



# What Happens When You Ignore Pain

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**T**he question seems to bring automatic answers: “Uh-oh!” or its opposite, “No pain, no gain.” But there’s more to it than that, a bigger picture. Pain indicates that something is happening.

People have a universal reaction to injury: we tighten up. This reaction occurs in everyone, from infants to adults, and in all animals. It is a universal reaction: to cringe, to pull away, to avoid pain. Our brain senses the pain of injury and causes muscles to contract. It guards the injured part. Everyone has experienced the guarding reaction, but the role of the brain may be new information for some.

Most injuries heal in days or weeks. When pain persists for a long period, it warrants attention. Such pain may indicate, not an injury, but the residual reaction to an old injury, and that reaction can and often does create more consequences than the original injury.

## **Injuries That Linger, Injuries That Mysteriously Surface**

Reactions often persist, sometimes for years after an injury has healed. In my experience, it is common for the muscular tension of the guarding reaction to persist decades after healing has occurred. The reason: the brain, the master-control organ of the muscles, has made a conditioned habit of the guarding reaction. The guarding-habit becomes part of the brain’s conditioning.

Interestingly, it is also common for pain to surface long after an injury has healed. What is interesting is that the pain signals, not an injury, but *the brain conditioning that keeps muscles contracted after an injury*. Contracted muscles get tired and sore.

Why the pain surfaces when it does involves numerous factors. It could be nervous tension, or overuse, or poor posture has added to the muscular tension of the guarding habit.

## **Consequences of Unattended, Linger Pain**

Another factor: joints and soft-tissue degenerate under the unrelenting tension and pressure of contracted muscles – with consequences: arthritis, bursitis, disk problems, bone spurs, facet joint syndrome, spondylosis.

That's what may happen in the long-term when you ignore pain: pain, tissue degeneration, poor aging, loss of mobility and at last, for many, decrepitude. Even if you've tended the injury, if you haven't tended the residual muscular tensions, this may become your destiny. It's what we haven't handled that gets us.

## Handling Lingerin9 Pain

Having heard this explanation and recognized that it applies to themselves, some people may turn to their chiropractor, their massage therapist, their acupuncturist, their herbalist, their surgeon, not recognizing that these health professionals *don't deal with the condition described*: the brain conditioning that causes residual muscular tension. People sometimes choose a *familiar* course of action, rather than a *relevant* one. They act out of habit; the habitual guarding reaction persists, the pain returns.

Others may hear this explanation and do nothing. They may not believe that this explanation is correct and remain unmoved. They may adopt a wait and see attitude. They may lack the will to take action until the situation is unbearable.

A word, to the wise, is sufficient: Somatic education can free you from the grip of reflexive muscular contractions, quiet the pain safely, and can protect you from the long-term consequences of the underlying causes of lingering pain.

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