My Letter to "Pain" Instructions

Dear Pain,

As absurd as it sounds, I am choosing to write you a letter so I may express how I feel about you. Writing to you may help me unravel whatever I need to explore regarding our relationship together. Perhaps if we just communicated, we would better understand one another and not be so much at odds with each other.

My intention for writing this letter is firstly to get a few things off my chest and express how you make me feel. My second intention is to become curious and learn something new about the possible reasons you are currently in my life. Every small understanding of why you are protecting me and how you may be benefiting me will undoubtedly help me in my recovery.

There are five parts to this letter.

1) **The ways you have impacted my life**
   Because of you, I am unable to… and feel…

2) **What I can still do and experience**
   Despite of you, I can still…

3) **The reasons I believe you are here**
   I believe that I am still experiencing you because…

4) **What you fear may happen to me if you let go**
   You may be protecting me from…

5) **Reflection**
   After writing this letter, I feel…

I will even sign and date the letter. I will do my best to write to you for 10 minutes a day for at least 3 weeks. I know that my letters may become repetitive, but I believe in time I will have a revelation and will truly understand you and myself at the same time.

Since I'm technically not sending these letters to you or anyone else, I can say anything that comes to my mind without censoring it. I may choose to keep the letters and in 3 weeks review them and perhaps appreciate how my answers may evolve over time.

I may either use the provided template or write on a blank sheet of paper answering the five parts of this letter.

Dear Pain,

The ways that you have impacted my life

Because of you, I have been unable to…

Because of you, I have had difficulty with…

Because of you, I feel…

What I can still do and experience

Despite of you, I can still…

The reasons I believe you are here

I believe that I am still experiencing you because…

What you fear may happen to me if you let go

You may be protecting me from…

Reflection

After writing this letter, I feel…

Yours sincerely, _____ *Date:* _____

A sample letter

Dear Pain,

Because of you, I have been unable to…
Go to work as a construction worker / Play tennis / Focus and concentrate at work
Play with my grandkids / Go to my Yoga & Pilates classes / Go on a vacation with friends
Sit and watch a movie with my family / Clean and vacuum the house / Walk the dog

Because of you, I have had difficulty with…
Cooking / Grocery shopping / Gardening / Doing my full gym workout / Driving to work
Concentrating / Sleeping / Being intimate with my partner

Because of you, I feel…
Sad / Angry / Stressed / Frustrated / Old & weak / Afraid of not getting better
If I'm this bad now what's going to happen to me when I'm older

Despite of you, I can still…
Enjoy my cup of coffee / Walk in the park for short periods / Work part-time as a nurse
Do a partial modified gym workout / Cook simple meals / Play the piano / Listen to music /
Paint & draw / Hang out and socialize with my friend Mary / Meditate / Breathe

I believe that I am still experiencing you because… *(POSSIBLE PHYSICAL FACTORS)*
I am injured / I have arthritis / My weight / My age / I'm out of alignment
I sit too long / I have bad posture / I have tight muscles / I have weak muscles
I do too much / Rheumatoid arthritis / Diabetic neuropathy / Blood clot / Etc.

I believe that I am still experiencing you because… *(POSSIBLE EMOTIONAL FACTORS)*
Fear of not recovering / Fear of worsening / Fear of not being able to work again
Fear of becoming a burden on my family / Family & work stresses / Anger / Grief
Sense of hopelessness / Sense of injustice / Sense of loneliness

I believe that I am still experiencing you because… *(POSSIBLE LIFESTYLE FACTORS)*
Poor sleep / Smoking / alcohol / Inadequate nutrition / Lack of connection with nature
Job dissatisfaction / Unemployment / Watching world news
Exercising with the mindset of "fixing" self
Random internet searches on my condition, worsening fear
Belief in negative messages on social media
Reliance on passive treatments such as medications and therapies that offer at best only temporary relief but too often lead to dependence and pain recurrence

You may be protecting me from… *potentially injuring myself while* (Name the activity) *as you're afraid that I may harm myself.*
You feel the need to protect me based on my past experiences and my beliefs. Since I've experienced pain with _____ many times before, you have now naturally associated _____ with being " in danger". However logically, I now know that _____ is perfectly SAFE for me to do, especially if I modify it.
Pain, you don't need to be afraid, and you don't need to protect me from _____ anymore.

You may be protecting me from… *my fear of not recovering and being able to go back to work and my activities again. The more I fear and lose hope, the more you will try to protect me by increasing your intensity and spreading to other parts of my body. I'm afraid that I may even get worse as I get older so you are trying to protect me from doing anything that you falsely assume may harm me. However, because of my fear, you are now over-protecting me.*

You may be protecting me from… *my poor sleeping and eating habits and are trying to warn me to change. You are warning me that I may be* (Name the habit) *too much.*
(Smoking, drinking, indulging in sugar, on social media, working, etc.)
You may also be warning me that I'm simply indoors and alone too often. Admittedly I'm not moving my body enough and not going outside for walks in nature or hanging out with friends as much as my mind and body need and crave.

You may be protecting me from… *my life stresses so you're warning me to also put some time aside for myself. I know I spend a lot of time either working or consuming negative messages on my phone or the world news and not enough time on creating.*
I used to love (Name the activity) *but I no longer have the time or the desire to do it.*
(Playing the guitar, painting, singing, dancing, listening to music, swimming, yoga, etc.)
Perhaps you are trying to warn me to get back to creating and doing the activities I used to really enjoy which I no longer put time aside doing.

You may be protecting me from… *my sense of injustice and anger because none of this is my fault. As long as I feel like I am a victim that someone else is the cause of all my problems and how I am feeling, you will continue to protect me.*
As long as I stay angry at my own body for failing me, I will continue to suffer, and you will continue to be there to protect me.

After writing this letter, I feel… *I have a better sense of how to move forward. I'm more hopeful and not as angry at you pain, because I now realize that you are only trying to protect me from my* (Name the emotion) (Fear, grief, stress, anger, hopelessness).
You may be trying to tell me to be more active and do more fun things in my life and be kinder to myself.