



LAY DOWN

AND

LET GO OF YOUR BACK PAIN

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Welcome

CHI REPAIR

Congratulations. And welcome to the Chi Repair Program.

Introduction

When was the last time you felt really good? Do you have pain every day? Every other day? Where does the pain begin? Does it begin in your back?

John William Johnson is a Massage Therapist (LMT), a Nationally Certified Massage Therapist (NCMT), and a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (MFCC) whose goal is to encourage you to live a health-filled life. Because he is a health researcher, he founded JMP Enterprises in Portland, Oregon, so that he could continue to learn and grow in the health and wellness field. He works in Portland as a Massage Therapist, a Yamuna Body Rolling instructor, and a Yoga Instructor. He teaches yoga to members of the community as well as to men in the Oregon Prison System.

During the 2002 Winter Olympics, John Johnson and several colleagues were asked to serve on the U.S. Massage Therapy team. On this team, they attended to the sports recovery needs of the athletes as they gave themselves to the full competition of the Olympics.

John soon realized the need for someone to encourage people to begin to understand that their pain is trying to tell them something. And so to help meet this need, we have this complete e-book of techniques to help you conquer your back pain.

Enjoy, learn, and grow as you seek to free your body from the pain that would try to keep you from accomplishing all those wonderful goals you have stored away in a journal or on a poster or simply in your mind.

Joanna Felts, ed.

CHAPTER ONE

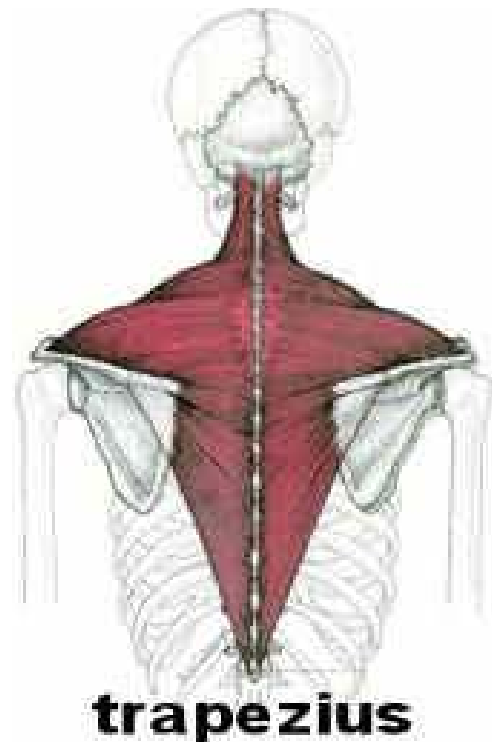
LEARN YOUR BODY - THE ANATOMY OF BACK PAIN

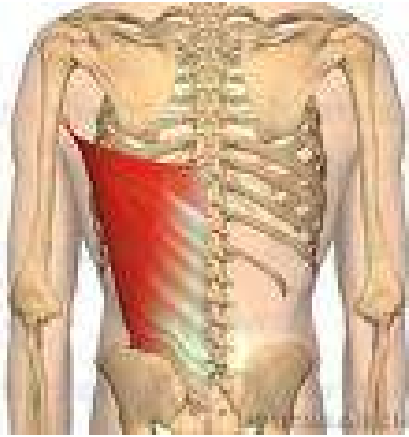
There are three primary muscle groups commonly involved in back pain. Throughout the program, it will be helpful for you to visualize these muscles and to have a general understanding of the anatomy of your back.

Take the time to examine the diagrams below. See if you can get a sense of which muscles are the source of your pain.

Muscles involved in upper back pain:

The trapezius – This muscle is broad and large and it extends from the base of the neck through the upper back. If this muscle is strained, injured or if spasms occur, you will not only have back pain, but limited mobility in the neck and shoulders, as well.



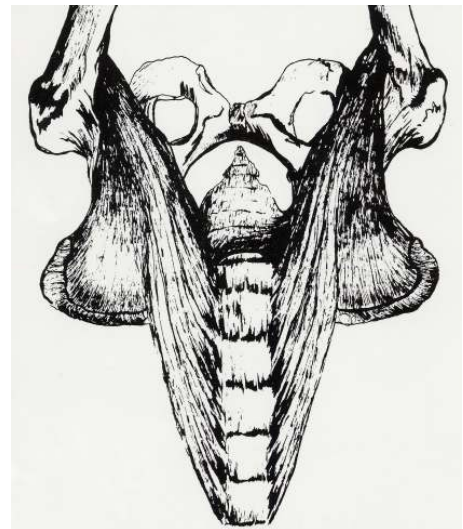


Muscles involved in middle back pain:

The latissimus – This muscle is commonly referred to as the “lats.” It is the most powerful muscle in the back. When it is strained or injured, it can cause pain in the mid back and may aggravate neck problems.

Muscles involved in lower back pain:

The psoas - This major muscle is responsible for stabilizing the base of the spine, rotating the hips and allowing the spine to flex. If this muscle becomes tight or strained, movement can become limited and lower back pain can result.



The hamstrings – This group of three muscles at the back of the upper leg help to flex the knee joint, adduct the leg, and extend the thigh. When these muscles are tight they can pull the pelvis out of its normal position leading to poor posture and back pain.



The gluteal muscles - Also known as “glutes”, these are three large skeletal muscles that form the buttock and move the thigh. Problems with the gluteal muscles, including atrophy, can be caused by long periods of sitting and may be associated with lower back pain.



CHAPTER TWO

AWARENESS AND PREVENTION

In order get the most out of this program, I'll first teach you to make some distinctions about actions and patterns that may be related to your back pain. I'll be asking a couple of questions to help you determine how back pain happens for you and highlighting some of the exercises and techniques for prevention that you'll be learning in later chapters.

Questions

First, take a moment to think back to when your back pain occurs. When do you most often notice your back hurting?

Now that you have a clearer idea of when you're experiencing back pain, do you notice any patterns? What do you think you may be able to do differently to help prevent back pain in the future?

Ideas for Prevention

- ❖ Are you a weekend warrior?
 - If your back pain occurs most often after over-exerting yourself in a sport, such as running or golf, the first question to ask is whether you have been stretching prior to exercise. Preparing your muscles for the activity to come can go a long way toward preventing injury.
 - The next, and perhaps most important step, is to begin to listen to your body. Let go of comparisons and let your body be your informer, telling you how far to push rather than the clock or fellow athletes. I'll be going into this in more depth in Chapter Seven.
- ❖ Is most of your time spent at a desk?
 - Our society lends itself to activities spent in front of the TV or computer screen. It's far too easy to forget to get up and move, and yet this is one of the best actions you can take to help prevent back pain. If you need to, set

a timer to remind yourself to take a break and move about at regular intervals.

- Investing in an **ergonomic chair** and/or an exercise ball can also help. You'll learn more about these tools and exercises in Chapter 4.

❖ Are you frequently stressed?

- Stress is one of the leading causes of back and neck pain. Learning simple stress management techniques, such as meditation, breathing exercises, and yoga, can go a long way toward easing your anxiety - and your back. Chapter Four will give you specific exercises and techniques to help bring you back into the moment and ease your stress.

❖ Were you injured or in an accident?

- Learning to pay full attention to your surroundings and be fully present in the moment could help to avoid future injuries. Many of the exercises and techniques I will teach you in Chapter Ten will also help you to increase awareness of your body and your surroundings.

Take Note of Your Pain

Now that you have a basic idea of what may be contributing to your back pain, I'll ask you to go a bit deeper. Begin keeping a log in a notebook or calendar where you can chart each time your pain flares up. Rate your pain on a scale of 1 - 10, with 1 being just a twinge and 10 being unbearable pain.

If your pain is chronic, make sure to make a note in your log book at least once a day. If your pain is due to over-exertion or an injury, make note of the cause and note the pain levels and how long it takes for the pain to resolve.

CHAPTER THREE

The Chi Vitalizer

Blood circulation is vital to your health and well-being as is exercise and the absence of stress. The Chi Vitalizer, or Chi Energizer as it is sometimes called, is part of the answer to some of those problems that come up in the lives of people on an everyday basis.



The Chi Machine relieves stress and allows you to begin to feel better after just 5-15 minutes of using the machine. It is actually a low-impact exercise machine with elliptical movement that moves your legs and your body to increase the blood flow. The calculated and precise movements of the machine work specific muscle groups, exercising them while being gentle with the muscles that have been cramped up in an office all day or overused as you lifted and pulled products from shelves or in the physical labor of construction work.

The comfortable padded ankle rest assures that you will not have ankles that beg to be released from the machine. It is built to specific medical definitions and it boasts a variable speed dial as well as a timer for your comfort and invigoration.

This e-book will focus on exercises and postures that you can use on a daily basis without this machine but it also speaks to the importance of muscle movement and manipulation. If you do not have one, as you read through these pages, you might want to consider its practical use in your life to increase blood flow and help in de-stressing your life.

Chapter 4

MOVEMENT

Your body likes to move. For thousands of years, the humans were highly mobile. Our bodies are not used to staying in a static position. When you're not moving enough, the muscles in your lower back begin to tighten and eventually lock up. Then when you do try to move, you experience pain and spasms.

Luckily, there are steps you can take to change this pattern. The simplest action you can take is to remember to get up and move frequently throughout the day. Take a brief walk or do some stretches, even if only for a few minutes.

I highly recommend getting an exercise ball to sit on when you are stationary for long periods of time. By sitting on the ball, your body is constantly making micro-movements to stay balanced. These tiny movements prevent any one set of muscles from becoming tight.

There are also specific yoga movements that can be done throughout the day to lengthen, strengthen, and stretch the three muscles groups we discussed in Chapter One. As you are doing these movements, take the time to really sense each muscle moving, stretching and releasing.

Lower Back Movements:

Hamstrings - Downward Facing Dog



Hamstrings – Alternative Stretch



Psoas - Forward Lunge



Gluteus - Pigeon Pose



Alternative Gluteal Stretch



Your Chi Machine is an integral part of the Chi Back Repair Program. Make sure you put it in a place where you can easily access it every day. It will make a great difference not only in the health of your back, but in your overall well-being. Your Chi Machine gently moves your spine in a lateral motion that usually doesn't happen in day to day activities.

This lateral movement nurtures and nourishes the spine by enhancing the flow of bodily fluids. The lymphatic system begins to function normally again and this helps to speed the release of toxins and to relieve inflammation. Chi Machines also have a balancing and energizing effect on the nervous system. This is the reason for the rush of energy you should experience after using the unit.

For back issues I recommend using the unit for five minutes twice a day, once in the morning and once in the evening. If you need to lose weight or suffer from edema, increase the time to up to 15 minutes.

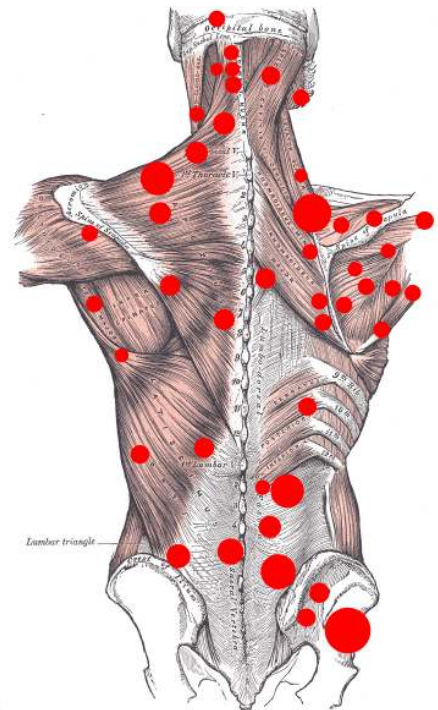
CHAPTER FIVE

TRIGGER POINTS

What is a trigger point?

These are hypersensitive spots in an injured muscle which refer - or “trigger” - pain in other muscle groups. For example, if you have pain in your lower back, it could be from a trigger point in your hip muscle.

Left untreated, the pain can become a chronic condition. Long after the initial injury has healed, you may still experience discomfort. The trigger point will continue to keep the muscles tight, restrict blood flow and compress nerves.



What can be done?

Trigger Point Therapy is a highly effective treatment for breaking up these spots, thus ending the cycle of pain. This system was developed by Dr. Janet Travell, who treated JFK for back pain during his years in Senate. Her treatment was so successful that she went on to become the first female White House physician.

You can learn to locate your trigger points and release them yourself. “The Trigger Point Therapy Workbook” by Clair Davies teaches you how to use short, repetitive massage strokes to release the points of tension and restore proper blood flow.

Although you can work on your trigger points with your fingers, to get the most benefit from this work I suggest the use of a tool such as the TheraCane or Trigger Pointer. These tools will allow you to work your trigger points more deeply and accurately. The TheraCane is highly versatile, allowing you to work even the hardest to reach points between your shoulder blades.



TheraCane

The small size of the Trigger Pointer is perfect for working the points in your hands and feet. By learning these techniques you can take one more step toward well-being. You will feel confident in knowing that you can relax your muscles and alleviate your pain.



Trigger Pointer

CHAPTER SIX

VISUALS AND REMINDERS

Journals and Affirmations

By this point you have hopefully begun to make a daily record of how your body is feeling. In addition to this monitoring, you may find it helpful to keep a journal. This may be done in the same calendar you use for appointments or in a section of your current journal. Use whatever method would be easiest and most inspiring for you.

Take the time to sit down and write some short, simple statements about what it will be like once you are pain free. Some examples might be:

- “My body is healthy and radiant.”
- “I am living free of pain.”
- “Each day I awake feeling vibrant and energetic.”

The most important thing is to create affirmations that make sense for you and that you can really see, feel, and believe. To make this exercise even more powerful, you can rewrite these phrases on sticky notes and place them in as many places as possible - you mirror, your calendar, your fridge, etc.

Keeping Things Easy

It's natural for us to not think about that which is not right in front of our eyes. For this reason, I would suggest that you keep your chi machine and any other tools or

equipment you are using (your body ball, trigger pointer, etc.) where they are easily accessible. That way they will always be right at hand when you are ready to use them.

Gratitude and Awareness

There is a scientific branch called Positive Psychology that says that living a healthy life is a learned behavior. One way to use this system is to practice the art of gratitude. Each night as you are lying in your bed review the day and ask yourself the following questions:

- ❖ *Were there any situations that I wish I had handled differently?*
- ❖ *What steps could I take to make a change the next time?*
 - An example of this would be if Bob stayed at his desk too long and noticed that it made his back stiff. He would note this and make the commitment that the next time he will set an alarm to remind him to periodically get up and move.
- ❖ *What were the things that I felt positive about and want to continue in the future?*
 - For example, perhaps Susan has come to realize that stress triggers her back spasms. Today, when she became stressed, she was able to be aware of the oncoming stress. Because she was aware, she began to use the breathing exercises and yoga to release her tension before it led to spasms.
- ❖ *What are three things that happened today for which you are grateful?*
 - These don't need to necessarily be about your back, although they may be. Studies have shown that those who feel thankful each day experience lower levels of stress and are, in general, much happier than those who focus on negatives.

Review

Whatever you may be doing throughout your day, stop and think “How will this action affect my back?” Think of your back as a child or pet that needs to be cared for. Up until now, it hasn’t been getting the nurturing and attention that it needs. You are now beginning to take the first steps toward giving it the care it needs.

CHAPTER SEVEN

JOHN'S RULES OF SELF MONITORING

Phase I: Timeliness

Your body responds best when it's attended to immediately. As soon as you notice a sensation of pain or something feeling "not right", listen to that message and take appropriate actions. When dealt with in a timely manner, your body has a great capacity to heal. Symptoms such as spasms and inflammation can often be prevented by this type of attention.

I'll give you an example of this. When I was doing trade shows, I had to carry a lot of equipment. One day as I was leaving my hotel, I picked up two large suitcases and headed out the door. When I was about 5 steps into the hallway my knee went out and I could no longer stand. I immediately began massaging the area and continued to do so for about five minutes. After that, the pain was gone and I was able to resume my normal activities. Had I not listened to my body at that time, the inflammatory process could have started, swelling could have set in and I would have been far worse off.

Many people will experience pain or discomfort and think, "I should make an appointment with a chiropractor or other practitioner." While chiropractors can be of great help at times, the problem lies in the pattern. You call and get an appointment for a week after you first noticed the pain. Finally the day arrives and you drive through traffic, stressed that you may be late. After your 15 minute adjustment, you get back into your car and drive through stressful traffic once again. By the time you arrive home, a lot of the benefit from your appointment is lost. Therefore, the best time to deal with you pain is when you begin to feel it.

Phase II: Listening

It's important that you begin to develop awareness about your body and learn to really feel the sensations that are happening. You can start by tuning in to the most obvious parts of your body. Take a moment now to close your eyes and really tune in. Can you feel what's happening in the palms of your hands? How about in your chest as it rises and falls with each breath?

The more time you spend listening to your body, the more aware you will become. After you have practiced this for a while, begin to try to be aware of other areas of your body. Again, close your eyes and see if you can sense your cheek. Can you feel what is happening in your elbow?

Although it may seem frightening at first, I invite you to also really feel your pain. Become acquainted with the specific sensations that are causing you discomfort. Does it feel warm or cold? Sharp or dull and achy? Try to become fully aware and present in your own body.

Phase III: Being Pro-Active

Once you've learned to become aware, the next step is to begin to contemplate what it would really take for you to heal. You can gain some wonderful insight into this by asking yourself "If my back (neck, shoulders) could talk what would it say?"

Although this may sound strange at first, try for a moment to get out of your left brain and use your creativity. My experience over the years is that once people are able to let go and fully engage in this exercise, the majority of them will receive a very clear message. Some common responses have been:

- “I don’t want to work anymore.”
- “I’m angry.”
- “I need to rest.”
- “I’m not loved.”

What is your back telling you?

Phase IV: Images

Visualization has been proven to be a highly effective tool for healing. Now that you’ve gained a clearer vision of your body and your pain, you can begin to use this technique to enhance the healing process.

Imagine a place that is warm, cozy, and nourishing. See what images come to you. Perhaps it is just a color - imagine the site of your pain relaxing and being filled with that color. Perhaps it is a soft, comforting bed - imagine the sensation of soft pillows surrounding your pain. Or maybe you see water, a river or the ocean - remember that our bodies are over 60% water and imagine the area of your discomfort being washed and nourished by its rich flow.

There are no “right” or “wrong” answers in this technique. The important thing is to find an image that you can really relate to and that brings you a sense of relaxation and healing. Then take that image and apply it to wherever you are feeling pain. You can use this technique as often as you’d like. In fact, the more you utilize this powerful tool, the more effective your results will be.

CHAPTER EIGHT

AVENUES OF RELAXATION

Tension can be the source of your pain and it can exacerbate your current pain. In order to have a healthy back, you'll need to learn some form of relaxation exercise. You may choose to work with visualization, breath, or attention to posture or a combination of all three.

Breathing

In many Eastern traditions children are taught how to breathe properly. They learn to expand their lungs and belly fully, filling their bodies with rich oxygen. Tune in to your body and notice how you're breathing right now. Are your breaths deep and slow or are they rapid and shallow?

The next time you notice yourself getting tense take a moment to try the following exercise:

- Sit or lie in a comfortable position. Slowly take a full, deep breath in through your nose and exhaling through your mouth. Feel your chest and belly expand as your body fills with air. Imagine that breath going to the source of your pain and causing those areas to relax and release.

Whenever I do this exercise I notice that the area where I felt pain feels expanded. The sense of constriction is gone and I notice more space in that part of my body.

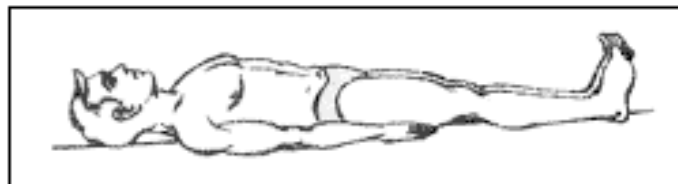
Visualization

If you've been following the program, you're starting to become familiar with this technique. For this particular exercise it is helpful to use images that create a sense of deep relaxation. See yourself in a place where you feel totally safe and at ease.

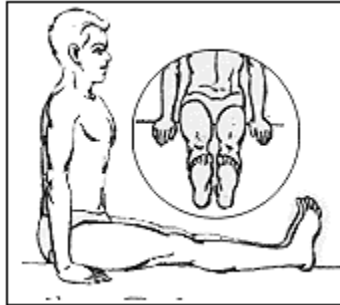
I often see a beach in Hawaii with palm trees and gently rolling surf. You may see a field in bloom with lovely spring flowers or imagine yourself to be in a softly swaying hammock on a warm summer day. The important thing is to trust yourself and the process. Be open to whatever comes to you and release yourself to the sense of peace and relaxation that it brings you.

Posture

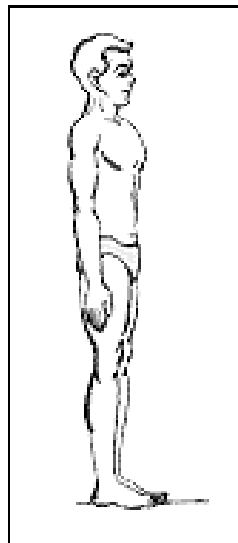
The ideal position for these exercises is to lie on your back with your hands at your sides of your body. If you are in a great deal of pain, you may find that placing a bolster or a rolled towel under your knees makes you more comfortable.



If you are sitting, make sure that your back is as straight as possible without straining. Your knees should be relaxed and your feet gently resting on the floor. You may wish to place your hands gently on your lap with the palms facing up.



Sometimes you might find yourself getting tense in a public place, such as the grocery store. When this happens, you can still do the breathing exercises. Take a moment to center and very gently bend your knees a bit to release the tension in your legs. Keep your back as straight as possible without tensing and let your hands rest softly at the sides of your body.



CHAPTER NINE

THE METAPHYSICS OF BACK PAIN

In order to receive lasting results from this, or any other program, it's important to understand the root causes of your pain. Often there are emotional and energetic issues that are tied to back pain. Eastern healing modalities have dealt with this aspect of healing for centuries. It is only within the last few decades that the works of healers such as Louise Hay have brought this idea to the general Western audience.

In reading through the descriptions below, take the time to contemplate whether you are currently experiencing any of these emotions or have dealt with these issues in the past. You may wish to take the time to journal about your discoveries in your program notebook.

The Shoulders and Upper Back:

Phrases like “carrying the world on your shoulders” are very good representations of the role of the upper back. Energetically, this area reflects burdens and responsibilities. If you experience pain in this area of your back, it could be that you resent or are feeling over-whelmed by your responsibilities in life. Have you taken on new tasks or been given more responsibility at work or home?

The Middle Back:

Louise Hay has suggested that problems the mid-back represent feeling of guilt or an unwillingness to let go of the past. According to Eastern medicine, this area of the back

is where your Qi (life energy) is transformed and transported throughout the rest of your body. Unbalanced emotions like worry, anger and anxiety lead to blockages in the flow of energy. If your energy is blocked in this way, you will begin to experience physical pain. Do you feel blocked or stagnant because of past guilt or current worries?

The Lower Back:

The lower back is directly related to feelings of support and security - both emotional and material. Are you experiencing financial difficulties or feelings of insecurity? Think about whether you feel you are receiving the support you need and are willing to accept the support that is being given to you.

Addressing your Root Causes

Throughout this program I've discussed techniques like visualization and using affirmations. These can be extremely helpful in addressing the emotional root causes of your pain.

Imagine, for example, that Roger has come to realize that his shoulder spasms began soon after taking on additional responsibilities at work. Perhaps in his visualizations he will see these new burdens as a huge dragon sitting upon his shoulders. He then sees himself releasing his resentment and instead being infused with the strength and grace to handle his new responsibilities. He sees the dragon shrinking until it transformed into a dragonfly and is no longer a burden.

Roger could then choose to continue his healing by using daily affirmations. He posts notes in his office and at home with phrases such as "I easily handle my responsibilities

with strength and grace.” and repeats them often throughout the day. By combining these exercises, he is reinforcing the message and enhancing their effectiveness.

After you have taken some time to think and write about today’s chapter, sit back and begin to create your own visualizations and affirmations for releasing the energetic and emotional ties to your own pain.

CHAPTER TEN

SETTING THE FOUNDATION

Habits

Realize that you are in the process of creating new habits. Scientists have determined that it takes approximately 30 days to integrate a behavior or action into your routine. Give yourself whatever time you need for this to take place.

Think about what it is that you are letting go of and what it is that you are taking on. Will you be releasing destructive behaviors like overdoing it when you work out, complaining, or sitting with bad posture? Will you be taking new, positive actions such as listening to your body, using your chi machine, or taking the time to move each hour? Be clear about what level of commitment you are willing to make.

With as much research as I do in the field of health and wellness, it would be easy to get lost in the task and sit for too long. I know this because it happened when I was first starting my business. Even though I knew better, I would sit at my desk for hours at a time, reviewing material. Soon my back started to give me trouble. It was a wake up call to be sure to practice what I know. I now make sure that I get up and either walk, do some quick yoga positions or get on my body ball every hour.

When beginning to create new habits, it is important to realize from where you are starting. If you've been active all along, you'll be able to go further and push yourself harder than if you've been sedentary. Start with small steps appropriate for your current level of health and activity and work your way up.

In order for something to become habit, it needs to be done consistently. Create a schedule for using your chi machine and participating in other healthy activities and stick to it. Three times a week is the absolute minimum for which you should strive, although a daily routine is best.

Visualization

As I mentioned in Chapter 8, visualization is a powerful tool for change and it will be critical to your success in this program. Numerous studies have been done proving the effectiveness of this technique, including the well known “Free-throw Study.”

In this particular study, three groups were tested to see how many free throws they could make. Group A then practiced their throws for 20 minutes each day, Group B did not practice at all, and Group C visualized practicing their free throws for 20 minutes every night. At the end of the study Group A had improved their scores by 24%; Group B saw no improvement, and Group C improved by 23%.

There was only a 1% difference between the group that physically practiced and the group that visualized! This gives you an idea of just how effective this tool will be for you throughout the program.

Goals

While it can be tempting to set lofty goals, it is vital to be realistic so that you will be able to see your success. If you set your goals too high in the beginning, you could end up frustrated. Remember the Tortoise and the Hare. It is better to move with slow, steady, and achievable steps than to try to move too far too fast.

Measure your success from where you have been and where you are now rather than by how far you are from your goal. As you continue doing this, you will be able to see each step you take as a small success in itself. Take a moment to sit down and reassess your goals at least three times a week so that you can monitor your behavior and see the progress you have made.

Missteps

No one is infallible. You will make some mistakes along the way, so it is important that you are clear about your goals and your practice. Then when you make a misstep, you'll be able to take a deep breath, re-center and get back on track.

Meditation is an excellent practice for this. You empty your mind and after a while a thought comes along. It's easy to get caught up in this thought and follow it down whatever path it may lead. The trick is in noticing and acknowledging the thought without becoming attached to it so that you can then release it and re-center.

Being Prepared

It can help to take the time to sit and think about what it would be like to veer off course. This will help to make you aware of the importance of catching yourself as soon as you begin to go in the wrong direction and possibly even avert making an error.

There is a story about the Dali Lama that is a good example of this type of preparation:

- The Dali Lama is due to meet with the ambassador from a country responsible for the deaths of many of his brethren. In preparation for this meeting, he rises at 3am and imagines all of the possible outcomes of this meeting - including seeing

himself as angry and resentful. By the time the ambassador arrives at 9am, the Dali Lama is able to greet him with peace and a state of calm because he has already experienced and released his negative emotions.

John's Spiral Theory

Gravity and inertia are real phenomena and they can be used to help understand those things that are affecting your health. If you start engaging in behaviors that aren't good for your body - becoming sedentary or eating unhealthy foods - you start heading down a negative spiral. The longer you engage in those habits, the stronger the downward pull becomes.

The same is true for positive changes. When you begin to create positive habits, such as those in this program, you begin to reverse the negative spiral. If you continue to practice these healthy changes, the spiral begins to move upward and continues to grow stronger.

I'll give you a personal example of this. I often awaken around two or three in the morning. If I have a desire to eat, perhaps a level six desire on a scale of one to ten, and I indulge in that behavior, the next night that urge to eat will have gone up to a seven. This is because I will have begun creating a habit. Once you understand this theory, it becomes easier to say "no" to those things which will begin the process of a negative spiral and "yes" to those which will enhance your health.

Support

Whenever you're trying to make significant changes, it's helpful to have a support system in place. This can be a friend, a lover, a parent, or someone who can provide mutual support because they are dealing with a similar issue.

Take a moment to write down the qualities you are looking for in the ideal support system. What would be of most benefit to you? You might say "I want someone to be there who can warn me before I make a mistake." If so, can you find someone to speak with a few times a week that can help you to assess your progress and possible pitfalls?

In our hearts, the vast majority of people like to be of assistance. Don't be afraid to ask for support. If one person says no, you will be able to find another who is willing to be there for you as you move toward better health and well-being.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

WHAT TO DO IF YOUR BACK GOES OUT

Spasms, what are they?

By definition, a spasm is an involuntary contraction of a muscle or group of muscles. In reality, spasms are a reflex that your body uses to protect itself when you push it to extremes physically or emotionally. They are your body's way of saying "Stop - slow down!"

What do I do if I have a spasm?

After your muscles have contracted, the inflammatory process begins, so it's important that you address this right away. Taking an over the counter NSAID or herbal anti-inflammatory with plenty of water should be your first step.

The next step is to do some breathing exercises to help relax you and to bring extra oxygen to the contracted muscle. If you're able, doing some gentle stretches or using your chi machine at the lowest setting for five minutes can also help.

For the first 48 hours use only ice on the injured area. Heat makes things expand, so it is not recommended with inflammation. A simple, yet effective pattern is to ice, stretch and breathe. Repeat this for two cycles, icing for five-ten minutes each time.

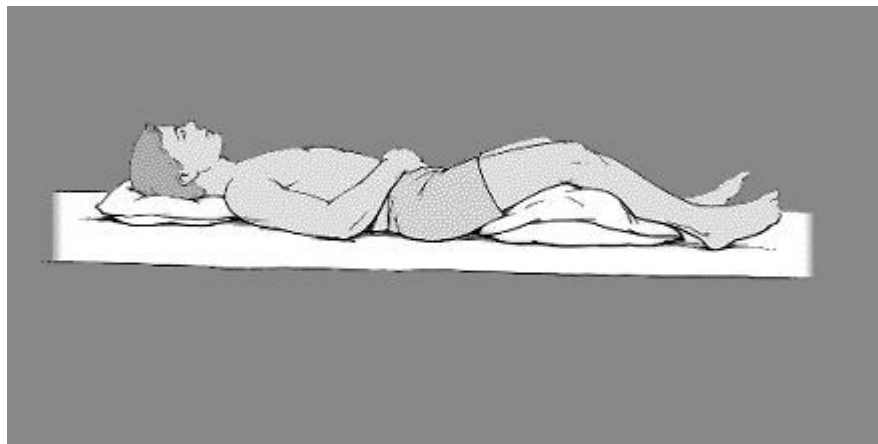
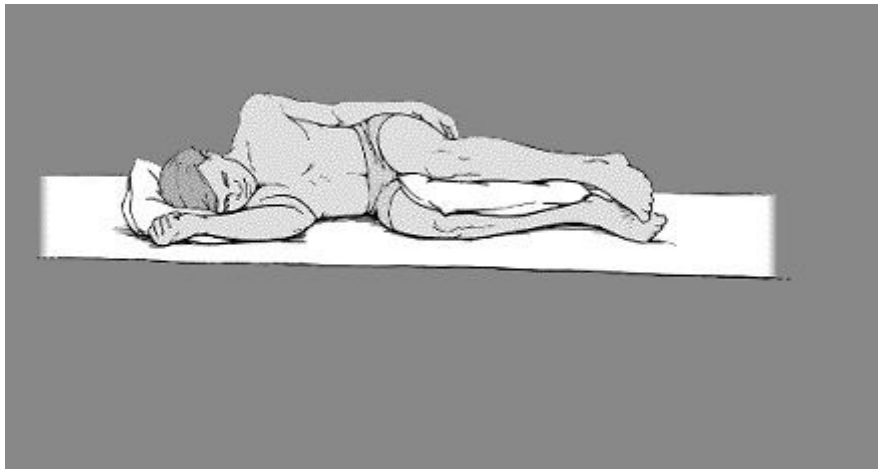
How do I prevent future back pain?

Realize that *the future will not be any different than the present unless you start to make changes*. This is where your self monitoring is helpful. If you've had a spasm, ask yourself the following questions:

1. Physical - Was I doing anything that put extra strain on my body? Did I over-exert myself playing a sport? Did I sit in one position for too long?
2. Emotional - Could my body be reacting to a current event? Did I experience something that could have triggered a body memory from the past?
3. Metaphysical - Am I experiencing any financial or emotional burdens right now? When you experience this type of stress, your chi or energy channels become blocked and this can lead directly to back pain.

It also helps to be aware of your pain patterns. In the space below, take some time to describe your pain process. Create a story about your pain. You can write it as a novel, if you like, in first or third person. Use whatever writing style you can most relate to.

Getting a good night's sleep is important for both helping to ease your current pain and for preventing future problems. The best sleeping position is on your right side. You can also sleep on your back, although it can be more difficult to breath in this position. Try to avoid sleeping on your left side because this puts pressure on your heart. Try also to avoid sleeping on your stomach since this will cause neck problems.



What do I do if I get a kink in my neck?

One of the easiest, and most effective, exercises for this is as follows:

1. Rest your chin on your chest
2. Imagine a circle surrounding your head

3. Slowly and gently follow this circle with your head
4. Repeat this 2 or 3 times in each direction

If your neck pain is there when you wake up in the morning, it is most likely caused by your pillows. Try adjusting them so that your neck is straight and well supported. You may also wish to try a therapeutic pillow that will help to keep your neck in the proper position.

Conclusion

We have heard from childhood, “Practice makes perfect.” After the coach told you how to throw the perfect pitch or when the ballet teacher taught you to pirouette or when the violin teacher taught you to slide your bow across the strings just right, they then reminded you to keep practicing.

John has given you principles and important steps in helping you live a healthy lifestyle by keeping your back in great condition. Begin now and keep on practicing. A full, pain-free life is within your reach.

Other Helps and Resources

“The Trigger Point Therapy Workbook” by Clair Davies

TheraCane or Trigger Pointer