

Focus On Yoga and Holistic Therapies

Back pain – Is it for real, or is it only in your head?

All articles you read about back pain focus on the same thing – tense muscles and / or a poor physical state. But is this the whole truth? Why did the pain occur in the first place? I'm sure your muscles have not always been tense? Why did they "tense up"? Does your mental state have anything to do with it?

It is certainly true that tight muscles and / or improperly aligned vertebrae causes pain. But the picture is much bigger than that. Muscle tension is often your body's defence, the muscles are trying to protect you. Pain is a warning signal, a sign that tells us something is wrong, but the pain itself doesn't answer the question "what is wrong?", it just tells us that "something is wrong".

Back pain costs society, the employer and the individual, a considerable amount of money every year. But does it have to be that way? Why can't anyone come up with a universal solution to the problem? A "one fix suits all" plan. I mean we're all built / constructed on the same principles.

We all have the same number of muscles and bones, internal organs and so on. But that's where the similarities end. We have different jobs and positions; we work out differently and with different modalities (if we work out). We all have different fears and other issues. Furthermore, there is a huge lack of help offered by the community regarding back pain in general. Forget about the "health care carousel", if you have back pain, you need to go to an 'alternative' therapist. It doesn't really matter if this is a chiropractor, massage therapist or similar. What matters is their approach to healing and health.

Why and not What (Cause not Symptoms)



Unfortunately, most therapists focus on what should be done to relieve the pain you are in when you walk through their door.

A masseur massages and uses a particular technique "What". In college he/she was taught to massage, and of course, that is what they focus on, what to do. But this doesn't automatically answer the more prominent question "Why".

Why did the back pain occur in the first place? By focusing on What is wrong and then How to treat, i.e. which technique to use, you will never get to the bottom of Why the pain occurs.

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Find a therapist that works from the other direction, starting with why and working their way “outwards”.

What kind of diplomas the therapist or doctor displays on their wall is of a lesser importance.

Find a therapist who dares to ask the question why.



Physical or mental?

Back pain normally occurs due to imbalance or trauma. Imagine that for years you’ve only worked out the right side of your body. One day you decide to take up running. Unfortunately, the left side of your body will have to work as hard as the right side, something it is ill equipped to do, eventually resulting in pain. This scenario is something we all have in our bodies, but it’s usually the front that is strong while the back is way too weak (in comparison to the front). This is called a muscular imbalance. Some people then automatically think, great I can correct this muscular imbalance by working out. Naaeh, that’s not really true, in that case a Physiotherapist would get tremendous results, as would personal trainers, but they rarely get a great result when it comes to back pain. In order to train a specific muscle, it needs an adequate nerve supply. Unfortunately, a muscle “in rest” has reduced nerve supply; we could say that the brain has lost contact with the muscle. This is a truth with modifications. It is incredibly difficult to train a muscle (for adequate strength) if the brain doesn’t have contact with it. So, first we need to establish contact, THEN you can go and strengthen the weak muscles. Everything has to be done in a specific order. You wouldn’t put the yeast in the cake after you had taken it out of the oven would you? Then why would you train the muscle if the brain doesn’t have contact with it?

What causes this disconnection between the brain and the muscle? Well, partly, it’s the daily misalignment in our lives: poor sitting position, bad physical form, incorrect training, etc., but an incredibly large part of the disconnection has to do with your state of mind: how well we like our work, our relationship with our partner, how much stress we put upon ourselves in the form of fear of not being good enough, need for control, fear that others will see that I’m not as good as everybody thinks, fear of not being worthy of love. The list could be endless.

It’s incredible how the mental aspects are one of the most common underlying causes for pain than you ever could imagine. If you put your tail between your legs daily because of incorrectly programmed software (your fears, phobias, etc.) you will sooner or later experience pain somewhere in the body.

We run on programs, to open a closed door is a program, like skiing, lifting your cup of tea, walking out to get the mail and so on. Once the programs are there, they help you to multitask; you can open the door while talking on the phone, nodding to your neighbour and move both legs to get the mail. AND holding your balance, digesting your food, thinking about the weekend etc., all at once, and you never give it a second thought. Our muscles are also running on very specific programs and if these programs malfunction, a muscular imbalance will be the end result. The programs malfunction in conjunction with stress, either physical (like pain) or mental (what’s going on between your ears) and is the underlying cause of your pain.

If you don’t find the root cause of your pain, then you might have a difficult future ahead of you. You have to re-program your faulty programs in order to function/perform optimally, i.e. movement pattern and proper muscle balance.

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Remember; There's a difference between the triggering action (like raking leaves) and the underlying cause of your discomfort. You need to find the underlying cause and not focus so much on the triggering action.

This article is typed in a Word document, I am the person who's writing this, I am in charge of what's being typed. But, I am not the person who programmed Word or my computer. You and I, are working every day on computers that are programmed by others. That's exactly what's going on inside your body as well, your fears, phobias, feeling of inadequacy, need for control, etc. You have to reprogram these programs so you can withdraw the tail between your legs and stop walking around in fear and anxiety. In order to do this you can't look for a therapist that focuses on What to do, but one who understands the whole picture and wants to find out your Why.

I see that this is deeper than I thought and we have to continue this reasoning in the next article. The next article in this series will dig deeper into the subject and focus more on the mental aspects of your quest for answers.

Here's some advice that you can start with:

Advice:

- Make sure that after work every day, you take a 20 minute walk, to “burn” your stress hormones
- Sit on a Pilates ball every day, about 10-15 minutes, I don't care if it's at work or in front of the TV.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Practice yoga at least once a week.
- Learn how to stretch your hip flexor; it is the major player that directly causes your back pain.
- Find a therapist that looks from the Why point of view and not one that focuses on relieving your symptoms. Your symptoms are only the end result, not the root.
- Learn EFT or any other form of technique that you yourself easily can use when pain and / or emotional disorders set in.



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