

# Why You're in Pain and What You Can Do About It

By Dr. Matthew Norton, DC

**“Not another nagging headache! That’s my third one this week. I guess the stress has been intense lately.”** “My lowback has been stiff and tight for the last month and now I’ve got sharp pain in my leg since I helped move that desk yesterday.” “My right knee and left shoulder have bothered me for several years now since that major fall I took skiing.”

**You are very likely experiencing some sort of pain as you read this report.** If not now, then you probably have during the past several months. It is almost certain that you will face pain many times throughout your life. **Pain is an extremely common human challenge that serves a very important purpose but can also threaten to significantly sabotage your quality of life.** It can be of physical or mental/emotional origin but is always felt in the body. If the pain persists or is regularly recurrent, it will definitely impact you emotionally.

**Sometimes we have a clear sense of what happened that brought on our pain and other times it may remain a mystery.** If pain begins soon after a physical action such as getting jerked in a car accident, lifting or twisting with a heavy object, a sudden overstretching reach or a collision in an athletic event, then we are fairly comfortable with the cause. However, **there are times when pain seems to come out of nowhere.** We conjecture that possibly we slept funny on our neck or it was something we ate or we throw up our hands and declare that we simply don’t have a clue.

When there appears to be no physical cause for our physical pain we typically have a more difficult time. There is another way that our internal detective work can be thrown off. **Often there will be an initial injury as a cause of damage that is either non-painful or the pain seems to quickly resolve.** This lulls us into the idea that we are fine and we don’t pursue assistance. The residual condition then quietly declines over time.

**As the damage reaches a point where we can no longer effectively adapt, then a minor, even unnoticed event could set off a crisis that doesn’t**

**seem to make sense to us.** This is probably the most common scenario from my experience. This might be like an earthquake rumbling through your area of town but seeming to leave your property undamaged until a big sinkhole opens up in the backyard a few months later and swallows up the swing-set.

**Over twenty years of assisting suffering people has led me to the conclusion that intense or especially persistent mental-emotional stress is the primary culprit in much of our pain or illness.** It at least sets the stage for our vulnerability to other types of causes. Lung cancer is a good example of this. Cigarette smoking alone doesn't cause it, because if it did then all smokers would develop cancer. However, in men, if you combine smoking with the inability to express emotion effectively, then cancer risk goes up fivefold according to studies by a British chest surgeon. **We are frequently out of touch with our mental-emotional states and miss their connection to how we feel (including our pain states), and to our conditions of illness.**

**Pain is the opposite of pleasure. Both of them are genetically wired into us and are absolutely essential.** We have specialized nerve receptors dedicated to pain that permeate our bodies. These nerves then transmit this pain information into our spinal cords for quick responses and into our brains for processing, understanding and learning. We are naturally drawn toward pleasure and repelled by pain. These are natural survival tendencies.

**What is the message of pain? It is a warning, an alarm, telling you that something is wrong and that some corrective or healing action may need to be taken.** Physical pain is alerting you to occurrences of tissue damage (like a cut, burn or joint sprain), abnormal tension (as in muscle tightness), or imbalances of body chemistry and physiology (such as upset digestion). **You have departed from ideal balanced function. Your vessel isn't fully intact.** Painful mental-emotional states can serve as warnings. They can alert you to actual or potential loss, deprivation of deeper needs, or choices and actions that may have negative survival value. Loss of the basic needs of love, financial security, and deeper life meaning are a few examples.

**Pain is a call for attention to rectify a damaging or potentially harmful situation.** What is our human tendency and what is the cultural encouragement when we become aware of pain? It is to do whatever we can to make it go away. If this were not the case then we wouldn't have such an

overwhelmingly successful over-the-counter drug industry, since these products only manipulate symptomatic effects.

**The true directive is to ask the cause question first and then to take action and make a change to protect us from further damage and assure our survival.** If we are touching a hot stove, the need and urge is to quickly jerk away as opposed to taking a painkiller to allow us to feel okay about our burning flesh. If we are overly tensing our muscles in frequent stress resistance to the people and circumstances of our lives, then we need to resolve some issues to modify our reactivity versus taking mood-elevating drugs to sugar coat reality.

**Pain can be acute or chronic.** Acute pain is of shorter duration and related to a more present time cause. **Chronic pain** is longer lasting or frequently recurring. **It is often far removed in time from the cause and typically occurs when the cause is not initially adequately understood and resolved.** It is still an active situation but is an ongoing response to the past. Chronic conditions can become devastating and irreversible and are to be avoided at all costs. The extreme danger lies in the fact that as they develop they are often painless but later transform into painful, quality of life destroying monsters.

Let's consider a car accident as an example. The physical whiplash trauma will commonly cause neck, shoulder and back pain as well as headaches. **These pains are due to the irritation of the nervous system, the spraining of joints with swelling, and the excessive reactive tension in the muscles that move those joints.** If the accident victim receives proper spinal adjustments over the next weeks to months that fully resolve the nervous system interference and restore proper alignment, then the acute pain telling of current injury will subside.

Future chronic pain can then usually be avoided when maximal function is returned. However, if optimal corrective care is not provided, then even if the pain subsides, the body will memorize the abnormal pattern and struggle with adaptive coping measures. **Ideal function is not restored and the stage is then set for long-term degeneration and chronic ongoing or recurrent cycles of pain and disease.**

**So why are you in pain? Most likely you have had an injury at some point in your recent or distant past.** This could be anything from a birth

trauma, an early childhood fall or a sports injury to a car accident, lifting injury, or postural/repetitive stress condition. **In addition to this probable foundational injury situation, you quite possibly live and operate daily in at least an intermittently stressful home or work environment.**

You may not be exercising regularly and your diet may leave something to be desired. As a result of any or all of these life circumstances your spine is almost certainly subluxated (misaligned with nervous system interference). **This state of subluxation will prevent your body, which is self-regulating and self-healing by design, from returning to the state of balance and ease that is required for optimal healing and real freedom from pain without drug masking.**

**You are still in pain because the true, underlying and ongoing cause has either not yet been fully clarified or adequately addressed.** It could also be that now you are doing the right things, the best you can, but allowed past injuries to become chronic and resistant to complete healing. You don't want to assume the latter however. **There may an underlying issue that has not been uncovered yet. You could still be set free to thrive when it is!** This happens frequently in my office as we get to the root of the problem and the seemingly miraculous occurs.

**So what can you do about your pain now?** There are three basic choices of action and then secondary options within them. **First, you can attempt to tolerate or ignore the pain** and hope it's meaning is insignificant and it goes away on its own. The problem with this choice is that it may not go away and more importantly it probably does have an important health and quality of life message for you. **When problems are avoided they typically worsen resulting in a greater likelihood of crisis later, even if the pain does disappear for a while.**

**The second choice would be to find some method of masking the pain to make life more palatable in the moment.** This approach usually involves medication of some sort. It may be acquired "over-the-counter" at the store, in the liquor department, or as a prescription from your medical doctor. **This doesn't mean that there is never a time or place for medicine, but simply that it's use as a mask without attending to the cause of the painful situation is risky even if it is productive of a short-term patch.**

You may have headaches or back pain for example, and either take OTC Advil, or seek a medical opinion and be offered a prescription NSAID (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug) to see if it resolves the pain. It often will, but it doesn't allow you to know and address the cause. It therefore prevents you from learning anything and making any necessary changes to get your body and life back into a healthy balance.

**Use of pain medication has become so easy and commonplace that we have lost any sense of the danger involved. According to a recent study, the 17<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death in the U.S. is the use of NSAIDs for less than 1 month.** Additionally, a University of Toronto study determined that the 4<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death in the U.S. (following heart disease, cancer, and stroke) was prescription drugs killing over 100,000 people per year or **290 every day.**

**The third and only reasonable choice is to seek the true cause of your pain and a real solution.** This commonly will require the assistance of either a healthcare or a disease-care specialist. **There are many possible experts that you could consult. The first would be your general practice M.D. or a medical specialist.** Their approach would be to attempt to diagnose and treat your symptoms or illness. The focus would be upon curing a malady as opposed to restoring you as a person to wholeness. The tools for doing this are often high-powered drugs with a laundry list of potential side effects or risky surgeries. These methods can be valuable on occasion but typically should be reserved for a rare crisis.

Many of you have been to see your medical doctor already and may or may not have been given a clear diagnosis. **Sometimes a diagnosis** is helpful and necessary toward a solution but at other times it becomes a useless label to hang around your neck. It **maintains you in a negative, illness-focused state of mind and doesn't really offer a true solution.** I believe fibromyalgia to be one such helpless disease identification. I have had an incalculable number of patients over the last 20+ years that have struggled to get an accurate diagnosis or who have one but are no closer to a solution. **We have helped them by assisting them to recover their innate self-healing capacity.**

Many of you have received sophisticated and expensive testing. While this may be beneficial or even necessary, **much of the time I see patients that have received all possible medical testing technologies, but no valuable**

**corrective care. Their true problem remains untouched.** Many of you have had a variety of drugs and therapies thrown at you but no real game plan for true healing has been established.

**Next, there are a number of safer non-drug, non-surgical methods available, especially outside the parameters of your traditional M.D.'s training, experience and recommendations.** However, even they are often limited in their focus to pain management or treating effects rather than restoring function or correcting underlying causation. Acupuncture, physical therapy, homeopathy and massage often fall into this category. They may be helpful, as part of the recovery plan, but often don't reach the core foundational issue. Exercise and proper diet are essential, often a necessary part of the long-term solution, and something that will most likely need to be modified.

There are many possible pieces to the pain resolution puzzle. **However, there is a foundational factor that you may never have thought of. It is your spinal framework and critically powerful central nervous system that absolutely run the show of your health.** The very fabric of health and healing is knit together from the threads of essential information that they transmit. The spine and the spinal cord that travels through and anchors to it, like the strings to the frame of a guitar, play the very music of your emotions, feelings, vitality and life.

Consider the extreme example of **Christopher Reeve (Superman).** **Look at the quality of life alterations that occurred as the communication lifeline was interfered with in his horse-riding accident.** He fractured the two upper vertebrae in his neck. He lost normal bowel, leg and lung function. However, he didn't injure those body parts. He injured his nervous system (spinal cord) that feeds critical functional information and energy to all the other parts. **Injuries and traumatic stresses of lesser magnitude have impacted all of us.** This has often produced pain, loss of vitality and illness as a consequence of our diminished function. This is the manifestation of the **Chiropractic subluxation (misalignment with nervous system interference),** which is affecting people in epidemic numbers and disturbing our self-regulating, self-healing nature.

**The persistent presence of sometimes quietly acquired subluxations may be the reason why you're in pain or have lost some of your health.**

Visiting a licensed doctor of chiropractic to be evaluated for subluxations

followed by a game plan for their correction may hold the critical answer you or your family members need. This may be the essential action step that has been missing that holds the key to truly solving the **cause** of your pain and to putting you on the road to thriving again or maybe for the first time in your life.

There is one more important consideration. **Many people have told me, or those that were attempting to refer them into my office, that they had tried chiropractic before.** They either didn't appreciate the manipulation method which might have been painful or too dramatic, didn't understand their problem, weren't provided a specific corrective game plan, didn't receive scientific, technological evaluations, didn't connect with the doctor, or simply didn't get better. There is one basic answer for all of those valid concerns. **There are many different doctors of chiropractic and there is someone for you that will meet every one of your needs and concerns.** You need to make sure that you find that person.

**Restaurants and aircraft have something to teach us here.** If you visit a restaurant and find the food and/or service not to be to your liking, especially if the experience is repeated upon a subsequent visit, then what do you conclude? The entire concept of a restaurant is invalid and there isn't one anywhere that could meet your need for an enjoyable place to eat away from home? No. Instead, you decide that you have given that specific restaurant a chance and you will now explore elsewhere to meet your future dining needs. The same should be true in the chiropractic realm.

**Not all aircraft are created equal either.** The first Orville and Wilbur Wright plane accomplished something incredible. However, attempting to fly that plane today would be ridiculous. **The point is that as time moves forward, powerful advancements occur. Scientific breakthroughs create new possibilities.** A spacecraft that can reach the moon or even Mars opens new vistas compared to a 747 jet that is also a major advancement over a small propeller plane. **Please don't lump all chiropractic options into the "flown one aircraft you've flown them all" limited mindset.**

**There continue to be powerful scientific advancements in the field of chiropractic. First of all, let's take a look into the diagnostic realm.** The key issue, as we have previously discussed, is detecting and correcting subluxations. (These are spinal misalignments with nervous system interference that are a primary cause of the disruption of the body's self-

regulating/self-healing capacity). This requires **precision analysis** in two key areas.

**First**, the use of **x-rays designed specifically to measure structural misalignments** as well as areas of degenerative disc and joint decay. The x-rays taken or ordered by many medical and chiropractic doctors today suffer from either being taken lying down or not being exacting enough.

The **second** area involves the use of **computerized SEMG (surface electromyography) and thermography as the means of assessing nervous system interference. This is a quantum leap forward and the optimal means of verifying this critical problem.** Without these tools, the assessment is too vague and the plan for correction is usually non-existent. Care recommendations then revert to symptom treating only or proceed indefinitely without appropriate re-evaluation and clear goals.

**The medical world has not been trained to understand and appreciate the incredible value of these diagnostic approaches.** This is true even though SEMG is the outcome assessment tool of choice in neuromuscular scientific studies published in major medical journals and it originated with NASA research. Unfortunately, the vast majority of the chiropractic profession is also not yet savvy to these scientific breakthroughs. Remember, however, that the world was flat for a long time in the minds of the majority.

**Next, let's investigate the realm of adjustment methodology.** The increasing trend as research progresses is movement toward more precise and gentle adjustments as opposed to more general and aggressive manipulations. The specific system of analysis and adjusting called **Torque Release Technique (TRT) with the Integrator instrument** (as opposed to the Activator and other devices) is the only one in the history of chiropractic (since 1895) to come into existence directly from research.

Jay Holder D.C., M.D., PhD developed it specifically for **a research study that ultimately linked subluxation correction with enhanced state of well being through demonstrating powerful reductions in anxiety and depression.** The results were so compelling that they were published in two prestigious scientific journals. TRT combines the best of several different analysis and adjusting approaches but in a dynamic vitalistic fashion. This allows the adjustments to change as the patient responds, allowing for

continued improvement instead of hitting a plateau. **This system is so far beyond the majority of methods currently available.**

**If you are currently in pain** or have been in recent months (even if it has eased with time or medication), there is an underlying cause. **It is very important for your current and future health that you pursue the cause and discover the best solution.** Due to life's many physical injuries, exposures to undesirable chemicals in food, drugs, air and water, and (probably most significantly) relatively unrelenting mental/emotional stresses, your nervous system is undoubtedly overwhelmed leaving you subluxated.

**Subluxation is absolutely a foundational condition underlying most pain and illness. It may be the reason that you are not healing and are still suffering.** I cannot encourage you enough to have your spine and nervous system evaluated right away for vertebral subluxations. **This may be the pivotal key that turns your health and life around.** It is also very important that you find a doctor that you really connect with and that reflects the vision you have for your health and ongoing well being.

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## **About Dr. Matthew K. Norton-Chiropractor**

**Dr. Matthew K. Norton of Norton Chiropractic Wellness Center has dedicated his life to developing, living and teaching a compelling vision of wellness possibilities.** He is passionate about his life, family and work while being committed to perpetual learning. He has been providing the utmost in scientifically advanced care focusing upon subluxation correction since 1983.

Dr. Norton utilizes the latest in computerized diagnostic assessments (SEMG and thermography) coupled with precision spinal x-rays. He also practices Torque Release Technique (TRT) with the Integrator instrument. **He is one of the only doctors in the San Joaquin Valley to utilize these cutting-edge advancements. He would love to assist you to reach true freedom from pain and illness and to live the highest quality of life possible.**

**You may reach Dr. Norton to schedule a consultation by calling 559-490-9550.**