

How to relieve chronic pains

by 'Focusing on breathing' and 'Gentle stretching'

Caution: First practice the 'Step 1: Relax the muscles deeply' routines. Continue these practices till you experience significant relaxation and less pain in the painful muscles. Then consult your doctor and practice the routines under 'Step 2: Gently stretch while 'focusing on breathing'. Do not exceed your comfort level of pain while stretching.

'Focus on breathing' – Three modes

Triple segment mode: This mode takes a while to work. After the practice, the muscles remain relaxed for some time. Every finger has 2 cross lines, dividing it into 3 parts. We call them segments. Place the tip of the thumb at the top segment of the little finger and breathe three times. Move the thumb to the middle segment and breathe three times. Move to the bottom segment and breathe three times. Repeat these steps at the next 3 fingers. At the thumb, place the tip of the index finger on its segments and follow the same steps. Then switch to the other hand and repeat the process all over. Continue the practice, switching the hands. If you realize that you lost track of the breathing, start immediately from the top segment of the little finger of any hand.

Repeat Counting Mode: While breathing in, feel the faint coolness inside the nose. While breathing out, count slowly in the mind, repeating the same number till the end of the out-breath. First out-breath, count 'one, one, one ...so on', second out-breath, count 'two, two, two ...so on' and third out-breath, count 'three, three, three ...so on'. Then, repeat the same sequence: counting with 'one, one, one ...so on' during the next out-breath. When your mind wanders and stops tracking the breaths, don't digress into wondering why your mind wandered. Simply get back to the practice, by counting 'one, one, one....so on' during the next out-breath. The number may be repeated once, twice, thrice or more. Continue repeating till the out-breath ends. It is OK for the number of repetitions to change from time to time.

911 Mode: This mode quickly diverts the mind from the acute pain and softens it momentarily. Breathe in deeply into your abdomen. Purse your lips with only a little opening at the center and blow the air out through the lips, like blowing air through a straw. The out-breath becomes slow and long.

Step 1: Relax the muscles deeply

Phase 1: Insomnia is a common feature of chronic pain. It deprives you of precious hours of healing sleep. It makes you more sensitive to pain. By practicing this technique you will no longer suffer from insomnia. You will enjoy quality sleep and become less sensitive to pain. The following two practices have a powerful healing effect. You will enjoy them.

At bedtime: Lie down in the bed preferably on your back. If you don't like lying on the back, adopt any other comfortable posture. Close your eyes and practice the 'Triple segment mode'. You will be surprised how quickly you fall asleep. When your sleep gets disturbed in the night, get back to sleep, using the same mode. Don't ever lose precious sleep time.

When you wake up in the morning: Continue lying in the bed, keep your eyes closed and practice the 'Triple segment mode'. Lie down in different positions - on your left, on your right, on your back and on your chest, be still in each position and practice the 'Triple segment mode' completing a pair of hands. If you like the impact in any particular position, practice more pairs of hands. Every passing week, you will feel more relaxed in mind and body.

Phase 2: Practice the 'Triple segment mode' during the day, before breakfast and before dinner when there is no chance of falling asleep, Lie on your back on a cushioned but firm and flat surface, like the carpeted floor. Spread your legs and hands wide, at a comfortable angle. Rest your head on the floor or on a thin pillow supporting the neck. If you can't lie in this posture, adopt any comfortable resting posture. Keep your body still and practice the 'triple segment mode' for about 45 minutes. If you like its effect, increase it over a few days, to one hour. Practice like this twice a day. In the beginning you will be impatient thinking "when will this boring 45 minutes end?". Use an alarm to set the time and avoid thinking about it. Bear with this impatience. In a couple of weeks, you will become addicted to this healing practice! You will reap immense benefits,

In a few weeks, you will feel overall looseness in the muscles, including the painful ones. When you get significant relief from the pains, move on to the 'Step 2 – Gently stretch while 'focusing on breathing' routines described in the next page.

Step 2: Gently stretch while ‘focusing on breathing’

Stretch all the muscles gently, using the ‘Repeat counting mode’: Practice gentle stretching from face to finger tips and toes, as advised in Yoga or any other system. One Yoga routine is shown in the video referred at (1). Skip those parts of this video that you find difficult at this time. Add them later when your muscles become more relaxed. Follow the instructions accompanying the video.

‘Stretch and hold’ the painful muscles while relaxing in the ‘Triple segment mode’: Imagine it is the right hand that hurts when raised sideways. Raise this hand just enough to cause a tolerable level of pain. Hold it still in this position and practice the triple segment mode using the fingers of the left hand. Complete as many fingers as you can. When the pain crosses your comfort level, bring the right hand down to its normal position. Continue the breathing, till all the pain is gone. Repeat this alternate stretching and relaxing routine, a few times. Practice like this twice a day. Every time, raise the hand only to the extent you can tolerate the pain. Over a few weeks, you will find that the right hand raises much higher than on the first day and hurts less. Use this gentle stretching practice with any hurting part of the body - hand, leg, shoulder, back or neck. The general rule is to hold the hurting body part at a tolerable level of pain and practice the breathing. When working on any part, adopt a suitable posture of the body to rest the unstretched parts in a relaxed condition. Let this stretching routine get well set, over a few weeks. Feel the difference and become comfortable. Then try the moving routine below.

‘Move’ the painful part while relaxing in the ‘911 mode’: In this routine, move the painful part, matching its movement with breathing in the ‘911 mode’. Imagine you are working on the right hand. Stand with your right hand by the side of your body. Breathe in deeply. Begin raising the right hand slowly while breathing out through the mouth, as described in the ‘911 mode’. Match the upward movement of the hand with the out-breath through the mouth. Raise it only to the extent you can. Don’t allow the pain to cross your tolerance level. When the out breath ends, stop moving the hand. As soon as the in-breath through the nose starts, begin moving the hand down. Match the downward movement with the in-breath. By the time the in-breath is completed, the hand is back to its original position by the side of the body. Repeat the up movement matching with the out-breath and down movement with the in-breath, a few times. Practice this routine twice a day. The fear of pain will ease to a great extent. You will see a significant improvement in range of movement in a few weeks.

Success stories

Back Pain: “I was suffering from back pain and sleep disorder for the last 25 years due to herniated disk and arthritis. I was hospitalized twice, taken numerous pain relievers, muscle relaxers and narcotics. I was treated by Chiropractors, Physical Therapists and Massage therapists. These helped for a week and then I would reach a plateau. After practicing the relaxation techniques and stretching, for the past 3 months, my back pain is down to 20% of what it had been for so many years, without taking any pain medications. I enjoy good night sleep as well.”

Fibromyalgia. A Report – “I suffered from fibromyalgia for almost 19 years. I had great difficulty sleeping due to extreme pain. With the breathing techniques demonstrated to me by C.S, I now get many hours of consecutive sleep which I could not get in spite of the aid from a sleep specialist. These practices relax me to the point where I experience great energy and decrease in my pain during the day. After many years I am once again able to drive my car and perform chores around the house like vacuuming, mowing the lawn and raking the leaves. It feels wonderful just to be able to finally go back to doing just that, the household chores!”

Migraine: A person, 53 years was suffering from migraine every week lasting for a day, for more than 30 years. He was not taking any medicine and putting up with the pain as the pain killers were making him drowsy. Within 2 months of practicing ‘counting breaths’ his Migraine pains totally stopped. He initially practicing the technique just for relaxation. The relief from Migraine was a pleasant surprise for him. He did not practice any stretching routines.

Arthritis: A person aged 60+ was suffering from chronic pains due to arthritis in one knee and one thumb. His doctor advised him to take pain relievers life long. One day he practiced the relaxation using the ‘Triple segment mode’ for about 20 minutes. He experienced the significant relief. Thereafter, he practiced it every day. He also practiced the gentle stretching. After a few weeks he reported that his pains were reduced immediately and stay that way for a few hours”.

(1) Visit the web page <http://countingbreaths.com/downloads/videos-for-download/>. Click on “Sitting stretches for beginners’ VIDEO link.

Practicing ‘Focusing on breathing’ relieves many other problems like: Anger, Anxiety, Lack of concentration, Difficult relationships, Grief, Hypertension, Job stress, Obesity, Panic attacks, Smoking, Stuttering, Worry, so on. Some practitioners of these mindbody techniques avoided medications or reduced them.

Suryanarayana Chennapragada (Short name – CS) trains adults and children in simple and practical mindbody techniques for Relaxation, Stress management and Meditation. Convenient times. Affordable charges.

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