

VII. Top 3 Methods for Controlling the Pain Makers of Back Pain

Lessen or eliminate pain makers by one of three methods (EEE):

1. Exercise: Change your back through stretches and strengthening. Exercises that are designed to help your spine can help handle the tasks which are normally pain makers.
2. Environment: Change your environment or something in your environment. This may include using modified equipment, changing the height of your work surface, adding a back support to your chair, and/or eliminating a task likely to be a pain maker from your life temporarily.
3. Education: Change the technique you are using to perform pain maker tasks. It should be noted, some of the techniques cannot be changed until we change your body- more on that later. As an example, some of you feel the first pain maker of the day when getting out of bed or turning in your bed. Later on we will provide the education on the proper way to turn in bed as well as getting in and out of bed.

ESSENTIAL VERSUS NON-ESSENTIAL TASKS

Ask yourself the question: Is this task or movement that normally is a pain maker VITAL for me to perform to get through TODAY?

Examples:

1. Is it VITAL for you to get out of bed today? YES, because you need to get up and walk as well as perform other tasks to help your back recover.
2. Is it VITAL for you to make your bed today? NO. You can let it go today, and in a week or two when your pain has decreased you can try it then. If you have the option of having someone else make it, do so.
3. Is it VITAL for you to get dressed? YES, because you need to get up and walk as well as perform other tasks to help your back recover.
4. Is it VITAL for you to cut the lawn? NO. Cutting the lawn could increase your pain. We often have patients say to us: "If we don't cut it, nobody else will." Our response: "Who is going to cut it when you have back surgery?" Because that is where you are headed if you continue down the path you are on.

Final Thoughts and Reminders on Pain Makers

You do not try to work through pain makers. You can work up to the point of pain but then you need to back down. The more you experience pain, the more sensitive your nerves become. The more sensitive your nerves become, the easier it is for your pain makers to trigger pain.

Luckily the reverse is also true. The more you can eliminate pain makers, the less sensitive your nerves become. We don't believe your pain is "all in your head".

Just because no one has been able to pinpoint the cause of your pain doesn't mean your pain isn't real. Every pain maker you eliminate is a personal victory and should be viewed as so.

Constant exposure to pain makers may be preventing your body (especially your back) from fully healing. Your body has an incredible ability to heal, if you let it. If you are feeling pain, you might be re-irritating your back with incorrect moves and postures.

Exercises we recommend are solely designed as an end goal to help you manage pain makers. Period!

Pain does not always match the severity of an injury. A common thought is "I am in a lot of pain so something in my back must really be damaged". This is not true. Your nerves may have just become oversensitive to pain because of continuous exposure to pain makers. Your nerves will calm down once you start managing the pain makers.

Only you and you alone can manage your pain makers. Yes, they can be managed. Yes, the amount of pain you experience during a day can be reduced. But you must do it. You are in charge. Nobody is going to come to your rescue. You must decide "I can do this, and I will do this!"