

What I can expect after the First Treatment

The range of responses varies from person to person after the first treatment. Many first time patients feel an overwhelming sense of relief and well-being, and others, may feel some slight discomfort a couple of hours later which may even last for several days—I assure you that this is *normal*, especially if you have experienced this problem for more than two months. The reason for the discomfort is simple—it is a result of deconditioning in the muscles and tissues, as well as metabolic waste (lactic acid). When the muscles, bone, tendons, tissues and nerves have been conditioned to perform at a sub-optimal level for an extended period (because of injury, bad posture, overwork, poor nutrition, drugs, stress) the body accommodates to this poor way of functioning and is vulnerable to injury.

The **goals of treatment** from the beginning are a progressive relief of pain, reduction of joint swelling, relaxation of tight muscles, restoration and strengthening of ligaments and muscle tone, improved coordination, restored joint sensation, correction of normal spinal curves so as support the body optimally, prevention of spinal degeneration and reduction of scar tissue, promotion of quicker, more-effective healing, stronger immune and nervous system and lastly, a healthy life that you can be proud of!

Programs of Care

26 Treatments (approx 2 months)

- Relief Care: 3x/week for 2 months.
- Corrective Care: 2x/week for 4 months.
- Wellness Care: 1x/week for 6 months.

64 Treatments (approx 9 months)

- Relief Care: 3x/week for 2 months.
- Corrective Care: 2x/week for 4 months.
- Wellness Care: 1x/week for 3 months.

48 Treatments (approx 6 months)

- Relief Care: 3x/week for 2 months.
- Corrective Care: 2x/week for 2 months.
- Wellness Care: 1x/week for 2 months.

22 Treatments (approx 4 months)

- Relief Care: 3x/week for 1 months.
- Corrective Care: 2x/week for 2 months.
- Wellness Care: 1x/week for 1 months.

24 Treatments (approx 3 months)

- Relief Care: 3x/week for 1 months.
- Corrective Care: 2x/week for 1 months.
- Wellness Care: 1x/week for 1 months.

The initial phase of care is called **Relief Care**. Visits are frequent during this period of intensive care and each visit builds on the one before, so keep your appointments to get the best results! Symptoms alert us to underlying issues and problems in the body, and they are the first things to go away with care, however the body is still vulnerable and the muscles and ligaments are in need of strengthening and stability, so it is imperative to keep coming (and follow all of the doctors recommendations) to get the results you need and want!

The second phase is called, **Corrective Care**. When you continue your care, visits are less frequent, and progress will be less dramatic as it was when you first started treatment. If you end your care before fully healing muscles and soft tissues, you can invite a relapse to occur.

Wellness Care is the third and last phase. You are feeling amazing and really notice how far you have come! You are aware of how your body moves and how important it is to keep yourself physically and nutritionally fit, as well as to continue to keep the joints/muscles/nerves flexible and mobile so as maintain optimum health! Congratulations!

The Purpose of Pain

No one really wants pain. Once you have it, you want to get rid of it. This is understandable because pain is unpleasant. But the unpleasantness of pain is the very thing that makes it so effective and an essential part of life. Pain protects you, it alerts you to danger, often before you are injured or injured badly. It makes you move differently, think differently and behave differently, which also makes it of paramount importance for the healing process. There are many myths and misunderstandings and unnecessary fears about pain. Most people, including health professionals, do not have a modern understanding of pain. This is disappointing because we know that understanding our pain helps us deal with it more effectively. It is my hope that through reading this article that you will be empowered through a deeper and more profound understanding of what pain is, why we have it and how to deal with it more effectively.

Pain is often unpredictable, which can make us frightened of it. Sometimes you can lift an object a thousand times without a problem. Then, all of a sudden, one lift causes extreme pain. Pains from bites, postural pain and sprains are simple everyday pains that can be easily related to changes in the tissues (i.e. Muscles, fascia, ligaments, tendons, nerves, etc.). The brain concludes that the tissues are under threat and that action is required, including healing behaviors. Also, past memories of pain will hopefully prevent you from making the same mistake twice. All pain involves many thoughts and emotional contributions. When pain persists and feels like it is running your life it is difficult to see how it can be serving any useful purpose. But even when pain is chronic and nasty, it hurts because somehow the brain has concluded, often subconsciously, that you are threatened and in danger—the trick is finding out why the brain has come to this conclusion.

Pain is really an amazing experience. *Of critical importance, however, is to know that the amount of pain you experience does not necessarily relate to the amount of tissue damage you have sustained.* For instance, a paper cut really hurts, stings and can even bring the toughest of people to their knees, but the damage to the tissues is very minimal. Low back pain and headaches are among the most common pain in humans. Many of us though have scary disc bulges and squashed nerves, yet may never have any symptoms. Many of these changes in tissues are just a normal part of being alive and do not have to hurt. Simply, if there is no pain it means that these changes in tissues are not perceived by the brain to be a threat.

The context of the pain experience is also critical. If both a professional violinist and a dancer cut their finger, who would feel the most pain? The violinist would feel more pain because it poses a greater threat and plays an integral role in the violinist's livelihood and identity. Also, post-mastectomy patients who attribute pain to returning cancer, have more intense and unpleasant pain than those who attribute it to another cause, regardless of what is happening in the tissues. The emotional and physical components of a pain experience clearly exist in a spectrum and the more knowledge you have about the pain process itself will help to assuage the fear and the threat of pain.

All over your body there are millions of pain sensors (for touch, temperature, chemical, etc.) that can be thought of as reporters constantly surveying their area for activity. The life of a given sensor has a lifespan of only few days, only to be replaced by a fresh one, therefore, your sensitivity is constantly changing and your current level of sensitivity is not fixed! In chronic pain, however, some neurons are hijacked or even enslaved by the pain experience, causing an addiction to the pain itself. Pain can be thought of as one tune that is played over and over by an orchestra. This tune played repetitiously, is on automatic pilot, and is in large part under the control of our memories and it becomes difficult for the orchestra to play a different tune.

Muscles have many pain sensors in them so they can easily be a significant part of a pain experience. If they are deconditioned and weak because lack of exercise or overused or damaged because of improper training they can cause pain. Muscles are hard to severely injure. Yes, they will bruise or have small micro-tears, or there can be a build up of lactic acid if your doing new exercises, but muscles are champion healers because of their phenomenal blood supply. Body movements are important to keep your system flushed. Lack of movement, leads to fluid build up in your muscles and joints causing acid formation as a by-product of cellular inactivity. So, even though your brain concludes that the muscles are in danger (pain and inflammation), the solution is to MOVE—no fancy therapies, no drugs, just move!

We have 206 bones in our bodies and many more joints which are living and healing structures and each covered with a supersensitive layer of periosteum meant to protect us. Each bone and joint absorbs pressures and will adapt and change their shape in response to the body's needs. Joints adore movement and regular compression, which are essential to their health.

Peripheral nerves connect the brain and spinal cord to all the tissues of our bodies. They transmit millions of simultaneous messages as you move and stretch. Nerves are quite strong and they can be a real source of danger messages and a contributor to pain. Stress and the chemicals that are released in the body can also contribute to nerve sensitivity.

Pain nearly always involves something going on in the tissues. This might be inflammation, slow healing or tissues that are unfit and unused. The fact is that all pain is produced by the brain—no brain, no pain—however this pain is very real and not just in your head. The nervous system is highly adaptable and WILL accommodate most of the demands that it is given. In chronic pain, the pain messages that are sent to the brain adapts to meet the demand, and therefore becomes more efficient at sending danger messages. This means that things that hurt, now hurt even more because the sensitivity has increased—the brain is being told that there is actually more danger at the tissues that there actually is. It's kind of like a dripping tap torture on the forehead—every little drip becomes more and more magnified.

Thoughts and beliefs are very powerful! It is well known that some people with persistent pain need only think of a movement or watch someone else perform a movement for it to produce pain. Our thoughts are so powerful that they can actually maintain a pain state—these are called “thought viruses.” By the understanding of the physiology of pain, we can actually affect the outcome of our pain! By allowing our pain to control our lives, instead of us controlling the pain, we in fact lower our immune thresholds and throw our sympathetic and parasympathetic systems out of kilter causing inflammation in the body. Here are some tips on buffering the immune system and helping to deal with pain: 1) to have an influence on the quality of one's life 2) to be in control of your life and your treatment options 3) to surround yourself with supportive family and friends and medical support 4) to have strong belief systems 5) to have and use a sense of humor 6) to exercise appropriately.

Fear is also a powerful motivator. It contributes to how you move, behave and experience pain. The sources of fear are diverse. Fear is strongly dependent on context, being obvious to us or hidden. *In order to face these fears, you need to be informed and understand as much as possible about your body. And you will need to brave—for this the vehicle for the road to recovery!*

Active coping strategy examples

- learning about the problem
- exploring ways to move
- exploring and nudging the edges of pain
- staying positive
- making plans for yourself

Passive coping strategy examples

- avoiding activity
- doing nothing
- waiting for something to happen
- believing that someone else has the answer

The natural response is to stop the activity when the pain starts. Over time the amount of activity at which pain is experienced slowly begins to reduce, eventually leading to disability, disuse and more often than not, depression. In my

experience this pattern is more common in people who are afraid of pain and re-injuring tissues and for people who are “passive copers.”

No-one has a single answer for all pains. Pain, like people, are always different. The pain experience, is like an onion skin—it has many layers, with body-mind-spirit interactions. Movement however, not only increases the health of the joints, soft tissues, circulatory and respiratory systems, it has another very important function. Educated movement is brain nourishing because it establishes and re-establishes fine functional sensory and motor representations in the brain, using pathways led low by fear and ignorance. The aim is to teach the orchestra to play all the tunes again, to regain its creativity, curiosity and resilience.

TOOL #1: UNDERSTAND PAIN

This is the road less traveled, but ultimately the true road to recovery. Learning about pain physiology reduces the threat value of pain. Reduced threat will reduce the activation of all of our protective systems: sympathetic, endocrine and motor. This in turn regulates and harmonizes immune function.

TOOL # 2: YOUR HURTS WON'T HARM YOU

When you are hurting, it does not necessarily mean that you are damaging yourself. We can be confident that persistent pain does not necessarily reflect the condition of your tissues. So, hurt does not always equal harm.

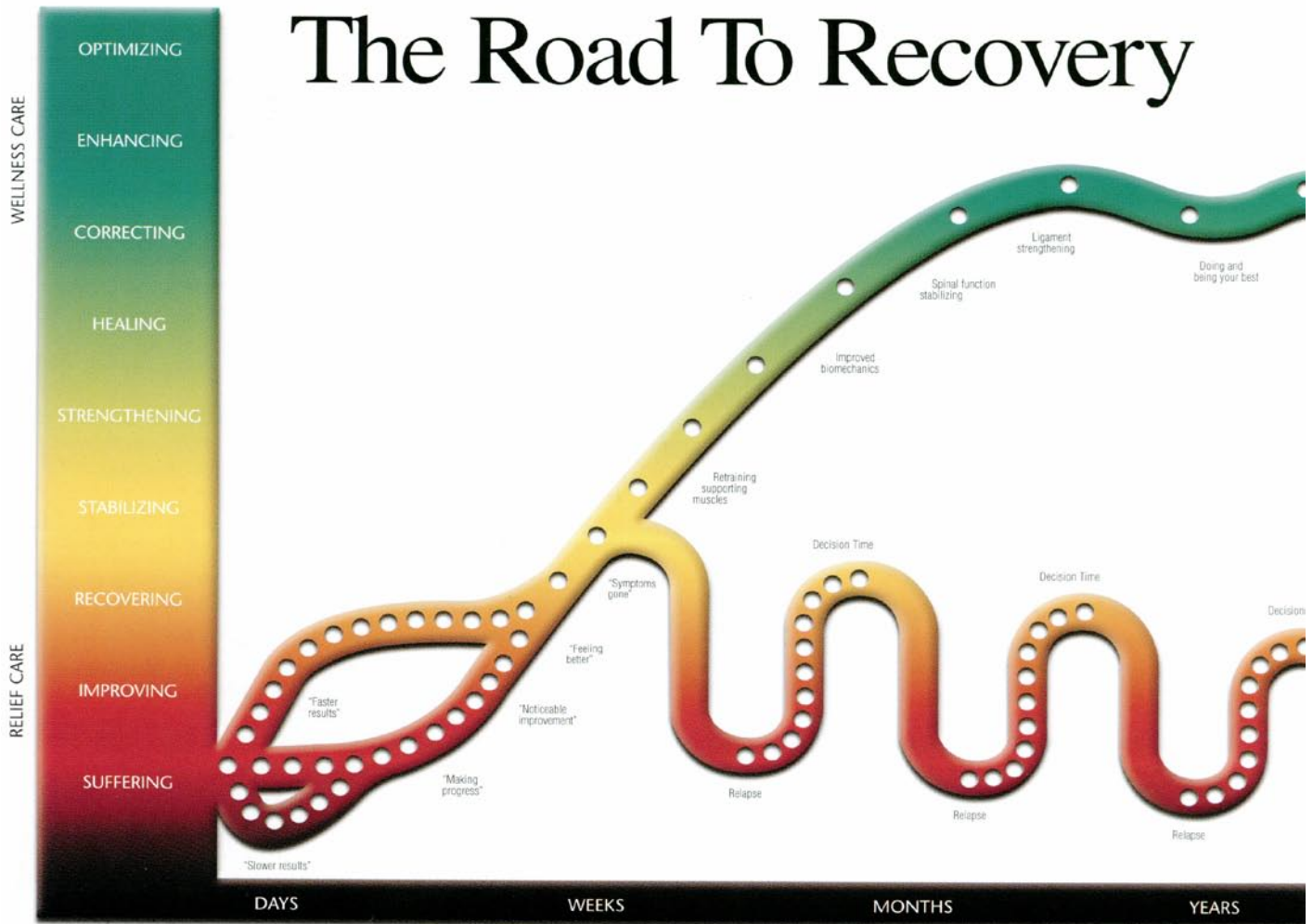
TOOL # 3 PACING AND GRADED EXPOSURE

All body tissues: muscles, joints and nerves—love and are designed for, activity and movement. “Motion is lotion.” But if you are in pain a long time, you might know you need to move, you really want to move, but you are trapped by pain.

Basic principles:

- Decide what you want/need to do more of.
- Find your baseline. This is the amount of activity you know that you can feasibly do without having a flare-up of pain. (e.g. You can walk 20 minutes without pain. Start at 20 mins. and each week go up by a couple minutes)
- Plan your progression. Be gentle on yourself. Set an alarm without exceeding your predetermined limit so that you don't flare-up.
- Don't flare-up, but don't freak out if you do! Your body's alarm system is so sensitive, so don't freak out or jump to negative conclusions if you have new or old pain. Remember: when you have a flare-up, your nervous system is trying to protect you. Don't give up—be persistent.
- It's a lifestyle thing. Choose fun activities to do. Challenge some feared activities when you become more confident.

The Road To Recovery



Relief Care

Most patients consult our office because they have an ache or a pain. Their goal? Relief. That's our first objective.

A thorough examination reveals areas of spinal dysfunction. Then, we offer a care plan designed to give you the best results in the shortest amount of time.

Visits are frequent during this period of intensive care. Each visit builds on the ones before, so keep your appointments to get the best results.

Decision Time

When you're feeling better, you'll have a decision to make. Will you continue with the care necessary to fully heal soft tissues? Or abandon the investment that you've made so far?

When you continue your care, visits are less frequent and progress will be less dramatic. If you end your care before fully healing muscles and soft tissues, you can invite a relapse. Whatever your choice, we're here to serve and help support you in your decision.

Wellness Care

Your health affects everything you do and everyone you know. With so many people depending on you, it makes sense to invest in your health.

A program of chiropractic checkups can help you be the caring parent, the loving spouse, the understanding friend or the dependable employee.

Invest in your health. You're worth it!

