

Bodywork for Wellness

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Spring/Summer '11 Newsletter

Pain as a messenger: In the last newsletter the idea of increased awareness in our bodies was addressed. We need awareness to know what is going on in life, in work, and in our bodies. But what happens when the awareness we have is one of pain somewhere in our body? Often the idea of pain is an unpleasant one. However if we can widen our view we may find that pain can be a messenger, and it can actually help us take better care of ourselves.

Many times we can forget that our body is made up of billions of cells all connected and communicating with each other from organs, muscles, bones, to our brain. These groups of cells communicate with each other in many ways: a few are thru hormones, vibrations/motion, and chemical reactions. What is amazing is how many actions are happening every minute in the background of "what we are really doing" Right now I am thinking and typing, but thankfully my body is breathing and digesting and beating my heart. So there are a lot of things happening that don't need our conscious attention.

Parts of our brain are always monitoring what is going on with us so that we know all systems are working well and correctly. But when all things are not going well we have to have a way to know this, so it can be corrected. We need a messenger. Often times pain is the messenger. This is our body's way of getting our attention so that we know something is wrong and we can try to correct it.

Many times pain gets a bad rap, but I am here to tell you that if pain can be thought of as a tool or indicator- it can be quite useful. Pain can tell us we need to go slower, lift less, or that we need to rest. It can tell us not to eat things that aren't good for us. It can tell us we have really hurt ourselves and we need medical attention. So the next time you have pain try to check in with it. Listen to what your body is communicating with you. This can help you try to find ways to ease your own pain, or it can let you know when you need to see the Doctor, go to the Emergency room or get set up with a physical therapy or massage session.

So how much pain is too much or how long is too long? Severe pain should always be addressed very quickly. Aches and pains that come from doing a new or different activity or when you know "what you did" to create the pain, if these sensations don't calm down within 5 days then you should seek treatment. Other awareness of mild discomfort or pain can give us generalized information about what might need changing in our environment. Do you need a new pillow, a new chair, do you need to find a new way to sit, lift, or move? These are all questions we can get the answer to if we can widen our view of pain so we can use it as a tool to help us take care of ourselves.

Spring/Summer wellness tip: New News on Sunscreen: Recently the FDA announced changes that will be mandatory by next year for sunscreens. The changes are: sunscreen will have to protect against UV A rays which cause skin cancer as well as UV B rays which cause sunburn that can lead to cancer. Also words like waterproof and sweatproof will be limited to 40 or 80 minutes per application. Which means we need to reapply frequently no matter what the label says. With these new regulations you will start seeing words like Broad Spectrum this will cover UV A and B rays, and sunscreen with SPF levels will be no higher than 50+ because the FDA has not found studies with significant proof to support protection higher than SPF 50. So this summer, always wear sunscreen when outdoors and reapply liberally. The good news is stores are already carrying brands of sunscreens with Broad Spectrum protection. So be prepared and get your new Broad Spectrum coverage sunscreen and protect your skin.

If you have a comment or question, or to learn more about Bodywork for Wellness please call or email:

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