

## Traffic Light Model To Guide Your SAFE Return to Movement

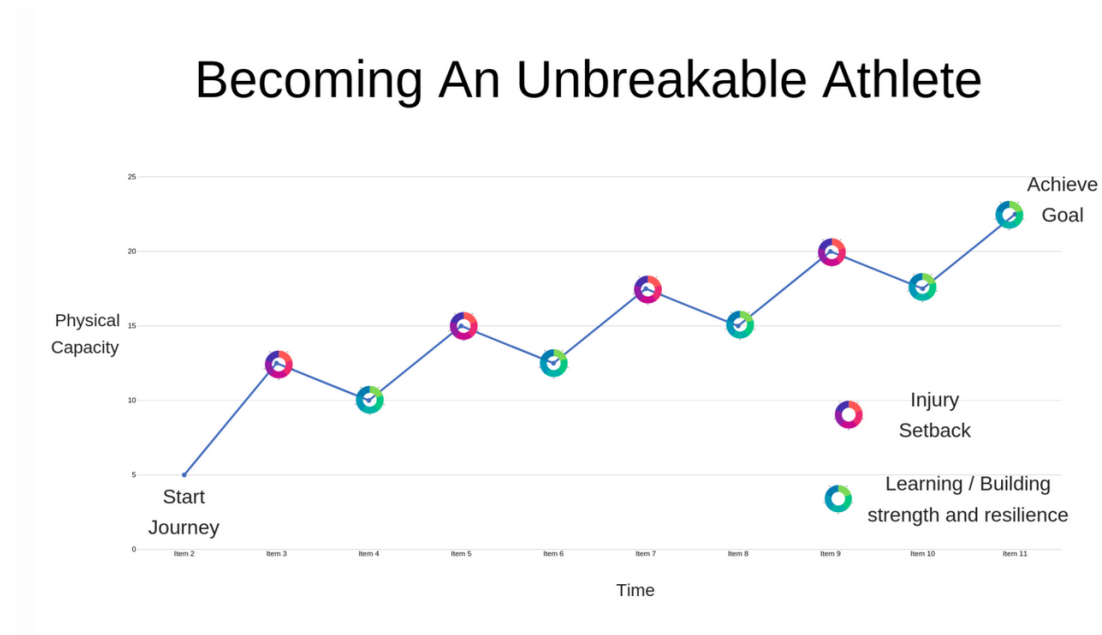
After an injury, it can be tricky to navigate your way back to your desired activities. Sometimes it can be hard to know how hard to push yourself.

Using a 'Traffic Light Model' to guide and monitor your symptoms can be extremely useful and self-empowering.

Tuning into your body's response to the loads you are placing on it are the key to improving over the long-term and gaining confidence in your ability to manage your condition.

### ***Adaptation - Your Bodies Superpower To Regenerate***

Our bodies are designed to adapt and change in response to stress and sometimes it is OK to feel discomfort and experience moderate flare-ups as we rebuild and return to activity.



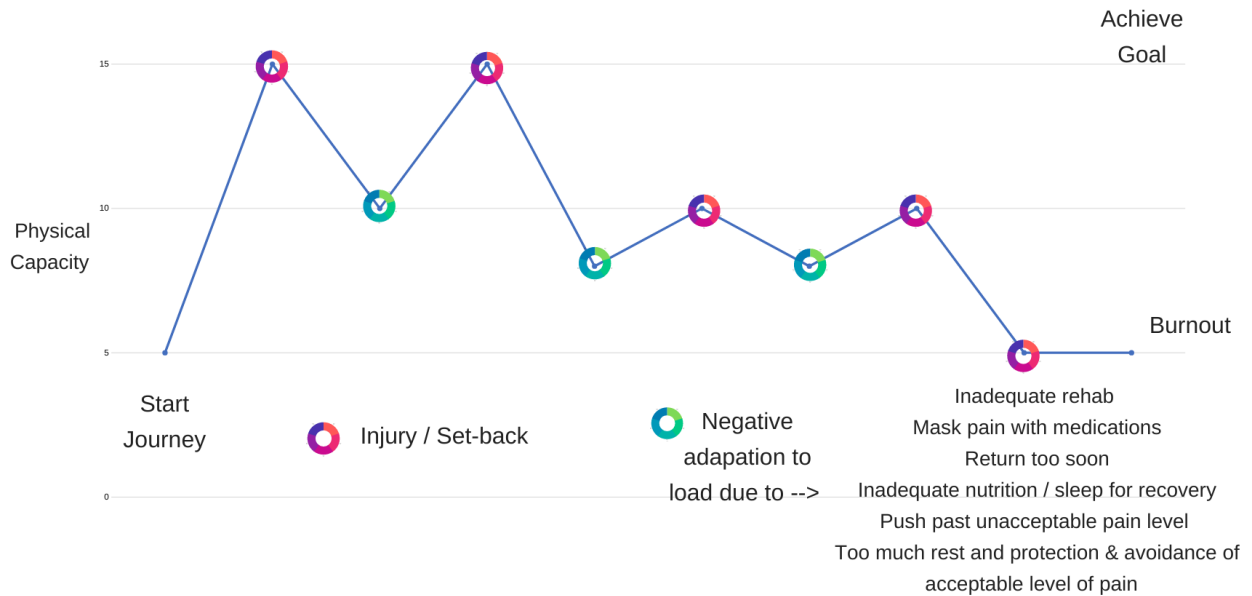
With time, patience and a sensible + progressive loading program, the body adapts positively to the loads that it is put under.

This is how we get stronger.

Ensuring positive adaptations to exercise relies on having adequate nutrition (carbohydrates for fuel and protein for recovery), sleep and maintaining tissue quality (foam rolling, massage e.t.c).

Mindset is also important - being disciplined and having a clear understanding of the process along with listening to your body is more important than following a "no pain, no gain" approach.

# Downward Spiral Of Pain & Injury



When this process goes wrong we end up with a tissue in disrepair – an injury – commonly this is due to sudden unaccustomed increases in load without the appropriate time for recovery and regeneration of tissue.

## **Pain is normal - use this scale to guide your level of activity**

The traffic light model will help you better understand your pain, how to respond when pain occurs, and if it is safe to add more activity or exercise.

This guide will help you understand when your pain is safe, no harm has occurred, and help you to avoid a flare up and re-injury as you progress back to your desired activities.

Sometimes when you have pain, you can misinterpret the meaning of your pain as harmful or have negative thoughts about healing tissues (examples of negative thoughts: “I’ll never get better, pain must mean I’m causing tissue damage, I shouldn’t move because I hurt, these exercises or activities are too much for my injury).”

These negative thoughts are a trigger that causes misinterpretation of your signals from your body’s tissues, increasing the sensitivity of your brain’s pain alarm system. This increase in sensitivity causes the brain to increase sensitivity of the receptors in your body’s tissues. The activity traffic light can be used as a guide to help analyze how your pain behaves to movement.

This will ultimately build confidence and competence in self-managing your pain and gradually building activity.

## PAIN MONITORING - TRAFFIC LIGHT APPROACH

When you start to resume your activities, pain that is at a 0-5 level is considered ACCEPTABLE —> KEEP GOING.

Pain that increases to more than 6/10 means you are probably over-doing it and need to rest or modify your activity.

### ***When to apply the traffic light model***

Pay attention to your pain *during* the activity, but **MORE IMPORTANTLY**, take note of your symptoms over the 24-48 hours **AFTER** your activity, which gives a more clearer picture of how your tissues have handled the increase in load.

As your body warms up during an activity it can often feel good. With the added benefit of pain-modifying endorphins, it can be difficult to get an accurate sense of how your body is tolerating the load. This can lead to a false sense of security and over-doing your activity, causing a flare-up.

<---IDEAL --->	←--ACCEPTABLE --->	←--UNACCEPTABLE --->
PAIN 0-3 /10	PAIN 4-5/10	PAIN 6/10 or more
<p><b>GREEN LIGHT</b></p> <p>Acceptable level - niggles are normal Ignore and keeping pushing through</p> <p>Monitor 24 hour response, if pain increases higher than 3/10 the morning after then you may need to modify load</p>	<p><b>ORANGE LIGHT</b></p> <p>Caution Might have to back off a bit Closely monitor loads and additional stress on your system</p> <p>Emphasize recovery - nutrition, tissue quality, sleep and mindset</p> <p>Check all equipment e.g. wear on shoes and update if required</p>	<p><b>RED LIGHT</b></p> <p>Stop Use ice Get assessed by Physio</p> <p>Reduce loads by 25-50% and double down on exercises</p>
No tissue damage	Low risk of tissue damage	Increased risk of tissue damage

Another option for pain monitoring

If you're not really a numbers person, another option is to think of keeping your symptoms '**low and stable**', as you *gradually increase your load*.