

Blueprints for Change

THE EMOTIONAL SIDE OF BACK PAIN

Many years ago I read the ground-breaking book *Healing Back Pain: The Mind-Body Connection* by Dr. John Sarno, which proved to be quite an eye-opener. Dr. Sarno's work has been taken to the next level in the book *Back Sense: A Revolutionary Approach to Halting the Cycle of Chronic Back Pain* by a team of Boston area medical professionals. The premise here is that a large percentage of back pain is related to painfully tense back muscles rather than damaged or defective tissues. While there may be physical causes (ranging from accidents and injuries to tumors or infections), the pain cycle is often triggered by emotions such as stress over pain, worries about the future, financial worries, living with a difficult spouse, etc.

Mind-Body Practices for a Healthy Back

- **Put it in Writing**
--- acknowledging your negative emotions can help you dispel them, reducing stress and enhancing immune function.
- **Take Note of Your Beliefs**
--- the mind is extremely literal in creating exactly what words you think about. You experience what you think! An excellent example of this comes from a colleague who spent many years constantly reinforcing the thought that she wanted to marry someone RICH. She did – his name was RICH!!!! I'll leave you to guess whether or not he had any money!

So constantly repeating phrases like the following can actually contribute to the creation of back problems or pain:

*My back is killing me
I can't stand this
I don't get any support
I feel backed into a corner
I won't back down
He/she's always on my back
I can't stand it!*

- **Don't Sweat the Small Stuff**
--- stewing over things you can't control or that don't make a difference only add to muscle tension.
- **Get Plenty of Rest**
--- when you skimp on sleep, your ability to handle stressful emotions decreases. Small problems can send you "over the edge" more quickly, increasing muscle tension.
- **Eat Healthy**
--- comfort foods high in sugars and fats may briefly reduce stress hormones but in the long run, a well-balanced, healthy diet contributes to better brain chemistry, emotional stability and less stress on the body.

When you do need to ease the pain of that aching back, try one of the natural remedies listed in the last newsletter. My two favorites are Arnica cream, a healing and soothing homeopathic remedy for the relief of bruises and sore muscles, and *Zyflamend* a unique herbal formula by New Chapter, which promotes healthy inflammation response and normal joint function.

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