

WHICH MODALITY?

Knowing what is going to work for you doesn't have to be a guessing game
by Todd Fiorentino

In a world where art, music, light, color and just about anything that makes one feel good is being considered “therapy,” and where there are literally dozens of spin-off modalities for pain relief, it’s hard to know which way to go. The pain process can be so elusive and difficult to categorize that even trying to describe what you’re feeling can be a challenge.

One day it may be your back. Then the following day it’s your neck. Sound familiar? I frequently hear stories of family members and friends who go to the doctor because of a given symptom; the doctors run a battery of tests only to find nothing. Our bodies and minds can be very complicated to understand. And while we’re pretty good at knocking out bacteria, for instance, doctors are still stumped on how to fight most viruses and are frequently mystified by pain processes.

Part of the reason why alternative healthcare such as chiropractic, acupuncture and massage therapy has become so prevalent is that it fills this void. Pain processes often signal that a lifestyle change needs to take place. But it’s not only the things you’re doing -- such as what you’re putting into your body -- it’s also what you’re not doing.

I recently read some good advice: “Never stop doing the things you love.” Believe it or not, making yourself happy will eliminate many muscular pains.

Pain processes may also be an indicator of inefficiency somewhere in your body. This may be in your gait or how you move, but it could also be energetic. When muscles or soft tissue become dysfunctional (massage or physical therapy) or bones are not properly lined up (chiropractic) or nerve signals are not firing properly (acupuncture), inefficiency results. It is important to keep energy burning through your body cleanly and evenly. Muscular tension blocks energy.

You may be asking, how do I know if it’s soft tissue, muscle, my bones or the nerve signals? All I know is that I feel pain. If you are feeling muscular spasm or tightness, you should probably seek therapeutic massage. Massage is a good starting point regardless because it is the least invasive with the possible exception of deep tissue massage.

Don’t seek radical solutions to simple problems. Going to a chiropractor for muscular spasm would be an example of this.

If you were in a car accident, got whipped around on a roller-coaster or suffered from a sports injury, you might seek chiropractic. Remember, there are many gray areas and this is just my opinion. Many chiropractors would tell you that chiropractic is good for everyone. Of course, no one is completely aligned so perhaps, to an extent, they are right.

Acupuncture is especially good for long-term chronic pain cases because it changes the speed of energy flow traveling through the nerves. Beyond jumping synapses in your brain, electrical charge must flow throughout your body. The metal in the thin acupuncture needles can alter the electrical flow.

Massage, on the other hand, changes your actual tissues. Fascia, which is connective tissue, can range from gelatinous to rock hard, and helps keep muscles from sticking together. It is also a stabilizing force. (You might think of it as the filler that

holds your body together and exists between all of your muscles and bones). Ideally, your fascia should be soft to allow for flexibility.

In cases of sciatica: bone, soft tissue or muscle could be pushing on the nerve, causing pain. A chiropractor may adjust the bone but if the muscle is dysfunctional, it will continue to pull back against the nerve. And since everything in your body is in a state of dynamic balance, when there is a problem on one side, it automatically affects the other.

So if one side is tensing up, the other will stretch. Both can be painful. It is for this reason that you may go to a massage therapist and tell him/her that your left shoulder hurts, and the therapist will start working on the right one. It's not that they didn't hear you; instead, they are addressing the compensation pattern first.