

## 45 Years of Chronic Pain -- Then Postural Restoration Crossed My Path

When I was about 5 years old, I fell off a chair and had a brain concussion that affected my vision. I still remember what it looked like to have triple vision, then everything being all white, then all black – all the while feeling nauseous and having a pounding headache. The following year I was riding on the rock wagon in our farm field, kicking at the wheel (which I knew I wasn't supposed to do), when it caught my foot and the next thing I remembered was seeing the sky come into view as the wagon rolled across my left hip. The field was just plowed, so I was pushed down into the dirt when I was run over, and walked away with just scratches and a tire track across my upper thigh.

When I was about 10 years old, I began to experience leg pain serious enough to keep me awake at night. A medical doctor said it was just “growing pains.” At 13, I had asthma so bad that I could not walk across a room without stopping to rest and catch my breath. A chiropractor took an x-ray that showed an S-shaped scoliosis that had started in the lumbar spine. The doctor showed us where the growth space was broken off on one vertebra, and the assumption was that this had happened when I was run over. The thoracic spine was curved the opposite direction of the lumbar spine, with one vertebra tilted 21 degrees. The cervical spine was curved the opposite direction of the thoracic spine. I began chiropractic treatment. Another injury occurred when I was 14. I slipped on a patch of ice on the bottom step of the school bus as I was getting off, and the back of my neck hit the top step.

The chiropractic treatments helped keep the pain manageable, although they never really fixed the problem. I was told my spine had grown into the “S” shape and it could not be fixed. Physical activity always caused additional pain. I could not run like other people; my arms and legs seemed to “flail” and be uncoordinated. Much of the time I felt like each side of my body was disconnected from the other side, as if they didn't know how to work together. I recall periods of time when the low back pain was so severe I simply could not do normal things like shopping, dancing, or standing for long periods of time. When I did not get chiropractic treatments, I would go through a whole bottle of Tylenol every month. Sometimes my low back would “lock up” so severely when I slept on my side that I had to wake my husband to have him push me over onto my back. I couldn't do it myself. I had two pregnancies, and both increased the amount of pain and restriction I had. I had severe headaches for years and years. Neck and arm pain were almost constant. I could always tell when I *really* needed to get in for a chiropractic treatment because my left ear would become flaming red and hot to the touch; the left side of my head and jaw would be a constant ache.

I was in two rear-end car accidents that caused whiplash symptoms, one in my early 30's, and one in my late 40's.

In spite of the chronic pain, I tried to be as active as I could. I tried aerobics, and popped a rib the first class. I tried yoga, and torqued my pelvis so badly I could hardly walk for a month. Walking seemed my safest bet, but I always walked with pain. When I was 44, I walked a 10K in spite of constant pain. It was a huge accomplishment! I walked the same 10K when I was 54, again with constant pain, but I did it.

I am almost 58 now. About two years ago, I asked my primary physician if I could try physical therapy for the back pain. That is when a postural restoration physical therapist crossed my path and guided me in a new direction. In addition to exercises and manual therapy, I have new orthotics, and glasses with prisms in them. Tape is used on the glasses when minor adjustments are needed.

I am virtually pain free now! I work out just about every day, using an elliptical, treadmill, or outdoor walking. I can even jog about ¼ mile! Headaches are very rare (a couple of times a year, maybe). When I do have pain, I have various tools to choose from, and can usually figure out something that will relieve or correct the problem. I have learned awareness of my own energy, and recognize when I am in a homolateral state. I have used homolateral crossover energy exercises to restore balance and once again feel each side of my body connecting with the other. I am a singer and have experienced marked improvement in my ability to breathe fully. I was not aware that my breathing had been shallow and in the upper part of my lungs. Now my ribs expand, and I can take full, deep breaths.

While many people attribute pain and stiffness to “getting older,” I am feeling better the older I get! I did not believe it was possible for me to live without chronic pain, but Postural Restoration has made it a reality.