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**“But you look good:” Psychological components of chronic pain and effective treatment modalities**

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By nature, chronic pain requires a multi-disciplinary, collaborative approach to treatment to be effective. As opposed to shorter-lived acute pain problems, living with pain that lasts three months or longer begins to affect an individual's life in multiple domains. These include family dynamics, work, self-esteem and a general ability to function at pre-morbid levels. Clients and doctors report feelings of frustration stemming from their inability to “cure” the chronic condition the client presents with. This can result in issues of shame and isolation for the person in chronic pain, especially as the disability is often “invisible” and the patient is perceived as malingering. Behavioral interventions such as goal-setting, visualization, mindfulness and journaling, as well as cognitive-behavioral and/or family therapy are crucial towards helping a chronic pain patient regain a sense of empowerment and hope. Grief work is also an important part of treatment as functioning, activity levels, and relationships suffer when the individual in pain struggles to adjust to a “new normal.” During this period one may experience mood instability and fluctuations in the emotional-behavioral cycle. In conclusion, pain is a subjective experience which is influenced by many factors. Culture, history (including upbringing, attitudes and beliefs) as well as biology and available medical care account for the vast differences in the way individuals have learned to cope with an adverse situation such as chronic pain. Working with these unique clients can be a rewarding experience as we join them in their journey toward acceptance and healing.

**Biography**

Wendy Walsdorf, LMFT, completed her master's degree from Antioch University, Los Angeles California, in 1993. She is a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist and has worked as an Employee Assistance Professional at The University of California, Los Angeles Staff and Faculty Counseling Center, for the past 19 years. She does assessments and brief, cognitive- behavioral therapy at UCLA, presenting to various departments on topics such as stress management, women and depression, work-life balance, and stress and burnout. Wendy has led workshops and support groups on chronic pain in the workplace for UCLA, Kaiser Permanente, and in her private practice.