



The Challenge of Being Different

The gentleman sits in front of me with a dubious look on his face and tells me that he's only here at his wife's insistence. I smile and tell him his wife has already told me so. "Aren't you offended?" he asks. I reply, "No. Why would I be? I think a certain amount of skepticism when trying something new is a good thing." "But I've tried physiotherapy before and it doesn't help!" he blurts out. "This isn't something new. It's all the same." My smile widens as I tell him "Ah, but that's where I beg to differ."

I ask him what his previous experience with physiotherapy has been like. "Well it seems I didn't spend much time with the physiotherapist. A lot of the time I was stuck on machines and given exercises to do on my own." This scenario is all too frustratingly familiar to my ears.

"It seems that they were only focused on my sore back and never really looked at the big picture," he continues. "I have a feeling that my back pain may be related to previous injuries I've had but they never really addressed that." "Well," I reply, "I will be looking at your entire body from head to toe and assessing how issues in one area affect others. You see, it's all connected. Instability in one area can lead to tight muscles in another area as they try to compensate."

I proceed with my full body assessment and discover that a fifteen-year-old knee injury has resulted in lack of mobility in one entire leg. This has caused his pelvis to pull back on that side which is in turn twisting his lower back. His shoulders are also quite tight and pulling down into the ground as a result of many years spent cross-country skiing and pulling on his poles. This is putting even more pressure on his twisted back.

Now comes the tricky part. I have to explain my findings and tell him that I am going to start by treating his tight leg and that we probably won't touch his back today. At this point he either trusts me or he doesn't. He seems somewhat doubtful but agrees to proceed. I let out the breath I've been holding.

I proceed to free his tight leg using nothing but my two hands and a lot of analysis. I work a bit through the hips and pelvis to activate some muscles of stability that have likely been on vacation since his knee injury. I spend a few minutes working on his shoulders and rib cage.

Now comes the moment of truth. He gets up from the table and moves around the room at first somewhat cautiously, but then with more confidence. He stops in front of me and searches for words. "I have been dealing with this pain for

so long I had given up hope of ever finding relief. Right now it is about fifty percent better!" I resist the urge to do a fist pump. "Wow! That's fantastic!" I declare. "So will I see you next week?" I ask. He grins and says, "Sign me up for as long as it takes."

Physiotherapy was a strictly hands-on profession before the advent of machines and physiotherapy assistants. In my opinion we have somewhere gone astray. I believe that manual treatment addressing the body as a whole and not just treating the painful area is what is required to provide lasting relief. If this approach resonates with you then please come and see us. We would be happy to help.

Marie Shinmoto
Registered Physiotherapist

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