

Pain – Free Movement Techniques

Since pain is a complicated combination of emotional, chemical and physiological components, treating and managing it often requires several approaches. It can extend beyond physical/medical approaches to include the psychological, social, and even spiritual aspect of the patient. There is a great prevalence of chronic pain within the world and the associated health care costs are estimated to be \$80 billion each year in the U.S alone. Fifty million Americans are affected with chronic pain each year and of this nearly 117 million individuals define it by back pain alone. As a result of the pain an estimated 33 to 35 million U.S. adults are likely to experience depression at some point during their lives.

Hans Selye recognized that physiological disease could arise from psychological causes, such as stress (***Somatic viewpoint***). Moshe Feldenkrais put his viewpoint into action with his method of bodily re-education (***Functional Integration***). Igor Burdenko states that physical activity does not have to be an activity of the physical body, but also can be an activity of our emotions, intellect and spirit (***Experience of movement***). In my view, as a physical and health educator, a Health-Fitness Education is one of the most important educational subjects to influence, maintain and improve people physically, emotionally and learning abilities at any age (***Experience your body the way it's meant to be***).

Benefits of Water Exercise: Water exercise is easier to perform and more beneficial than the same exercise on land, plus it's gentler on your body:

- It's non-impact, so it won't jar your muscles and joints.
- The buoyancy decreases effects of gravity so moving takes less effort.
- Water provides resistance, which helps you build strength and develop better balance.
- Immersion in water helps you relax and lowers pain perception.
- Sensory feedback is enhanced during movement.

Until recently, claims for the psychological and physical benefits of water exercise for people in chronic pain tended to precede supportive evidence. Results of studies have become more consistent and show that a population with a chronic pain condition (arthritis, fibromyalgia, pregnancy- especially low back relief) experienced reduced pain, improved functionality and better emotional health (Anxiety, depression, and self-reported physical impairment). All studies reported long-term benefits from water exercise (the number of days they felt good).

Once research established that water exercise benefits people in chronic pain, research was focused on what types of exercise were best, giving us solid information about specific methods. Aquatic programs that proved to help stabilize and harmonize emotional, social, physiological, spiritual and intellectual aspects of health in a chronic pain population was based on the ***SykorovaSynchro Educational Method***.

The SykorovaSynchro Method is a therapeutic Body & Mind balancing method which integrates techniques that enhance communication between the brain and the rest of the body. This will help to achieve positive changes in our life (a new sense of self awareness and control,

stress reduction, revitalization of energy flow, postural alignment and flexibility, circulation, sensory-motor learning ability and creativity.

The structure of the SykorovaSynchro water exercise session has three components: Mind, Body & Social. Improvement of posture for the relief of pain involves conscious control over learned habits. This happens by applying the powerful neurological rule: ***Less muscular effort produces more sensory motor learning and physical improvement.***

The water is enhancing awareness by use of our senses (sight, hearing, balance and touch) in conjunction with movement. The sensory motor learning process is improved tremendously, which improves the biomechanics of the movement and helps to successfully cope with chronic pain. ***MIND +JOY +BODY = SUCCESSFULL AQUATIC PAIN MANAGEMENT SESSION***

The Mind component of the session is to stabilize emotions, stimulate the central nervous system and improve social participation and relations. A psychosocial aspect of the session is to build- up positive behavioral changes in a very gentle way by creating positive expectations. For example: “As soon as you put your feet in the water you will start to feel chilly, so take your time getting in and try to relax.” This is to build trust, respect and the feeling of normality in an abnormal situation on the the pool deck and in the pool creating a welcoming atmosphere and positive feeling.

The Social component/interaction with co-participants includes focusing on biofeedback in a supportive way in order to help increase the level of trust and emotional comfort that can lead to positive attitude changes. Learning to live with a chronic illness often challenges an individual emotionally. The patient needs to develop a program that provides emotional support which increases communication with family and friends. Chronic pain is hard enough to deal with by itself, but it often brings “side effects” such as isolation and loneliness. Being with others who are suffering and working together to find relief dispels the feeling of being alone.

The Body component of the session is to improve general fitness, well-being, and sensory-motor awareness, increase comfort and prevent injuries by improving biomechanics of movement, strength and endurance among participants of the study.

Session Description: A low impact and non-impact water fitness session that includes progressive muscle relaxation, somatic exercises, active and passive stretching and deep breathing.

- Duration of Class: 45 minutes.
- Water Temperature: 86 -94 °F.
- Class Size: Larger groups are better (5 – 20 participants).
- Equipment: Floating devices (2 pool noodles per participant).

Format of the session:

1. ***Warm up:*** 5-10 minutes. When entering the pool, many individuals in chronic pain have a “Shivering Period.” Their muscles become tight and tense; even though the water temperature is warm. It is very important during these times to be positive & encouraging. The participants began to walk at a comfortable pace: walking forward, backward and sideways, highlighting proper body mechanics and balance.

2. **Somatic Exercises:** 35 minutes. Somatic means “self – sensing” and is an internalized perception (first person view – always “soma”) of one self. It is radically different from externalized perception (third person view – always “body”). Somatic treatment techniques are highly valued for their contribution to pain management and recovery. Body awareness is a skill that allows a person to accurately assess what they are experiencing somatically. Body awareness techniques are excellent breaking tools that can be used to prevent escalation of unnecessary feelings and re-traumatization.

**All somatic exercises are performed with the help of floating devices (2 noodles per participant in 5 feet or deeper water)

3. **Warm Down:** 5 minutes. Water exercises performed using a combination of deep breathing and slow broad movements of arms, legs, and torso. They are “all body” awareness of coordinated movements, and slow walking.

People suffering from chronic pain need to be fully educated about the process of managing pain. Knowledge is power. With the great wealth of information and techniques presented in the **Pain - Free Movement Techniques workshop**, you (health-fitness professional) will increase one’s ability to manage his/her chronic pain.

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