



# 8 Essential Components When Healing Chronic Neck / Back Discomfort and Pain

*Presented by Rita Rivera*  
*Teacher of the Alexander Technique*

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28 Day Program for Management and or Relief of  
Chronic Back / Neck Discomfort & Pain



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*We are all unique with different circumstances contributing to the experience of poor posture, leading to chronic discomfort or pain. In my almost 30 years as a teacher of the Alexander Technique, it has been my experience that healing generally takes a bit of time and patience – especially to achieve long lasting results.*

*After two back injuries, my somatic training has been an enriching guide and comfort in my own healing.*

*My work as a dancer, chigong practitioner and teacher of the Alexander Technique have been pivotal in sustaining my health and vitality. My experiences and career have led me to create “Your Brilliant Back” 28 day posture reboot, an essential blueprint for you to manage and relieve chronic stress issues due to poor, unconscious postural habits.*

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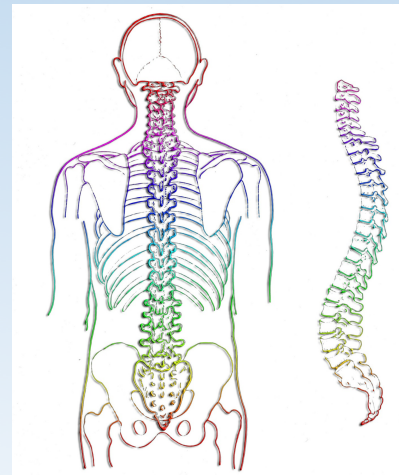


## Introduction

We often take our backs, and for that matter our body, for granted until we have pain. Our backs and necks are vulnerable – rarely do we receive training on how to develop and maintain balanced posture.

### Contributors to chronic discomfort & pain issues.

- Posture
- Extended periods of stress
- Injury or trauma
- Unresolved emotions from past injuries & trauma
- Adhesions
- Repetitive actions
- Dehydration
- Poor diet
- Inflammation
- A lack of movement and exercise



**How you sit, stand, move – even speak and breath will impact your posture and the way you experience balance and ease in your body.**

Building awareness of your posture, shifting the patterns that cause stress, paying attention to the way you breathe, allows you to break free of chronic limitation so that you can experience a greater degree of freedom and ease in daily living.

**The following is a list of 8 essential considerations on your journey to managing and or relieving chronic discomfort and pain.**



# 1. Posture

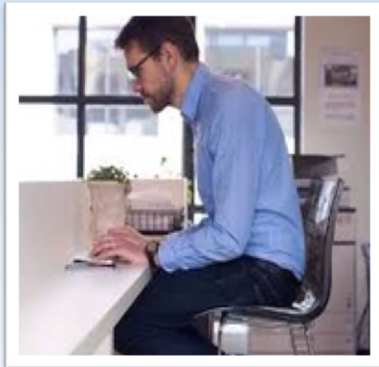
Unconscious posture is a big contributor to chronic discomfort & pain.  
Do any of these strike a cord?



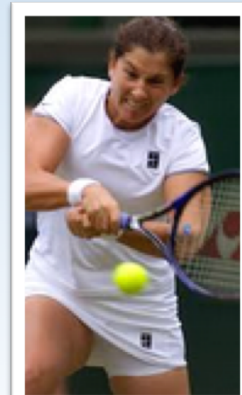
Emotions



Accidents



Repetitive Habits

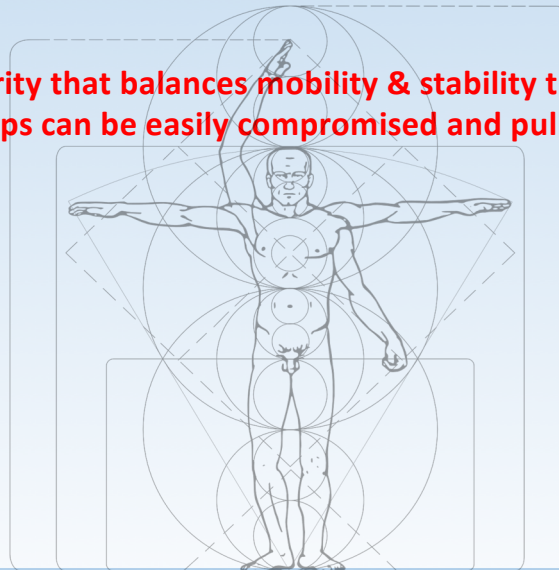


Professional  
Demands

Poor posture impacts our muscular skeletal system. In turn, that can impact our organs, our nervous system and the way we breathe. For many people these imbalances can go on for a long time before chronic discomfort and pain arise, for others, the compensation created in postural imbalances show up quickly.

**A dynamic balance is critical.** From a purely structural standpoint, imbalances cause stress. Think of an engineer building a multi-level structure. Critical planning comes into managing the overall design of a building to make sure the building is safe, functional and free of stresses that would be dangerous to inhabit the building.

**Our body has an innate integrity that balances mobility & stability through tensional relationships.  
These relationships can be easily compromised and pulled out of balance.**





### **Example:**

In the above picture (on far right) notice how the weight of the head is forward of the vertical axis – or the spine. This is not uncommon, especially with cell phone and computer use.

Unconscious, poor posture will impact the health of your spine, setting up a trajectory of compression and kyphosis (rounding of the upper back).

In aging, as well as poor postural habits, if our head is not balanced well - gravity pulls us down and takes us into compression, impacting nerves and the health of our neck and back.

***One powerful aspect of changing this pattern?  
Building awareness & directing our thoughts, which in turn impact our actions!***

The body can compensate many times before instability and or chronic pain begins. However, compensation is like a cascade and at some point the body will no longer be able to compensate further – again, leading to discomfort or pain.

One of the pioneers in the field of posture awareness was **Matthias Alexander** who created the principles of the Alexander Technique in the early 1900's.

I highly recommend the Alexander Technique to assist you in building conscious awareness of your posture and how you use yourself in activities during the day – and that includes how you sit and how you stand.

F. Matthias Alexander



Compressing or being “pulled down” by unconscious habits can be counteracted.



**Unconscious patterns set-up a trajectory of how we will age.**

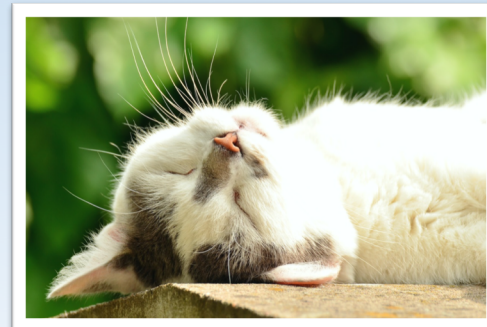
## 2.Rest

We all agree that sleeping and rest are important. It feels great to wake up from a really good night sleep – feeling energized and ready for our day.

It's also common that people have trouble sleeping and can struggle with energy and clarity during the day. And, at different times of our lives and depending on the stresses that we have, our need for rest will be different.

Some benefits of quality rest and sleep:

- Supports the immune system
- Can improve memory, concentration and productivity
- Restores & energizes
- Improves your mood
- Can release stress
- Impacts your hormonal balance



**“Conscious Resting” can assist in releasing long held patterns.**

I have a close friend in her 40's who is energetic and healthy and she swears that taking a nap every day for about 30 minutes is responsible for her energy and vitality. Another friend says she can never nap, she feels guilty taking the time.

Regardless of where you are on the spectrum of taking down time during the day, here are some ideas to incorporate into a daily routine to make sure you allow your body time to rest, counteracting the stressors that lead and contribute to chronic discomfort and pain.



- **Meditation** – is a powerful tool for self reflection. Science is also proving that the positive benefits of meditation impact our body, mind and emotions. If you are unfamiliar with meditation, this can be as simple as sitting quietly for 15 minutes and following your breathing.
- **Napping** – if taking a short nap to revitalize your system works for you, then incorporate napping into your health program.
- **Restorative yoga** – is a practice about slowing down and opening your body through passive stretching. During the long holds, your muscles are encouraged to relax deeply. It's a unique feeling because props are used to support your body.
- **Restorative Rest**– this is a passive resting pose that I use in “Your Brilliant Back” program that is ideal for resting, without the stretching of restorative yoga, napping or meditating.

**A combination of all of these approaches can be used!**

### 3. Breath

Are you aware of how you breathe? Do you hold your breath?  
Do you allow your belly to move freely when you breathe?

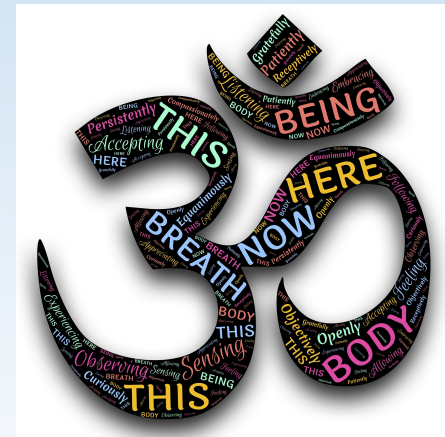
I have had many clients tell me that they are shallow breathers and there are also people that don't think much about how they breathe. Just as we can have poor habits in our posture, we can also have poor breathing habits.

Stress, tension, trauma and suppressed emotions will impact how we breathe.

When we breathe well, we feel more grounded and present.

## Benefits of breathing well:

- Breathing detoxifies
- Breathing oxygenates our cells
- Keeps the diaphragm strong
- Assists in relieving pain
- Focused breathing connects us to present time and what we are feeling
- Stimulates the parasympathetic nervous system for relaxation



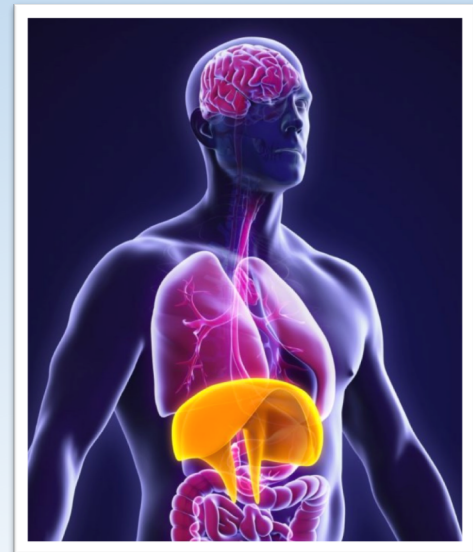
Have you ever observed a new born breathing? Their whole body seems to breath and you can observe the movement of the diaphragm.

**The diaphragm** is a large muscle that divides the heart and lungs from the lower organs (yellow dome in picture). This is the primary muscle for breathing.

**To connect with the motion of the diaphragm:**

- Sit quietly (or you can do this lying down)
- Gently, place one hand on your belly and one hand a little below your heart
- As you inhale, feel the air coming into your lungs as the diaphragm pulls down
- As you exhale, feel the air leaving the lungs as the diaphragm moves up

The diaphragm pulls down to make room for the expanding lungs.  
The diaphragm moves up to assist in pushing the air out of the lungs.



**Focus on your breath in meditation and allow the diaphragm to freely move.  
This can be an effective tool for helping to relieve chronic discomfort.**

## 4. Hydration

In Dr. Dana Cohen's book, "Quench" she describes that water exists as liquid, ice, vapor and gel, the latter which is known as "structured water". Every muscle, bone, organ, cell and nerve is surrounded by this fluid-based tissue.

She highlights:

- A key component of proper hydration is getting the water into the cell, and one of the most effective ways of doing that is to eat your water in the form of plant foods. Chia seeds, aloe vera and cactus gels are also excellent hydrators.
- You can also structure the water already inside your body by exposing your bare skin to infrared and ultraviolet radiation such as sunlight on a regular basis.



**Proper Hydration is necessary to detoxify and remove waste via sweat, stool and urine.**

# Are you well hydrated?

**Connective tissue** is the most abundant tissue in the human body. The **connective tissue** connects, supports, binds and separates. Think of the **connective tissue** as a 3-dimensional grid of architectural support throughout the body. The supportive nature of this matrix is acquired between the balance of fluid within this tissue along with the integrity of fibers and molecular components.

**When the connective tissue is well hydrated, it is flexible, glide-able, and resilient.**

**When the connective tissue is dehydrated, it gets inflexible and stiff – like a dried out sponge.** This causes the fibers to slowly adhere, inhibiting the tissues ability to glide. The outcome is less support, responsiveness and connection – leading to chronic issues of discomfort and pain. This type of pain is often difficult to diagnosis.

Our **connective tissue** and **fascia** (fascia is a type of connective tissue) is a renewable tissue that is made up of 70-80% water and this water combines with protein and fibers ie: collagen, elastin and other molecules.

**Hydration is important! It's not only the water we drink, but the food we eat!**

## 5.Nutrition

This is a big topic that can be frustrating and confusing! With countless approaches – from raw foods to a paleo meat based diet – along with gut imbalances and sensitivities – what is the right choice?

One thing that is certain, when suffering from chronic discomfort and pain, it's important to remove inflammatory foods. And, if your body needs repair, you may need nutrients and supplements as the health of your gut will either hinder or support your inflammation and healing.

This critical piece on your healing journey really does need special attention. Consider a consultation with a Naturopath, Nutritionist or Health Coach. You may need some necessary testing to get you on track.

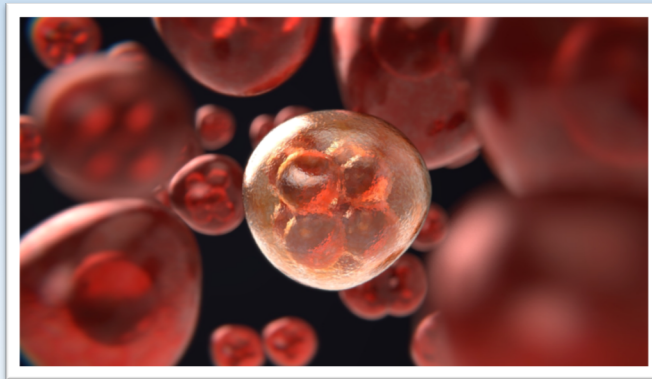
Reduce inflammation and get the proper nutrients!

**Make adopting new plans around your food & beverage intake fun and enjoyable, nutritious and delicious!**



## 6.Movement

When the sperm enters the egg at conception, a process of mitosis begins, which is basically a division of cells.  
This is our humble beginning - this stage of our formation is motion, is movement.  
We are without language or consciousness at that stage - but there is motion.



We move on the most minuscule levels. Our cells move, they breathe.  
Cellular breath happens within a fluid exchange.  
This is our foundation. Movement is who we are.

# Explorations in Movement

## **A simple list to begin moving or to stay in motion on your healing journey:**

Think about “natural movement” as an important part of your healing journey – simply, walk. Use small strides. Try walking on soft terrain and uneven terrain that challenges your balance – and use walking sticks if necessary.

When you are in chronic pain and understand how to walk well, walking in nature can contribute to healing your back. Start with a short walk – feel your body in motion. Other things to explore:

- Chigong
- Thai Chi
- Walking in nature
- Swimming
- Yoga - Try Restorative Yoga
- Melt Method
- The Alexander Technique
- The Feldenkrais Method
- Dance - find a class that supports you, or move to music at home



**There are many movement modalities to explore on your healing journey. Explore - take the time to find what you enjoy and what works for you. Be open and learn about new methods that you may be unfamiliar to you.**

# 7.Support Systems

A support system is comforting and necessary to have in place. When I injured my back, my first plan was the *“hoping and wishing it would go away”* plan, and I can assure you, this is not effective!

**A trusted doctor is good to have on your support team, with many excellent choices:**

- Chiropractic
- Naturopath
- Osteopath
- Integrative Medicine
- Functional Medicine

**Alternative Support can include, with many excellent choices:**

- Acupuncture
- Health Coach
- Massage Therapy
- Alexander Technique
- Cranial Sacral Therapy
- Myofascial Release
- Look into Body Mind Syndrome



**A trusted loving friend and a support group can be a lifeline when healing from chronic discomfort & pain.**

## 8. Journaling

**Don't underestimate the value of keeping a journal where you can freely write about the emotional aspect of what you are experiencing. Journaling is a helpful tool that will often provide insights on your journey to healing chronic pain and discomfort.**

The American Psychological Association states that new research suggests that expressing yourself by writing strengthens the immune system!

Grab an journal, a pen and express yourself – don't hold back!

**Express yourself freely through Therapeutic Writing or Expressive Journaling**



*Every day we have an opportunity to put a new plan in motion, to develop a new habit and to live a new life.  
See the beauty that surrounds us.  
Make new choices, perhaps bold choices and be open to new experiences.*



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