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5 Ways to Ease the Underlying Causes Of Pain

Written by Trent Dolman

Chronic pain can interrupt your entire life— from losing sleep to increasing stress, and making it difficult to focus.

Around 1 in 5 people experience chronic pain in their lives, with this increasing with age.

If you've been in chronic pain for some time, then it's likely that you've tried to manage the pain in some way to provide relief.

But if you don't address the cause, any relief will only be temporary.

In my practice as an acupuncturist, wellness coach and personal trainer, I've helped hundreds of people with chronic pain and found that the most effective way to treat the pain was to start by identifying the cause.

When you know the cause of the pain, you can overcome it.

In this guide, I'll share with you the 3 underlying causes of chronic pain and the 5 things you can do help overcome them.

Wait—can't you just manage pain with pills?

Before we go on, I want to get this out of the way—managing chronic pain with pills is not a long term solution.

You can't just spray Lynx Africa over a body that hasn't been washed in 5 days and call it clean.

Masking pain is different to treating pain.

When you're looking for a long term solution, you don't want to treat it with short term fixes.

OK with that said, let's dive into the underlying causes of pain.

The 3 Underlying Causes Of Pain

Cause 1: Chronic Inflammation

Inflammation and pain go hand in hand.

Studies show that inflammation, not compression or wear and tear, is the primary cause of joint damage.

When there's chronically inflamed tissue in and around the joints, they become stiff, overheated, and swollen with stagnant chemicals and fluids.

But chronic inflammation doesn't just damage joints – it also wreaks havoc on your immune system and other aspects of your health, dramatically accelerating the ageing process.

Inflammation commonly stems from issues with the gut.

Even if you don't have digestive problems, gut inflammation can show symptoms in the form of pain in other areas of the body, such as the back, neck and shoulders.

Cause 2: Untreated Stress

Our bodies' natural systems are designed to be able to deal with a level of stress.

Anything that the body deems as “not normal” puts some amount of stress on the system so the body can deal with the abnormality and return to its normal state.

How well you slept last night, your heart rate, when you last had a bowel movement, or how sluggish your metabolism seems – you can't control these consciously, but they are constantly being regulated in your body.

All of these involuntary (or automatic functions) are regulated in the body by the autonomic nervous system through the regulation of chemicals, electrical impulses, and hormones.

The different parts of the autonomic nervous system are:

- **the sympathetic nervous system** - involved with movement and our fight or flight responses, the world of adrenalin (short term stress) and cortisol (long term stress)
- **the parasympathetic nervous system** - involved with essential functions and restoration, sometimes called the "rest and digest" system; the world of sleep, digestion and recovery.

It's a good thing you don't have to think about the five hundred functions of your liver, how often you need to blink, or when food is ready to move from your stomach to your intestines.

Your body is doing this for you, and it's an intricate dance that is perfectly balanced.

That is until it isn't...

In our modern world, we're often stuck in "fight or flight" and don't allow the rest and restore the system to play its role.

The natural response of the body to stress is inflammation, but if we don't allow the parasympathetic system enough opportunity to counteract this, then it can create blockages and cause problems.

Cause 3: Poor Circulation

Poor circulation can result from stress that hasn't been processed and has become stagnant.

This stagnant stress accumulates, which reduces the ability for fluid to flow and affects the supportive environment your systems need to thrive.

Having an adequate circulation of fluids in your tissue and organs is vital for its function and daily repair.

Your capacity for healing and repair is completely reliant on your cells' ability to take in healthy fluid, nutrients, hormones, neurotransmitters and emit waste.

When the environment around your cells is stagnant, cell walls seal themselves off and resist absorption. This makes cell renewal impossible. **Cell renewal is what keeps you looking and feeling young.**

Slow cell renewal accelerates not only ageing and appearance, but accelerates bone and muscle loss, impairs organ function, impedes immune response, and slows metabolism.

You may find yourself with symptoms like weight gain, low libido, chronic constipation, headaches, fatigue, low back pain, anxiety, and insomnia.

By the time you have these symptoms, there's a significant underlying problem.

To help overcome these underlying problems, you need to get back to a balanced state.

Now that you know what the 3 underlying causes of pain are, let's look at the 5 ways that you can help your body to overcome them...

5 Ways To Ease the Underlying Causes Of Pain

1. Identify Your Inputs

What stressors are you adding to your life?

I'm not just talking about diet here, but what are you putting into your mind as well.

Your environment, the people in it and the media you're consuming can add just as much stress to your system as overloading on junk food.

Identifying these inputs in your life isn't about judgement, this is simply starting with awareness. Keeping a journal can really help.

Nothing fancy, just a notepad where you can easily note down the foods you eat, the people you're with and what you're doing throughout the day.

The key is to simply keep an unbiased record.

Oftentimes we think we're being really healthy, but we forget about that late-night burger and fries we ate in front of the TV at 3 am after a few too many cocktails the night before.

While we can be unhealthier than we think, we can also be much healthier than we give ourselves credit for.

We forget all those times when we chose healthier options to take the stairs or not get a second helping of pavlova.

This exercise is about noticing what we're doing so we can see it all in one place.

Keep a journal for 2 weeks. Write down the foods you eat, the activities you're doing and who you were doing them with.

Again this is just about awareness without judgement.

1. Identify Your Inputs

I like to use a Moleskin A6 notebook as it's small enough to fit in my pocket. Many of my patients like to use the notes app on their phones to keep the journal.

There's no right or wrong way to do it. Just start being aware and taking note of what you're putting into your body and mind.

ACTION:decide how you'll practice awareness, whether that's writing notes on your phone, in a notebook or making mental notes.

2 - Simplify Your Routine

Our minds and bodies are amazing at conserving calories, and the most efficient way to conserve calories is to just repeat what we've always done.

Our systems have a strong bias toward "If we've done it before, it will be easy to repeat it."

The problem is, **if we keep doing what we've always done, we're going to keep getting the same as we've always got.**

So if you're in pain and want to make a change, then something needs to change in your life.

The fewer variables that are in your life, the simpler your day will be and the less stress will be on your system.

Although life isn't about removing all stresses—that's not realistic—we want to remove the unessential stress to get your system back to a balanced state so we can then work on building resilience.

Start by simplifying the most important parts of your life, one thing at a time.

Here are a few ideas to get you started:

- **Relationships:** each day tell your partner or someone important in your life something you appreciate about them.
- **Diet:** each day, choose to replace one meal or snack with a healthier option.
- **Exercise:** each day, move for 5 minutes longer than you usually would. This could be a 5-minute walk, stretch or an extra set at the gym.
- **Mindset:** each day, write down 3 things that you're grateful for.
- **Rest:** each day, take 10 minutes to rest. Turn off all your device notifications, find a quiet place where you won't be interrupted, and allow your mind and body to just be. For guidance by way of meditation, try the Calm app or Headspace app.

It's not about doing everything perfectly, it's about identifying one thing that's important to you and one thing you can do to take care of it in a simple way.

ACTION: Take a moment now to brainstorm 5 things you can do to simplify your routine.

3. Move Your Body

The more we're stationary, the higher the likelihood that stress and inflammation will build up in our bodies.

By moving our bodies, we help to naturally clear the stress in our system.

Some people love to exercise and already have it as a part of their daily routine. For others, it can feel like a real struggle.

Wherever you are with your fitness level, then that's where we'll start from.

Let's take a moment right now to release all the judgement we have about our bodies and our fitness level and free ourselves from any negative thoughts.

Take a deep breath in... Now breath out fully and release any judgement.

Repeat this 5 times and allow yourself to release more and more with each exhalation

You're alive. You're breathing. You're able to read this.

You're doing good - now, let's get moving!

We're not trying to hit the gym for hours every day or become the best at exercising.

All we're doing here is getting movement into our lives and we do this by starting small.

Where many people go wrong is trying to "catch up" on all the times when they haven't been exercising by setting big goals and overcommitting themselves.

They think this will motivate them, but after not too long it ends up having the opposite effect and overwhelming them.

What to do instead is to start small. Set small exercises you can do every day.

Exercises so small they're almost laughable.

Calf raises while you wait for your kettle to boil, 5 squats before you check your social media, dancing around in your office before you start your workday.

These are all simple and easy ways to get your body moving and clear away stress.

With movement every day, your body will be more efficient at clearing stress, you'll be more productive and you'll feel more positive.

You can make it happen and you're allowed to make it fun.

Your future self will thank you for it.

ACTION: Write down 5 laughably small exercises you can do to get your body moving.

4. Rest Your Mind

Just like our bodies, our minds need time to rest and recover.

When our minds are under stress, chemicals are released into the body. When the body's systems are out of balance and not able to process these chemicals, it causes harmful inflammation.

When we're lifting weights to build muscles, muscle growth happens while we're resting. The same is true for our minds.

Rest gives our minds space to develop new neural pathways. This space helps us think more creatively.

You know those ideas that come to you while you're in the shower or while daydreaming on a walk somewhere?

This is your mind having the space and freedom to think creatively.

It's kind of counterintuitive, but the more space we can give our minds, the better they can think. The more we work our minds into exhaustion, the less.

Resting your mind is allowing it to have the space to not need to be busy.

It doesn't mean achieving a zen state level of enlightenment, it just means giving it a break from working on overdrive all the time.

Here's how you can help your mind have the rest it needs:

Get 7+ hours of sleep - there's no way around it, we need sleep. Start prioritizing the health of your mind by giving it the sleep it needs to recharge.

Schedule yourself nothing time - for many people, this is very challenging. Our culture is built on always doing. Take some nothing time to enjoy your surroundings. You don't have to always be a human doing, you can take time to enjoy life as a human being.

Practice Mindfulness – how much of our lives do we spend in our minds thinking about the future or getting lost in the past? Being mindful is about being present right now with what you’re doing at this moment. Every moment is an opportunity to be mindful. While you’re washing the dishes, while you’re making a coffee, while you’re reading this. These are all opportunities to practice keeping your mind focused on what’s in front of you.

A regular meditation practice can help you become more mindful and apps like Calm and Headspace can make this practice part of your daily routine.

Get Professional Support – from a psychologist, therapist, or wellness coach. They can help you with tools to create awareness in your mind.

ACTION: brainstorm 5 ways you could help your mind to rest

5. Restore The Natural Flow

In Traditional Chinese Medicine, energy is referred to as Qi (pronounced “chee”).

A healthy (and happy) human being is a dynamic but harmonious mixture of all the aspects of Qi that make up who we are.

When our bodies' Qi is blocked, it causes problems with inflammation, stress and circulation.

Like a river that’s blocked by a dam, it has an effect on the natural ecosystem downstream that depends on what the river provides.

When we keep the blockages clear, this allows the energy to flow naturally and the system can return to its natural state.

In their natural state, our systems are able to help us overcome issues with physical, emotional and psychological pain while helping us feel healthier and happier.

This is where acupuncture can help.

Here are a few of the benefits of acupuncture:

- Helps to unblock and restore the flow of Qi
- Resolves stagnation, allowing Qi and Blood to flow freely
- Helps to stimulate blood flow and restore nerve damage
- Reduces inflammation
- Releases endorphins, our natural painkillers
- Improves blood flow
- Increases local healing response
- Relaxes body and mind, allowing the systems to naturally restore

Summary

Now you know about the 3 underlying causes of pain: inflammation, untreated stress and poor circulation.

You also know the 5 things that can help:

1 - Identifying your inputs - awareness of what you're putting into your body and mind.

2 - Simplifying your routine - creating simple, healthy habits so you can focus on what's most important

3 - Moving your body - quick and easy movements you can do each day to get your blood flowing.

4 - Rest your mind - just like our bodies, our minds need time to rest and recover.

4 - Restoring the natural flow - how energy (Qi) blockages affect our system and how acupuncture can help them restore naturally.

I hope you've found this content helpful!

Book In A Treatment

If you want help with your chronic pain so you can feel better, recover faster and live healthier - then book a consult with me and I'll work with you to put together a treatment plan. My approach combines my experience with acupuncture, personal training and over 12 years in business.

Constant stress with little rest was common in my life and although I had a loving family, I found myself burnt out and suicidal at 28 years old.

Since then, I've found my healing by prioritising my health and relationships and have found my purpose in helping others to do the same.

I'm here to guide your body to remove blockages and turn to its natural balance.

I'm here to help on your journey to health.

Best,

- Dr. Trent Dolman

0401 655 585

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Trent Dolman

Book A Consultation

Want to improve your health, and recover faster from injury, stress, and pain?

Visit my clinic for an initial consultation.

Simply book online or call to book in a time that works for you: 0401 655 585

BOOK ONLINE



*"Trent's acupuncture and other treatments have helped me deal with ongoing muscle tightness and injury and also helped with relaxation. **He is also a great coach motivating me to work harder toward my health and fitness goals.** Highly recommend booking in with Trent to find out for yourself how he can support your goals."*

– Thuong Nguyen