

Chapter 1: The Key to Unlocking Pain

Pain! Everyone experiences pain at some point. Do you know what causes most of your pain? The answer is simpler than you think. Remember when your mother told you to sit up or stand up straight? Your mother probably didn't know it, but good posture is more than just about looking good. Good posture is essential to a healthy, functioning, pain-free body. Most of your pain is caused by poor posture. You are in pain because you are misaligned or crooked. Even if you think you have good posture, you probably don't. Many misalignments are not obvious to the untrained eye.

This concept may seem too simple to be true, so let's look at some examples. Picture a house in your mind. Imagine that the basement of the house is a little lower on one side. In other words, the house is crooked. Over time, the crooked house develops all sorts of structural problems – the roof might leak; windows are hard to open; the chimney is leaning; marbles roll down the floor, etc. The structure of the building is not carrying the load the way it was designed to because it is not level. All these problems are caused by one condition. The house is crooked.

You could also imagine a car with its front end out of alignment. The car will run, but the tires will have abnormal strain on them. Because the car is crooked, those tires will wear out very quickly.

The solution in each case is to bring the building or the car back into proper alignment – to give the car or the building “good posture” so that the car or the building carries its load the way it was designed to.

Let's apply this solution to the human body and your pain.

Do you know what the following conditions have in common: sciatica, plantar fasciitis, carpal tunnel, tennis elbow, low back pain, most headaches and neck pain?

At first, they don't seem to have much in common. They occur in different parts of the body and involve different musculoskeletal structures. However, if you step back and look at the body as a whole, you will notice the common element.

This element is called muscle imbalance. This simply means that some muscles are too short and some muscles are too long. Both muscles will feel tight. The short muscle is contracted and tight while the long muscle is like an overstretched rubber band – too long and very tight.

Since every muscle is attached to a bone, these muscle imbalances pull the bones out of alignment. That's what makes you crooked.

Misalignment of the skeletal structure caused by muscle imbalance can cause compressions of the nerves, discs and other structures in the body. It can also cause

the fascia to be twisted. Fascia is a band of fibrous connective tissue enveloping, separating, or binding together muscles, organs, and other soft structures of the body. These twists, compressions and tight muscles ultimately lead to less oxygen in the tissues at those areas. The medical term for this condition is ischemia, which means that there is not an adequate supply of blood getting to the tissues. As a result, the tissue is not getting enough oxygen. It is the lack of oxygen that is actually causing a lot of the pain.

In a nutshell, muscle imbalances pull the frame of the body (the bones) into misalignment, which then causes pain in the body. The condition of being out of alignment or crooked results in many neuromuscular pain patterns. It is estimated that 80% of all the pain you will experience in your life is due to mechanical problems. Muscles that are either too long or too short are pulling your bones crooked, causing compression and lack of oxygen to the tissues.

When you go to a doctor, you could be diagnosed with any one of hundreds of conditions. In our Western model of medicine, standard treatment for conditions like sciatica, plantar fasciitis, carpal tunnel, tennis elbow, low back pain, most headaches and neck pain involves treating the symptoms, typically with a pain killer or an anti-inflammatory drug. Seldom does treatment address the cause. The cause is muscle imbalance or misalignment and the correct treatment is to get you “uncrooked.”

Integrated Positional Therapy

Integrated Positional Therapy (IPT) is based upon the osteopathic techniques of Strain/Counterstrain and Muscle Energy Technique. Strain/Counterstrain slackens a muscle and makes it shorter while Muscle Energy Technique stretches a muscle and makes it longer.

Don't worry about the technical terms. These techniques are simply used to bring your body back into alignment and out of pain very gently and quickly. Muscle Energy Technique (MET) and Strain/Counterstrain are used to correct the imbalances in the muscles.

MET is a very powerful tool to quickly and easily lengthen tight, constricted muscles and restore range of motion. It is a form of assisted stretching using active isometric contractions.

Strain/Counterstrain can also be applied to these tight, constricted muscles. With this technique, the affected area is passively shortened and held for 2 minutes, thereby allowing the muscle fibers to effectively reset and return to neutral. The results are often dramatic and long-lasting.

One of the first principles therapists and doctors learn is that the body, including the muscular/skeletal system, is always trying to achieve homeostasis. This means that it is

trying to get back into balance or alignment. The great thing is that we are actually doing this every day. Here's an example. Do you ever lie down on your back and instinctively put your hands under your head? You probably don't think about the movement. You do it because it feels good; your body makes you do it. Why? Because your body is trying to get back into balance. This movement releases and rebalances the shoulders and part of the neck.

Try this experiment for yourself:

Place your left hand on your right shoulder. If you are wearing a shirt you might find a seam in the shirt in this area. With your left hand press somewhere along the seam. This will be tender or sore in many people. Once you have found a tender spot, take your right hand and gently rest it on top of your head. Now press the spot that was sore before. Does it feel better? It usually does. Now hold in this position for 2 minutes. This period allows the muscle memory to reset. After 2 minutes, put your right arm back down at your side. Press the tender spot again. It should feel better. The effects of this technique are cumulative, so each time it gets better and better.

Here is another example. Do you ever sit in a chair and cross your legs? Almost everyone does this and yet we don't generally think about it. Our bodies make us cross our legs because the position feels good. The body is trying to achieve homeostasis or balance by gently stretching the outside of the hip and leg. When your body is in balance, it just plain feels good. (Common wisdom is that crossing your legs while sitting in a chair is bad for you, but it is simply the body's way of stretching the muscles on the outside of the leg and hip to bring them back into balance.) When your muscles are in balance, you will no longer cross your legs because it is not needed any more.

Your body is always trying to heal itself. All you have to do is learn how to listen to it. The body has great wisdom. Whenever your body is telling you one thing and your brain is telling you something else, always listen to the body. The brain can make up some pretty good stories that are not necessarily true.

Positional Therapy cured my migraines. I developed Integrated Positional Therapy (IPT) by adding critical components to make the therapy even more effective. IPT is what I now practice and want to share with you in this book. In addition to the basic muscle release techniques of Positional Therapy, Integrated Positional Therapy includes very important exercises to straighten the pelvis and adds Wellness Plans, which makes it far more effective.

Integrated Positional Therapy (IPT) is designed to eliminate pain at its root cause and not just hide the symptoms. As a self-care technique, this therapy can help you to correct the muscle imbalances in your own body.

With some easy-to-learn practices, you will learn to correct the imbalances by making your short muscles longer and your long muscles shorter. This process will bring your body into alignment and out of pain.

IPT can eliminate the pain associated with many common conditions such as headaches and migraines, back and neck pain, carpal tunnel syndrome, limited range of motion and sports injuries, thoracic outlet syndrome, sciatica, repetitive motion injuries, fibromyalgia, tendonitis, plantar fasciitis and many more. This book covers eleven of the most common conditions. In some cases, a session with a trained Integrated Positional Therapist may be advisable, but most people will find great relief from chronic muscle pain by following the appropriate Wellness Plan described in this book.

Simple, easy-to-do-at-home exercises and other lifestyle habits will maintain the results. On-going maintenance is crucial to keeping your body pain-free. Remember the car analogy? Just as your car needs regular maintenance to stay in great working order, your body requires maintenance to stay pain-free.

The treatment protocols described in this manual are based upon 25 years of clinical experience treating tens of thousands of people with superior results. In the pages that follow, you will learn how to correct your own muscle imbalances. You will learn exactly what is causing your pain. You'll learn how to improve the quality of your life by reducing or eliminating the pain in your body that you are currently enduring. You will also learn some general tips on how to be healthier than you are now. Everything I am going to show you is easy and takes very little time to do. No previous experience is needed. No special equipment is necessary. These practices are designed to fit your busy lifestyle. As a matter of fact, many of the practices can be done in bed, on the couch or at the office.

So let's get started!