

What Pain?
Addressing Pain as it Manifests
Physically, Mentally, Emotionally and Spiritually

Overview

Pain can sap all your energy and take over your life. Ultimately, it can be hard to distinguish between physical and emotional pain, as they interweave and seemingly conspire to bring you down.

I have had my share of all types of pain. While I am not a medical professional, I have seen enough of them to assemble an effective kit of remedies that I would like to describe to you. If I can spare anyone the years I have spent focusing on nothing but my pain, this book will have been worth the effort.

I have been diagnosed with breast cancer, lyme disease, fibromyalgia, migraine, severe degenerative disc disease, scoliosis, and a variety of lesser concerns. I had to assess my pain level and energy level before I could make any decisions. It ran my life.

Today, I have more energy than I have had in 20 years. If I have headaches at all, they are minor and easily treatable. I am rising to physical challenges I never would have undertaken voluntarily in the past, because they are fun and I can.

You may respond more to psychological cures, or emotional or creative remedies, or a gifted healer who costs a fortune but is worth it. I will offer any number of suggestions in the hopes that at least one will serve you. They have all been helpful to me at one point.

Sometimes one thing stops working, and it's time to try another. Perhaps you'll find a resource that is all you'll ever need. Anything is possible. Some of this might be obvious to you, but perhaps there will also be something you have never tried before. Have hope. After what I've been through, I never thought I'd feel as good as I do now.

Pay attention. Pain is a messenger. Ignore it and it yells louder. "Grin and bear it," is not a good long-term strategy. Ignoring your pain is like hitting the snooze button. The alarm will just ring again, and you will be more stressed out because you now have less time to do what you thought you needed more time to do when you set the alarm in the first place.

How do you pay attention to your pain? How do you engage it? There are lots of strategies. Because pain has many components, this ebook is divided into physical, mental, emotional and spiritual pain. You never know what may be at the root of it. And might just be fed up enough to try the crazy-sounding idea that actually works.

Physical pain relief

Allopathic care: If the pain intensifies or persists, call a doctor. Follow the expert's advice and see how you feel. This may be all you need.

Holistic care: Chiropractors, acupuncturists, and massage therapists are great support in dealing with pain. Seek them out.

Drugs: If you ignore it, some types of pain might get so bad that you end up in the emergency room. Take something. Pain killers can rebound if you take them daily. Ultimately you will have to remove the source of the pain.

Presence: Do what the Buddhists do and face your pain with equanimity. Pain exists; therefore it is perfect. Make space for it. Allow it. Use it to feel connected to all the people who suffer. Your pain may isolate you, physically, but you are not alone in your suffering. In fact suffering is the human condition.

Dialogue: Some people go as far as to say God speaks to you through the body. Perhaps you are not one of them. But what is the message behind the pain? Don't ignore it, and don't think you know better. If you did, you wouldn't be in pain. Be open to information in whatever way you are receptive. You might draw, write, dance. The act of listening to the body is more restorative than the actual information that is imparted.

Yoga: Yoga teachers are trained to bring a person to their level of tolerable discomfort. The gift in yoga is the attention you pay to your body. Yoga means union. It harmonizes body mind and spirit. As you pay attention to the breath and sensations within you, you will be able to intercept and move out of a pain before it overtakes you. Find a teacher you respect who is able to make adjustments for your physical situation. There are many types of yoga, so don't give up. If there are no teachers in your area, there are many DVD's you can practice in the comfort of your home.

Posture: Standing up straight puts less pressure on the body than slumping over a desk, shoulders curled forward. Do it, not because you're supposed to, but because it feels better. Chest up, chin in is a good mantra.

Rest: Pushing yourself through pain may get the job done, but it will probably accelerate an already uncomfortable situation. Take a nap when you need one. We spend a third of our lives in bed, so do what you can to make that a restorative time. This is when the body repairs itself. Let it do its job. You might need a different type of pillow or mattress. You might need a pillow under or between your knees. Check out the options.

Breath: Pain is usually the result of a constriction, and breath is expansive and free. Although we initially take the breath into our lungs, it ultimately oxygenates the entire body. You can consciously direct the breath to any body part that needs it. Intend that it relax, open and soften that area, or use any words that support you.

Attitude: Notice how you are responding to the pain. Do you chastise it? Are you angry at it? How do you respond when someone else is angry at you? Would your body choose to relax when you treat it this way? More than likely, it tightens up and renews its offensive. Catch yourself venting your frustration internally. Replace angry thoughts with supportive ones.

Inquiry: Scrutinize the pain in its every detail. If you had to outline it, where would it begin and end? Does it have a color, texture, sound? How would you describe it? How does it feel if you move it one way or another? What happens when you breathe into it? Explore with fascination. Sometimes this loving attention is all that the pain needs to release its grip.

Detective work: If you seek medical help, they will ask you a lot of questions to try to determine the cause of the pain. Anticipate this by keeping track of your behavior. You might be able to solve the problem, yourself. What were you doing before the onset of the pain? Is the pain localized or general? How long does it last? Is it acute, dull, or throbbing? How were you feeling before the pain set in? What usually relieves it? How recently did you do what relieved it before the pain recurred?

Diet: Sugar depresses the immune system, and can intensify or create pain. Changing from white sugar to raw sugar may be all that is needed for some people. Someone else may only be able to eat fruit but no refined sugar. Others may need to give up sweets altogether. Pick your poison. Would you rather be in pain or eat whatever you want? Keep note of what you eat for 24 hours before the onset of the pain. Eliminate those foods and see how the body feels. You are your own science experiment. Sometimes the body develops allergies to what it eats all the time. It's a good idea to have a broad assortment of foods available so that you don't feel you can't live without a particular one of them.

Magnets: Magnetite is a stone that draws pain away. People wear magnetite necklaces, anklets and bracelets to keep their entire body pain free. Some people find relief sleeping on magnetic mattresses. This changes your electromagnetic field, so there are consequences, but you might prefer them to the pain.

Herbs: Arnica, available as a homeopathic remedy and as a massage oil, offers relief to some for muscle pain. White willow, butterbur, feverfew, offer migraine relief to some. Peppermint can offer topical relief. Menthol, a mint derivative is available in roll-on applicators as Biofreeze. It has a cooling effect. Camphor is available in topical salves like Tiger Balm.

Access Wellness: If you have tried everything and are willing to pay whatever it takes to cure your pain once and for all, I urge you to see Ariel Wilcox, awilcox@accesswellness.net

She has developed a diagnostic tool that picks up vibrations throughout the body's lymphatic, circulatory, organ and muscular systems. Based on what she hears, she can

trace pain to its source, determine how it needs to be released, and then eliminate it. More than anyone or anything else, I believe she has the answer.

Mental pain relief

Heart over head: You can't control your thoughts, but you can control what to do with them when they arise. Take charge. There is a yoga posture called yoga mudra, where the heart is above the head. This posture is known as the symbol of yoga because it is a metaphor for how we ought to govern our lives. Pay attention to what goes on in your head. Choose what to ignore, what to engage and what to replace. Notice how your body feels when particular thoughts arise. You might have to resolve to never again engage certain types of thoughts.

Thought substitution: If you are addicted to anything, whether it be food, drugs, sex, a particular person, shopping, the mind will probably do everything in its power to encourage you to take up your substance of choice. If you engage those thoughts, you will head right back into the pattern you might prefer to avoid. Thought control is a powerful step to changing your pattern. Choose something life affirming that you enjoy contemplating. It might be a beautiful flower or a landscape that empowers you. Whenever thoughts of your addictive substance arise, immediately replace them with this other object. Don't argue with it. Don't allow it back into your consciousness. Don't give it any time at all. Just replace it. This takes rigorous mental discipline, but it works. You can use this same process to abort any repetitive thought.

Input Screening: Be vigilant about what you let into your consciousness. You may have no control over the sounds that surround you, but you might invest in headphones that could cancel the noise so that you don't have to take it in. At some point, with practice, the environmental sounds might have no influence over you, but until you have this level of internal control, screen them out.

Notice your dreams after a violent television program or film. The show doesn't end when you press the off button. It may be an entertaining diversion, but if you have nightmares afterwards, it has penetrated deeper than you bargained for. Be proactive about the information you will take in.

This goes for news programs as well. It is good to be informed, but what do you really want information about? Do you need to sit through all sorts of commentary and arguments that only make you angry or bored? With the internet, you can select the websites that will convey the information to you that you request. Don't accept someone else's idea of what is news. Decide what you want to know, and seek it out when you need to know it.

Cultivating positive thoughts: You might play with a mantra or repeating uplifting thought to replace the random thoughts that might torment you. You could do it for a few minutes a day and see how it makes you feel, or if you are ambitious, try a longer period of time. Some practitioners have a mantra on their breath at all times. Consider

a quality you want to bring to your life, and chant that to yourself, or sing it aloud if you can. It might be peace, compassion, love or any number of wonderful things.

Breath: Use the breath to draw good things to you. Inhale a particular thought and exhale another. You might inhale a quality you would like to exhibit like mastery or intelligence, and exhale love as something you would like to share. Or you might inhale a good quality and exhale something you want to release, like a bad memory or attitude.

Conscience: Keep your conscience clean. Do what you say you will. This will remove ammunition from the inner critic.

Exercise: Stay in shape. Use the body to quiet the mind. Even if all you can do is breathe deeply, this will keep toxic thoughts at bay.

Restraint: Think before you speak. This will prevent a multitude of catastrophes. Who are you talking to? Can they receive what you are about to say? If not, don't bother. This will prevent a rehashing of upsetting conversations in your head, and a rehearsal of all the things you intend to say next time or should have said last time.

Record: Write things down. This will prevent you from having to remember them.

Emotional pain relief

Many of us decide what emotions we want to entertain. Then we deny, argue with or ignore the others. Those neglected feelings can then lodge in our bodies as pain. It is best to pay attention to them at their onset before they can take hold.

Definition: Emotions have been defined as energy in motion. We can feel them in our bodies, and even locate them in specific places. If they are just energy, we do not have to engage our minds to describe or figure them out. We can just tune into the energy and transmute it. This can be done by breathing in and out of the center where the emotion is being experienced, watching and waiting. Exercise works because it, too, is energy in motion.

EFT: The emotional freedom technique was designed to clear any and all uncomfortable emotions. It consists of affirmative statements, said while tapping on acupuncture points. The technique can be applied in as quickly as a minute, and is worth learning. A free manual is downloadable on this technique through emofree.com. You can also seek out practitioners. I recommend Nancy Gnecco, ngnecco@gwi.net.

Ho'oponopono: Ho'oponopono is another effective method at clearing emotions. It does this through four phrases: I'm sorry. Forgive me. I love you. Thank you. This system was popularized by a doctor in a ward for the criminally insane in Hawaii. He refused to see patients, but, instead sat with their files, repeating those statements over

and over. Ultimately, everyone was cured and the ward was closed. The system works because we are all connected, and, ultimately responsible for one another.

Play: Be creative with the emotion. Sound it out. Exaggerate it. Sculpt clay into something that looks the way you feel. Write everything you feel and then burn it.

Avoiding traps: Know your dead ends. If you are trapped in one emotion, perhaps it is best not to go there any more. Find a different way to deal with it. Perhaps someone treated you wrong, and the resentment is eating you alive. Focus on something else. Don't allow yourself to be pulled into the abyss any longer.

Cultivate joy: What brings you joy? Do it. Schedule it in your calendar and make it a priority. Whether or not people are suffering in the world and there is something you can do to help, you deserve to play.

Breaking free of addiction: See the connection between addiction and emotions. Notice how you feel when you can't have what you crave. You can use that feeling to justify further the addictive consumption. The reality is the addiction can perpetuate the emotion rather than truly satisfy it. Addicts go through a shame cycle, feeling awful, seeking the addictive substance for relief, feeling better, then feeling guilty about indulging again, then craving the substance again to get over the guilt, and on and on. Break free. Get treatment if you need it.

Spiritual pain relief

We long for meaning in our lives. What's it all about? Do we matter? What is our purpose? Why bother? We may be so afraid to confront these questions that we keep ourselves too busy to seek the answers. We get entangled in life's dramas and tell ourselves they are more important. There is a deep fear in many of us that we do not matter. We do not want to know this.

Many of us have been raised in a spiritual tradition that made us feel guilty, because we did not measure up to its ideals. This in itself may have been reason enough for us to abandon that religion, or, worse, to pretend we followed it, while, inwardly feeling ashamed of our hypocrisy.

Religion presents a useful guide, but what do you do if your tradition doesn't address all your needs? This is where spirituality comes in. What is spirituality? What is spirit? Apart from the ephemeral answers, there is a tangible one, the breath. We inspire on the inhale. We expire on the exhale. Each inhale is a rebirth, each exhale a death. Each breath is a choice, a commitment to life, itself. We can be conscious of that breath and the miracle of our existence, or we can take it for granted.

Breath: If breath is spirit, then we are spirit as long as we breathe. When people die, it is said that the spirit leaves their bodies. They no longer have breath within them. Breath is what animates us. And if it is spirit that carries the life force, then our lives

extend beyond our bodies. The body is just the vehicle through which we experience it.

We are not just our bodies, we are spirit, itself, in its infinitude. Spirit enters us and we wake up and go to work and eat something. Spirit enters a flower and it blooms and releases a beautiful fragrance. Spirit enters a tree and it shares its fruit and grows to offer us shade. It is all the same spirit, expressing itself through an infinite number of unique vehicles.

We have responsibility to care for our bodies and our minds and our emotions and the spirit that animates us, but we are far more than our senses perceive. We encompass the entire universe.

When we ask whether or not we matter, it is critical to remember who we are. The body we haul around is an infinitesimal part of our being. And yet it is a vessel that carries spirit. Spirit matters, therefore we do.

Who we really are: The way out of spiritual pain is to remind yourself of who you really are. Spending time in nature is a beautiful way to do this. As spirit animates all of it, you can begin to identify with the sky, the birds, the earth. What qualities do you need in your life? The stability of a mountain? The flexibility of water? The brilliance of the sun? They are yours. You are spirit, as are they. Become them. Identify with the water within you in its resilience, its capacity to absorb and purify. You are 70 per cent water. You are not pretending anything. Identify with the strength and solidity of a mountain. You are earth. Your body is made from the earth and will return there. Find inspiration in nature and realize it is all within you as well.

Inspiration: Read things that inspire you. Find a spiritual guide or mentor who will help you remember the real you. Go on a retreat where you can do practices that will affirm this part of you. Answers to life's big questions will change over time as you evolve. Pain is an opportunity to revisit them. Here is one person's answer to the meaning of life:

Hazrat Inayat Khan's ten Sufi thoughts

1. There is one God, the Eternal, the Only Being, None exists save God.
2. There is one Master the Guiding Spirit of all souls, who constantly leads all followers toward the Light.
3. There is one Holy Book the Sacred Manuscript of Nature, the only Scripture that can enlighten the reader.
4. There is one Religion the unswerving progress in the right direction, toward the Ideal, which fulfills the life's purpose of every soul.
5. There is one Law the Law of Reciprocity, which can be observed by a selfless conscience together with a sense of awakened justice.
6. There is one Family the Human Family, which unites the Children of Earth indiscriminately in the Parenthood of God.

7. There is one Moral Principle the Love which springs forth from a willing heart, surrendered in service to God and Humanity, and which blooms in deeds of beneficence.
8. There is one Object of Praise the Beauty, which uplifts the heart of its worshipper through all aspects, from the seen to the unseen.
9. There is one Truth the true knowledge of our being, within and without, which is the essence of Wisdom.
10. There is one Path the effacement of the limited self in the Unlimited, which raises the mortal to immortality, in which resides all Perfection.

In Service,
Abbe Anderson