

→ 3 STEPS

TO PAIN FREE

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OSTEOPATH, LONDON 1986

TO BE USED IN CONJUNCTION WITH YOUR OSTEOPATHIC TREATMENT





1 INTRODUCTION



2 Look for change



3 Avoid Further Damage



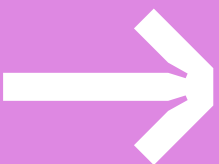
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INTRO

Healing by design - not happenstance

THE HEALING MINDSET. HEALING IS MORE THAN FOLLOWING A SET OF 'HEALING RULES'. OUR OSTEOPATHIC GUIDANCE HELPS OUR PATIENTS ACHIEVE THE SUCCESSFUL HEALING MINDSET.

To some of our patients, our guidance may come across *'just as advice'* and to others as getting in touch with the root *'cause and cure'* of their condition.

A treatment will help you get better today.
The mindset will last you a lifetime.



1. THE CAUSE: LOOK FOR CHANGE

It happens for a reason

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It happens for a reason

TISSUE DAMAGE HAPPENS BECAUSE OF A BUILD UP OF DAMAGE. KNOWING WHAT CAUSED THE BUILD-UP IS VITAL TO GETTING BETTER, STOP IT HAPPENING AGAIN, AND AVOID LONG TERM INJURY.

It follows that once you identify the cause, you know where the weak link is. For example if you first noticed the pain after a long drive, it follows your body's sitting capacity may be weakened, if it was after lifting a heavy bag, the lifting capacity may be weakened. We know it sounds obvious but *when people are in pain often they don't think straight and continue doing the very actions that caused the problem.*

Pain that arose without an obvious cause

In cases where the pain arose for no apparent reason, until proven otherwise, consider that the problem may have built up over a period of time.

- . The key moments to look back over are:
 - 2 weeks ago
 - 2 months ago
 - 2 years ago

Change can be anything from a new activity such as starting an exercise class, new furniture, a different daily routine, a new job, getting a pet, etc. It can also include stress or emotion, working longer hours, relationship difficulties, caring for a family member. Change can also apply to low-level, 'drip-feed' of stress. In these cases you may need to look back as far as 18 - 24 months, sometimes more.

As an example following the Covid lockdown of 2020 some of our patients presented around 18-24 months later, complaining of back pain.

It turned out that a good number had taken up walking as an exercise for the first time, even though some were previously regular gym-goers.

For others their back pain arose because they had spent extra hours seated, almost continually on the PC / TV / Meals / Sofa combined with a lot less movement than.

Finally some patients found the lockdown stressful. It included the stress of lack of exercise, lack of freedom as well domestic and relationship stress. These contributed to spinal pain problems.

The stress principle is true for the '2-week' and the '2-month' key-moments. Noting in some cases the trigger may have been an event ie twisting in the shower, lifting a kettle, playing tennis, getting out of a chair etc. But we would consider these to be the 'the last straw' because if these things were the true cause, every shower, kettle, tennis racquet or chair would carry a government health warning!

Key Moments reveal The Line of Weakness

The take home message is to look for changes at the key-moments and understand where your line of weakness is. This will guide you as to what activities are safe and less safe. Avoid these even if you don't notice any pain at the time.

2. HEALING: AVOID FURTHER DAMAGE

Don't put more fuel on the fire

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IT IS PERVERSE BUT TRUE THAT A PATIENT WILL DEMAND MORE WORK FROM DAMAGED TISSUE, AND WILL USUALLY DO SO WITHOUT REALISING IT.

Understanding this chapter is the cheapest and most comprehensive way to support self-healing. When we get slightly better we do a bit more, hurt ourselves a bit more then have to be 'extra good' to recover. This leads to a pattern of good day / bad day at best. At worst a non-healing, chronic, pain.

This happens because the patient may be unaware that they are prevailing on the injury during seemingly 'normal' day to day activities, such as socialising, sitting, shopping, driving, office work, meeting for meals, home chores etc.

Understanding the tell-tale signs of overdoing it can be found in the following:

a) Delayed Pain

Often the only time we know we have overdone it is when we feel the pain after the event, this can be minutes or hours later.

Why does this happen?

The reason for this delay is down to inflammation. When we cause injury, the body literally 'cries it eyes out' and the tears (inflammation) gradually build up in little pockets around the injury. This process takes time. It takes time to prepare this fluid and time for the fluid to build up.

As the build-up of this fluid is in a confined area it not only causes painful swelling, but also chemical irritation to the nerve endings, which again can cause more pain, more muscle spasm and stiffness, etc.

b) Avoiding Pain and Inflammation

In simple terms make a list of all the things that you know cause you pain, because these are the actions that prevail on the 'line of weakness'. By avoiding these things, not only will that reduce the swelling, pain & muscle spasm, it will also reduce the amount of 'making good' the body has to do, clearing the way for the next stage of healing.

To achieve this we may need to be emotionally honest with ourselves, as deep down we may know it's not good to do a certain action, but we want it to be like we were before the pain came, so we gradually drift, inadvertently, into resuming 'normal things'.

If you are unsure if what you are doing is good or bad, we suggest you ask a relative or friend to keep an eye on your actions. Often an outside eye can help keep you on the straight and narrow. It can also provide you with the critical information you may be unaware of.

e) Best Way to Know What's Going On

If you feel pain towards the end of the day, think about what you may have done during the earlier part of that day – even if it was normal to you. As we say to our patients, the body doesn't decide 'out of the blue' to give a patient pain one evening. If pain happens it means whatever action(s) took place during the day (even if they were 'normal' activities) that such actions may have been too much for the injury, yes, even if you didn't feel it at the time! Similarly if you

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feel pain in the morning think about what you may have 'done' the day before, or even in your sleep.

d) Let Pain Guide You

By learning from the pain, you can start to identify the things your body does not like. Avoiding these actions, could include things like avoiding sitting, lifting, working on a PC/Laptop, driving, socialising, practising a hobby or sport, etc.

Finding a way around these is often the hardest part for many patients. When we are in pain we also don't always think straight too. So go ahead and ask a family member or a friend for help.

You may wish to view this as a paradigm-shift, as normally we try to block pain or try to put it out of our minds. Instead try making friends with the pain signals - it's your body talking to you, guiding you.

The adverts on TV about taking pills 'just to carry on' are not always helpful.

Common Pitfalls of the Poor Healer

Poor Routine

Not keeping a good routine and stopping the care routine too soon are the commonest reasons for healing failure.

Routine: People are usually good at taking care when the pain is at it's worst. But as things improve they depart from the routine of selfcare. For example on a good day, they do slightly more, take slightly less rest, take slightly more risks and think slightly less about their injury. This might mean the next day you may be worse, creating a pattern of good day / bad day.

Stopping Care: people can take the right care, but stop their care too soon, mainly because they feel better and believe themselves to be 'cured'. This is a common reason why a patient may get better, then relapse two weeks later.

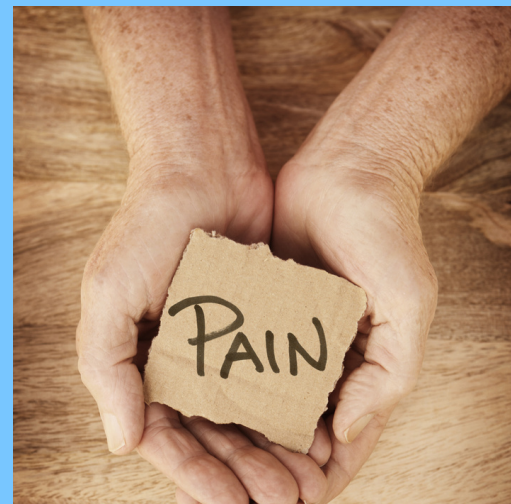
The reason for this is because though the patient may feel cured, in reality they may only be say 60% better with the remaining 40% improvement coming from the body 'adjusting to the pain'. This gives a false sense of security.

So always complete the prescribed course. That means the medicine, exercises and of course your osteopathic treatment.

Your osteopath will check your body for inflammation, muscle spasms, joint movement, spinal stability etc and provide you with an informed appraisal of where you are on the healing cycle. This will allow you to know what things you can start doing and what things you need to continue to avoid.

In simple terms consider the above as a 'discipline' issue. One that requires you to keep up a routine. The body thrives on routine. Think of a new baby, it would need to feed, bathe, play etc at certain times of the day, then it thrives.

Such a body clock is life long and when we are poorly, we may need to refer back to those first principles.



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Masking Pain

The overuse of pain killers or 'might as well get on with my life' maxim does not help. A strong minded person can often mask their pain. By over-ruling the pain one loses awareness of what action is hurting the injury, and so causes more damage. This means more repair work has to be undertaken. In this sense pain is 'your best friend' and should not be masked.

Misuse of Medication: medication can mask what is happening to you at a tissue level. To heal completely you need to know what the state of healing is at any one moment, so you know what action to take.

Mind over matter: Try not to over-rule the pain or put it out of your mind and carry on as normal. Instead do the opposite, try and focus on exactly where the pain is, what time of day it comes on, how long it lasts on each occasion, and of course, what action brings it on. It's a bit like going to court, the more evidence you gather the better your chances of winning.

Attitude of Mind vs Life Getting In the Way

Lastly as mentioned before, being emotionally honest with oneself is a huge boon in healing. Deep down we all know if we are taking enough of the right type of rest. We know we should make changes but either feel we can't or don't know how.

Some patients sink into catastrophising, even though the cognisant part of their brain knows they won't have to 'live like this forever'. But human nature can get the better of us and fear can seep in. The mind and body are connected, so we need to avoid negative thoughts or catastrophising. You will get better!

Some patients feel there is no getting out of doing an activity, ie the kids have to be picked up from school; a work task has to be completed; and worse still, some think if they stop doing things they never get back to normal life. These are all emotional blocks to finding a solution.

At least One Solution

Remember there is always at least one solution for each issue. It may not be the one you want, ie asking a friend to take kids to school, paying for someone to attend your home to clean the house, arranging takeaway food, being off-work, some self-employed patients have even taken on an overdraft to support them whilst being off work just to heal!

This thinking happens best when one is *emotionally honest* and accepts *change* as well as *action* are needed.



3. HOW TO HEAL FASTER

Medicine and Movement in Recovery

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Medicine and Movement in Recovery

**THE AIM IS TO BOOST THE NUMBER OF HEALING PARTICLES REACHING THE INJURY.
- AND TO FLUSH OUT TOXINS.**

Inflammation

Following any tissue injury, the first step in healing is inflammation. Inflammation works to:

- stop you moving the injured area.
- increases the flow of blood.
- boosts the supply of healing particles.

What is Inflammation?

As mentioned when the body is injured, the injured area produces 'tears' otherwise known as inflammatory fluid (inflammation). think of it as the injury is literally crying.

Firstly, the trapped inflammatory fluid causes a rise in pressure, as the area swells up. This also causes the area to become super sensitive to movement.

That's why we get stiff and can't move. It's a bit like the body saying 'freeze - don't move a muscle'!

Next, the inflammatory fluid works by 'sucking-in' the raw products needed for healing from the increased blood flow that accompanies inflammation. That's why the area gets swollen and hot.

Lastly the nerves get super-sensitive. That's why the area feels more tender than normal. The body is trying to protect itself from further insult.

In the early stages inflammation is clearly needed, but sometimes the process does not always stop as it should. If inflammatory fluid is still being produced, it is hard for the healing particles to 'stick' themselves in place, over the wound and so close the wound up.

To the body it's a bit like trying to lay a new floor when there is still flood water around.

Once inflammation has served its purpose we can help reduce un-needed inflammation by using cool-packs, cooling gels and of course anti-inflammatory medicines.

Hot and Cold: Cool packs are best in the very early stages and for ongoing inflammation. Use 3 - 4 times a day for no more than 10 - 20 mins. Whilst heat can be soothing it causes 'rebound inflammation' so in the long run can cause more problems than it solves. Also heat is a 'pro-inflammatory' agent so works against anti-inflammatory medicines such as ibuprofen. So generally we discourage heat at this stage.

Cooling Gels: These can also help bring down inflammation. Mostly this works best with two thin layers applied 3 - 4 times a day. Clinically the gels achieve optimum healing after 3 days of application (read the label). As above, avoid heating gels, as these can create more inflammation - not reduce it.

Anti-inflammatory medicines: currently these are the very best medical care has to offer. More powerful and immediate than the above. However not everyone can take these medicines because of stomach or breathing problems or because of a heart condition. It can also conflict with other medication - so always check with your GP first.

If an anti-inflammatory causes you a side effect ie stomach irritation, you may need to decide what is worse - the injury you are suffering from or side-effect on the stomach.

Pain killers: we are generally not fans of pain killers such as paracetamol or codeine. As mentioned before it masks pain. However using it judiciously in the case of severe pain or for sleep is of course good use. It should not generally be taken to over-rule the pain and carry-on doing things. As mentioned we need to be aware of pain so we know if we are doing good from bad in the pursuit of healing.

3. HOW TO HEAL FASTER

Medicine and Movement in Recovery

Boost Healing Through Movement

It may not be appreciated, but healthy living and injury-recovery rely heavily on muscle function. It is muscle action that is responsible for acquiring the all raw-products for life, health and importantly, for healing.

Muscle and movement is so important. For example the heart muscle pumping blood, the diaphragmatic pump to draw oxygen into the lungs, the calf muscles pumping spent blood out of the legs to get re-oxygenated, the muscular movement of swallowing nutrition-rich food, the bowel for pushing fresh food through the gut to extract the nutrition.

Movement is Medicine

Importantly the spinal-muscles are used to pump life-giving nutrition into the spinal discs of the backbone. (The discs have virtually no blood supply and rely on this muscle movement to 'breathe', thrive and heal). Similarly almost all injured tissues use muscular movement to pump goodness into a damaged area for healing. When muscles move it helps to boost circulation, brings fresh blood full of healing particles to the area, drains away old inflammatory fluid, washes away toxins and helps stop you from seizing up.

Of course it is a balancing act. One has to learn the balance between enough movement to help healing but not too much as to cause more damage. Healing needs movement. But it needs to be interspersed with rest.

Resting

Rest does not just mean not using it, rest also means reducing the effect of gravity through the damaged area. For example in the case of the spine it may mean lying down (this reduces the gravity passing through the injured section of the spine); with a shoulder it may mean movements only in certain directions (to reduce the force needed to work against gravity). Your osteopath will guide you, as each injury is different.

Getting the balance right can be hard to achieve, it's a learning curve. It is usually down to trial and error. It's about learning, what to do more of, when to do it, how to rest, how long to rest and crucially what to avoid doing.

Example

As an example if you have an injured area and after using it for 20 minutes the symptoms creep in, next time you will stop at 15 minutes as you remember 20 minutes caused you pain.

This can also vary depending on the time of day. This might mean you may be better at start of the day, or end of the day, or similarly better after the weekend, or worse after a weekend – so try keeping an eye on yourself or better still ask a family member or friend to monitor you.

Healing is a learning curve. The principle is to do enough of the movement you need to boost healing but not so much that you enter the re-injury zone. Stay in the pain free 'Neutral Zone' and avoid risking more damage.



IN SUMMARY

In the first section we started by identifying the event that caused the problem, as that is where the line of weakness will lie.

In the next section we spoke about making a list of the things that would re-injure the area and the things that disrupt the healing cycle, such as sitting, twisting, lifting, hobbies, socialising, travelling, worry, stress, etc.

Finally we spoke about why and how movement is good for healing. Understanding these processes, with awareness, is key to understanding self-management.



So if you have a bad day with pain, a good question to ask is "what did I do to cause this, this time" rather than "OMG, the pain has come back again and I am fed up with this!". If you are able to think this way you will have connected with this information and are living it.

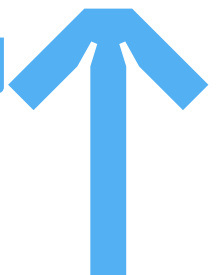
If you get stuck working out what's going on – as we all sometimes do – why not ask for a little help. Book in with our friendly osteopaths to talk it through it, to discover what is really happening to your body under the radar.

Osteopathy is much more than hands-on, it's mind-on too!

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"A Way of Thinking"

Healing is not just about getting better. It is about thinking better.





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