

## A Fresh Perspective on Pain

Our attitude toward pain is critical since the health of our bodies depends largely on our attentiveness to it. Two simple examples are the sensors on our eyes and in our bladders. One tells us the surface of the eye needs lubrication the other reports on distention. If we respond by regularly blinking and going to the bathroom we do not feel pain but if we ignore either message we will experience severe pain. Pain is the effective language our body uses to get our attention and awaken our consciousness to bring about a change in behavior. Most of us respond to pain by immediately selecting a medication to block its signals to our brain. To ignore the messages of pain without changing behavior is to invite far greater damage, as the body will feel better for a bit while getting worse. Certainly pain killers offer benefits under unique conditions but I believe we must first consider the positive response to pain and then take action or make changes that address the causes of it.

Although our bodies are resilient and pliable, we are vulnerable to misuse which can lead to chronic pain. Routinely taking drugs when we experience pain or toughing it out can lead to detachment or even hostility with our bodies. When we become accustomed to a pattern of ignoring or masking the valuable pain messages coming from our brain, in time, the result becomes chronic.

Several years ago, I woke up with chronic pain in my shoulder. It was constant and distracting and made it difficult for me to concentrate on my job as a software consultant. A doctor prescribed pain medication that hindered my ability to function at work but did not eliminate my pain. I went to physical therapy which felt better during the treatment but did nothing to lessen or diminish the pain. Then I tried massage, acupuncture and chiropractic care all to no avail. After six weeks of constant pain I was getting desperate and to this day I am grateful for a chance meeting with a student who was attending a training on movement learning. He suggested that perhaps his trainer could see me, and of course I jumped at it since all my other pursuits had failed.

The one hour session was not a pleasant experience and toward the end I was beginning to feel desperate because we had not yet located the source of my pain. The trainer said shoulders are complex, we have over 100 muscles in them and they are the most vulnerable part of our body because of their amazing range of motion. He tried all kinds of movements with the arm and shoulder, relating it to my ribs, pelvis and neck. I could sense when he was getting close to the source but did not know how to guide him. As he was carefully moving and manipulating different parts of my body, he was gradually getting closer to the source of my pain. Every movement he did irritated the shoulder. Sometimes the irritation felt good and sometimes it did not. Finally in the last five minutes, he held my entire shoulder and was lifting it up, I could feel something tight and pulling in my neck. His fingers felt into my neck toward my spine and the soreness was intense! Suddenly my entire shoulder went 'clunk' and dropped into his hands, the soreness in my neck was gone and we both knew we had found the source of my pain. It originated in my neck!

It was unbelievable relief! In one session I was out of chronic pain! The Movement Specialist explained how and why we experience pain and for whatever reason I understood it right away; it is up to me to change how I move to avoid pain or discomfort. I experienced the shoulder pain a couple more times but was able to clarify the causes of the pain and move out of it. I have not experienced shoulder pain since 1992.

As I began to practice as a Movement Specialist I realized that my recovery in just one session was VERY rare. For most people it takes some time to establish self awareness such that they move through life pain free. In my practice, since graduating in 1994 from a movement training, I have seen one person that got it in their brain and body how to live pain-free in one or two sessions. For most of my clients it is a gradual process of feeling less pain over time. For some people that may be in three sessions, for others 3 months and still others years. Everyone changes at different rates depending on their

awareness, how long they have been living with pain, and an ability to shift their senses to include how they move. The good news is that if you have been living with pain for years it will not take years to feel better. Relative to how long it takes most of us to get in chronic pain, feeling better happens quite quickly because of the ability of our brain to process millions of new messages, faster than any computer in existence!

For many clients, an awareness of how they move becomes an integral part of their waking lives. They learn to regard their bodies with respect, wonder and appreciation, becoming attuned to the first twinges of discomfort or tightness that may lead to pain. Our body is not like a piece of clothing we take off at night when we go to bed, it is integral to our every function and to our intelligence. The more intelligently we move the more intelligent we are in all aspects of our lives.

For many of us it is a huge shift in consciousness to react to pain by CHANGING how we are using our bodies rather than minimizing movement or masking it with drugs. I became a Movement Specialist because I never wanted to feel so helpless again about my body and pain. I guide people to view pain as a wise, valuable friend and when we listen to it and adjust accordingly, we will be learning how to move and function optimally. Pain is actually a gift of self preservation that can teach us how to improve our lives.

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