

Chronic Pain Program

If you have been living with chronic pain you know all too well how thoroughly it can impact your life. You may have tried many approaches to feel better, and may have seen many doctors, had many tests, tried physical therapy, injections, massage, acupuncture, the Gamut. Maybe you have been given a diagnosis – or a label- for your condition, but not a helpful solution. Tests such as xrays, MRI's, or blood work may not have shed light on the issue and maybe the pain has been labeled as “non-specific” – meaning that there is no known cause, or that at least the tests do not show anything that might point to a cause. Maybe you've learned to live with pain, and accept fatigue...Or decided this is “just the way life is” now. Sometimes, people get caught in a vicious cycle using “over-the-counter” or prescription medications that provide limited relief and sometimes cause other problems. Many people suffer for years, with their lives and function becoming more and more limited, and may begin to feel hopeless.

Chronic pain is typically multifaceted, with many contributing factors melded together. It is a “biopsychosocial” and neural phenomenon. Let's look at a breakdown of these ideas.

Bio = involving changes in cellular, nutrient, soft tissue, blood and lymphatic flow, structural, movement and motor control function. It means tight areas, weak areas, stagnant fluid flow, scars, maybe physical trauma.

Psycho = involving emotions, stress, thought patterns, beliefs, anxiety, depression, and emotional trauma history. Decades of research demonstrates how emotions can amplify pain. This is excellent news, as this puts control back in your hands and is amenable to change.

Social = Involves changes in life roles and relationships. It involves your support system or lack thereof, your ability to participate in work and leisure pursuits, and engage in the world in a meaningful way. All of these nuances are interwoven into the chronic pain experience.

Neural = Ample research shows that the brain and nervous system change when there is chronic pain. In regards to the brain, this is very good news since the brain has remarkable plasticity and with appropriate training, can be changed. *Central sensitization* is a phenomenon where some areas of the brain become overly sensitized. The remarkable work of neuroscientists Dr. Lorimer Mossley and Dr. David Butler (and others) and their approach of Graded Motor Imagery provides a useful and effective roadmap for retraining the brain that shows signs of central sensitization. Not all neural tissue can be changed – for instance if nerves are cut through or damaged – they may not grow back properly. But there are many things that may reduce nerve pain, from brain retraining to dietary changes.

Because chronic pain is such a multifaceted problem, it requires a multi-faceted approach to treatment. An integrative approach to the treatment of chronic pain addresses all contributing areas. A Functional Medicine approach is uniquely positioned to help with chronic pain because it helps you look with a wide lens at all areas of your life which may be contributory .

Making a combination of lifestyle changes is often profoundly beneficial in reducing chronic pain. Some of these changes may feel radical to you. To achieve success in my Chronic Pain program it is necessary to address *every* contributing factor: Diet and nutrition, stress reduction,

movement, neuromotor re-training, brain retraining, and psychotherapy to address limiting thoughts, beliefs, and trauma.

The Chronic Pain Program is largely educational in modifiable lifestyle factors which fan the flames of chronic pain.

I partner with patients in:

- Identifying lifestyle sources of inflammation
- Identifying potential food sensitivities contributing to systemic inflammation
- Identifying potential nutrient deficiencies
- Circadian rhythm management
- Optimizing restorative sleep
- Stress management
- Identifying toxicants which may be contributing to inflammation
- Neural re-training using an Explain Pain and Graded Motor Imagery approach (Moseley & Butler)
- Structural, soft tissue, and motor control evaluation, and physical therapy treatment as needed. (This is the least emphasized part of the program and is short term.)

Working with a qualified psychotherapist trained in CBT and trauma treatment is very important to success and is a required part of the program. ***I am not a psychotherapist.*** If you do not already have a psychotherapist, or the therapist you are working with now does not have specialized training in CBT specifically for chronic pain or a trauma focused modality such as EMDR – I strongly encourage you to find someone who does this specialized work. It may take some time to find a practitioner who is right for you.

If you are a diabetic and especially if you are on medication for diabetes, I require that you also work with a licensed Nutritionist who specializes in a Whole Foods approach.

Participation in other therapies such as acupuncture, yoga, mindfulness meditation, infra-red sauna, Sound Biofield Tuning, and Dynamic Neural Retraining System (DNRS) can also provide valuable contributions. Together, we can explore ideas about the best combination of modalities to best support your personal healing journey.

Change is hard! Often it requires a person to reach a point in their life where nothing else has worked and the only thing left is to do that hard thing. But nothing changes if *nothing changes*. Engaging in a chronic pain program is not a passive process, but an immersive experience. It requires a high level of motivation on your part and a strong desire to learn and *do everything necessary* to shift an entrenched and stubborn condition. This program is work intensive on your part and is not for everyone. Or, you may not feel ready right now.

If you are interested in learning more about an integrative approach to chronic pain treatment, I encourage you to call or email me with questions.

Wishing You Healing and Ease,

Dr. Linda