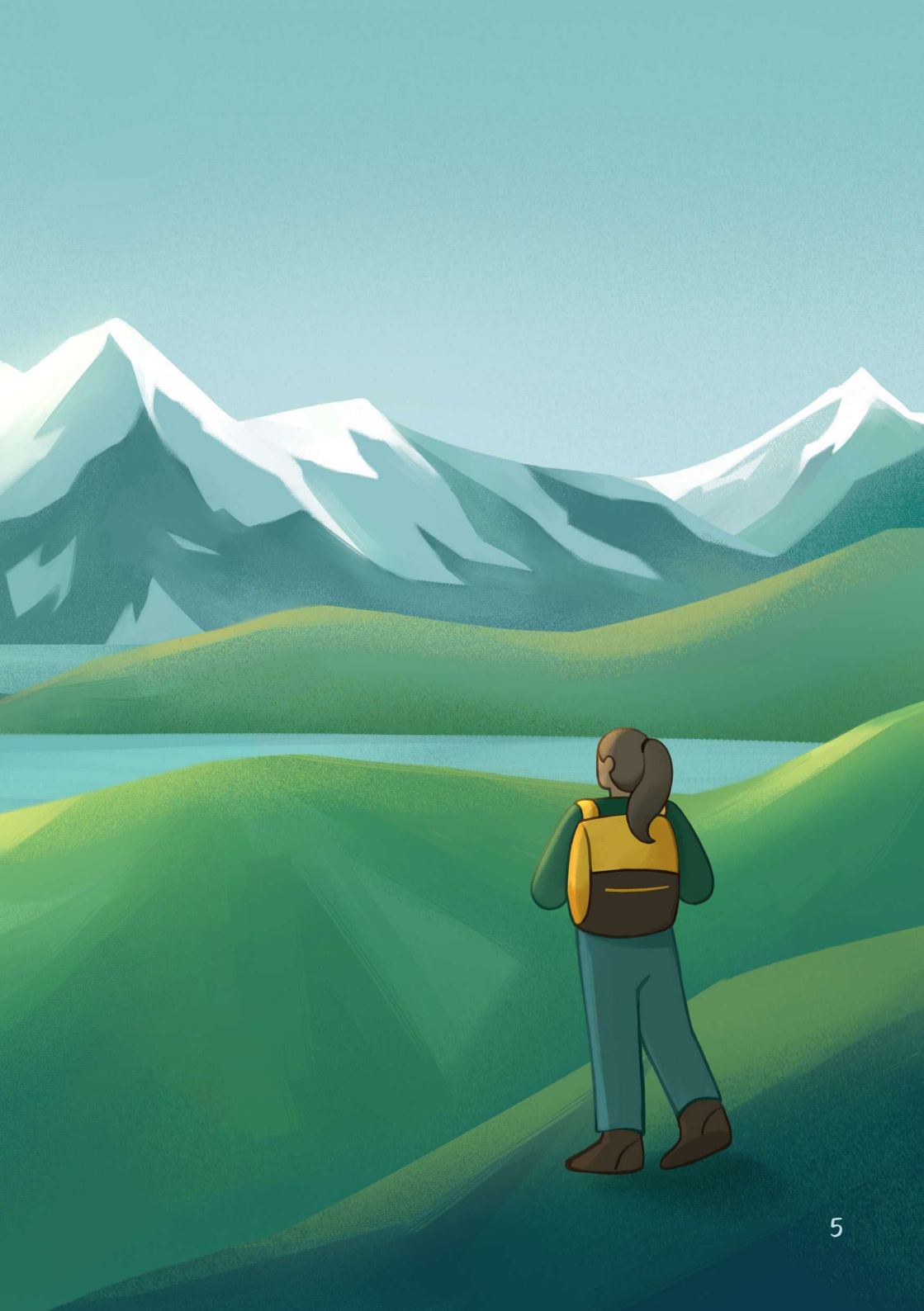
## About

This booklet is a brief informational resource that features illustrated stories from people with chronic pain. If you're just starting your pain management journey, the goal is for these stories to offer some support and help you navigate your pain.

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We are all individual and different,  
and our pain will manifest in various  
ways. This may change with time  
and learning.



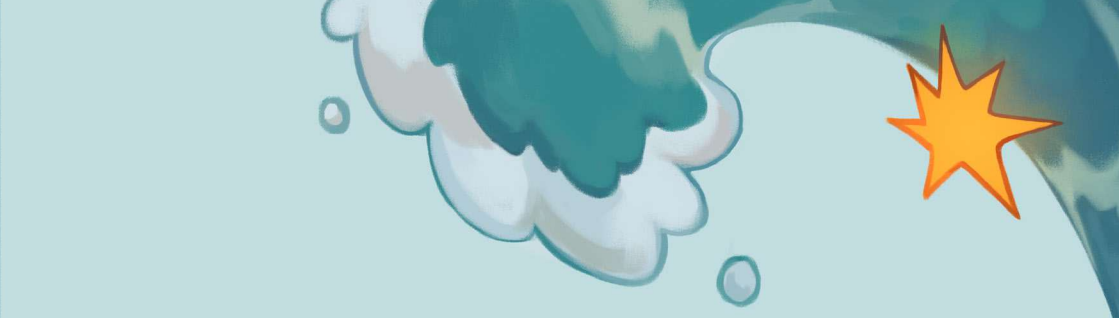




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# Where do I begin?

Pain can be confusing, but  
learning about it can help you  
better understand your pain.

# What is Chronic Pain?

Pain is one of the body's important alarm systems, warning us when we are under threat. Acute pain happens in response to an injury or illness, for example, a sprained ankle.

In "Chronic" or "Persistent" pain, the physical hurt continues, even after the initial injury or illness has healed. Sometimes, it starts without a clear reason. This pain is still real, even if the cause isn't obvious.

When pain persists for a long time, changes in the nervous system can make the body's alarm system more sensitive. As a result, the body starts reacting to things that wouldn't usually cause pain. This process, known as sensitisation, is a major contributor to persistent pain.



## Pain is Complex

Mamae (Pain) affects the entire body, including our emotions, thoughts and even our immune system. It can affect every area of life, including physical, spiritual, social, and mental well-being. The complexity of this can make pain feel overwhelming.

“

I get home at the end of day wiped out. There's so many things I don't do because I am so sore and tired.







# What can I do?

There is no straightforward solution for persistent pain. It can feel like you're struggling to keep afloat while figuring out what works for you.

# Seeing Healthcare Professionals

Healthcare professionals play a vital role in your support network. However, it can be frustrating when multiple visits don't give clear answers. You will need to work closely with your healthcare team so they can tautoko (support) you in finding the right pain management plan for you.



Finding someone with the aroha (compassion) you need is essential as you navigate your pain management journey.



“

I am very grateful to the help I have been given. Most of the people I have seen have always been kind and they do what they can.



## Tautoko Support

Persistent pain affects more than just the person experiencing it. It changes the way we interact with other people, such as our whānau, friends, and colleagues. Being successful in pain management requires recognising tautoko and aroha (love) from those around us.

“

I'm now 51 and really wish I could have a pain free day but at least I have friends and family that are so supportive.

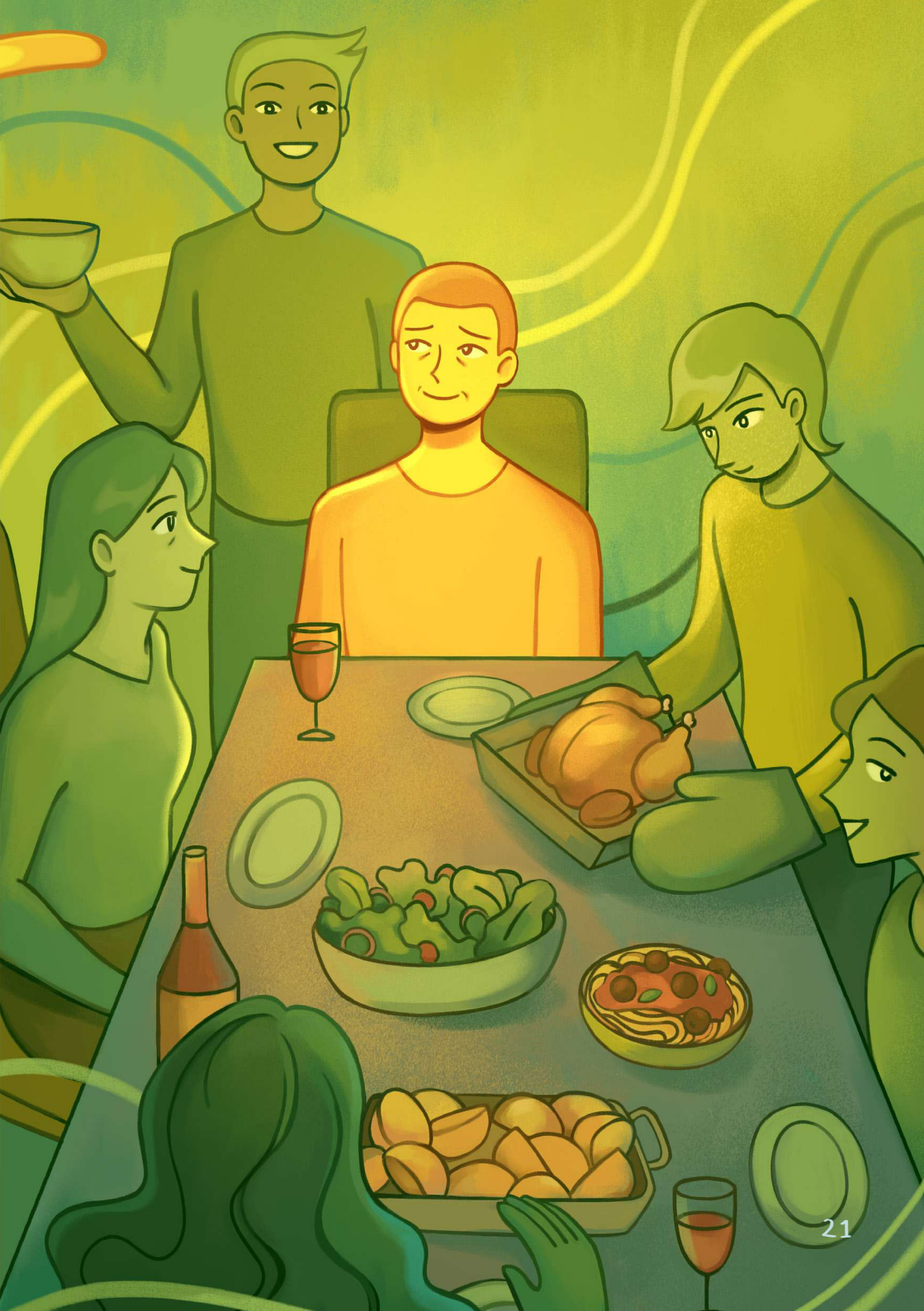




## Whānau & Aroha

“

At home with my boys, we never discuss pain at all. They know it's permanent. They learned years ago, and they know what they have to do around the house to help me and the tasks that I can't manage in the household.







## Can I do it?

Over time the challenges start to add up. It's common to worry about the *mamae* (pain), questioning what's causing it, whether it will improve, or if it might worsen.

## At times you feel stuck

Developing your personal pain management plan can take time. After trying multiple approaches, it can be hard to stay hopeful. Progress often feels like two steps forward and one step back, but this is a normal part of living with pain.

“

I feel I don't have a life anymore.  
I am just existing.





“

When you first start off, you think, oh yeah, I can get back. I can do that. It's kind of closer. And then as you get on, you think it's further away and you can't quite reach it.





## You are not alone

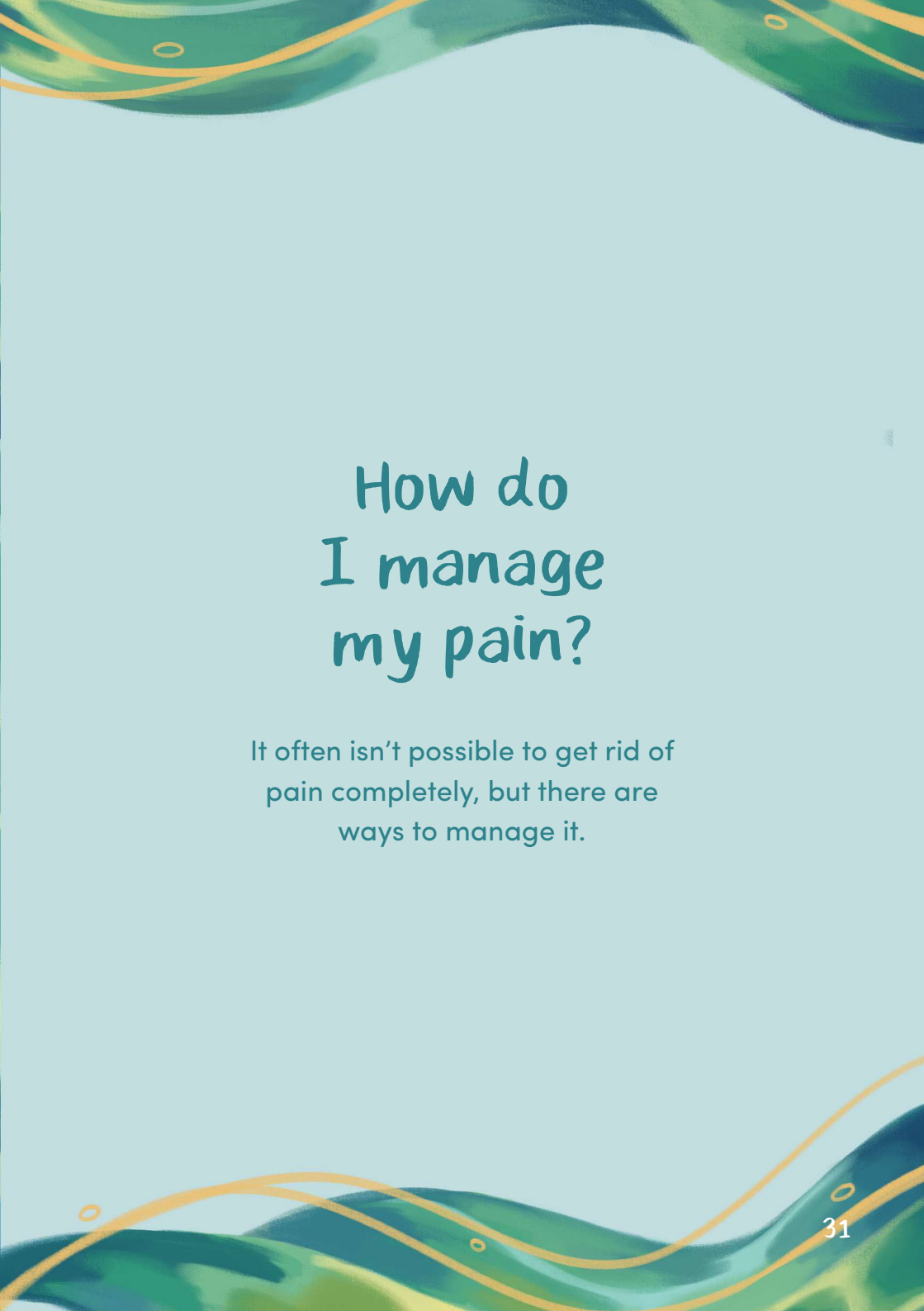
While it might seem isolating, many people with chronic pain share these struggles.

“

I mean, I was very angry about it because I couldn't do anything. And I find it very frustrating.







# How do I manage my pain?

It often isn't possible to get rid of pain completely, but there are ways to manage it.

# Whakaaro Pai Helpful Thinking

Our tinana (bodies) respond to our whakaaro (thoughts) and beliefs about pain. In this way, our thoughts have a real impact on our body. Understanding our thought processes is a powerful tool for managing pain effectively.





“

I felt being loved and I gradually came to my senses from a state of confusion. My thoughts became more positive and not to be in desperation anymore. My pain still continued, but it did not worsen which was satisfying.

# Relaxation

A relaxation technique that works for you is a great tool for pain management. Techniques like calm breathing can help ease racing thoughts and tense muscles.

## Ha ki roto

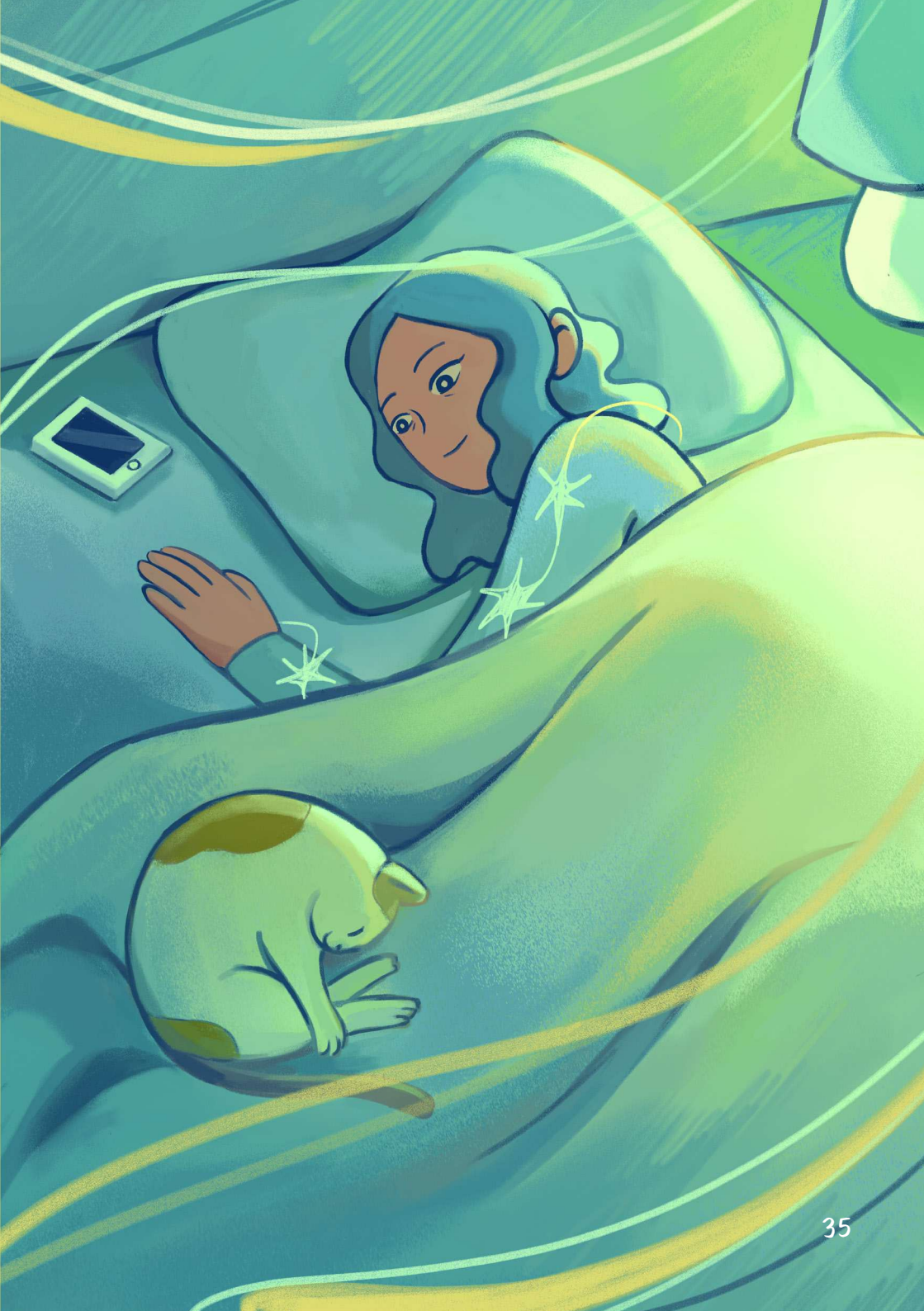
Breathe in

## Ha ki waho

Breathe out

“

I now am able to appreciate basic things in life. I feel satisfied by just doing that.



Relaxation also could be...



meeting whānau for a coffee...



being in nature...



or spending time  
with pets...

# Korikori Tinana

## Physical Movement

Staying active is an important part of managing pain. Some people worry that exercise might worsen their pain. While it may increase pain at first, over time, regular stretching and exercise decrease discomfort and strengthen weak muscles.

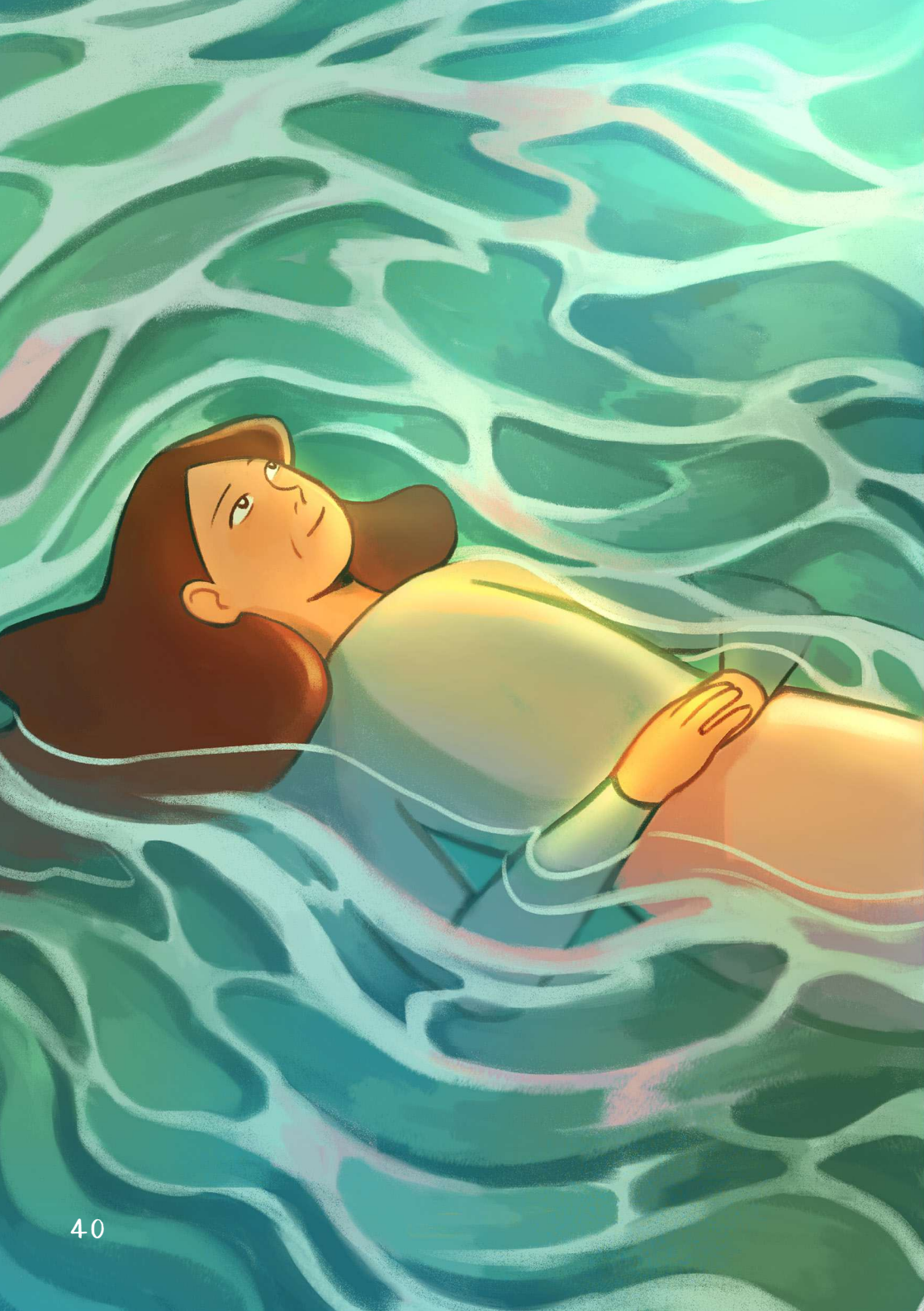
You can start by finding simple ways to move more and sit less throughout the day. Activities like golf, gardening, or spending time with your tamariki (children) or mokopuna (grandchildren), are great ways to stay physically active.





“

Slow and steady wins the race and small steps are all it takes to begin to improve the quality of your life.





# How do I live well with pain?

Even when pain is present, it's possible to live well by seeking ways to add meaning to your life.

# Whakaaetia

## Acceptance

Accepting chronic pain is tough but essential to live your life well. Though adjusting to new ways of doing things may be frustrating, focus on what truly matters to you. It can be helpful to reflect on what you can do today compared to last week and praise yourself for your efforts.

“

*I accept my pain and acknowledge it. It's just part of me now and I have bad days when I struggle to function but I just take some paracetamol and think well, tomorrow is another day.*

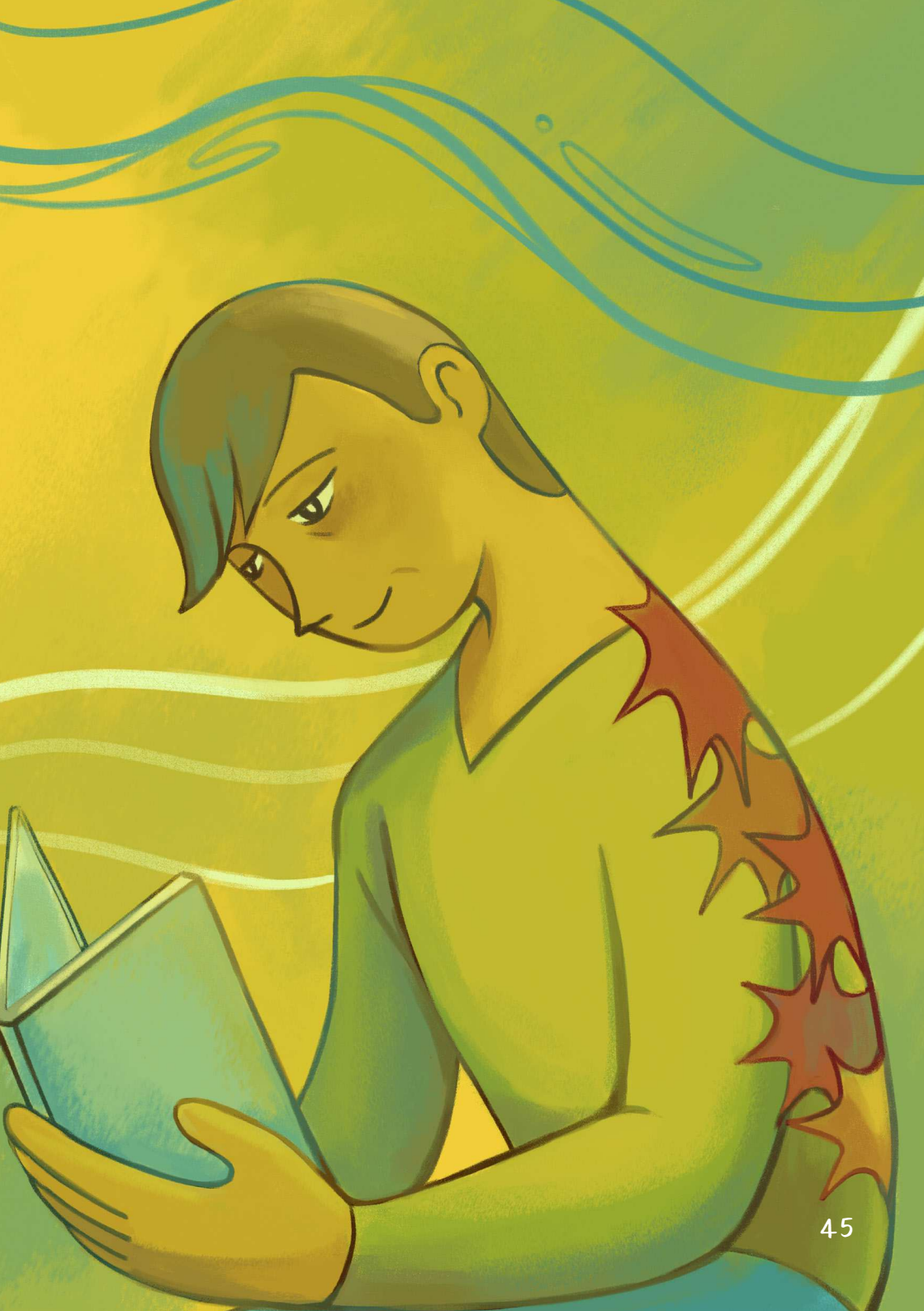


## Aroha mai ki au Be Patient with Yourself

It may take you a few weeks, months, or years to see changes or improvements. When you start feeling better, you might want to catch up on activities. Be careful not to overdo it, or you may end up having setbacks later. Just remember to pace yourself and take things a day at a time.

“

The pain was still there,  
but I became more joyful.





# Thank you

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