

# Chronic Pain

## PAIN...Pain...pain...pain...discomfort!

Rev. Fr. Martin J. Patton

Recent changes effective last January 1st (2001) are requiring hospitals and doctors to treat pain. New standards require that every patient's pain be measured regularly from the time they check in and proper pain relief begun. The patients will rate their pain from zero, no pain, to 10, the worst pain imaginable. Physicians will prescribe those pain medications that sometimes help but most often because of the side effects are not tolerated well by the patient or the body develops a tolerance for the drug and it loses its effectiveness. These medications are effective for "Acute Pain" but have little effect on "Chronic Pain." Medications while helpful are not always the answer. Many of our clients come to us because "It hurts!" "It makes me sick" "It's still there --- that nagging pain!" "I haven't been able to sleep!" Chronic Pain is universal and long term! Chronic pain itself has become a major illness. The common types of chronic pain that I see in my office have to do with postoperative pain, headaches, back pain and the pain of arthritis.

Chronic pain management requires a comprehensive approach. Physical therapists can give relief by determining the best exercise. Chiropractors and massage therapists may be able to release the nerves and muscles. We as hypnotherapists release the pain by teaching skills of relaxation and stress reduction and behavioral changes. One of the affirmations I give to my clients who have cancer is: "If you continue to do as you have always done, you will always get what you have always got!" They learn to relax and take the world with a little less stress.

Any complaint of pain brings a caution. **Do not** attempt to work on a chronic pain in which the pain may be a symptom of an as yet untreated, medically treatable physical condition. It is **highly recommended** that you get a doctor's referral before working on a client. Pain is God's way of letting us know that there is a problem. Once the cause of the pain is established then it is proper to use clinical applications of hypnotic modalities to release stress, and develop within the patient the ability to dissociate and turn off the pain. As long as the suggestions are acceptable, the patient will freely comply with the hypnotherapist to release or dampen the discomfort until it dissipates completely.

**Postoperative pain** can be the most severe and the pain just can't be controlled by medications. The most common is the pain caused by the use of staples or glue to close the operation. After the pain becomes apparent, it makes no sense for the surgeon to go in and redo it, so the patient must learn to tolerate the chronic pain. Actually in my classes for cancer patients I tell them to ask the doctor not to use staples to close and if they can't do that, could he bring in a plastic surgeon to close. Now you know the doctor will never ask another doctor to close his operation but he will do the nicest close you have ever seen. But, as you are aware we don't usually get the clients before the surgery! The scar left by surgery is usually not lined up with the severed

nerves and there is usually a pucker. The staples allow the scar to widen. And on some women the scars on knees and on the body embarrass them and cause self-consciousness. In Therapeutic Touch and Body Talk there are methods to reduce the appearance of the scars even if they are old. To control the pain you need to soften the area around the scar, making it soft and supple. By taking the hardness or rubbery feeling out of the scar you actually permit the energy of the nerves to balance and the nerve endings eventually cease sending pain signals to the brain.

**Headaches** are another matter. The contraindications mentioned above are important. A medical exam must be done to rule out a more serious problem such as a tumor or a head trauma of some type. Most clients who are referred to me by doctors are affected by stress. When we look at what is taking place the chronic pain is really associated with severe chronic stress. By doing what hypnotherapists are trained to do you relieve the stress by removing the causes. The causes can be current life problems or can be rooted in the past. In doing what we do best we work on the cause of the headaches and have them go back to the source using many of the modalities and specialties you have learned in advance classes sponsored by IMDHA.

**Back pain** falls in a couple of categories. First, is the post surgical patient who is having trouble releasing the discomfort or his or her expectations of what surgical benefits would come after the operation? The other is the person who has struggled with chronic back pain for a number of years. When working with them you must realize that in some way they need the pain. Finding out why they need the pain usually suffices to alleviate the chronic pain.

**Arthritis** brings forth a very large group of people who have symptomatic arthritis. The symptoms are there but the actual arthritis is not. Usually we find that the success rate with this type of client is very high. The cause of the chronic condition is usually chronic stress. Most times their doctor labels them because he can't think of any other diagnosis that fits. These types of pain do not treat well with medications since the cause is hidden. I always ask my clients if they "have any recurring pains?" This question and answer helps to uncover the upset and the cause.

However the person who truly has rheumatoid arthritis is a joy to work with. They want to get better. Their motivation is what really sets the scene for recovery and remission. Because they often have had deterioration of the bone sockets to cause joint replacement surgery, they usually come to us with problems experienced because of postoperative pain. With a few clients that have come over a period of time we find that as pain diminishes remission will set in.

**Chronic Fatigue** Immune Dysfunction Syndrome (CFIDS), **Fibromyalgia** Syndrome (FM) and **Post Polio** Syndrome (PPS) also fall under the arthritis umbrella. In these three syndromes the mind/body connection is important in giving the patient the ability to empower himself or herself. Once they learn techniques to turn the pain off, even for just a few minutes, they become aware that they can overcome the pain. These pain symptoms are very real and there are few doctors who have become expert in treating

these areas. The experts, I've met and have talked to, will always recommend hypnotherapy and behavioral changes as they go about the medical diagnostics to come up with a medical treatment that is long lasting. It is difficult for most patients to sleep: studies have shown that alpha waves intrude upon sleep, whereas beta waves intrude upon wakefulness. So we must be able to take this patient to the theta state and to teach them how to do this themselves. A banish stress sleep tape and practice will assist them in getting control. These autoimmune conditions are particularly suited to the use of hypnotherapy.

With the changes in regulations for doctors and hospitals it may be a good time to send a mailer on controlling chronic pain by using hypnotherapy to the doctors in your area. It should outline your experience in treating pain with hypnosis. A number of the doctors that I have talked to regarding these changes are not sure that medications alone will be the answer for every client.

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