

Releasing Chronic **PAIN**

by TERESA WALDING, RN, BSN, NC-BC

In 2012, 25 million U.S. adults reported experiencing chronic pain on a daily basis (Nahin, 2015). A study funded by the Institute of Medicine has estimated that the cost of chronic pain in the United States ranges from \$560 to \$635 billion a year in medical treatments and lost productivity (Gaskin & Richard, 2012).

I was one of those statistics at the time these studies were taking place. I had pain daily. I was taking Aleve and alternating it with Tylenol every day to tolerate the pain. Every muscle in my body hurt. My lower back would spasm merely lying in bed. I would have to stop and brace myself (mentally) just to sit down or stand up. In short, I was miserable. I knew I did not want to start taking narcotics for the pain...I'm a nurse...I wanted to find the root cause of the pain. So I made an appointment with my PCM and thus began the long wait for specialty appointments with rheumatology, a battery of blood tests, MRIs, detailed assessments, and frequent return appointments for test results. After almost a year, I still had no definitive diagnosis.

During this same time, I began searching for complementary and alternative modalities to help with the pain. I had a massage weekly using a technique called Ortho-Bionomy, which is based on osteopathic principles and alleviates stress and pain patterns with gentle movements. I used my essential oils, had acupuncture, Reiki, and chiropractic treatments, nutrition therapy, etc. I did experience some positive results, but the pain always came back. I began to think I was "just going to have to deal with it."

Then one day, in my seemingly non-stop search for relief, I came across some work by Dr. John Sarno (1991), who wrote a book called *Healing Back Pain*. I read the first chapter, and lightbulbs started going off – most chronic pain is caused by mental/emotional pain shunted to the body through neural pathways that manifests as physical pain in order to protect the person. *What? I was making myself sick!*

I recalled the many sayings I had heard working in health care, such as "It's all in their head," or "We can't fix what's wrong with their thinking," in response to the lack of a diagnosis or failed treatment. Dr. Sarno (1991) called it, Tension Myositis Syndrome (TMS)/Mind Body Syndrome (MBS). As I read, I realized that I had a lot of built up mental tension in the form of worry, insecurity, and self-doubt. In recognizing my mental/emotional pain, I began to understand my physical pain. I felt better

each time I read his books. However, the pain, although tolerable, was not gone. I continued to search.

Fast forward to October 2015. I attended a regional conference hosted by the American Holistic Nurses Association's Central Texas Chapter entitled, "Why Aren't We More Resilient?" Dr. Keith Blevens (2015) was the speaker and talked about how our reality is created through our thoughts. If we're thinking it, we're feeling it. Suddenly I realized at a very deep level where my pain was coming from. I felt light as a feather. A little buzz radiated through my body, and at that same moment, I had no pain. Filled with hope, I now felt mentally and physically free. I could take a deep breath and know I wasn't "crazy." A deep sense of inner knowing affirmed that I was healing at a profound rate.

After the conference, I began a journey of healing that, even today, I look back at in amazement. I moved out of my own way and began to experience what true freedom feels like. My fears of the future disappeared. I started taking classes in nurse coaching and found a new home in the nursing profession.

Today, I consider myself pain free. I'm not saying that I never have pain, but the constant mind-numbing pain I had experienced is now gone. My past emotional pain has healed, and when a painful memory does creep up, I recognize it for what it is – a memory carried through time that no longer exists. That simple recognition alone keeps me grounded in today. Of course, there are times I forget what I have insightfully learned, but I return to my inner knowing more quickly than I used to. I am grateful for this new understanding that has the power to heal.

Now I am living my dream. I am a faculty member of Advancing Holistic Health coaching program. I get to coach using the Resilience Paradigm with my students, clients, and family. My clinical work as a post anesthesia recovery nurse has changed too and taken on a much deeper meaning, where I now see something new every day. Life is a gift. In healing my emotional pain, I am able to live fully in the present and embrace my innate resiliency.

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*Have you ever asked yourself,
“Will I be in pain for the rest of my life?”
“Is this (pain) ever going to end?”*



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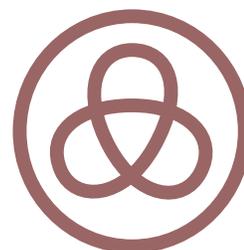
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