Doing the best you can with what you have at your disposal

Selective optimisation with compensation (SOC) is a way of problem solving to help you to still achieve your goals in light of any losses that may have developed. Accepting the reality of a loss does not mean you have to just put up with losing an activity, role or hobby of value to you, instead it can mean you work to find a new way to keep it in your life. In the face of a changed circumstance, continuing to do the same thing in the same way you did before may not be possible or may result in frustration or other problems. It can be easy to give up on the activity.

SOC aims to help you to consider if there are ways in which you may be able to select the way in which you do the activity to optimise your experience of it, whilst compensating for the loss or injury.

In research people who use SOC have reported better life satisfaction. The pianist, Arthur Rubinstein, who continued to perform professionally late into his life despite having been physically affected by the ageing process, illustrates how each element of SOC can be used. When asked for the secrets of his success, Rubinstein mentioned three strategies; First he reduced down the scope of his repertoire he played (an example of selection), secondly, he practised this restricted-repertoire more intensely than would have been the case if he still played a larger repertoire of pieces (an example of optimisation) meaning he got better at them through more practice, and finally he created the illusion of speed he had lost due to his physical limitations by purposefully slowing down just immediately prior to playing the faster segments of his repertoire thereby giving his audience the impression of greater dexterity than was actually the case (an example of compensation).

Use the worksheet to consider some possibilities of using SOC to keep doing the activity of value to you, with the help of your practitioner.