

Pain as an alarm



- Pain is our bodies alarm system. It acts as a warning system with its aim to change our behavior to protect us
- Pain is really important and not always a bad thing, if I put my hand on an iron I want it to hurt so I move my hand and prevent further burning
- ***So what's the problem?*** Any alarm that keeps going off is a problem
- To stop the alarm (pain) it is important to address what is causing it to go off. In the case of back pain that could be getting rid of a back muscle spasm or decreasing the irritation to a facet joint for example.
- **However**, sometimes alarms can go off for no reason. Such as a car alarm going off randomly. They can be more sensitive than they should be, such as a smoke alarm going off every time I cook toast. Its not a problem with the toaster but a problem with the sensitivity of the alarm.
- The same thing can happen with back pain where we may experience pain that is out of proportion to any damage in the structures of the back. In this instance it is important to address factors that influence the sensitivity and volume of the alarm, not just what is causing that alarm to be set off.
- To enable this to be done effectively it is important to gain a greater understanding of the science behind what happens for us to experience pain.

Reflective questions:

- 1) If you hear a smoke alarm going off in your house could you tell where the fire is and how bad it is?
- 2) Can you relate this to any pain you have felt in your life? Have you ever had pain that felt really severe but wasn't anything too bad (eg a papercut)

